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Citizenship and Gender¹

Introduction

'Is citizenship gendered?'. The answer to this question, posed by Sylvia Walby (1994) has to be a resounding 'yes'. Citizenship has always been gendered in the sense that women and men have stood in a different relationship to it, to the disadvantage of women. Yet, for much of its history, a veil of gender-neutrality has obscured the nature of this differential relationship. Today, as feminist theorists have stripped away this veil, the challenge is to reconceptualise citizenship in gendered terms in the image of women as well as men. We are thus talking about citizenship and gender from two angles: as a historical relationship and as a political and theoretical project.

This chapter will discuss each in turn. It will focus in particular on the key debates around what we might call the 'regendering' of citizenship. These relate to the meaning of citizenship itself and, more centrally, to the nature of this 're-gendering': is the aim a genuinely 'gender-neutral' or a 'gender-differentiated' model? Or can we, as I shall argue, avoid getting stuck in this particular formulation of the traditional 'equality' vs. 'difference' dilemma through a synthesis of the two and through a pluralist 'conception of citizenship which would accommodate all social cleavages simultaneously' (Leca, 1992, p30)?

Citizenship and gender: a historical relationship

Citizenship as both a theory and a practice operates simultaneously as a force for both inclusion and exclusion, both within and at the borders of nation states [*cross ref Soysal*]. Women have been denied the full and effective title of citizen for much of history, ancient and modern. The twentieth century mainstream theorisation of citizenship has tended to ignore the ways in which women's gradual achievement of civil, political and social rights often followed a different pattern from men's. Likewise, it has tended to dismiss women's earlier exclusion as a historical aberration, now more or less effectively remedied. Thus, for example, Adrian Oldfield asserts that it does not 'require too much imagination...to extend the concept of "citizen" to include women'; leaving aside Machiavelli and even allowing for the 'citizen-soldier', there is, he claims, 'nothing aggressively male' about the concept (1990, p59).

The excavations of feminist scholarship have, on the contrary, revealed how, in both theory and practice, despite its claims to universalism, citizenship has been quintessentially male. While the purpose of these excavations has generally been to spotlight women's exclusion from citizenship, critical studies in masculinities are beginning to problematise the other side of the gender equation: men's relationship to citizenship. Jeff Hearn (1997), for instance, underlines the need to interrogate 'the silence that has persisted on the category of men [as gendered actors] in both theory and practice around citizenship', but in a way which both names and decenters men.

¹ This is a chapter which will appear in K. Nash and A. Scott (eds) *Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, Blackwell, forthcoming.

The exposure of the quintessential maleness of citizenship helps us to understand that women's exclusion (and the chequered nature of their inclusion) far from being an aberration has been integral to the theory and practice of citizenship. Nowhere was this more obvious than in classical Greece where the active participation of male citizens in the public sphere was predicated on women's labour in the 'private' domestic sphere which rendered them as unfit for citizenship. The public-private dichotomy, and the male-female qualities associated with it, stands at the heart of the gendered citizenship relationship. On the 'public' side stands the disembodied citizen *qua* man who displays the necessary qualities of impartiality, rationality, independence and political agency. This is upheld by the 'private' side to which embodied women are relegated and from whence they are deemed incapable of developing the 'male' qualities of citizenship (Pateman, 1989). The continued power of this deeply gendered dichotomy has meant that women's admission to citizenship has been on male terms. It has also meant that much mainstream theorising about citizenship continues to discount the relevance of what happens in the private sphere to the practice of citizenship in the public sphere. Thus, for example, it ignores the ways in which the gendered division of labour in the private sphere shapes the access of both women and men to the public sphere and to the political, economic and social rights of citizenship which derive from such access (Lister, 1997).

Why re-gender citizenship?

