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Recognition and representation of citizenship in marginalised communities in England and Spain: Two cases illustrating the building of social and emotional citizenship.

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Abstract

Since the 1990s education for democratic citizenship has been at the heart of European policy, with current policy that aims to enable individuals to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life. Alongside legal status and civic participation, *feelings* are an important dimension of citizenship and citizenship education, because they influence how individuals engage with their communities, societies, and the world around them. Citizenship education policy and curricula recognise diverse society and emphasise social inclusion. Yet, many individuals from marginalised communities feel that their citizenship is either undervalued, or not welcome by mainstream society. Historically disadvantaged groups in society commonly perceive that democratic acts of resistance are regarded with suspicion or interpreted as a threat.

This paper reflects on the experience of community educators working with two marginalised communities: namely, the British-Bangladeshi

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community in east-London, and the community living in Cañada Real, Madrid, a spontaneous settlement that has a quasi-legal status. We build on these examples, and our analysis, to articulate a pedagogical approach to citizenship that complements the current policy framework by incorporating narratives of resistance. Our analysis and recommendations highlight the important role of community educators in the recognition and representation of citizenship in marginalised communities.

Keywords: democratic citizenship, marginalised communities, ethnographic research, critical pedagogies, community educator, narratives of resistance, equitable change, emotional citizenship

Introduction

This paper is set out in three main parts. It begins with an overview of citizenship education policy and guidance in Europe, which is premised on democracy, human rights, and common values that include equality, solidarity, and respect. Policy aims to foster socially inclusive active citizenship and sets out competencies deemed necessary to enable citizens to participate in social and civic life. Policy documentation not only helps guide learning and its assessment, it also provides educators and educational institutions with a reference to reflect on their own policy and practice. Notably, while European policy stresses equality, it is set within a wider discriminatory social milieu, which the community educator must be cognisant of. We use the term *community educator* to include teachers in mainstream schools and colleges, as well as pedagogues working at informal sites, such as youth clubs, community hubs, street-detached work, sports centres and cultural centres. Informal sites also include charities and advocacy organisations, acting within and on behalf of marginalised communities.

The second part of the paper reflects on two case studies with focus on specific sites of marginalisation, and in doing so present narratives of resistance significant to citizenship education. The first draws on co-author Aminul Hoque's ethnographic research which examines the lives of young Bangladeshis from east London, England. Hoque has studied 15-19 year-olds from immigrant families from Bangladesh who were born in the UK and self identified as third-generation British-Bangladeshis. Young British-Bangladeshis face multiple forms of discrimination, often viewed from the outside through an Islamophobic gaze that renders their responsible citizenship invisible. The study views resistance as a creative force and finds that many young British-born Bangladeshis have developed a syncretic British, Muslim and Bangladeshi identity. It argues, that for citizenship education to be relevant, it must provide a space that bridges important layers of community, religious and cultural identity and mainstream culture in England. Ideally, citizenship education is shaped as a space that allows young people to negotiate their sense of belonging and citizenships. The second study draws on the practice of co-author, Liliana Jacott and her colleagues at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Jacott and colleagues have developed an MA module in which students work with the marginalised community of Cañada Real in Madrid, Spain. Cañada Real is a spontaneous settlement that has a quasi-legal status. Jacott and colleagues have worked on an initiative that seeks to bring the community and university together. The purpose of the initiative is to create an educational space to recognise, and to make room for, voices from this underrepresented community.

The concluding part of the paper proposes a pedagogical approach to citizenship education that recognises and supports the representation of marginalised social groups. It reflects theories that affirm the recognition of minorities, and what has been termed as *positive marginalisation* (Mayo, 1982). In this perspective, we understand that narratives of resistance and a search for *recognition* (Taylor, 1994) can bring unique knowledge of where and how to create equitable change. In line with European education policy and guidance, our research is orientated by a sense of social justice, and aims for an inclusive society premised on democratic values, that will enable the full participation of citizens in civic and social life.

Citizenship and citizenship education

Citizenship is a contested concept that is defined in different ways, by different groups, for different purposes, and as such carries no one single simple essential or universally true meaning (Crick, 2000). A refugee seeking asylum, for example, may primarily see citizenship in narrow legal terms. A citizenship status that is perceived as something bestowed from on high, that grants certain rights within a state, as well as obligation to abide by the rules of that state. Meanwhile, a young online campaigner for global justice, may present their citizenship as transcending national boundaries. A perspective in which the campaigner sees it as their duty to take action that calls for change at both local and global level. These brief examples help illustrate two dimensions of citizenship – citizenship as *status*, and citizenship as *practice*. Later in this paper we add a third complementary dimension, that of citizenship as *feeling* (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

Citizenship as status and practice

Historically, citizenship has in Europe depended on practices such as genuine inclusion in decision making processes but also the purchase of political allegiance by conferral of a citizenship status. These contrasting conceptions of citizenship have been characterized as *thick* and *thin* citizenship. Thick citizenship privileges responsibility over rights, viewing active participation as an obligation. Thin citizenship, on the other hand, privileges individual rights, offering the opportunity to participate without the obligation to do so (Faulks, 2000).

