

**“Facebooking” Young Voters in the 2008 Federal Election Campaign:
Perceptions of Citizenship and Participation**

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Declining participation of citizens in electoral politics has been a phenomenon observed in many western democracies over the past two decades. In Canada, turnout in federal elections has dropped systematically from a relatively consistent level of 75 percent of eligible voters in the 1970s and 1980s to a new historic low of 59 per cent in the most recent (2008) federal election. Continuing studies of this long term process of decline have made it increasingly clear that the underlying causes of the phenomenon are largely demographic rather than political (Pammett and LeDuc, 2003ab, 2004; Gidengil et al, 2004; Rubenson et al, 2004). While the gradual withdrawal over time of young voters from the active electorate is not the sole cause of the turnout decline in Canada, it is increasingly evident that generational replacement is both the strongest and the most important factor in accounting for changing turnout patterns in Canada. These findings have also emerged in many countries elsewhere (Franklin et al, 2004; Wass, 2007; Wattenberg, 2002ab, 2008).

Voting turnout, important as it may be for the study of elections, is not the only political and social effect of these long term patterns of generational change. The underlying social and demographic changes within the cohort have produced changes in political values and beliefs, and those changes in turn need to be better understood if we are to address the turnout problem effectively. There is considerable literature which argues that longer term processes of social change have been transforming values in a number of ways, including those touching upon citizenship norms (Dalton, 2008ab; Inglehart, 1990; Nevitte, 1996). These authors attribute the generational differences of today's young people to a shift in values from a materialist outlook to one characterized by post-materialism, with ensuing changes in the nature of political engagement. In this paper, we examine some of the broader implications of changes in young people's political attitudes and behaviour, particularly those involving perceptions of political participation, civic duty, and citizenship.

The perception of voting as a 'civic duty' continues to be an important part of the explanation for high turnout rates among older generations of voters. There is, however, increasing evidence that this norm of a civic obligation to participate may not be the same among younger generations. A growing body of newer literature finds links between what constitutes both the perception of rights, and sense of obligation toward being a 'good citizen' (Isin and Turner; 2002; Dalton, 2008a; Pammett, 2009).

Another hypothesis advanced to explain the decline in voting among Canadian youth has linked non-engagement to their being 'tuned out' or disinterested in all aspects of the political system generally (Gidengil et al, 2003, 2004). The weakening of young people's sense of traditional civic duty has also been noted as a rationale for this thesis of disengagement, given that there is a positive correlation between civic duty and voting (Blais, 2000; Gidengil et al, 2003, 2004; Pammett and LeDuc, 2003). A number of other studies which have examined the changing nature of youth participation attribute this shift to the emergence of different citizenship norms among the young (Zukin et al, 2006; Berdahl and Raney, 2009).

It is one thing to propose that norms of civic behaviour and conceptions of the obligations of citizenship among the young are changing, and another to offer evidence about the specific directions of that change. We are not well informed about what contemporary conceptions of citizenship look like in the minds of young people, and how these notions of citizenship affect their sense of obligation and its relationship with participation. We do know that the level and scope of people's engagement is typically reflective of their citizenship perspective. Theiss-Morse (1993) for example, documents that citizenship perspectives significantly influence political behaviour. Similarly, Pammett's (2009) recent research on citizenship in Europe and Canada shows that differing dimensions of citizenship directly correlate with different avenues of participation. Dalton's (2008ab) work on citizenship perspectives and norms among American youth also confirms that attitudes toward citizenship affect obligation and political behaviour in an electoral context.

These accounts are limited however. Dalton in particular advances two conceptions of citizenship, both of which centre on engagement. He does not focus on where the non-engaged fit into the picture of political participation, or how conceptions of citizenship may differ in those less committed to voting. We believe there is a more diversified picture in terms of the extent and nature of engagement, conceptions of citizenship, and perceptions of the duty to vote among contemporary young Canadians than has emerged in previous research. In this paper, we pay close attention to all groups of young citizens – those who are engaged and non-engaged and those who have strong intentions to vote, as well as modest and weak or relatively nonexistent

inclinations to do so. The crux of our analysis is to further explore the relationship between conceptions of citizenship and senses of obligation or responsibility, and consequently, the influence that these concepts have on the electoral behaviour of young people.

Study design

This project was designed to find a way to engage young people in a conversation about civic participation during a political campaign, where they would feel comfortable to engage in dialogue, and where they already spend much of their time communicating. Instead of the traditional focus group model which involves putting people around a table and watching them from behind two way glass in an unnatural boardroom, we thought it would be more revealing to engage them online, in a familiar peer group setting. *Facebook* is a medium of communication that youth are familiar with, and would allow them to feel comfortable to express themselves more freely and honestly. We arranged participants into three groups; one consisting of those less likely to vote, one with those who expressed high levels of engagement, and the last group being comprised of those with moderate levels of engagement. Highly engaged people who reported previously voting were separated from those less motivated in order to prevent any mediating effects from occurring between groups, or within conversations. Specifically, we did not want those less engaged to feel uncomfortable in expressing their views around those with stronger levels of commitment.

It was also important to have this discussion correspond with the timing of the election, as much of the population does not think about politics on a daily basis. Furthermore, by engaging youth during the campaign we would be able to better understand their feelings about the campaign, and whether it affected their motivation to vote. We were primarily interested in learning more about how youth feel about voting, being involved politically, and what it means for them to be a citizen during an election. In addition, the study was designed to probe and contrast attitudinal differences between voting and non-voting youth, with specific attention given to within-cohort differences produced by variances in their level of engagement in politics; attitudes toward civic duty or obligation; senses of responsibility toward politics, and the differing conceptions of the role of a citizen during an election.

In order to create the groups, we placed an ad on several *Facebook* message boards, calling for young people (ages 18 to 26) who were interested in participating in an online discussion during the election campaign. Subjects were promised \$50 remuneration for completing four online survey conversations with both open-ended and close-ended questions (see Appendix 1).¹ Those interested were then asked to complete an interview questionnaire (see Appendix 2) to determine qualification and group placement. After reviewing initial close-ended survey questionnaires, qualified participants² were assigned to one of three groups: the first consisted of those who identified themselves as probable voters; the second group self-identified as likely non-voters; and a final group consisted of a range of those who reported no consistent pattern (e.g., irregular history of participation; measures showed they possessed both low and high levels of engagement, etc.).³

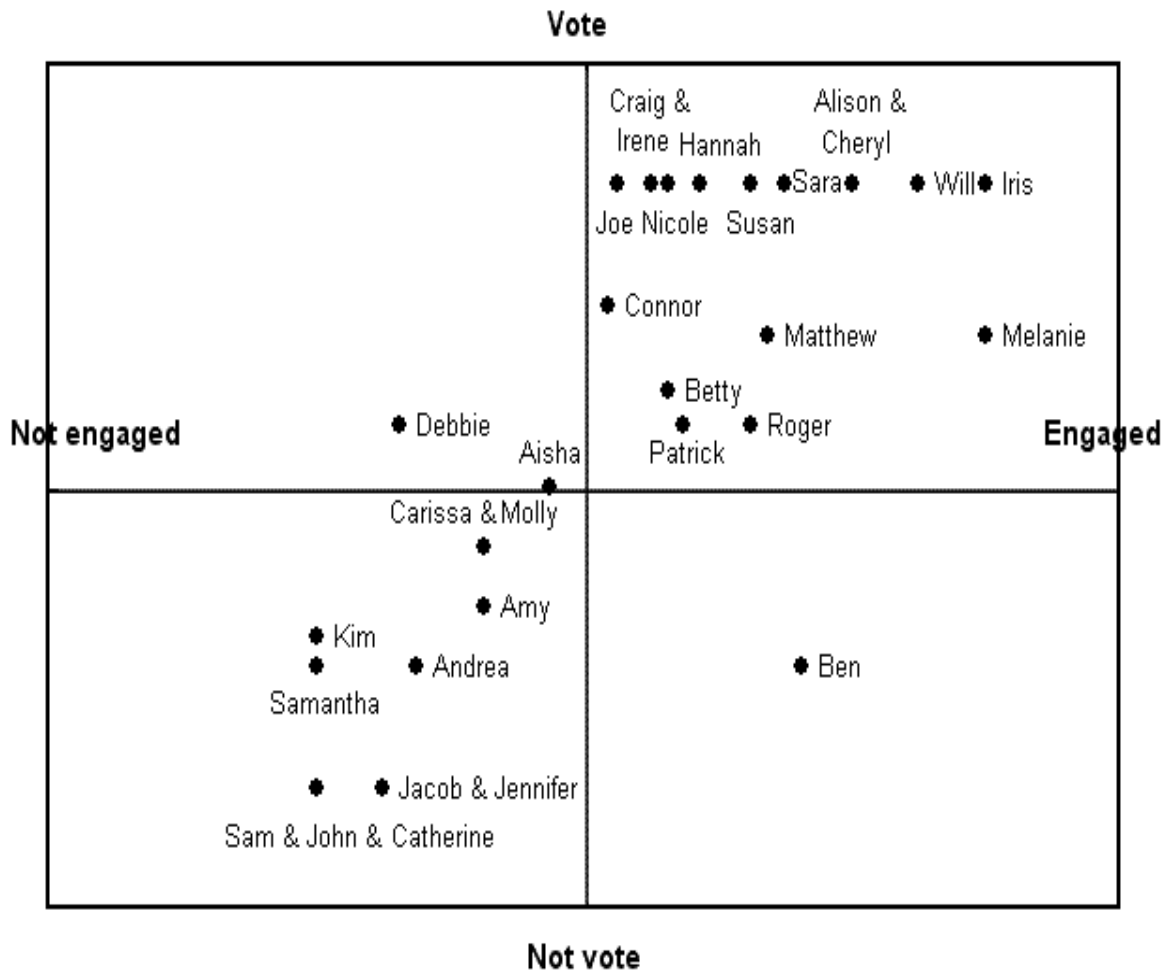
Matrix Construction

Once the data were collected, we then used a combination of both qualitative responses and quantitative measures (see Appendix 3) to construct a number of factors designed to reflect respondents' overt or latent feelings about engagement and participation, the meaning of citizenship, the role of a citizen in the electoral context, and sense of responsibility. In this paper, they are placed on the x axis of a series of matrices, matched against views on voting participation (found on the y axis). This contrasting multidimensional approach is not unlike basic quantitative cross-tabulation, but in addition can be compared to a "political compass"⁴ where individual responses are arranged in a scatter-plot formation. In contrast to reporting frequency positioning alone, this presentation allows us to better expose differences between voting and non-voting participants along the response dimensions, while also providing the opportunity to compare the patterns across the different matrices. Where a larger data set would disallow such a venture, the smaller size of the respondent group used here was quite manageable for this technique, as is evident upon examining the first matrix which focuses on citizen engagement.

