



REVIEW ESSAY

Two Conceptions of Cultural Citizenship: A Review of Recent Literature on Culture and Citizenship

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Citizenship in Diverse Societies

Kymlicka, Will & Norman, Wayne, (eds)

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Culture and Citizenship

Stevenson, Nick (ed)

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Introduction: Culture and Citizenship

One of the striking developments in recent political discourse has been the increasing confluence of culture and citizenship. Until recently the concerns of most practices of citizenship have been quite different from cultural issues and conflicts over identity. As is well known, citizenship has been historically formed around civic, political and social rights. Even if T. H. Marshall's account of the formation of modern citizenship reflected a very one-sided view of what was at best the British experience, it is certainly true that his omission of the sphere of culture was characteristic of most conceptions of citizenship (Marshall, [1950] 1994).

Citizenship had been held to be based on formal rights and had relatively little to do with substantive issues of cultural belonging. Although Marshall acknowledged a relation between rights on the one side and on the other duties and loyalties, the substantive dimension of citizenship was never central to his conception of citizenship. In the civic republican tradition, which emphasized more strongly participation and an active as opposed to a passive view of the citizen, the cultural dimension of citizenship did not receive much more attention (Pettit, 1997; Putnam, 1999; Etzioni, 1995).

Until about the late 1980s multiculturalism and citizenship performed quite different functions. Citizenship on the whole pertained to the national citizenship of an established polity and was generally defined by birth, or in some cases by descent, while multicultural policies served to manage in-coming migrant groups. Today this distinction has virtually collapsed. Migrant groups have become more and more a part of the mainstream population and cannot be so easily contained by multicultural policies and, on the other side, the 'native' population itself has become more and more culturally plural, due in part to the impact of some four decades of ethnic mixing, but also due to the general pluralization brought about by postindustrial and postmodern culture. In Britain, for example, there is a greater awareness of the constituent nations of the Union as well as of regionalisation. The focus on production and social class, which informed Marshall's account of citizenship, has given way to greater interest in subcultures based around leisure pursuits and consumption. In addition, new and more



radical ideas of democracy have arisen as a result of the rise of new social movements. In recent years a wide spectrum of, more sociologically orientated, publications on culture and citizenship have moved the focus beyond multiculturalism (Isin and Wood, 2000; Delanty, 2000; Isin and Turner, 2002; Lurry, 1993; see also the journal *Citizenship Studies*).

There are two broad responses to the general pluralization that has affected contemporary society. The first response expresses anxiety about increasing cultural pluralisation. The American 'culture wars' debate is the exemplar of this response. Widespread anxiety about militant nationalisms and religious extremism, especially in aftermath of the 11th September terror attack have added to fears of a new age of culture wars (the 'clash of civilisations') fought out on a global level. In this view pluralization is closely associated with conflict. In the second response cultural pluralism is viewed as something which enriches rather than threatens the fabric of society. This second approach, one of advocating cultural citizenship, is the one adopted by the two books under review here.

Two Conceptions of Cultural Citizenship

On closer inspection it becomes evident that there is less consensus than might be apparent from a first glance of the literature on cultural citizenship. Roughly speaking this body of writing can be divided into two groups of thinking and which are respectively represented by the two books under review in this essay. On the one side we have an approach that is influenced by cultural sociology, (Nick Stevenson's volume), and on the other we have an approach heavily influenced by political theory (the Kymlicka and Norman volume). The result is in fact a certain intellectual uncertainty as to exactly how culture - which is mostly understood in terms of diversity - is to be brought into the sphere of citizenship.

The first approach, which I think is reflected in most of the contributions to Stevenson's *Culture and Citizenship*, is one that stresses the centrality of culture for an adequate understanding of citizenship while the second, very well represented in the contributions to *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, seeks to bridge citizenship with diversity. In this the concerns of the first and more sociological approach go beyond the aims of the second approach, which is more characteristic of a highly normative political theory. Perhaps this is too simple a distinction to make, but in terms of the objectives of the volumes and the theoretical traditions and substantive concerns of the various chapters there would appear to be two quite different understandings of culture and, to a lesser extent, of citizenship at stake.