The balance between a citizen's rights and responsibilities has been central to debate around citizenship and citizenship education. In Western democracies, a thin conception of citizenship has evolved from traditional liberal philosophy, which prioritizes individual rights as long as one's pursuits do not infringe upon the human rights of others. At a supranational level, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has committed nations to recognize all humans as being *born free and equal in dignity and rights* (United Nations, 1948) irrespective of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. At the European level, with the exception of Belarus and Russia, all states are signatories to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council of Europe,1950), which has legally enforceable provisions overseen by the European Court of Human Rights. Additionally, the EU's foundational values, outlined in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Union 2009), enshrine individual rights and freedoms.

Numerous movements including those for worker's rights, women's suffrage and racial justice have contributed to the development of citizenship over time. Marshall (1950) identified a development that encompasses (1) civil rights in the eighteenth century, (2) political rights in the nineteenth to (3) social rights in the twentieth. Rights were premised on membership of a sovereign state, but the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and notions of a more global citizenship serves to complicate traditional notions of citizenship that are solely tied to territory.

Moreover, there is often disjunction between legal rights and citizenship in practice, as highlighted by Banks (1997) in the context of *groups of color* in the US, who have experienced three major problems in becoming citizens:

> First, they were denied citizenship by laws. Second, when legal barriers to citizenship were eliminated, they were often denied educational experiences that would enable them to attain the cultural and language characteristics needed to function effectively in mainstream society. Third, they were often denied the opportunity to fully participate in mainstream society even when they attained these characteristics because of […] discrimination (Banks, 1997, as cited in Osler & Starkey, 2005, p.13).

In Europe, rights come with few civic obligations, minimally to abide by the law, and in some countries to vote or undertake national service. However, current citizenship education policies invariably proffer a thicker conception of citizenship. A conception that places greater emphasis on active participation in society, with concern to induct children and young people into society. A goal is to introduce students to the moral, legal and political arena of public life, and how they as individuals may relate to the whole. In non-formal sectors this is seen in several frameworks and initiatives (e.g. The European Youth Strategy, 2010-18; The European Civic Forum, 2020; Youthpass, 2019).

The European Education Area (2025) aims to foster active and responsible citizenship, which in Higher Education includes initiatives to strengthen democratic engagement, critical thinking, and media literacy to cultivate a generation of informed and engaged citizens. However, it is within the school sector that the form of active citizenship is articulated in more detail. Whilst each country has its own curriculum, liberal democracies in Europe align with the European Union's commitment to democracy (Council of Europe, 1993).

European educational policy guidance is framed by The Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, 2010. A key reference is the *Paris Declaration* (March 2015), in which Ministers of Education declared to promote citizenship and the common values of *freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education* (EECEA, 2016). A key objective is to ensure "that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship" (EECEA, 2016, p.3).

Building on this, EU policy (The Council of the European Union, 2018; *Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,* article 2) emphasises the development of citizenship to strengthen awareness of common values with citizenship competence described as the ability to fully participate in civic and social life as responsible citizens (Table 1).

Table 1. Citizenship Competencies outlined by the Council of the European Union

Citizenship competence	
Knowledge and understanding	Understanding of European values Knowledge of current events Awareness of the aims, values and policies of social and political movements, as well as of sustainable systems Knowledge of European integration as well as an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe and the world
Skills	Ability to engage effectively with others in common or public interest Ability to engage in critical thinking and integrated problem solving Ability to develop arguments and constructively participate in community activities Ability to access and interact with both traditional and new forms of media
Attitudes	Respect for human rights as a basis for democracy Willingness to participate in democratic decision-making at all levels and civic activities. Show support for social and cultural diversity, gender equality and social cohesion, sustainable lifestyles, and to promote a culture of peace and non-violence Readiness to respect the privacy of others, and to take responsibility for the environment. Interest in political and socioeconomic developments, humanities and intercultural communication Preparedness both to overcome prejudices and to compromise where necessary and to ensure social justice and fairness.

Note. Adapted from the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, pp.10-11.

As educators working in, and promoting a bridge between, formal and non-formal sectors, we welcome the inclusive thrust of such curricular initiatives. Documentation helps to challenge simplistic conceptions of citizenship. For example, the inculcation into formal citizenship of a state; or merely learning about the obligations and benefits of citizenship. EU policy references support a reflection on the concept of citizenship as something beyond the individual's relation to the state. This is helpful for recognising socio-political participation in wider as well as local communities. Further, we can see that these competency statements can be used as a referent to analyse citizenship. Shared references can be used to positively frame individual experiences, including those of resistance, as examples of productive, active citizenship. However, we also recognise complexity which we raise in discussing a third complementary dimension of citizenship – that of citizenship as *feeling.*

Citizenship as feeling

Citizenship is felt and experienced emotionally through everyday experience. Whilst we may share common citizenship, it is filtered through personal experiences and narratives (linguistic, religious, cultural, historical) that cannot simply be interchanged, or understood in non-embedded terms (Bhabha, 1996; Chambers, 1994). Institutional bias that gives rise to male and white privilege in present day society should be recognised. Associated inequalities in the workplace, health, and education are important. Related experiences of discrimination affect the practice of citizenship in different ways. Discrimination is a complex and multidimensional issue, as it can undermine a sense of belonging and negatively impact an attitude to participate outside ones immediate individual or community concerns. Although it can also promote civic engagement to counteract discrimination and work towards change (Oskooii, 2016; 2020).