Citizen Engagement

The first matrix shows the relationship between engagement and voting (see Figure 1 below). This diagram clearly depicts that while those who are engaged vote, those who are less engaged or not engaged do not. There are only two exceptions to this pattern and otherwise there is almost a perfect regression line, beginning with Sam, Jeff and Catherine at one end, all of whom are almost completely disengaged and report not voting, and Iris at the other end, who is fully engaged and committed to voting every time. The non-engaged and voting, and engaged and non-voting, quadrants otherwise remain vacant, Ben and Debbie being the only exceptions. While this pattern is not surprising in itself, listening to the conversation that it engendered is quite enlightening.

Figure 1. Engagement and Voting



First of all, when we turn to those not engaged and not voting, in the far left hand corner at the bottom we find Sam, John, Catherine, Jacob and Jennifer expressing a lack of importance of politics in their lives. They do not discuss politics and have little if any commitment to seeking information about the campaign. Here we see a disengaged group that is content with politics not being a part of their lives; they are removed from the political scene, and not politically aware. As 22 year-old John says, "I only really pay attention to the stuff that's shoved in my face." Or similarly from college student Jacob, "I am not politically informed at all. I just have no interest in that area at all. I rarely read the newspaper, nor am I in a social circle that cares about those things." And finally, from Jennifer we hear,

As far as Canadian politics are concerned... none of us pays attention and none of us really cares. We don't talk about politics any more than the occasional "Harper is creepy-looking" or "Maybe we shouldn't be in Afghanistan. Yeah. Hmmm. How about sushi tonight?.." I don't know who many people are, and I don't investigate platforms so I don't really know where anyone stands on any given issue, or what the debates are surrounding them (except for the obvious, controversial, "sexy" points that are so all over the media that they're more or less unavoidable).

This group seems to be virtually 'tuned out' – a pattern which is not unlike that found in other studies which focus on Canadian youth (Gidengil et al. 2003, 2005).

Interestingly however, this sense of detachment and disinterest is not the case for all of those found in the non-engaged, non-voting quadrant. Moving up toward the center of the grid we note a somewhat mixed response from Aisha, Amy, Carissa and Molly. This cluster cannot be considered entirely disconnected, since in some cases they express interest during elections as a result of discussion in their peer group. We hear this expressed in Amy's comments, "Politics isn't very important to me in my day to day life, but when an election or specific issue comes along, then I get a bit more interested in it. Some of my friends are pretty into it, support specific parties." In other cases, they are engaged themselves, but turned off politics, which they view negatively, and do not enjoy peer group discussions as a consequence. As Molly, a 26 year-old drama student notes:

To me politics is a necessary evil...I pay attention to what the various sides have to say, and watch election coverage on TV. I tend to not discuss politics, because I end up in heated debates which just end up in hurt feelings and anger. I do not

trust politicians and find it best not to discuss with friends I'd like to keep. I could be better informed, but I do feel like the public only gets part of the story. I don't go to party websites, because I don't like being lied to in an attempt to gain votes.

As we travel closer to the center of the matrix we see a mixed and inconsistent pattern of engagement. On one hand respondents may be more engaged and likely to vote than others found in the same quadrant, as their friends are more committed and do sometimes talk about politics. But this engagement has not produced positive feelings, and in some cases there is little commitment to become more involved as a result. As Aisha says; "Honestly, I don't really plan to pay much attention to this election because I don't think anything special will change."

Crossing over to the engaged and voting quadrant, this negativity all but disappears. Looking at Betty, Roger, and Patrick we witness a more positive attitude, and a recognized sense of the importance of politics. However, there is also some degree of uncertainty and a lack of confidence surrounding their ability to find the time to acquire the necessary political information. This concern is expressed in Patrick's comments;

I think politics is an important part of everyone's lives that me and many friends around me take for granted. I intend to pay attention to each election, but seeing that elections typically fall at inconvenient times (midterm time), it's difficult for me and my friends find the time to stay informed.

The concern about being appropriately informed is found without exception in those who vote but remain a little less engaged, such as Hannah, Joe, Nicole, Craig and Irene. This cluster of young people makes the effort to actively seek information, and has a strong sense of commitment to being engaged, but they also feel that they are not as informed as they might like to be, or could be, as a consequence of the complexity of politics. These voters place a great deal of importance on the possession of an 'educated opinion' when voting, as described by Irene:

As much as I would like to think I am politically informed I know in my heart that I am not and that I am in fact fairly naive about politics. I often feel that there are not enough opportunities out there for younger people to learn about politics until they are almost forced to when they decide to vote. For the most part I receive much of my basic political knowledge from TV (i.e. news casts, debates, interviews etc) and

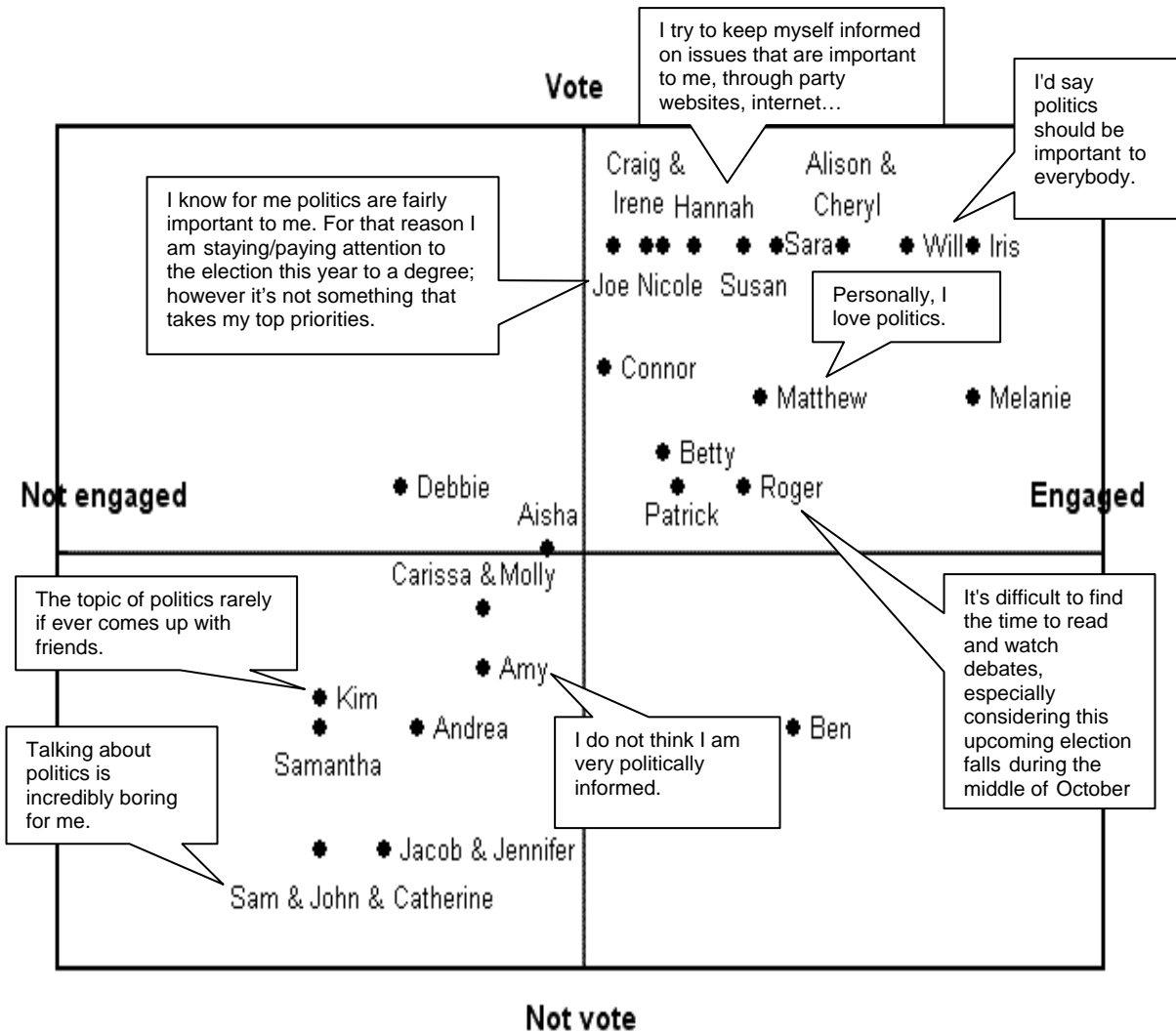
if a topic or policy caught my attention I am likely to do further research online about it.

It appears as if the greater level of importance they place in politics seems to influence not only the level of engagement, but also, the expectation of knowledge about politics and a consistent pattern of voting and commitment to political engagement. Even if these respondents do not consider themselves completely or fully informed, when they feel a sense of importance or obligation to being involved, they are more likely to vote consistently.

Finally, the view that being an active engaged citizen is important is shared by those who have a strong sense of engagement and also vote consistently. Those who fall in the top right hand corner who are deeply invested in being informed, and who vote every time, or almost every time, demonstrate a passion and affection for politics and civic duty that is clearly exceptional. They consider themselves informed, talk about politics, read widely and consult websites to broaden their knowledge, and are sometimes active members of political groups or online forums.

In a majority of cases this highly-engaged group is influenced by traditional socialization agents and their current circumstances (i.e. parents, friends, job), and yet in some cases this commitment is newfound and driven by an awareness of how politics impacts their lives. Will notes being influenced by his parents in saying, “I think I'm slightly above average when it comes to political informedness, [sic] because my parents really care a lot, so it rubs off on me.” Melanie connects her political passion to a recent trip abroad where politics could not be taken for granted, and her job which is also inherently political. In contrast, Iris has become more zealous as a result of seeing the effect that politics has on her everyday life. What they all share in common is an emotive sense of attachment to citizenship and a sense of duty to be informed, which is less evident or completely absent in those who are not seeking information, engaged and voting. Reviewing the matrix with comments attached illustrates the differences in these conversations. It also brings out the importance of investigating conceptions of citizenship held by young people.