For some, the historically gendered nature of citizenship, together with its inherently exclusive tendencies at the boundaries of nation states [*cross ref Soysal*], renders it a concept of little value for contemporary feminism. This rejection of the very concept of citizenship is rarely articulated in print, although Gillian Pascall (1993) expresses deep ambivalence about a concept which is so problematic for women. Likewise, Anne Phillips has warned that 'in a period in which feminism is exploring the problems in abstract universals, citizenship may seem a particularly unpromising avenue to pursue' (1993, p87). Nevertheless, it is an avenue which has become positively crowded by feminist scholars, in a wide range of countries, intent on re-gendering citizenship from the standpoints of women (for an overview, see Voet, 1998).

This feminist preoccupation with citizenship in part reflects a wider desire to (re)claim concepts which have been hi-jacked in the interests of men. Citizenship is a pivotal contested concept in contemporary political and social theory. As such, feminists cannot afford to be absent from the contest. More positively, citizenship is seen by many as an analytical and political tool of considerable potential value (Walby, 1994; Lister, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Bussemaker and Voet, 1998; Voet, 1998). It has also been deployed by a range of social movements, in which women are active, reminding us that women do not necessarily claim citizenship simply as women but as, for example, Black women, disabled women or lesbian women.

Given citizenship's status as a 'contested concept', it is hardly surprising that the issue of how to re-gender it is not straightforward. The debates can be grouped around two questions concerning the nature of citizenship and the nature of its re-gendering.

The nature of citizenship

One reason why citizenship is a contested concept is that it has its roots in two very different, and at times antagonistic, political traditions: liberalism and civic republicanism. The former casts citizenship as a *status* involving primarily rights accorded to individuals; the latter casts it as a *practice* involving responsibilities to the wider society (Heater, 1990; Oldfield, 1990). Whereas under classical liberalism, rights were confined to the civil and political spheres, the twentieth century saw their extension to the social sphere and more recently their embrace of new categories, such as reproductive rights, demanded by social movements. Within civic republicanism, the citizen is primarily a political actor, exercising 'his' civic duty within the public sphere. In the late twentieth century, though, the more prominent duties discourse centres on work obligations as one element in what has been described as a communitarian strand to citizenship (Bussemaker and Voet, 1998).

Rights

Until relatively recently, it is a rights discourse which has been more dominant. Women have struggled to achieve equal rights with men in the civil, political and social spheres as crucial to their achievement of full citizenship. Although some contemporary feminists reject a legal rights discourse as individualistic and male-inspired, many others acknowledge 'the dual nature of the law - as an agent of emancipation as well as oppression' and that, for all its shortcomings, it 'has played a vital role in securing for women the prerequisites of citizenship' (Vogel, 1988, p155).

Political participation

From the perspective of re-gendering citizenship, there have been two main sources of challenge to a rights based approach, centring on political participation and on promoting care as a citizenship obligation. In a recent text on feminism and citizenship, Rian Voet argues that 'instead of seeing citizenship as the means to realize rights, we should see rights as one of the means to realize equal citizenship. This implies that feminism ought to be more than a movement for women's rights; it ought to be a movement for women's participation (1998, p73). She goes on to argue that having acquired citizenship rights, it is the exercise of those rights, especially in the political sphere, which is crucial to the full development of women's citizenship as part of what she calls 'an active and sex-equal citizenship' (1998, Ch11).

The most forceful case for a feminist civic republican model of citizenship is that made by Mary Dietz. She advocates 'a vision of citizenship' which is 'expressly political and, more exactly, participatory and democratic'. In this vision, politics involves 'the collective and participatory engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community' and we conceive of ourselves as "speakers of words and doers of deeds" mutually participating in the public realm'. It is only, she contends, when active political participation is valued as an expression of citizenship in contrast to the 'politically barren' construction of the 'citizen as bearer of rights' alone, that feminists will 'be able to claim a truly liberatory politics of their own' (1987, pp13-15). Other feminists, sympathetic to Dietz's vision, such as Anne Phillips (1991, 1993) and Iris Young (1989, 1990), nevertheless caution against an uncritical reading of civic republicanism which, *inter alia*, defines the political in narrow terms and ignores the domestic constraints on many women's political participation.