In our view, the Paris Agreement was reached in part as a reaction to Islamist terrorist attacks in Europe. Goals included the promotion of common values and to tackle extremism and extremist ideologies. At state level, educational responses included comprehensive national action plans involving measures to help prevent radicalisation (EECEA, 2016). However, the language of emergency and paternal positioning have led to accusation that these policies can in turn foster intolerance (Heath-Kelly & Shanaah, 2025; Hoque, 2015b). Whilst policies aim to address all forms of extremism, gaze is frequently on minority communities, with individuals being seen simultaneously as both potentially *at risk* (i.e. vulnerable to radicalisation) and *risky* (*i.e.* suspect). Such suspicion and surveillance are keenly felt by minority communities, adding to their often material marginalisation, and the discrimination they face (racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance etc). This is further aggravated by anti-migrant rhetoric within mainstream political and media circles. Such *othering* leads to individuals and minority communities feeling that they are not accepted as truly belonging. This fosters expectations that minority views will neither be listened to, nor heard. In short, they may feel excluded from fully participating in civic and social life.

Moreover, even when people from minority backgrounds democratically participate as active, informed citizens, their engagement is frequently presented as a threat. In the UK, for example, Zara Mohammed, secretary-general of the Muslim Council of Britain, expresses this feeling:

> The calls for peace and justice for Palestinians echo far beyond the Muslim community. People of all faiths and none have taken to the streets in diverse, impassioned marches [...] Yet British Muslims find themselves caught up in this, thrown into *culture wars* not of their choosing [...] The conflict has been cynically manipulated to stoke hatred against Muslims, orchestrated not only by far-right elements, but also by those who deploy harmful tropes to silence peaceful advocacy for Palestine. (*The Guardian*, 2024, p.1)

Whilst the European citizenship competency framework (Council of the European Union*,* 2018) seeks to support cultural diversity this is set within a social milieu that often misunderstands or misrepresents the complexity of multiple identities and marginalises the voices of the other. It is from this position that we further explore the complexity of citizenship within two marginalised communities.

Method

We use a multiple case study methodology in which two case studies are compared. One is based on ethnographic research and the other on a practical educational case. Our study was based on a series of youth experiences enacting acts of citizenship. These were generated in two different marginalised communities, situated in very diverse geographical, social and cultural contexts. Our aim was to bridge the gap between theory and practice by using these two case studies to examine in greater depth how alternative forms of citizenship, and specifically of social and emotional citizenship, are produced on the margins. The objective of the study on which we report in this paper was to analyze how citizenship is enacted and experienced by: (*1*) *British-Bangladeshi youth living in east London in the context of deprivation, racism and Islamophobia,* (*2*) *master's students who were working with residents of Cañada Real in the context of class-based spatial exclusion, deprivation,* *racism and institutional neglect in Madrid.* We focused on the social and affective dimensions in the construction and performance of citizenship in real contexts. The first case is an ethnographic study conducted with young British-Bangladeshis living in east London, England. The second case documents experiences in an MA course on Human development and social justice at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain. We have sought to analyse similarities, differences and patterns present in both case studies.

Rather than considering citizenship as a fixed status, we are interested in addressing how citizenship is lived and experienced in real marginal contexts, what are the different meanings that citizenship has in people's lives and what role does emotions and feelings play in these processes. Our interest in presenting these two cases is to focus on real examples of everyday experiences of emotional and social citizenship that take place in cultural and community spaces, while also highlighting how these everyday experiences of citizenship sometimes constitute acts of resistance and recognition that are often absent from mainstream discourse.

Findings from the first case study illustrate how young Bangladeshis are engaged in multiple acts of resistance, recognition and activism that are examples of citizenship which is often ignored in mainstream discourse (Hoque, 2015a; 2018). This case study is based on qualitative ethnographic research conducted between 2004 and 2016 with a group of sixteen young Bangladeshis aged 15–19 from east London, in which their lives and multifaceted identities were analysed through group and in-depth individual interviews and participant observations (Hoque, 2015a; 2018).

The second case study documented experiences in an MA course on *Human Development and Social Justice* at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, from February 2022 to May 2023. The central objective was to provide a guide for research and action to work toward equity and justice in human development. During this period an innovative curriculum initiative was carried out focusing on working closely with Cañada Real, a marginalized community in Madrid. The curriculum involved working closely with community activists, local politicians and associations. Thirteen Master students participated in the course, from different professional backgrounds (teachers, social workers, pedagogues and political sciences). Data analysis was based on the analysis of group discussions, narratives, field camp notes taken, written reflections by students and participant observation.