Figure 2. Engagement Matrix with Comments



Conceptions of Citizenship

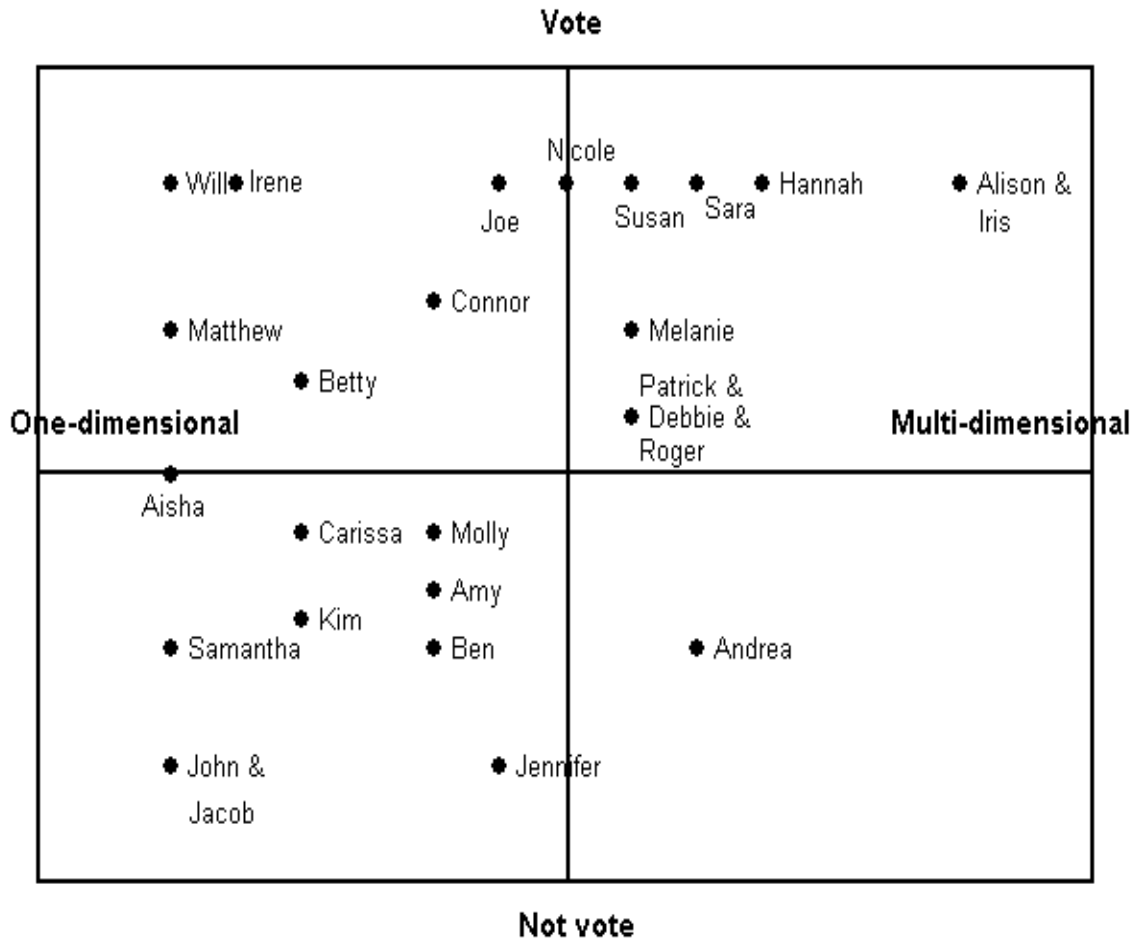
Orientations toward engagement with others are likely embedded in a larger conception of citizenship. In this section, we investigate whether an attachment to citizenship is explanatory of young people’s senses of obligation and how this may impact their levels of engagement by examining how young people feel about, and conceive of, Canadian citizenship. The data reveal multiple dimensions of citizenship and several interesting findings concerning young people’s constructions of citizenship. Though there is a much richer sense of variation present here than in the engagement matrix, generally two broad conceptions emerge. On the one hand, some young people possess relatively one-dimensional conceptions of citizenship, whereby citizenship is

seen as almost a contract of rights and defined in legalistic terms. Others, by contrast, depict more multi-dimensional conceptions in which citizenship has both legalistic elements as well as components involving duties on the part of the citizen. A few conceptions are more complex and abstract.

Interestingly, the responses suggest that these conceptions are closely tied to feelings of national or civic pride. Respondents with broader conceptions of citizenship that incorporate multiple dimensions convey strong feelings of pride, whereas those whose responses comprise thinner conceptions of citizenship do not evoke any particular sense of emotion. Those young people who recognize that citizenship encompasses more than its legal and rights dimension, but do not offer fuller, more nuanced, accounts of what it means to be a citizen report moderate feelings of pride in their text. The degree of fullness in a conception, and the presence and intensity of attachment to broader citizenship norms, appears to be closely linked to a respondent's intention to vote. Virtually all non-voters espouse thin conceptions of citizenship, which usually excludes any feelings of attachment to being a citizen or pride in participating. The exceptions are those non-voters who conceive of citizenship as having alternate dimensions, even if they are not able to clearly articulate what those might be, and report a somewhat stronger intention to vote.

Voters by contrast, report both one-dimensional and multi-dimensional conceptions of what it means to be a citizen, and a majority of these descriptions are laced with varying degrees of commitment and emotion. In fact, perhaps understandably, the broader the conception a respondent conveys, the stronger his/her sense of pride with respect to the country and the notion of citizen responsibility within Canada. This pattern indicates that while voters can conceive of citizenship one-dimensionally or as having multiple facets, virtually all of the non-voters in our *Facebook* group recount single-dimension conceptions of citizenship and are found on the left hand side of the matrix.

Figure 3. Conceptions of Citizenship



For the most part, respondents on left side of the matrix tell a one-dimensional story of citizenship - describing it as merely a legal status that allows people to live and work within a country - but there are variations within this pattern. In particular there are three types of conceptions which emerge from the left side of the matrix: those who are unsure of what citizenship means beyond status and rights, those who strictly view citizenship as a type of status and nothing more, and those who, aside from a predominant focus on rights, recognize citizen responsibilities and attach a sense of commitment to citizenship, albeit a limited one. These conceptions are connected by their overall emphasis on citizenship as an expression of rights.

In terms of placement, those with very weak intentions to vote are found closer to the left (Jacob, John, Samantha) and recount strictly rights-based notions of citizenship

that reflect a degree of ambiguity. John aptly reflects the perceptions of the group by commenting, “A Canadian citizen, to me, refers to someone who resides in Canada. Outside of that, I don't really know what being a citizen would mean.” Similarly, Samantha, a 23 year-old university student from Toronto also remarks, “I'm not really sure. To me a Canadian citizen is just someone who was born/lives here.” These descriptions reflect a one-dimensional view of citizenship and uncertainty over what else citizenship encompasses or stands for. These young people touch upon the rights dimension in their responses, but are unable to identify further components; and while their doubt suggests that they may believe there is more to citizenship or perhaps less, they are unable to verbalize any additional description. There is a sense of entitlement with respect to rights, but no mention of duties or responsibilities associated with being a Canadian citizen and an absence of any emotional attachment to being engaged. Politics is not something these young people think about.

A bit higher on the left side of the matrix, we find a few people (Kim, Carissa, Aisha) who strictly regard citizenship as a legal status that entitles residents to privileges and rights and does not expect anything of citizens. For example, Aisha from Ottawa comments, “I would describe a Canadian citizen to be someone who legally has Canadian citizenship lol. I don't see any other way around it or any other types of descriptions...” Kim, a 20 year-old university student echoes, “a Canadian citizen is one who lives and works in Canada.” Again, these young people conceptualize of citizenship one-dimensionally, defining it as a type of status with legal privileges. Their depictions revolve around the individual and his/her legal contract with the state, offering no recognition or acknowledgement of the importance of community or sense of obligation, no allusions to any broader nuances or uncertainty and no mention of pride in participation.

Toward the middle of the matrix among the non-voters (Ben, Molly, Amy, Jennifer), respondents begin to acknowledge dimensions of citizenship beyond entitlements to rights and privileges; and an indication of pride emerges. Ben, a 25 year-old college student from Toronto comments, “A Canadian citizen is someone who has citizenship in this country, to be lucky and fortunate to live a country where you can practice your religion, and embrace your sexual preference without fear.” Molly, who is plotted above Ben, remarks, “Being a citizen in Canada means following the laws set in

place to ensure the safety of other citizens, and to respect said citizens despite any differences that there may be. Canada is such a diverse country, and its citizens should embrace that.” While Ben and Molly’s comments do not reveal a necessarily broad conception of obligation, they conceive of citizenship as having more than one dimension and their references to acceptance and diversity reflects a minimal degree of national pride.

In the upper left quadrant but closer to the vertical line of the matrix, respondents Connor, Joe, Irene, Nicole, and Betty recognize there is a degree of citizenship that is rights-based, and offer additional gradations within their responses which demonstrate a belief that there is more to being a Canadian citizen than merely living and working within the nation. The closer participants are placed to the centre, the more nuanced their responses. With one exception (Matthew), all of these responses indicate some feelings of pride which become stronger the closer a respondent falls toward the upper end of the voting scale. As Betty from Toronto remarks, “I believe that to be a Canadian Citizen today is a great thing. We are in a free country that has no messed up laws and isn’t continuously in wars.” While there is also some uncertainty present in these responses, suggesting respondents may also believe there is more to citizenship than they are able to recount, they offer more detailed accounts of citizenship in spite of this.