For the sociological approach, the real challenge, it would appear, is to bring about inclusion in the sphere of identity and belonging; whereas the culture debate in political theory is about extending a more or less already established framework to include excluded or marginalized groups. It is in essence a question as to whether cultural citizenship addresses the new 'cultural' needs of the individual or the inclusion of excluded groups. While departing in many respects from the assumptions of multiculturalism, the second approach has mostly remained within the confines of the liberal communitarian debate and is closer to the concerns of multiculturalism, with its concerns around issues of the limits of tolerance, the accommodation of difference, problems of group representation etc.

In my view the new sociological approach to culture and citizenship offers a potentially more far-reaching model for democratic citizenship and which might be useful in addressing, for instance, the urgent need for anti-racism and citizenship policies that might stem the rising tide of xenophobia. However, this approach is very poorly developed. In order to distinguish the two approaches, I term the sociological idea of cultural citizenship 'cosmopolitan citizenship'. This is because it concerns issues that extend beyond the accommodation of minorities and problems of cultural diversity within national societies. In general, as already argued, the concerns of cultural citizenship as expressed in political theory are confined to the established state, which is generally taken to be Canada or the United States, as is evident from the Kymlicka and Norman volume. The version of cultural citizenship I call 'cosmopolitan citizenship' refers to a different dimension of culture than that of political theory, namely the wider cognitive dimension of culture.

Cultural Citizenship and Diversity

The fifteen very substantial chapters in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies* give an immensely comprehensive analysis of some of the key problems in bringing culture into the sphere of citizenship. The objective of the book is clearly stated by the editors in the introduction and is very well elaborated in all the contributions. Kymlicka and Norman seek to connect the growing interest within political philosophy of citizenship with multicultural politics. Until about the early 1990s it is indeed correct that these two areas have developed relatively separately. For instance, much of the American communitarian debate on citizenship has not addressed ethnopolitics. In the tradition influenced by republicanism – as in the work of Etzioni and Putnam for example - the political community was the dominant white population. Kymlicka and Norman link into a different debate, and one which might be said to be more Canadian in its concern with dealing with cultural diversity within a democratic order. The volume is thus heavily anchored in what might be called the political theory of liberal communitarianism, to which Will Kymlicka has already contributed a widely discussed theory of liberal multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995).

Communitarian multiculturalism is best represented by Canada, whose constitutional tradition is not based on classical republican democracy. The accommodation of cultural diversity and democracy are not antithetical as they are in the republican constitutional traditions, as in France and the United States. Thus it is possible for different groups to get official recognition by the state, which encourages them to retain their ethnic identity and requires only minimal commitment to a common Canadian identity. This is the basic premise of all the chapters which recognise the validity of minority rights in the sense of limited accommodations of the needs of different communities. In this the traditional equation of citizenship with the individual is abandoned as is the belief that citizenship must be 'difference blind'.

The contributors to the volume all accept that the liberal pursuit of equality must be adjusted to accommodate cultural difference, which very often will include the right to be different. The volume adopts a communitarian version of liberalism in that the basic assumptions of liberalism are accepted but modified by the recognition of ethnopolitical community. The basic belief in the autonomy of the individual is fully accepted but not to a point that the burden of proof must lie with the defenders of multiculturalism. Minority rights are in general compatible with a basic liberal view of the world if that is to take seriously a plural democratic order and the fact that occasionally there may be problems in



reconciling equality and difference is not grounds for avoiding the need to achieve a balance between both. In fact the general thesis is that some recognition of difference is necessary to achieve equality and thus it is more than a matter of striking a balance.

In so far as democracy rests on citizenship – along with representation and constitutionalism – and to the extent that citizenship entails participation in political community, then minority rights are essential. With some 5000 to 8000 ethnocultural groups in the world and only 200 states to accommodate them, clearly democracy must find a way of dealing with the reality of ethnoculturalism, as very few states are, or can be, mono-cultural. For the editors and contributors to this excellent volume, the problem is not the validity of special minority rights but establishing their limits. If one group's rights are accepted, we will be pushed more and more in to conceding other rights to a point that may make the political unit nonviable. There are also problems of reconciling the rights of different groups, and even in defining what constitutes a group in the first instance, and in problems in reconciling the conflict of the autonomy of the individual with the rights of the ethnocultural group.

The general message of the volume is that liberal-individualist fears of minority rights are unwarranted while some of the concerns raised need to be taken seriously.