Third-generation British-born Bangladeshis from east London: The development of a Br-Islamic identity

First case study

Outside of Bangladesh, the United Kingdom hosts the largest Bangladeshi diaspora, with over a sixth of this population living in Tower Hamlets in east-London (Gov.uk, 2022). Within a wider sociopolitical context of deprivation, disadvantage, poverty (Alexander & Lidher, 2024; Khan, 2020), alienation, racial exclusion, working-class realities, Islamophobia which surged post-9/11, the *War on Terror* (Abbas, 2005; Allen, 2010; Said, 1979), and a wider identity conundrum of neither fully belonging to either a British national space nor a Bangladeshi cultural community, Hoque's study (2015a, 2018) finds that many young British-born Bangladeshis have constructed a syncretic identity for themselves, which he terms *Br-Islamic*, balancing new culture norms with their ancestral traditions as they negotiate the complexities of belonging and the meaning of *home* (Bhabha 1996). This positive public identity is dynamic and borderless and enables them to negotiate and fuse the many segments of their multifaceted identities of being *British* by nationality or citizenship, Bangladeshi in ethno-racial terms and Muslim in religious terms. A Br-Islamic identity also provides many with a sense of belonging. For example, one of the participants in the study, Sanjida (aged 16) spoke of her syncretic identity as important to her: "along with my Bangladeshi heritage, my religion, Islam, is also important to me. These are two important parts of my identity. These are parts of who I am" (Sanjida, 16 years, interview in east London, quoted in Hoque, 2015a, p.96). Another participant, Saeed (aged 19) wanted to be represented as a Muslim first and foremost: "I am a Muslim. That is the way I view myself and the way I want others to view me as" (Saeed, 19 years, interviewed in east London, quoted in Hoque, 2015a, p. 96).

Research in two deprived UK areas indicates a strong link between social deprivation and the religious identities and spiritualities of young people (Catto, 2013). Religion and spirituality provide socially alienated youth with voice and visibility, empowering them as active citizens. Bari (2002) and Begum and Eade (2005) find that Islam appeals to young Muslims by offering structure, hope, stability, and confidence in times when external factors, over which they have no control, dominate their life chances. Therefore, it is argued that a Muslim identity is expressed more visibly because of a sociopolitical climate in which many feel victimized and excluded from mainstream society and the political process. As a cultural and spiritual way of life, membership to *Br-Islam* also affords a neutral space where race, social alienation and poverty become less significant, allowing individuals to move from the *periphery,* in which they are positioned by their ethno-religious and social class background, to the *centre* of British society, through a sense of belonging to a wider global community (Saeed et al., 1999; Malik, 2004). Through physical manifestations such as large congregations at the local mosque, the growth of a beard for many men, the wearing of the headscarf (hijab) for many women, the celebration of Eid or the sense of community displayed during the breaking of the fast during Ramadan, Br-Islam is visible in numbers and representation. This shift in position takes place through the mechanics that Greaves (2005) calls *contest* and *protest*. It helps to build a sense of empowerment, as illustrated by Saeed (aged 19) in his assertion that "I don't take shit from no one [...] Islam has given me the confidence to fight against injustice" (quoted in Hoque, 2015a, p. 104).

Akhtar (2005) notes that what attracts many marginalised young Muslims in Britain to Islam is the idea of resisting a dominant, negative hegemony. The turn to religion, in this sense, could be also viewed as psychological, as an active resistance to symbolic and actual exclusion.

A Br-Islamic identity also offers a sense of belonging to an *imagined* (Anderson, 1983) global Islamic community—the *umma*—where race, nationality, citizenship and the colour of a passport is insignificant compared to global brotherhood and sisterhood. Zeyba (aged 15) refers to this as her *one big family*: "I don't just have three sisters [...] I feel connected to the many millions of Muslims around the world. Sometimes I feel as if I have millions of brothers and sisters [...] like one big family". (quoted in Hoque, 2015a, p. 102)

Despite ethnic, class and national affiliations acting as challenges to the utopian ideal of the *umma*, scholars such as Malik (2004) note that it is the sense of *belonging* to the *umma* that is attractive to its members. This sense of belonging provides membership to a religious group that is the second-largest in the world. It also gives membership to 1,400 years of history and a mystical and romantic past. The political ideal of the Muslim *umma* is therefore part of a search for identity, meaning, dignity and power.

Br-Islam also has a political dimension, characterised by symbolic expression rather than incitement to violence. This engenders a sense of acceptance, belonging, and recognition, enhancing visibility within broader society. This visibility has been further amplified by the involvement of many British Muslims in the anti-war movement and recent protests regarding the situation in Palestine, which has sharpened the gaze and attention on the British Muslim community.

Examining the development of a British-Islamic identity through the theoretical framework of the *politics of recognition*, Taylor (1994) provides valuable insights into understanding this identity as a form of positive marginalisation. Taylor posits that recognition in contemporary multicultural Western society is achieved through contestation, interaction, and exchange with other members of society. He emphasises that genuine respect for minority cultures within multicultural societies is essential for meaningful recognition to be conferred upon minority communities. Modood (2005) argues that Muslim assertiveness in public spaces and the revival of Islam among many British Muslims is a direct consequence of prolonged misrecognition of their identity. Embracing a British Muslim identity, or presenting Islam as a fundamental aspect of one's identity, constitutes both a politicised act and an integral part of an *equality seeking movement*, which should be analysed within the context of the *politics of recognition*.