Moving toward the right side of the voting matrix, feelings of pride are expressed more strongly and coherently and respondents’ conceptions of citizenship are also more nuanced and multi-faceted. Here pride is evident in almost every response and even where pride is not explicit there is recognition that duties and responsibilities are important components of citizenship. Two clear variations in what it means to be a citizen are present here, connected by the recognition that the notion of citizenship encompasses more than one dimension. One group (Roger, Patrick and Melanie) laments that citizenship is not defined broadly. Instead of being explicitly prideful, these respondents evoke a tone of moral authority, complaining that many people take the notion of citizenship for granted. The other group (Sara, Hannah, Alison, Susan and Iris) conveys the same message more positively, recognizing citizenship as a multifaceted concept. Interestingly, the more prideful a respondent, the broader and more nuanced the conceptualization of citizenship s/he communicates. Responses from both groups highlight the importance of citizen responsibilities and some stress that giving back and

contributing to society in other ways is also a central dimension of citizenship. All of these respondents report a stronger intention to vote, which is not surprising given their understanding and commitment to the importance of citizen duty.

The first group evokes a tone of moral authority in their responses, specifically in reference to others not behaving as responsible citizens, or the failure of others to recognize what is great about being a citizen in Canada. Roger offers a candid example:

Unfortunately, being a citizen of Canada today just means holding a piece of paper that tells you can legally be here and work here. Many... take it for granted and don't take pride in their Canadian citizenship. It's saddening...Being a Canadian citizen (and living here) means it is your civic duty to take part in politics of this country, shape it and defend Canada first...

Melanie, a 21 year-old university student from Ottawa expresses a similar sentiment in her remarks:

...In my opinion citizenship doesn't really mean anything anymore. It means you live in a country and you have certain rights that everyone takes for granted, which has led to a DANGEROUSLY apathetic voting populace. I find that people would much rather turn a blind eye, and manage to epitomize the notion of ignorance being bliss, and then blaming their problems on others, when one of the most fundamental aspects of being a citizen is taking part in...the political sphere.

These responses express negative judgments regarding the public's perception of citizenship and practical actions as citizens. Respondents here offer two approaches to what it means to be a citizen – a general definition they feel is commonly accepted and practiced by others, as well as their own personal conception, which is much broader, and specifically recognizes the importance of a civic duty to vote. Patrick, a biology student from Hamilton refers to the phenomenon as 'active' versus 'passive' citizenship; noting that a passive citizen meets the minimum requirements of citizenship such as abiding by laws, "[having] basic rights, [and] treating Canada just as a piece of land they happen to live on" whereas a more active citizen seeks to play a role in the community and "want[s] to be involved and committed to society, and therefore, involved and committed to democracy." Patrick's position considers that young people like himself, Melanie and Roger see the validity of both conceptions of citizenship, but mourn the fact that many of their compatriots possess a more limited definition.

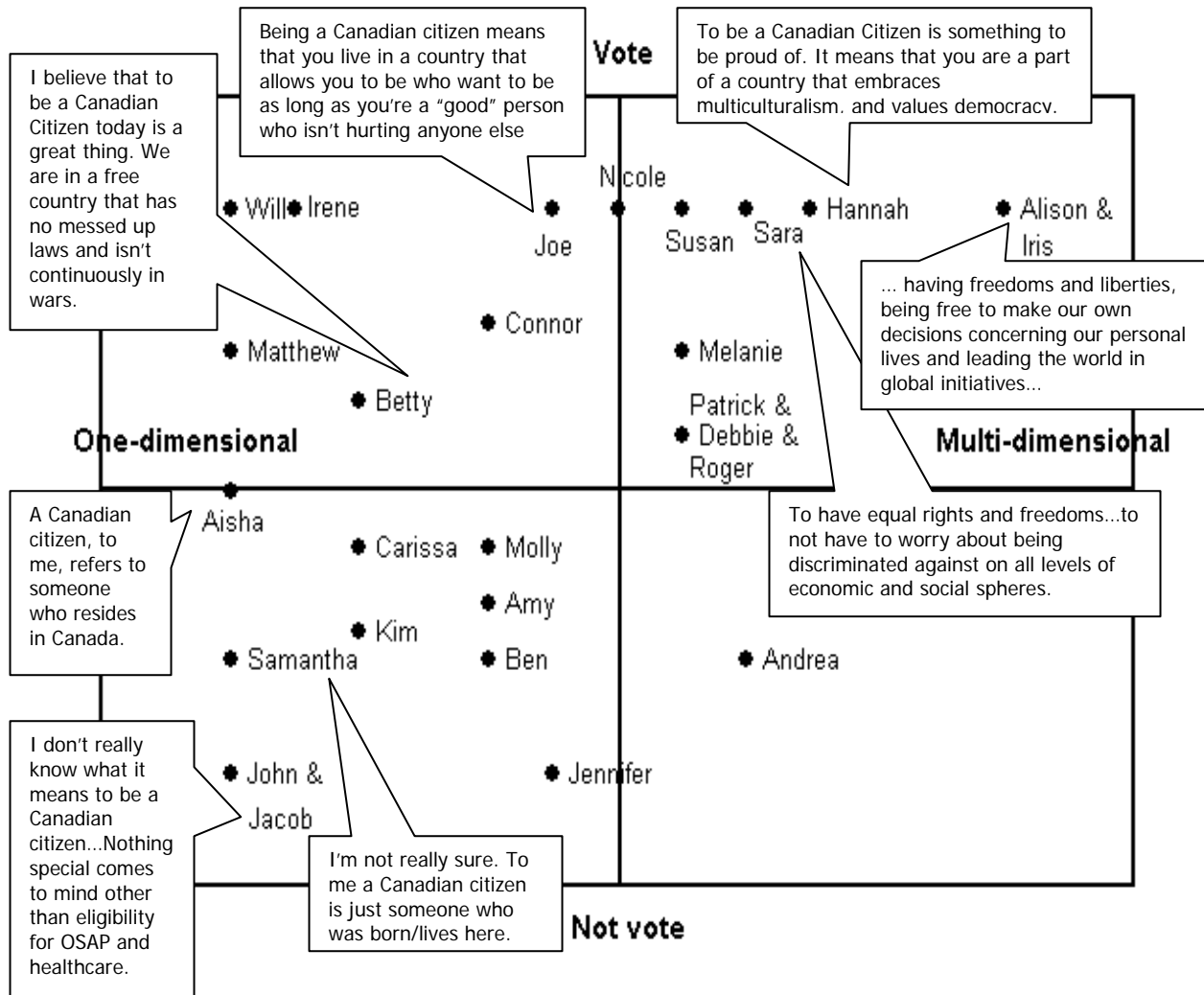
Most of the remaining respondents in the upper right quadrant are prideful in their accounts of citizenship, albeit to varying degrees. Feelings of pride become stronger the closer a respondent is to the right side of the matrix. Thus, the more prideful a respondent, the more likely s/he is to recognize multiple dimensions and facets of what it means to be a Canadian citizen today and this seems to correspond to voting intention. Those respondents plotted at the far right of the matrix conceive of citizenship most broadly, and also relay the strongest senses of pride with respect to Canadian citizenship. Their perceptions of citizenship recognize norms, values, ideology, national identity, national culture, national institutions, rights, freedoms and the importance of community. Their account of Canadian citizenship more specifically focuses on aspects of community, identity, protection of diversity, and liberal values. Hannah, from Toronto for example, highlights pride and dimensions beyond rights in her remarks by noting, “be[ing] a Canadian Citizen is something to be proud of. It means that you are a part of a country that embraces multiculturalism, and values democracy.” Iris, a Marketing student from Toronto offers an even broader account:

To be a Canadian citizen means being proud of Canada's liberal values and respected name around the world. These values to me include: being a peace-keeping nation, having freedoms and liberties, being free to make our own decisions concerning our personal lives...and leading the world in global initiatives such as ending poverty and the environment. I think a true Canadian who lives and breathes these values should vote in the election...

Whereas those who espouse relatively one-dimensional or more legalistic renditions of citizenship still imply that citizenship is more than a label or status.

There is also an expectation of responsibility beyond obeying laws, as Alison a 20 year-old Ottawa University student remarks, “these responsibilities extend to an involvement within the group, to the environment, to social and political issues, and to an overall consideration for others.” The pattern of pride, responsibility, and broader conceptions of citizenship are likely closely linked and reflective of one another. The prouder a respondent, the greater value they see in participation, the stronger their sense of obligation toward it and correspondingly, the greater emphasis they place on voting.

Figure 4. Conceptions of Citizenship with Comments



The rich variation within these qualitative responses points to multiple conceptions of citizenship. Just as youth are not an amorphous group with respect to engagement, they also conceive of citizenship very differently. In fact, their patterns of engagement are likely intertwined and reflective of their conceptions of citizenship. Generally we see that youth who have thinner conceptions of citizenship and express limited pridefulness can be voters, but non-voters rarely possess richer conceptions and do not articulate pride in the nation, or in civic life. However, while this matrix highlights how young people generally conceive of citizenship, it does not explain their own citizen action, nor does it offer a detailed account of their senses of personal responsibility. To get a better idea of how young people regard themselves in terms of their sense of responsibility or personal obligation, we turn to the responsibility matrix.

Personal Responsibility

To measure the conception of personal responsibility, respondents were asked open-ended and close-ended questions designed to gauge whether they felt it was their responsibility to contribute to fixing the problems in government, or whether it is the government's responsibility, and if they felt we would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people. Responses did not show as much variation as expected, and critically, do not vary between voting and non-voting groups. Instead, both groups cluster around the center line with many implying shared responsibility between the government and the people. However, although not initially evident here too there are distinct patterns and differences between the groups. Respondents share a desire to see a balance of responsibility between people and the government, but their reasoning is quite different.

Those who are more likely to vote, be engaged and hold multi-dimensional views of citizenship are also more likely to be satisfied with existing government structures. Those who are less likely to vote by contrast, express greater disenchantment with government, and project a certain amount of futility with regards to public participation given that they lack faith in political actors. But they too can be deferential. The tendency to coalesce in the middle appears to be caused by two very different sets of reasons. On one hand those less committed to voting call for shared responsibility because they mistrust government, or alternatively they feel a sense of deference to authority which government provides. On the other hand, committed voters call for shared responsibility because they value the expertise which government provides, and feel strongly about the value of engaged and informed citizen involvement.