Chapters by Shachar, Coulombe and Mansfield show that there is a trade-off between the gains and losses in granting minority rights. The dangers of minority rights are easy to document, as these contributors note. For instance, as Shachar argues, serious infringement of individual autonomy can result when religious communities are allowed control aspects of family law. Mansfield notes that minority rights while benefiting some groups in specific districts where they are sufficiently numerous may lead to a loss of influence in other districts. Coulombe argues that Quebec's language laws undermines free speech and threatens equal citizenship. Moreover, minority rights fails to address the problem of other minorities and disadvantaged groups and various other sub groups (the disabled, women) within an ethnic minority.

Notwithstanding these problems, all authors and the editors in their excellent Introduction contend that the denial of equality will be more detrimental to citizenship in the long run than these problems that arise from minority rights. At least four chapters (those by Coulombe, Réaume, Bauböck and Modood) show that concerns about a loss in collective democratic identities are unjustified and that democracy is not threatened by the accommodation of differences. Callan and Spinner-Halev also argue against exaggerating cultural differences such as the detrimental impact of religious schools on civic virtues. The point in these chapters is that this is less of a problem as such universalistic identities do not necessarily exist in the first instance. Moreover, they make clear that the costs will be greater by not granting minority rights as there is likely to be increased resentment and hostility stemming from exclusion. Interesting chapters by Levy and Borrows look at the question of the rights of indigenous peoples and show that recognition of indigenous rights and participation in the wider society are not exclusive.

Perhaps the point is that there are costs and benefits in granting minority rights and it is important not to overstate the dangers. The volume provides some very convincing arguments that minority rights do not involve a zero-sum game

between citizenship and minority rights and that a balance can be achieved between conflicting conceptions of the common good. The view of culture in this volume is one that is far from the culture wars of the 1980s and early 1990s. Culture is not divisive and can be a basis of citizenship. It is unlikely to be a basis of common citizenship in the classic liberal sense, but it is essential to the working of a democratic order.

If the volume has any limits it is that the concerns of many chapters reflect issues that are more pertinent to North American debates, where issues of race and indigenous law are more central than questions of gender and ethnicity. Europeans will find less in the volume to illumine the challenges facing European integration and the problems of nationalism and xenophobia. A small shortcoming of the book is that there is relatively little discussion on dual or multicitizenship, which is one of the main issues in European debates. There is also a need for a greater recognition of the flexible nature of citizenship in terms of multiple loyalties that may transcend any particular state, as a recent study argues (Ong, 1999). Yet there is surely much to be learned from the examples discussed in this volume.

Cultural Citizenship and Cosmopolitanism

The contributions to *Culture and Citizenship* provide a striking contrast to the more normative political theory in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*. This volume is concerned with a quite different question, namely how to bring together culture and citizenship. By culture is not meant cultural diversity or ethnopolitics as in the Kyimka and Norman volume, but cultural resources, identities and the cultural presuppositions of the polity. For Kyimka and Norman cultural identities are fairly fixed entities that need to be accommodated in the polity in order to enhance citizenship. The contributors to Stevenson's volume would appear to understand that culture and identity are much more fluid and less denoting particular forms of agency that have to be somehow managed. In this sense the volume moves beyond the normative theory of multiculturalism.

Thus citizenship as cultural citizenship is about the status of culture as discursively constructed. In this view what is at stake is cultural rights rather than minority rights. In the chapters by Bryan Turner and Maurice Roche, cultural rights – which can be compared to civil, political and social rights – are important in expanding the legal framework of governance into the cultural sphere, but the main issues are less normative than symbolic and cognitive, since it is about the construction of cultural discourses.

The advantage of cultural citizenship in this sense of, what I would prefer to call, 'cosmopolitan citizenship' is that it shifts the focus of citizenship onto common experiences, learning processes and discourses of empowerment. The power to name, create meaning, construct personal biographies and narratives by gaining control over the flow of information, goods and cultural processes is an important dimension of citizenship as an active process. In this regard what needs to be stressed is the *learning* dimension of citizenship as a *constructivist* process. The volume argues how citizens learn citizenship, which mostly takes place in the informal context of everyday life and is also heavily influenced by critical and formative events in people's lives. Citizenship is not entirely about rights, but is a matter of participation in the political community and begins early in life. It concerns the learning of a capacity for action and for responsibility but, essentially, it is about the learning of the self and of the relationship of self and other. It is a learning process in that it is articulated in perceptions of the self as



an active agency and a social actor shaped by relations with others. In this view, citizenship concerns identity and action; it entails both personal and cognitive dimensions that extend beyond the personal to the wider cultural level of society.