This *politics of resistance and recognition,* is central to democratic citizenship—encompassing the ability to dissent, protest, demand representation and visibility, and contest feelings of alienation and exclusion. This manifests itself in many intersectional and complex ways. Firstly, there is intra-resistance against elements of Bangladeshi culture which many younger British-born Bangladeshis do not identify with such as language, diet and clothing. Many of the female participants were also resisting ingrained patriarchal practices common in many aspects of Bangladeshi (Sylheti) cultural and familial spaces which has positioned them as homemakers, passive and docile. For example, Zeyba (aged 15) speaks of how a Br-Islamic identity allows her to feel equal to men. "Islam teaches us that we are equal to men. My mum should learn to stand up for herself more like my sisters do with their husbands (Zeyba, aged 15, quoted in Hoque, 2015a, pp.142-156).

Secondly, there is also resistance against external and wider systemic Islamophobia and everyday racialised lived experiences. For instance, despite attending a single-sex female school where a large percentage of the pupils are Bangladeshi Muslims who wear the headscarf, Ayesha (aged 15) recalls a playground conversation where she felt alienated and victimised:

> After the terrible attacks in Paris [...] one of my teachers stopped our group in the playground, looked specifically at me and said "I hope that there is widespread condemnation within the Muslim community towards those barbaric attacks". I was shocked and also felt victimised. Why was he directing those comments towards me? What had I done? (Ayesha, 15 years, interviewed in 2015, quoted in Hoque, 2018, p. 191)

Importantly, the idea of *Britishness* as an exclusive sense of racialised identity that excluded them from membership was resisted by participants in Hoque's study. Many participants engaged in the *politics of recognition* by contesting and redefining the idea of Britishness. They viewed Britain as their home by virtue of birthright. Saeed (aged 19), for example, stated, "I have a right to be British. I was born and raised here. No one can take that right away from me", (Saeed, 19 years, quoted in Hoque, 2015a, p. 134).

The everyday lived experiences and the stories highlighted in Hoque's study, illustrate many examples of citizenship that chime with the European citizenship education policy guidance cited above. These include, for example, raising funds for domestic and international charitable causes; raising awareness of international issues of social injustice; engaging in community and political activism via local political processes, forming local grassroots organisations; working with local authorities and actively campaigning for localised issues around better, equitable and affordable housing, more funds for education, greater employment opportunities; challenging health disparities, tackling drugs and crime; keeping youth clubs open for young people, amongst many others; and, volunteering in many local grassroots community initiatives and charities, including sports coaching. Also, a common feature in other areas of deprivation, many young Bangladeshis are carers for their elderly and disabled family members and neighbours.

Community educators have a role to play in re-connecting with these young people in informal community spaces. These are places of familiarity and belonging for them that include local parks, youth centres, football fields, council estates, mosques. Re-connecting in familiar places is a way of reminding them of their worth and value. It provides opportunities to tease out the many valuable contributions they are making as responsible citizens. If this was also recognised and valued in mainstream education spaces, then the confidence and self-esteem of young people would be further enhanced. To this end, the citizenship education competency framework provides a useful reference-point to assess, recognise, indeed celebrate the achievement and responsibility of these young people. However, without genuine respect, without understanding of the realities of their day-to-day experiences, the problematic gaze of suspicion, and their conundrum of non-belonging, such celebration would be merely tokenistic. For citizenship education to be relevant, it must be more than a tick-list of achievement and provide a space that bridges important layers of community, religious and cultural identity to mainstream culture, a space that allows young people to negotiate their sense of belonging and citizenships.

Second case study

Cañada Real Galiana, or Cañada Real, is considered Europe's largest shanty town and one of Europe's poorest neighbourhoods (Galloway, 2022). It has expanded in the south-east of Madrid notably since 1960s with immigration from deprived rural Spanish regions. Currently people from 17 different nationalities live there. In Sector 6, the most disadvantaged and stigmatized, the Spanish population, which includes Roma community is the largest, followed by the Moroccans, Romanian and other nationalities. The legal status of much of the settlement remains complex and disputed. As Alvarez Aguí (2017) notes, there is a strong presence of minorities who are discriminated against in Spanish society. Although some families experience extreme deprivation and rely on social aid, there are all kind of professions. Many residents are engaged in working-class employment, with a smaller number holding professional occupations and many others in unskilled and precarious jobs. In response to those who refer to Cañada as an illegal settlement, the most active residents of Cañada Real describe themselves as a *neighbourhood under construction*, as an act of resistance against stigma and neglect (Rosa, 2022).

Cañada Real came to the world's attention in October 2020, when a power outage left around 1,000 houses in Sectors 5 and 6 without electricity. Storm Filomena worsened the situation by covering Madrid in snow, causing freezing and damaging water pipes estimated to affect 1800 children. The community had been left without access to electricity for five years. Despite making political representation through formal channels, protest and a publicity campaign using Alinsky-type tactics (Alinsky, 1989), residents felt ignored by the authorities. While residents acknowledged drug activity in Sector 6, they viewed it as providing the authorities with a convenient excuse to demonise and ignore them. This added to stigmatisation by the media, which had shifted from the portrayal of Cañada Real's residents as victims to criminals, with continual reference to illegality, dirt, danger, chaos, that elide people and place (Alvarez Aguí, 2017; Jacott et al., 2024; Monreal Requena, 2014; Rosa, 2022).