When we review comments from non-voters such as Amy, Kim, Andrea, Samantha, Jennifer and Ben, we hear expressions of dissatisfaction with politics and political leaders, but also a desire for some form of cooperation between the two groups. Notably they place the ultimate responsibility in the hands of the government, as they see government as holding greater power. This comes through clearly when we read Amy's comments;

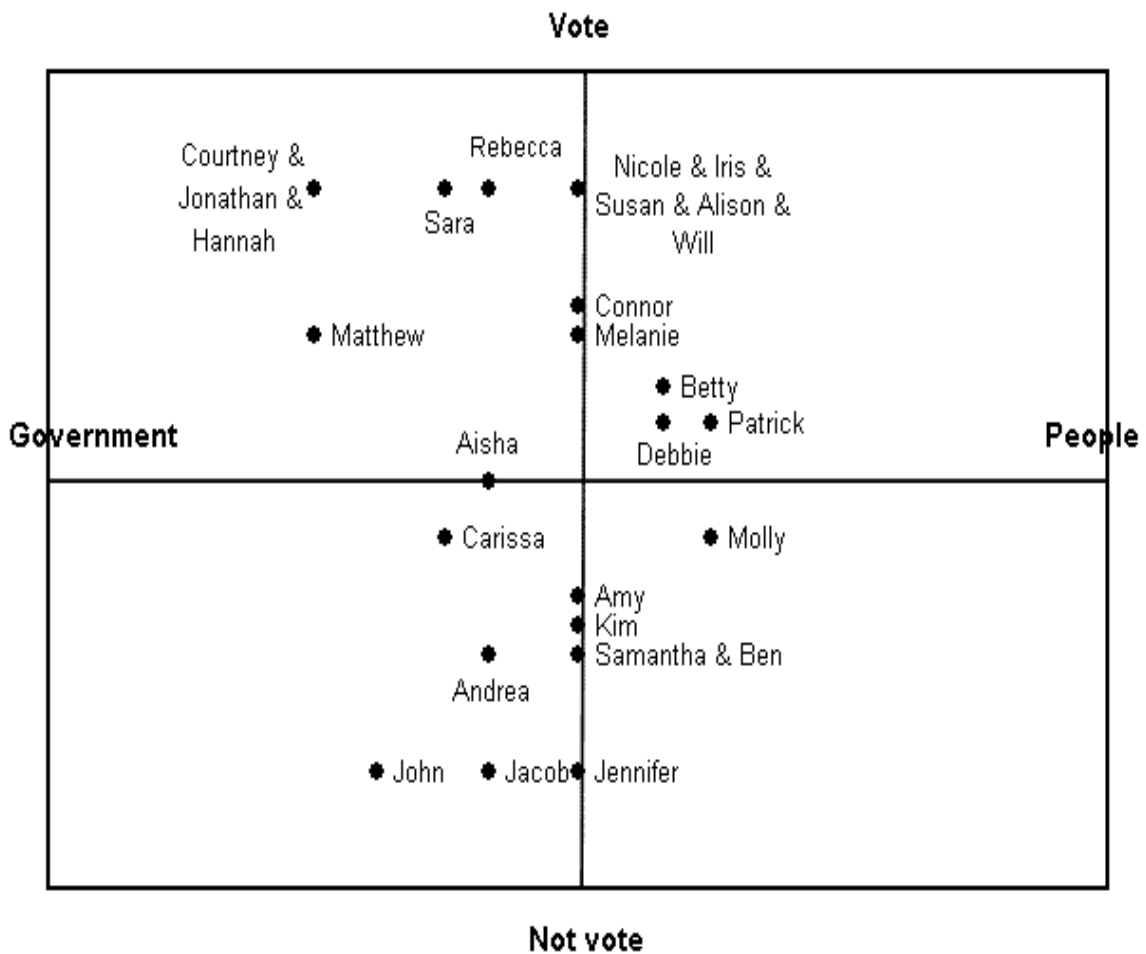
I feel individuals can make change and help things, but that it is ultimately the government with the power and resources to make bigger changes, in policy or whatever. It may be fine and good for people to raise awareness about an issue (say

disability rights) but if the government doesn't change the policy about how they treat the disabled, then it won't really matter. For some issues, even if a lot of private citizens feel one way, the government still does what it wants regardless.

Or Andrea's response;

Ultimately it is the Prime Minister's job to fix the problems, but it is the job of himself and the party to listen to the citizens and what they think and feel about things. It is important for the government in power to consider the opinions and thoughts of the population of the country in its entirety and not just the opinions of themselves and those of the directly affiliated party.

Figure 5. Personal Responsibility



Andrea's comments are quite different from John or Jacob who are least likely to vote and place more responsibility in the hands of government, and are content with government taking a larger role. They are both deferential and tuned out. Conversely,

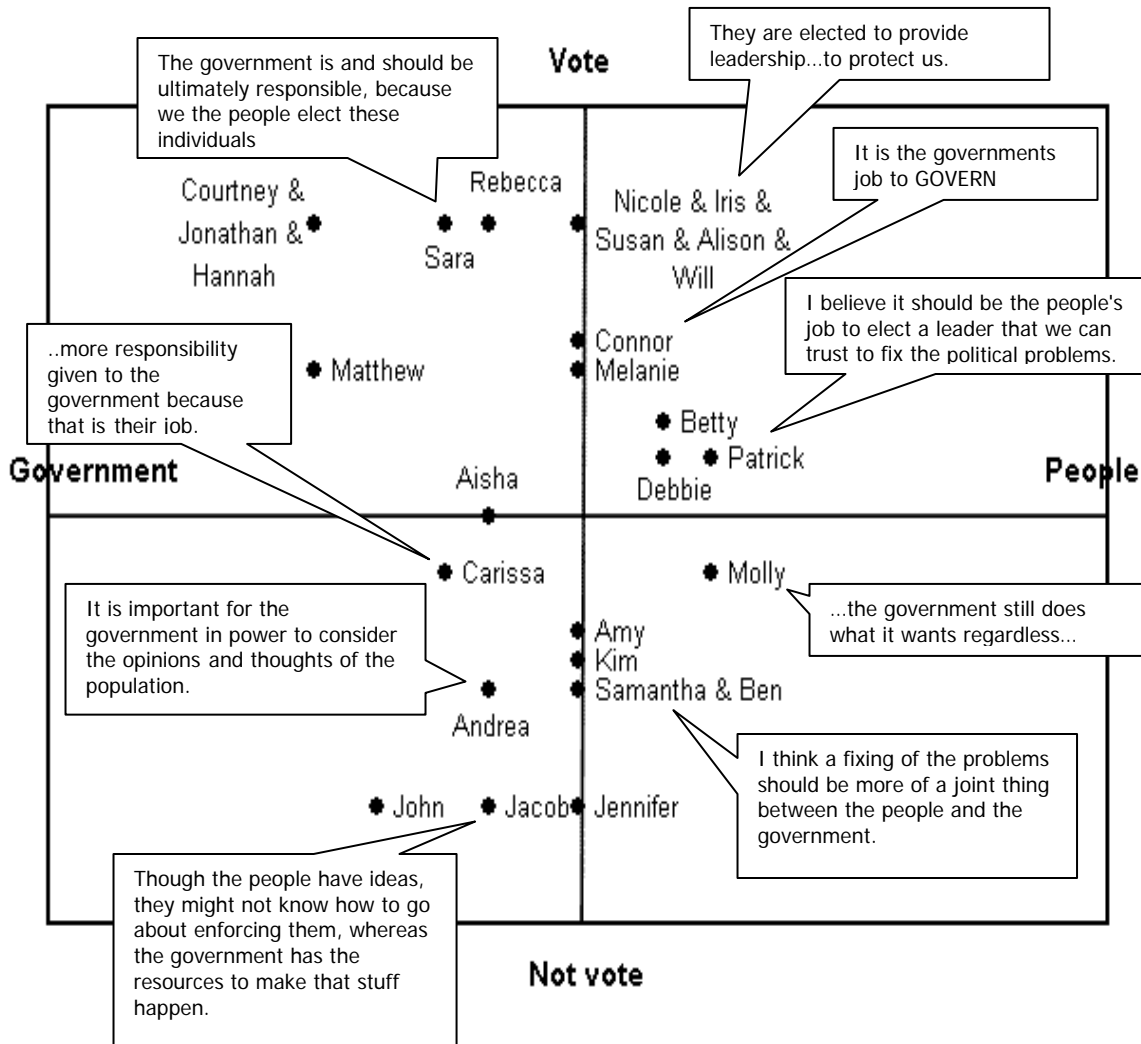
Molly, who does not quite fit in either area, places greater weight on the citizen's shoulders. Yet even here there is a call for balance.

The government is there to create rules, to make sure that the country runs smoothly, like a well oiled machine. Sadly, and as a former anarchist this is hard to say, but we need government. But as people living in this country people need to work with the government, not break laws, not become a cog in the wheels, if you will. It's a give and take situation.

Looking above the voting line this call for balance continues, but for a slightly different reason. Nicole, Will, Susan, Iris, Alison, Connor and Melanie all argue for shared responsibility, but it is not as a consequence of being convinced of the benefits of citizen participation – quite the opposite. They continue to articulate the responsibility of citizens to participate, “because if you don't vote you have no right to complain”, as Melanie remarks. However, she also goes on to explain that “voters are irresponsible in the way they vote”. Similarly, Iris notes that government is “elected to provide leadership and control funds in a responsible way to protect us. Politics cannot be brought back to the people because there are too many differences and distances...”. Ironically, those who vote and place their preference in favour of greater government responsibility also reflect a lack of confidence in the skill of the public. This view is captured by Joe in his statement; “People are uneducated and have no reason to vote because they don't know the difference between one party and the next.”

However, not all of our respondents share such a dim view of voters. Betty, Patrick and Debbie, who are clustered near the center of the grid, seem to have the greatest degree of optimism for shared citizen and government responsibility. As Debbie says, “I believe that political problems belong to all of us. While the government should be encouraging its people to act in a politically responsible way, it is up to each individual to make a difference in any way that they can.” Yet ironically, although this group believes in a more traditional conception of shared participation with government and people working together, they report not voting consistently.