Responsibilities

Central to these domestic constraints is the unpaid care work which many women still undertake in the home. Under present models of citizenship, such work does not tend to appear in the pantheon of citizenship responsibilities as does paid work, nor does it carry the same access to social rights. This has led some feminists, such as Pascall (1993), to be wary of claims to citizenship based on duties. In contrast, Diemut Bubeck has suggested that by focusing on citizenship obligations, feminists can turn conventional understandings of citizenship on their head through the introduction 'of a revised conception of citizenship in which the performance of her or his share of care has become a general citizen's obligation' (1995, p29). Such a reconceptualisation could be particularly significant in the context of debates about the work responsibilities of lone parents and I will return to it below (Lister, 1999a).

A critical synthesis

Most would accept that citizenship involves a balance of rights and responsibilities; what is at issue is where that balance should lie and what should be the link, if any, between them. With regard to whether the re-gendering of citizenship is better pursued in terms of citizenship as a status or as a practice, my own position (echoing that of, for example, Chantal Mouffe (1992)) is that we need a critical synthesis of the two. While the rights and participatory approaches to citizenship have developed along separate parallel tracks, they are not necessarily in conflict. On the contrary, they can be seen as mutually supportive, even if a tension remains between their primary concerns with the individual or the wider community. The development of women's position as citizens in the twentieth century can be understood as the outcome of the interplay between women's exercise of their political capacities and their emergent social rights.

The re-gendering of citizenship needs, first, to embrace both individual rights (and in particular social and reproductive rights) and political participation, broadly defined to include informal modes of politics, and, second, to analyse the relationship between the two (Sarvasy and Siim, 1994). The notion of human agency helps us to knit the two together. Citizenship as participation can be understood as an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to exercise their agency as citizens. As citizenship rights remain the object of political struggles to defend, reinterpret and extend them, a dynamic is set in motion in which the rights and participatory elements of citizenship stand in a dialectical relationship with one another. Re-gendering citizenship in this way is particularly important in challenging the construction of women (and especially 'minority group' women) as passive victims, while not losing sight of the structural and institutional constraints on their ability to act as citizens.

The re-gendering of citizenship.

The different approaches to the re-gendering of citizenship can be summed up under the three headings of 'gender-neutrality', 'gender-differentiation' and 'gender-pluralism'. The first works with a model of women as equal with men; the second with a model of women as different from men, thereby reflecting the long-standing 'equality vs. difference' debate within feminism. In the third model both women and men are members of multiple groups and/or holders of multiple identities. Individual theorists do not always fit neatly into any of the three categories, so that any views cited here should not necessarily be taken as definitive of the particular author's thinking. In my own work, I have attempted to develop a 'woman-friendly'

conceptualisation of citizenship which draws on aspects of each of these models (Lister, 1997).

The gender-neutral citizen

The model of the gender-neutral citizen is most commonly associated with liberal feminism, although it is not necessarily confined to it. The emphasis is on equal rights and equal obligations. The gender of the citizen should be irrelevant to the allocation and exercise of these rights and obligations. From the time of the French Revolution to the present day, some feminists have used the egalitarian and universalistic promise of citizenship in the cause of women's emancipation and autonomy (Bryson, 1992; Voet, 1998).

In the political sphere, this has meant an emphasis on women's full and equal participation in formal politics, first through the winning of the vote and then through formal political representation. Women's representation in parliament and government has been pressed as a matter of equality and justice rather than as a means of promoting a particular set of interests or a 'different' way of doing politics.

In the social sphere, the priority has been to enable women to compete on equal terms with men in the labour market. This in turn opens up access to the social rights of citizenship linked to labour market status through social insurance schemes. In both cases, women are better able to achieve the economic independence seen as critical to full and effective citizenship. This approach prioritises effective sex discrimination and equal pay legislation combined with 'family-friendly' employment laws and practices which enable women to combine paid work with their caring responsibilities in the home. Its logic underlies the social security rules operative in many countries which require lone mothers and fathers claiming social security to be available for paid work (once their children reach a certain age, which in Wisconsin is as young as 12 weeks) on the same basis as unemployed people.