In short, many factors contribute to Cañada Real's marginalization, with people prevented from full or active participation in social, economic and political life. Residents suffer discrimination on account of their race, ethnicity, class and culture; their material deprivation; their access to services and denial of rights; their lack of political voice; and, their stigmatisation.

Aware of these problems, a MA course at UAM developed a module with specific focus on Cañada Real, the place and its people. Course development involved working closely with community activists and local politicians. Innovative practices have evolved over the years that bring the academic and Cañada Real communities together.

The course focused on social justice, based on *The Three R's of Social Justice*' proposed by Nancy Fraser—(1) redistribution of resources (Rawls, 1971), (2) recognition of *the Other* (Fraser, 1995), and (3) representation for active participation in society (Young, 2000). Its aim is to provide students with a framework to analyse how these principles affect education and human development. This involves addressing educational outcomes, barriers to access, and representation in curriculum and assessment, as well as exploring the extent to which individuals' or groups' are able to participate in social, economic, and political life.

Students represented various professional backgrounds—social workers, teachers, and social pedagogues. As such, many had experiences of working in the community within governmental, non-governmental, or informal settings. The module encouraged reflection on professional roles and work, or potential work in the field. Two concepts that were in the course emphasised as central to a professional orientation towards social justice were respect and responsibility.

While respect is key to the 3Rs model, further emphasis on the role of the professional, draws on Nussbaum's (2000) work on respect and dignity, in which the importance of care is seen as a primary good, and all human beings are viewed as moral equals despite their differing circumstances. The course also notes Freirean praxis, in which respect is central to relationships between the community educator and the community they serve. This necessitates that the community educator listens to, and works with the community, rather than imposing a particular plan, ideology, or methodology, and where their authority comes not from their title or position but from their knowledge, understanding and action. This chimes with the theory of positive marginality (Mayo, 1982), which explains how the experience of being marginalized can equip individuals with a wider lens and unique knowledge of where and how to create equitable change in society. In this view, marginalisation can facilitate deep psychological investment in transforming social obstacles into opportunities for change. The experience of having both insider and outsider status as a member of a marginalized group living or working in a dominant culture may create a vantage point from which individuals can better understand and serve the needs of their community (Hall & Fine, 2005; Hammack, 2017; Unger, 2000). In encountering these perspectives students are encouraged to reflect on the role of the community educator in respecting community knowledge and understanding, and, in supporting individual and community capacity to take action.

In developing a new module, the team were keen to ensure that voices from Cañada Real were heard and embedded in the teaching and learning strategy from a critical participatory approach and within a community-based action programme (Fine et al., 2021). Central to this was creating dialogical, critical and sensitive pedagogical spaces in which students and teachers could dialogue and question themselves about the different conditions (political, social, cultural, educational, etc.) of injustice and oppression that were experienced in the community.

One of the first steps taken was to organise a round table conference involving academic staff, student representatives, a local politician and, crucially, representatives from Cañada Real. The main purpose of this was to provide a platform to those directly experiencing living and working in Cañada Real, to listen to and respect what they had to say, and in doing so to acknowledge their unique funds of knowledge and understanding. In this and in subsequent sessions students and staff heard narratives of transformational resistance that tell of the initiatives and actions taken by many women from Cañada Real to transform and fight against the conditions causing harm, of living for more than four years without electricity (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). One participant, Houda Akrikez, President of the *Asociación Cultural Tabadol* an organisation formed by Maghrebi women from sector 6, articulated the ways in which she thought the authorities were failing to listen to their concerns, and the forms of resistance they were taking, and also her role as a community leader in a patriarchal community. It is beyond the scope of this paper to outline all teaching and learning activities (for detail see Jacott et al., 2024), but the curriculum includes a lecture led by Akrikez, giving context and insight into the situation in Cañada Real from her organisation's perspective. A visit to Cañada Real was included to give students opportunity to meet with different organisations working in the area. Students undertook a final assessment that involved curating an exhibition that presented views from and for Cañada Real to the wider university community.

Building social and emotional citizenship on the margins: a comparison of the two case studies

This section compares the two case studies and highlights some of the similarities and differences between them. We present our analysis of how emotional citizenship is experienced and embodied on the margins in two such different geographical and cultural contexts producing alternative forms of citizenship. This implies recognising citizenship as a situated and relational experience that takes place in specific contexts. We underscore the importance of the emotional component, the affective dimension. In the following we present alternative forms of citizenship and different patterns of emotional expressions that emerged in the two case studies, as well as briefly outlining some of the educational challenges necessary to address critical affective dimension in citizenship education.

Building alternative forms of citizenship

As has been discussed in this paper, citizenship requires a sense of belonging, recognition, and representation that enables individuals to act as critical and responsible citizens by fully participating in civic and social life. And at the same time citizenship is lived as a feeling, in which emotions constitute a very important part. The two communities described here produced alternative forms of citizenship, due to the situational and relational nature of the social and emotional experiences that take place at the two locations that we report on.

In the *Br-Islamic* youth community, in east London, England, a strong religious cultural identity has been developed providing a strong sense of community and belonging. It offers structure, hope, stability and confidence to young Muslims, and is experienced as a source of pride by many of them. This religious identity is expressed more visibly in reaction to a socio-political climate that is lacking recognition of this social group, and where many from this group experience deprivation, racism, Islamophobia, and exclusion in which many feel victimised, invisible, voiceless, and excluded from mainstream society and political processes. At the same time, the study also shows how young Bangladeshis engage in multiple acts of resistance, recognition and activism, which have often been ignored in mainstream discourse, denying them recognition as authentic acts of citizenship.