Figure 6. Personal Responsibility with Comments



There is a meeting in the middle to be sure - voting and non-voting groups view roles for both the people and government. No one surveyed wanted politics wrestled from the hands of government. Those more likely to vote report being more satisfied with the capacity of government and less convinced of the merit of the citizen, categorizing citizens as irresponsible, lazy, and to some degree categorizing their lack of knowledge as negligent. This group was also more likely to credit government with providing the necessary leadership, and as being 'expert' in areas where the citizenry is incapable. Those who were less likely to vote by comparison, were also more likely be deferential or feel that government is not credible. Some trusted government and placed their faith in government decision making, while others took an opposing view supporting shared responsibility as a means to allow the people to maintain a check on government power,

yet they themselves do not vote. This particular disconnect between principle and practice is quite interesting and can be best explained when we review their responses to questions surrounding how they see the role of a citizen in electoral politics and then compare that role to their own conduct and actions as citizens.

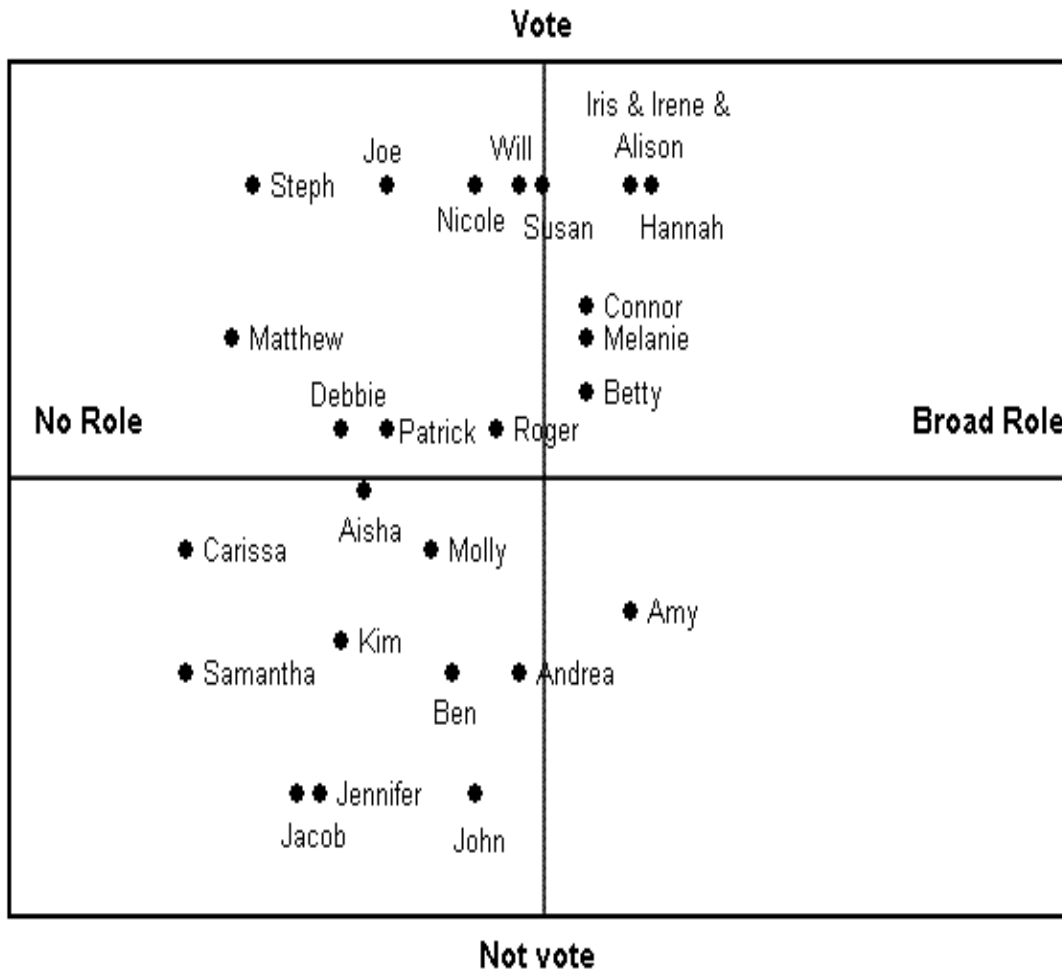
The Citizen's Role in Electoral Politics

The final matrix places participants directly in the electoral context, asking questions that probe how a citizen should behave in an election specifically, and how they compare this expectation with their own personal actions during a campaign. There is clear acknowledgement of the instrumental benefit for society and the normative benefit of citizens voting, being informed and involved during an election. However, there is also a recognition that this is not always the case, and that the citizen may also choose to *not* to be involved. Surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of responses fall toward the left side of the matrix, with very little, if anything, required of the citizen during an election (see Figure 7). Only six of the respondents feel the citizen is obliged to participate more fully. Respondents' perceptions of the role of citizens in the electoral context have a different pattern than reported conceptions of citizenship, responsibility or engagement.

Two distinct images emerge from the data on citizenship. The first is the recognition of an ideal type of citizen, with normative implications regarding what a citizen should or ought to do during an election and the campaign leading up to it. The second is a more practical conception that reflects the respondent's actual contribution during an election and/or their perceived responsibility as a citizen, if any. Within this more practical, 'real life' conception, there are a large group of respondents, predominately from the left hand side of the matrix, who believe citizens have little duty if any, to participate. This signals a normative acceptance of thin participation regardless of respondents' own activity. Over and over, respondents emphasized that citizens should vote, but that they do not *have* to, and can behave any way that they see fit. On the whole, these young people communicate that while voting is desirable, there are a number of reasons which make non-voting understandable or acceptable and that the choice to vote or not is one that the individual citizen should decide for themselves.

The strong presence of these two themes suggests that young people today conceive of citizenship and citizen duty in elections two-dimensionally – one dimension portrays the actions and expected behaviour of an ideal citizen, while the other explains the respondents' own reality or expectation of a citizen and attempts to justify his/her personal behaviour during an election. In most cases among the non-voting respondents, there is a distinct variance between the characteristics participants use to describe an ideal citizen compared with their own expectations and actions as citizens. Within these conceptions of the roles of 'ideal' and 'real' citizens there are also variations. Overall, we see that while voters can have either strong or weak conceptions of citizen duty, non-voters tend to have only weak senses of personal obligation.

Figure 7. Citizen's Role During an Election



Within the quadrants there is considerable variation regarding personal conceptions of their role as citizens and practical application of responsibility in real life. Generally however, two central conceptions of duty emerge, both of which draw on the idea of the ideal and practical citizen. The first conception recognizes that voting is good in an ideal or theoretical sense, but that a citizen can act any way they like. The second, is associated with a stronger sense of duty, articulating that citizens should be informed first and vote second. Though pride is not as evident in the responses from this second group as it was in the citizenship matrix, those who report a stronger intention to vote and define citizenship more broadly are the same respondents whose senses of citizen duty are also more expansive. This second group believes that the citizen has an obligation not only to vote, but to also cast an *informed* vote.

By contrast, many of the young people who subscribe to the first conception are mostly non-voters, but some voters, with weaker conceptions of citizen obligation. Interestingly, they often express shame when rationalizing who should participate and in justifying their own patterns of participation or lack thereof. These respondents acknowledge that voting is good, but point out that a citizen can act anyway s/he likes; meaning it is not always necessary to vote. To support this rationale they draw on reasons why they, themselves, did not vote. Some non-voting respondents are more likely to feel shameful that they do not know enough to make an informed choice, whereas other non-voters tend to blame the politicians instead. They rationalize their own personal lack of participation and responsibility by pointing to the unprofessional or combative nature of politics. While these young people recognize it is ideal to vote and be informed, they argue it is not essential to do so. Most responses do not emphasize the innate importance of fuller participation.

Respondents who are closer to the far left of the matrix and are non-voters (i.e. Jacob, Jennifer, Kim, Carissa, Aisha and Samantha) report very weak, almost non-existent, senses of traditional duty and associate little value with voting, although they recognize that ideally citizen's "should" vote. Those closer to the right, who are plotted at the bottom or top of the matrix (some voters and non-voters, such as Nicole, Joe, Molly, John, Ben, Patrick, Andrea and Debbie) also acknowledge that citizens should actively take part and be involved in politics and though some stress the importance of information, they emphasize that citizens only responsibility during a campaign is to

choose whether or not to vote. Debbie for example comments, “A citizen should take the responsibility to act as they feel they must during a campaign, whether that means actively making the choice to vote, or actively making the choice to refrain from doing so.” Molly, a 26 year-old artist from Toronto also notes, “In an election campaign citizens should vote if they feel they will be represented, or if they are informed. That said, being a free, democratic country, citizens can also *not* vote in elections, if they do not feel represented or if they are uninformed.” According to this group then, voting is a choice and not a necessary duty. Although voting is a right, youth see that they also have the right to decline to vote.

There are a number of illustrations of this point. 25 year-old Joe notes: “I think citizens have the right to act however they want in an election campaign. I mean voting would be the ultimate goal, but if someone feels they do not want to vote then I feel that is perfectly fine behaviour.” Nicole, a 20 year-old Ottawa university student echoes this sentiment in her comments, “I think it’s a citizen’s responsibility to, during an election, pay attention to it. Although it’s a personal choice whether or not they vote.” These responses explain that while ideally they realize citizens should participate, on a practical and personal level they have relatively weak senses of obligation to a process that either does not provide them with enough information to vote confidently, or, as we heard from Molly, that does not represent them. In this sense an ideal citizen ‘should’ vote, but it is acknowledged that they do not have to vote, if they have reasons which are justifiable.

Given that both voters and non-voters communicate similar conceptions of a citizen’s “optional” role during an election campaign, what motivates voters to vote and non-voters to abstain? What differences are present in their responses that may shed light on differences in voting motivation? Both voters and non-voters are turned off by politicians given the unprofessional way they behave, and the combative or negative nature of the campaign, but voters exhibit a sense of pride in their capacity to contribute whereas non-voters do not. For example Samantha remarks, “I believe that a citizen should vote if one feels that they know what they are voting for, if you are unsure then you should not vote because that one vote could decide our future in the wrong way.” While she admits she wish she knew more, she is not really interested and rationalizes her lack of involvement based on her lack of knowledge and by referencing the shameful conduct of parties and politicians: “the candidates are just bashing each other every

chance they get and they are only saying what we want to hear. It seems like whoever is elected never follows thru [sic] with their promises and we end up suffering in the end. In all honesty it reminds me of a high school popularity contest.”