Several chapters nicely reflect this confluence of the personal and the political dimension of citizenship as a cultural discourse. Adopting a psychoanalytical perspective, Stephen Frosh argues that a cultural understanding of citizenship entails looking at the emotional aspects of collective identity. The subjective dimension of citizenship is also discussed in the chapters by Elliott and Crossley for whom citizenship involves the capacity to take on the point of view of the Other. The contributions to this volume are concerned with a broader concept of diversity than in the Kylimka and Norman volume. Diversity relates not merely to ethnic diversity but to all kinds of group difference. We thus find only one of the 13 chapters on race, the final one by John Solomos. Anna Yeatman's chapter on feminism and citizenship argues for a post-patrimonial ethic of difference that breaks with the traditional assumptions of male based citizenship. This concern with difference is also explored in chapters by Richardson on sexual citizenship, Marks with respect to disability, Blackman and France on youth culture.

While the volume offers very useful and interesting discussion on culture and citizenship an overall theory is not to be found. To an extent the first chapter by Byran Turner serves the purpose of a theoretical framework, but is clear that the contributors are not working to a tight framework. Turner discusses the cultural presuppositions of citizenship as connected with specific forms of life and, secondly, the emergence of new forms of participation that suggest the need for 'cultural rights'. The implication here, and in the chapters by McGuigan and Roche on cultural policy, is that what was once social is now becoming more cultural and with this comes new kinds of participation. For instance, as the chapter by Bloomfield and Bianchini illustrates, the context of the city is becoming more important for citizenship. As with McGuigan, they argue that cultural rights are in fact extended social rights.

This is an interesting collection of short chapters on culture and citizenship. However, the reader in search of a theory of cultural citizenship will be frustrated as the volume lacks a clear theory. For instance, it is not clear whether cultural citizenship is to be defined in terms of cultural rights and how these might relate to the well established conception of minority rights, as discussed in the much more cohesive and comprehensive Kymlicka and Norman volume. Although potentially Stevenson's volume is more far-reaching, it lacks the rationale of the former. The problem is the absence of a clear discussion on culture, which at times becomes too all embracing.

Conclusion

The upshot of much of the debate on culture and citizenship is a more open conception of culture than what is often suggested by multiculturalism. While recent political theory also looks to a more open conception of culture as pluralism, the really innovative ideas are coming from sociology, cultural and social theory in this regard. As a learning process, citizenship takes place in communicative situations arising out of quite ordinary life experiences. It appears that an essential dimension of the experience of citizenship is the way in which individual life stories are connected with wider cultural discourses. What I think is interesting is this cultural dimension to citizenship, which goes beyond the institutional dimension of both rights and also participation. We need more information, as well as theoretical tools, for understanding the cultural dimension

of citizenship. However, for present purposes it will suffice to note that one of the most important dimensions of citizenship concerns the styles and forms of language, cultural models, narratives, discourses that people use to make sense of their society, interpret their place in it, construct courses of action and thereby give rise to new demands for rights, which we may call cultural rights. It is important, too, to see the learning component of citizenship not just in individual terms but also as a medium of social construction by which individual learning becomes translated and coordinated into collective learning and ultimately becomes realized in social institutions. Neither volume reviewed here succeeds in this task, although Stevenson's volume comes closer.

A conclusion arrived at by a critical reading of these books might be that cultural citizenship is an extension of the trajectory traced by Marshall of civic, political and social citizenship. However, it is not to be confined to ethnocultural or minority rights but must include all kinds of minority rights. Moreover, as a discourse and practice that seeks to include large areas of human experience, it also addresses other domains of culture. It is not exclusively about rights and freedoms but also concerns the articulation of identity/belonging and other components of citizenship, such as participation and responsibility. Cultural citizenship is particularly relevant to the area of communication (media, virtual reality, popular cultures) and in the context of globalization is a form of citizenship that extends beyond nationality. However, as the two books reviewed here make clear, there is much uncertainty on the relationship between the rights discourse and the wider and more transformative discourse of cultural belonging.

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