In the critical participatory education project carried out with the community of Cañada Real, masters students of Universidad Autónoma de Madrid developed a strong sense of agency through close collaboration with the Cañada community, including community activts, local politicians, and cultural associations. In this case, they built a citizenship oriented towards social justice through a model of civic participation that promotes critical analysis of social and political power structures to address inequalities and injustices. This approach emphasizes respect, recognition, care, dignity and solidarity. Students developed and embodied experiences of solidarity with others, through different actions, projects and public events designed to highlight the situation of injustice and violation of rights experienced by the Cañada community for several years, to present views from and for Cañada Real to a wider university community and the public.

Exploring some patterns of emotional expression

The findings from both case studies serve as useful examples to illustrate how young people in both communities build and practice social and emotional citizenship in different ways. This highlights how the concrete and real spaces and contexts in which we live and act shape this relationship.

The first example is from the first case study conducted in east London when Ayesha felt *victimized* at school when one of her teachers publicly called her out in the playground after the terrorist attack in Paris in 2015. It can be inferred how emotions such as surprise, discomfort and anger emerged when she is publicly *othered* by her teacher. But it also reveals a feeling of discomfort by the host population, embodied in this case by the teacher, and which lies behind the moral and emotional imperative proposed by multiculturalism regarding *coping with the difference* (Zembylas, 2014), according to which the host population has to learn and accept to live with the difference. As a result, Ayesha feels *victimized* and discriminated against, based on the distinction created by her teacher between us and them. This example demonstrates how emotions circulate in schools to construct affective citizenship and how the process of *othering* is a form of social construction premised on power dynamics and representation. For this reason, if one of the objectives of citizenship education is to prepare young people to engage in dialogue with others from diverse backgrounds who may have differing ideologies and cultural beliefs, it is important to be able to critically analyse how difference is constructed through emotional discourses (Keegan, 2021).

Exploring the links between political emotions and civic engagement

There is also a complex relationship between political emotions and civic engagement among masters students in Madrid and young Bangladeshis in east London. It is expressed by their participation in marches, protests and civic acts regarding different social justice causes, such as anti-war movements and recent protests regarding the situation in Palestine or engaging with local marginalised communities. These collective acts of civic engagement led young people to fight against specific situations that are perceived by them as injustices through a shared political emotion of solidarity (Tava, 2023). Solidarity is considered here as a political emotion that enables individuals to share plans for action for social struggle and change against perceived injustices.

Masters students working with Cañada Real engaged in united acts of participation in civic life through collective action and mutual recognition. They curated exhibitions at the university campus presenting views from and for Cañada Real to the wider community. This empowered course participants to develop agency as citizens in their everyday lives. At the same time, it led course participants to build relationships of solidarity with others, fostering social responses to injustices. Similarly, in east London, young Bangladeshis also developed their emotional agency and felt empowered when they became involved in political activism via local political processes, forming local grassroots organisations in sports or drugs education or working with local authorities around better, equitable and affordable housing.

Citizenship, as a feeling and as a form of emotion, was also in a continuous state of flux. For example, at the beginning of the Cañada course students expressed a sense of discomfort, sadness, indignation, frustration, anger, or shame, in different ways, as a reaction to the unjust situation of human rights violations experienced by the inhabitants of Cañada Real, especially children and young people, who had been living without electricity in their homes for several years. The students were also aware of the huge impact that this prolonged situation was having on the lives of disadvantaged communities in Cañada Real, without any effective response from the state or local authorities. However, after reflexive group discussions on these issues during the course, students were more aware about the role that emotions have in civic culture and in our social and political life and in the construction of social groups that are perceived as *others*. For example, students became more aware of how their indignation was triggered by the recognition of the situation of injustice faced by people from Cañada. Such a reflection requires us to go beyond ourselves and think about other people in a global and supportive way. This means broadening our scope to engage in reflecting on what truly is fair and unfair, which encourages a sense of political responsibility. As such, the anger and indignation felt by many of the students translated into a series of concrete actions – such as an effective social media campaign and also a public exhibition to raise awareness of the social injustice and human rights violations in Cañada Real.

Correspondingly, the frustration and anger felt by some of the female participants in Hoque's (2018) study in their everyday lived experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination in schooling spaces and wider society after the terror attacks in Paris in 2015, changed into defiance, activism and education as both Ayesha and Serena (both aged 15) were both involved in a community outreach project campaigning against Islamophobia and dispelling myths about the *hijab*. In this instance, it is argued that they made a journey from the *periphery* to the *centre*, from *victim* to *citizen*.