Patrick, who falls right near the voting line, also comments, “I trust the rest of the society has the same interests as me, they are probably more informed than I am, and I'll leave it up to them to make an informed decision without me going there and guessing.” He rationalizes not participating by drawing on his lack of knowledge with respect to the election. Conversely, a 24 year-old college student from Toronto, John, justifies his lack of voting by drawing on the conduct of politicians:

According to TV, "We're better off with Harper", and something about how Jack Layton is good? I don't really like TV spots - they're so stupid, relying on shallow processing. The whole "Yeah, this person is a baby eater, I am pretty much awesome. Don't concern yourself over issues" thing just annoys me.

John offers the following response when asked about how a citizen should act during an election, “A citizen should pay attention to the election campaign (though, really, how many of us really do?), and should vote.” Like others with weak intention to vote, John, Patrick and Samantha recognize what citizens should or ought to do, but see real life citizen duty as minimal given either their lack of information and/or dissatisfaction and feelings of revulsion surrounding politicians' behaviour. John's comments in particular highlight a *'why should I care'* attitude with respect to obligation. Whether it is a scapegoat or not, many of these young people rationalize their lack of obligation as a consequence of the poor conduct of politicians and express little faith in their ability to make a difference. As Jennifer comments, “To be fair, though, I would feel like a better citizen if I voted and if I contributed more to the community in other ways.” Even though the non-voters recognize that they should and would feel better participating, they judge the institutions and place the impetus for change in the government's hands. Their negative attitudes toward these political objects override any sense of civic duty.

Voters with weak senses of obligation by contrast, also cite the conduct of politicians, but have greater faith in their personal capacity to have a say. They see themselves as having the potential to contribute, but do not judge those who choose not to vote. As 23 year-old Will remarks:

I see a lot of negative finger-pointing by all the parties. As well, most of the things each party says they will do just seem really dishonest. I mean, none of those things will ever actually get done; they're just ways to get more votes. I really don't like that, so I ignore those and look at the parties' history at getting things done.

Susan also comments, "Most of the campaign ads attack one another, and instead of focusing on important issues, situations are being brought up that have nothing to do with the current campaign" but still believes she is "responsible for remaining informed on all of the issues and voting." Although these voters also have a lack of respect for government they have a sense of confidence in themselves to contribute. Interestingly however, voting respondents with a weaker reported sense of obligation do not judge those who do not participate and accept it as their right. Voters who have stronger opinions toward obligation are judgmental toward the public more so than the institutions.

Finally, those respondents on the right hand side who are more likely to vote (Iris, Alison, Hannah, Irene, Connor Betty and Melanie) all describe similar pictures of electoral obligation. They believe that citizens have a duty to vote, but more importantly to make an informed choice. While they recognize both ideal and practical conceptions of citizenship, their personal commitment to being a citizen is couched in a strong sense of obligation and living up to the expectations of ideal citizenship, and the duties associated with it. These responses suggest that merely voting is insufficient and that citizens have a moral responsibility to pay attention, be informed and educate themselves. Some comments stress the importance of representation and voting as a means of 'giving back' and renewing democracy. While these young people dislike government behaviour and campaign unprofessionalism, they also express feelings of discontent or moral distain toward uninformed voters. According to these young people, it is a citizen's duty to be informed and they judge the public accordingly. In contrast to this opinion, it is interesting that some non-voters say they did not feel informed enough to contribute – perhaps the version of citizen duty which demands a vote every time is turning off other young people with a weaker understanding of politics and thinner conceptions of citizenship and encouraging them to sit on the sidelines.

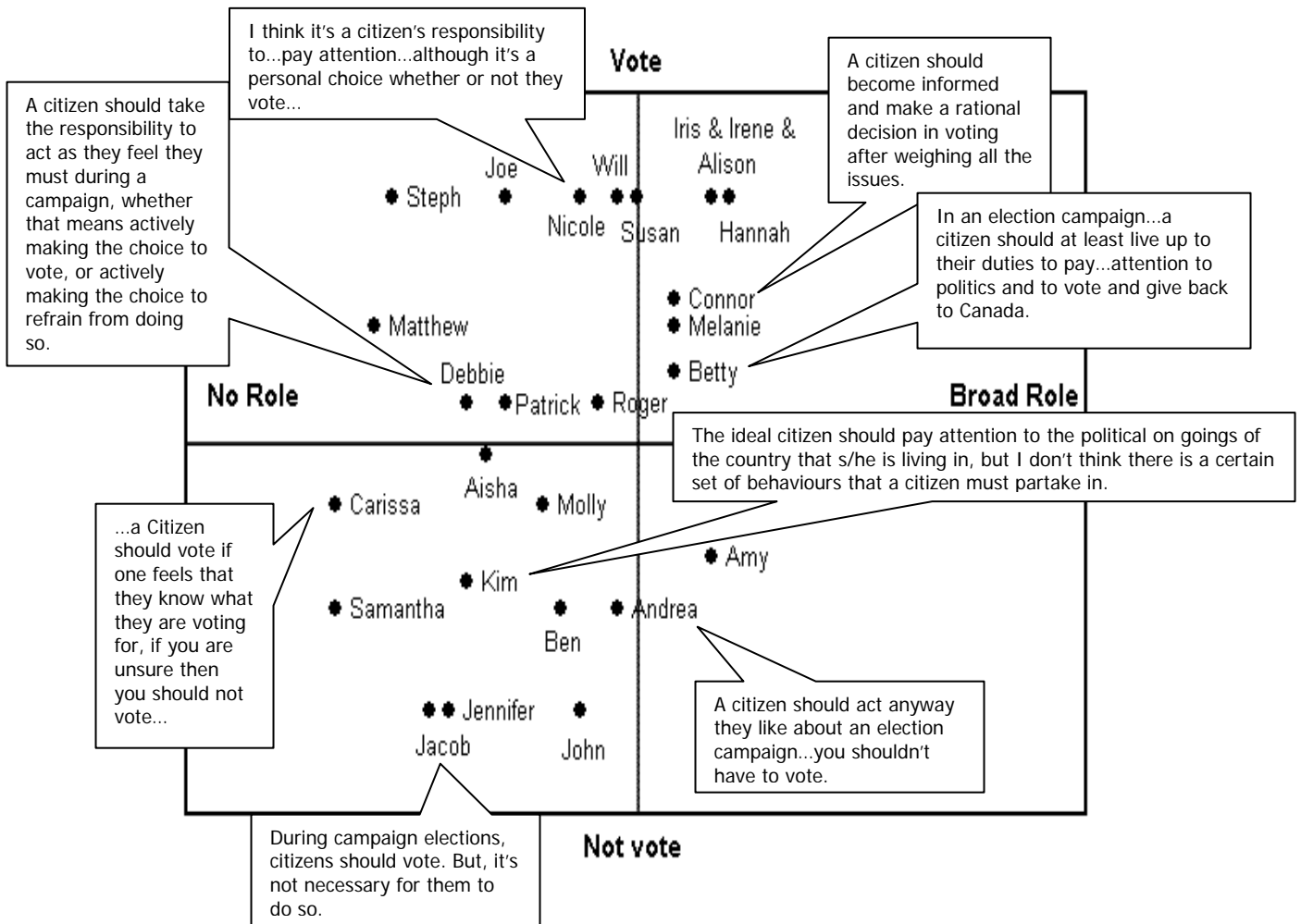
Negative views of politicians' conduct are expressed by many respondents, but for some their strong sense of personal responsibility supersedes viewing negative conduct among political leaders as a deterrent to voting. Betty expresses this view clearly: "I really think it's childish the way the candidates are acting. They all just seem really fake this time around." Irene, a 20 year-old Ottawa University student also explains:

I feel that if the candidates spent even half as much time on talking about where they stood on issues and their ideas on how they are going to make the country better in comparison to how much time is given to all their "Anti" ads then people might feel more comfortable to vote because they would feel informed.

Despite their negative views of politicians, voters see some importance in acting not only for the community but also for Canadian democracy more generally; as illustrated in Betty's comments on duty: "In an election campaign I think a citizen should at least live up to their duties to pay at least a little bit attention to politics and to vote to give back to Canada." Alison's remarks also emphasize the importance of obligation and duty despite negative perceptions of politicians: "A citizen should be informed of their options before they vote in this election; During the campaign they should be open to all possibilities and not get swept away by the usual white-washing of parties." Thus, negative views of politicians aside, these young people believe citizens have a duty to make an informed vote.

The sense of duty is aptly highlighted by Melanie and Iris's comments. Melanie says, "A citizen in a Utopia would be responsible for voting, and doing as much as they possibly can to make an EDUCATED vote. The key word being EDUCATED, not simply following what a bunch of people have told you, or voting based on a 3 minute clip on T.V." Iris's remarks also strongly stress the importance of being informed, "It is also our moral responsibility to be as informed as possible when voting and to really know the issues and platforms and economic consequences of all political parties and to look at the effects of their future decisions in many angles." To these young people then, the importance of voting is taken as a given, but being informed and making a responsible, knowledgeable choice takes precedence. They are not only critical of government, but also of the public and what they see as a lack of commitment to being a responsible citizen.

Figure 8. Citizen's Role During an Election, with Comments



The variance in all of these responses illustrate that young people's perception of citizenship is not static or consistent.⁵ Not all youth conceive of citizenship broadly or narrowly. The comments clearly depict different grades of citizenship and levels of obligation that young people recognize and identify with. Clearly, there are a variety of ways that youth conceive of civic duty or obligation with respect to an election. Shame with respect to the conduct of politicians seems to negatively affect the electoral choice of those who have weaker senses of obligation, with the exception of those who have pride in their capacity to participate. These young people also have stronger levels of pride with respect to their conceptions of citizenship, and as a consequence are more willing to overlook negativity and barriers to voting. Also interesting is that those who have very strong senses of duty place a greater emphasis on making an informed and

knowledgeable vote than they do on voting per se. Taken together, these responses highlight that young people have very different conceptions of themselves as 'real' citizens. Some believe they should try as vigilantly as possible to live up to their notion of an ideal citizen, while others are content doing nothing for the time being because they are not equipped to make informed choices, or they are unhappy with the conduct of government.

Conclusion

Voting is part of a larger picture of political engagement, and is not approached by young people in isolation. Those who are engaged, vote, while those who are less engaged (or not engaged at all) frequently do not. In turn, orientations to political engagement are embedded in conceptions of citizenship. Young people who are more engaged tend to have a multi-dimensional view of citizenship, one which not only claims legal rights or asserts that citizenship can be taken for granted by virtue of place of birth or residence, but that also involves recognition of the obligations of citizenship. One of the multiple dimensions of citizenship is a sense of national and/or civic pride, in which belief in the worth of the nation and/or the democratic project is a reason for maintaining an active engagement with it. Young people with a richer conception of citizenship are more likely to be open to adopting a personal role for themselves in political action, even if only through voting. Many of those who are more engaged also possess a sense of empowerment, and feel that their vote has some meaning, whereas nonvoters are less apt to express a sense of efficacy, or to articulate pride sentiments or any attachment to the idea of participation. While young people in general feel that everybody should *consider* voting, it is those who feel that their vote has a personal or social meaning who actually decide to do so consistently.

The limited evidence from this study suggests that the vote can be seen as a culmination of a series of calculations (which may not all be conscious) on the part of young people passing the age of eligibility. Young people who possess a multi-faceted view of citizenship are more likely to define themselves as part of the society rather than as simply existing in it, and thus express some form of pride in that society or in themselves which seems to lead to a greater commitment to voting. But the electoral aspect of citizen duty is not conceptualized as the necessity of voting as an expressive act, for its own sake, even for many who are engaged. Young people respect the

decisions of others not to vote, and, as a consequence, a large majority of this generation is unlikely to condemn non-voting behaviour as a personal choice. Nonvoting appears more rational and more acceptable to young voters than is typically found in the thinking of older cohorts.

Newly eligible potential voters are not uniformly a phalanx of uninterested, turned-off people, determined to ignore public affairs. Neither are they, however, eager to join the ranks of those who vote merely because it is the expected thing to do, no matter what the circumstances. Rather, unlike their older counterparts who feel a sense of guilt if they do not vote, this generation is different, and many young people fall in the middle range. They are prepared to consider an active view of citizenship, involving participative engagement including voting, but only if their feelings of empowerment are substantial enough to make them conclude that this action is worthwhile or meaningful. They are also willing to accept choices to not vote among their peers. Those who conclude that voting is worthwhile are not prepared to censure those who come to the opposite conclusion. The turnout decline may in part be a result of gradual replacement of a generation that viewed voting as a 'civic duty' by one that is more inclined to feel that voting is simply not worthwhile.

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Appendix 1: Weekly Questions

Week 1: Importance of Politics

PART A - Personal answers not shared with the group

Politics is too complicated for me to understand

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

Political discussion is interesting to me

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

It is important for me to be politically informed

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

On a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all satisfied and 7 very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the following about the campaign:

Amount of Information: 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ 6 ____ 7 ____ very satisfied

Clarity of information: 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ 6 ____ 7 ____ very satisfied

Quality of discussion 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ 6 ____ 7 ____ very satisfied

PART B - Group Discussion

1) Importance: How important is politics to you and your friends? Do you intend to pay attention in this election? Do you talk about politics?

2) Information seeking: Do you consider yourself politically informed? Why or why not?

Where do you receive most of your political information? How many of you have been to a party web site for provincial party? Have you ever visited a political website not affiliated with a party (i.e. Greenpeace, World Wildlife Federation)? [What prompted you to do that?]

Week 2: You and Politics

PART A

Private message - Getting to know you

We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people. Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

It is the government's responsibility to fix problems – not mine. Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

I make a difference when I vote. Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very connected and important to me and 10 not at all; How connected do you feel to your community...

My Friends ____

My Family ____

My School ____

My Neighborhood ____

My City ____

My Province ____

My Country ____

My World ____

My Other (please list if there is an 'other' for you) ____

If you can, please briefly explain how you feel about these ratings.

PART B

Group Discussion – You and politics

Do you think your vote counts? How much? Why or why not?

What are your thoughts on the campaign so far? For example, issues, advertisements, media, candidates, or anything that comes to mind.

Week 3 – Meaning of Citizenship

PART A

It doesn't take too much time and effort to be active in politics and public affairs.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

You don't have to vote to contribute to society.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

If you don't know much you should vote anyway.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

You have to be involved in politics to be a good citizen.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

Participating in a group, (i.e. a pressure group like Greenpeace, a student union or group, etc.), is a better way of being involved than being a member of a political party.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

There are better ways of participating in politics than voting.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

In the responses last week there seemed to be a contradiction for some people between NOT feeling politics has to be brought back to the people, but at the same time feeling the people were responsible to fix problems (not government); while other people felt politics should be brought back to the people but that it is the government's job to fix problems not theirs. These two things can both be true, but we need to understand how. Can you explain? Who do you see as being ultimately responsible for fixing political problems and why?

PART B

How would you describe what it means to be a Canadian citizen today? How should a citizen act in an election campaign?

What are other/alternative ways of being involved instead of voting? Is there something you do?

Was there anything about the campaign that you noticed this week that you thought was interesting? Did you watch the debates? If no, why not? If yes, what did you think?

Week 4: Your values and the Election

PART A

Generally speaking, do you feel that the people who run for elected office have values that are the same, different, or opposite from your own?

Same____ Different____ Opposite_____

My concerns or issues were addressed in the campaign

1 ____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6____ 7____ very satisfied

My Influence on the outcome

1 ____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6 ____ 7 ____ very satisfied

Our current electoral system

1 ____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6 ____ 7 ____ very satisfied

The way politicians behaved in this campaign

1 ____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6____ 7____ very satisfied

Politicians have lost touch with the people

1 ____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6____ 7____ strongly agree

There is a political party that is right for me

1 ____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6 ____ 7 ____ strongly agree

Follow up from last week; In last weeks study there seemed to be two conceptions of citizens. Some young people see citizenship very broadly including responsibility to community, identity, and diversity, whereas others described being a citizen as abiding by the laws and having rights. Where do you place yourself and do you see consequences of these different conceptions for society and/or democracy?

PART B

Values: Were your own values represented during the campaign? If so, in what way? If not – why not? (Please mention which values you have in mind.)

Campaign: Was there a particular issue that was important to you? Or was there an issue you cared about that politicians did not talk about?

Did you vote? Why or why not? How likely is it that might vote in the future?

Do you have any particular thoughts about the outcome?

What, if anything, do you think should happen in the new parliament that could make it work better?

Appendix 2: Application questionnaire

Postal Code: _____

Age: _____

Gender: male ___ female ___

Highest Level of Education _____

Discipline (engineering, English, business) _____

Level of Interest in Politics

Read Newspaper: daily ___ weekly ___ rarely ___ never ___

Watch News: daily ___ weekly ___ rarely ___ never ___

Internet research: daily ___ weekly ___ rarely ___ never ___

Political parties and participation

Do you identify with any political party?: yes ___ no ___

Do you belong to any groups?: yes ___ no ___

Have you ever signed a petition?: yes ___ no ___

Volunteered in Political Campaign?: yes ___ no ___

Did you vote in the 2004 election? : yes ___ no ___ not old enough ___

Did you vote in the 2006 election?: yes ___ no ___ not old enough ___

Did you vote in the 2007 election?: yes ___ no ___ not old enough ___

Do you intend to vote in this election yes ___ no ___

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all interested and 10 being very interested

How interested are you in politics generally?

How interested are you in this election?

Appendix 3: The Matrices

Vertical Axis: Voting

The vertical axis was consistent on all matrices. Scores were averaged from four pretest measures, and one from after the election

Did you vote in the 2004 election? : yes ____ no ____ not old enough ____
Did you vote in the 2006 election?: yes ____ no ____ not old enough ____
Did you vote in the 2007 election?: yes ____ no ____ not old enough ____
Do you intend to vote in this election yes ____ no ____
Did you vote?

Horizontal Axis: Engagement Matrix:

Two closed ended and two open ended questions were used to construct the factor of engagement. The open ended questions were scored on a one to four ranking based interest in politics, attention paid, talking about politics, information seeking and informed responses.

Political discussion is interesting to me
Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

It is important for me to be politically informed
Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

Importance: How important is politics to you and your friends? Do you intend to pay attention in this election? Do you talk about politics?

Information seeking: Do you consider yourself politically informed? Why or why not?

Where do you receive most of your political information? How many of you have been to a party web site for provincial party? Have you ever visited a political website not affiliated with a party (i.e. Greenpeace, World Wildlife Federation)? [What prompted you to do that?]

Horizontal Axis: Conceptions of Citizenship Matrix

How would you describe what it means to be a Canadian citizen today?

Some young people see citizenship very broadly including responsibility to community, identity, and diversity, whereas others described being a citizen as abiding by the laws and having rights. Where do you place yourself and do you see consequences of these different conceptions for society and/or democracy?

Horizontal Axis: Responsibility Matrix

We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people. Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

It is the government's responsibility to fix problems – not mine.
Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

In the responses last week there seemed to be a contradiction for some people between NOT feeling politics has to be brought back to the people, but at the same time feeling the people were responsible to fix problems (not government); while other people felt politics should be brought back to the people but that it is the government's job to fix problems not theirs. These two things can both be true, but we need to understand how. Can you explain? Who do you see as being ultimately responsible for fixing political problems and why?

Horizontal Axis: Citizen's Role Matrix

You don't have to vote to contribute to society

It doesn't take too much time and effort to be active in politics and public affairs

You have to be involved in politics to be a good citizen

How should a citizen act in an election campaign?

Notes

¹ All names have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of the participating subjects.

² Due to limited size of the study, and the risk of unduly skewing the conversation, any respondents who had a political science background were excluded. Each of the three focus groups was capped at 15 participants, (28 participants in total), Since we wanted to make each group as balanced by gender as possible, not all applicants were invited to participate.

³ Ideally these groups would also be controlled for level of education and gender also, however the *Facebook* sample produced an overwhelming number of female students in university or college. Therefore controlling for education was not possible. The groups were balanced by gender, however they do reflect a greater number of females than found in the general population.

⁴ See the Political Compass website, < <http://www.politicalcompass.org/> > , March 2009.

⁵ It should be noted that those closer to the top of the matrix expand more broadly on a citizen's roles and responsibilities in terms of being informed and engaging themselves further, while those closer to the bottom define what it means to be informed and educated and the activities one could partake in to achieve these more narrowly.