Both case studies presented above illustrate the dynamic nature of citizenship as both an act of political and civic engagement, but also as an emotion, a feeling and a lived experience. They also demonstrate how citizenship is experienced and embodied on the margins, and how acts of citizenship can be individual as well as collective and mutual, empowering young people, giving them agency and voice, and in the process, making them visible. It is further argued that educational institutions, as public spaces, also play a very important role in helping young people navigate affective boundaries as citizens by attending to emotions and specifically to political emotions in the classroom (Abowitz & Mamlok, 2019; Keegan, 2021). Although much citizenship education has not yet come to consider the role of emotions and feelings as an important dimension of citizenship, recent studies are exploring the affective dimension in citizenship (e.g. Abowitz & Mamlok, 2019; Brummer et al, 2025; Keegan, 2021, 2024). Current approaches to civic education are focused primarily on promoting critical thinking and deliberative models of reasoning (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Knowles & Clark, 2018), relegating emotional dimensions to the private sphere of life. Schools must consider preparing young people to navigate critical affective civic literacy.

Problematically, these *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992), emotional experiences, acts of resistance and solidarity with others, demonstrated by young people in different contexts to address inequalities and injustices, have not traditionally been considered an important part of the curriculum that should be brought up and discussed openly in schools. In this case, community educators can help build bridges between communities and formal educational settings, such as schools, by recognizing, gathering and connecting meaningful civic experiences, narratives, and citizenship journeys (Mycock & Prosser, 2025) of young people experiencing their citizenship in different contexts and spaces, often outside of school. This will enable educators to learn how young people enact citizenship in everyday spaces in real time (Abowitz & Mamlok, 2019).

Conclusion: Towards a pedagogical approach to citizenship education that recognises and represents voices from the margin

The brief descriptions above help to illustrate complex and diverse aspects of marginalisations. No two contexts are the same, each reflects a particular social, cultural political and psychological landscape, within which individuals navigate their identities and citizenship. It is a landscape in which practice is situated and embodied in personal experiences and narratives that cannot be interchanged. There can be no *one-size-fits-all* response to related challenges experienced in different contexts. Nevertheless, we propose over-arching principles can be articulated from these studies and documented practices. Principles that are helpful for informing future education practice when working with marginalised communities.

We stress a commitment to social justice, and universal values with focus on a human rights approach, and within this endorse the aims of European citizenship education policy that promotes "democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship" (EECEA, 2016. p.3). This is premised on an understanding that education has a role to play in making a difference at multiple levels: individual, institutional, and societal.

Yet progress towards social justice is often painfully slow. We feel it is like fighting a rearguard battle now when values of democracy, respect for the rule of law, and individual rights, are being challenged by populist discourse and action. The authors of this paper, have all experienced sites of contestation, within the community, in our institutions, and in national policy. For example, while Hoque has been honoured nationally in the UK with the prestigious Membership of the British Empire (MBE) award for his work with British Bangladeshi disengaged youth in 2008, his work on decolonising the curriculum has seen him at the centre of the *culture wars* with backlash at ministerial level (Merrick, 2021). Commitment to social justice when it is not superficial, necessitates courage of conviction. Jacott and her team could have developed their course differently. They did not have to work with the community from Cañada Real but chose to do so because they considered it important to address a situation of injustice that was on their doorstep. The choice presented difficulties in balancing the needs of the community, students, and course regulation. Guiding this was an understanding of the importance and power of a social justice-oriented community-based learning experience as a framework to develop critical consciousness and civic engagement. Within the parameters of the choices we can make, what the community educator researches and publishes, what is presented in curricula, and the way it is taught, manifest a commitment to social justice. In the context of this paper, we emphasise that practice should aim to recognise the agency of the marginalised and create spaces in which this may be represented.

At the heart of recognition and representation is respect for the dignity and knowledge of all. Positive marginalisation (Mayo, 1982) is premised on an understanding that being marginalised can equip individuals with a wider lens and unique knowledge of where and how to create equitable change in society. The starting point to access this knowledge is to hear the stories of the marginalised. This can only take place in a safe place, and for the mainstream educator, collaboration with community activists and organisations is often an imperative to begin to establish mutual trust.

The stories of the marginalised are invariably narratives of resistance. These are stories which tell of sites of belonging and alienation. How citizenship is enacted, not only through protest but also through displaying an attitude that *refuses to give in to resignation* (Hoy, 2004, as cited in Papadopoulos et al, 2008, p.72). For example, by getting on with life without electricity; and in everyday acts of positive identity affirmation, such as wearing a headscarf and refusing to accept a second class or misrepresented status. Other examples include more direct forms of resistance: demonstrations; political lobbying; and other examples of political activism. In listening to these narratives, the educator places themselves in a position where they too are learning, and may need to re-evaluate their views and strategies. It is a position that recognises that learners come with unique *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) and implies a culturally sensitive pedagogic approach (Ladson-Billings, 1995), that taps into various lived experiences as a means of making curricula and educational spaces more inclusive and relevant to developing diverse identities and citizenships.

In summary, we advocate a pedagogy that seeks social justice, that recognises individual rights; common values, including solidarity, inclusion, and respect; and, the need to foster democratic, informed, and responsible citizenship both within formal and non-formal settings. We advocate for a pedagogical approach that recognises the importance of the affective dimension of citizenship and emotional engagement along with critical analysis and commitment to social justice. It involves creating dialogical, critical and sensitive spaces in which the marginalised are visible, their voices heard and their participation recognised. Spaces, in which all young people can negotiate their identities and citizenships, with the aim to enable their full participation in civic and social life.

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