While traditionally proponents of a gender-neutral citizenship have tended to focus on the changes in the public sphere necessary to achieve this ideal, today there tends to be a greater recognition of the changes which also need to be made in the private sphere, most notably in the gendered division of labour. A more equitable division of labour is, for example, central to Susan Moller Okin's vision of the 'genderless' family and society which she sees as crucial to the transformation of women's position as citizens (1989, Ch 8). Likewise, Anne Phillips, one of the more prominent exponents of a gender-neutral citizenship places great emphasis on a more equitable domestic division of labour as providing the context in which 'the notion of the citizen could begin to assume its full meaning, and people could participate as equals in deciding their common goals'. Phillips' 'vision is of a world in which gender should become less relevant and the abstractions of humanity more meaningful'. However, she acknowledges that in the transition to such a world, an emphasis on sexual differentiation is necessary in order 'to redress the imbalance that centuries of oppression have wrought' (1991, p7).

Phillips is thus well aware of the dangers of a gender-neutral model of citizenship in a gender-differentiated world and of lapsing into a false gender-neutrality which in practice privileges the male. Others see such dangers as inherent in a gender-neutral conception of citizenship. Ursula Vogel, for instance, dismisses as 'futile' any

attempt to insert women into 'the ready-made, gender-neutral spaces of traditional conceptions of citizenship' which are a chimera (1994, p86). Kathleen B. Jones is critical of gender-neutral approaches which require women to mould themselves to fit a citizenship template which has developed in the interests of men and which ignore 'the ways in which gender, as a socially constructed, historical reality, reflects different ways of being and knowing that fundamentally affect the practice and meaning of civic duties and responsibilities, and the enjoyment of civil and political rights' (1988, p20).

The gender-differentiated citizen

In an exploration of the possible meaning of citizenship in a 'woman-friendly polity', Jones contends that

a polity that is friendly to women and the multiplicity of their interests must root its democracy in the experiences of women and transform the practice and concept of citizenship to fit these varied experiences, rather than simply transform women to accommodate the practice of citizenship as it traditionally has been defined (1990, p811).

Jones is primarily concerned with women's *political* citizenship. The dilemma she poses is 'how to recognise the political relevance of sexual differences and how to include these differences within definitions of political action and civic virtue without constructing sexually segregated norms of citizenship?' (1988, p18). Historically, attempts to incorporate sexual 'differences within definitions of political action' tended to be rooted in 'maternalist' arguments for treating motherhood as the equivalent of a male civic republicanism grounded in active political participation and the ability to bear arms. Motherhood represented the embodiment of difference, for only women, qua mothers, could bear the next generation of citizens (Pateman, 1992). Another strand in maternalist thought made the case for women's full political participation with reference to the qualities and gifts which women could bring to politics as mothers.

Within contemporary feminism, this argument is echoed in Sarah Ruddick's exposition of 'maternal thinking' which she defines as 'the intellectual capacities [a mother] develops, the judgements she makes, the metaphysical attitudes she assumes, the values she affirms' (1989, p24). Although Ruddick does not herself write explicitly about citizenship, other 'social feminists', such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, have made the connection for her. It is in Elshtain's work that the torch of political maternalism burns brightest among contemporary feminists. She celebrates mothering and the private familial sphere in contrast to a negative picture of 'an ideal of citizenship and civic virtue that features a citizenry grimly going about their collective duty, or an elite band of citizens in their "public space" cut off from a world that includes most of the rest of us' (1981, p351).

The maternalist approach has been attacked by those who see it as constructing the 'sexually segregated norms of citizenship' which Jones warns against. As Carol Pateman (1992) has reminded us, it is just such sexually segregated norms which have served to subordinate and marginalise women as political citizens. Dietz rejects 'maternal thinking' as the basis for citizenship on the grounds that it reinforces 'a one-dimensional view of women as creatures of the family' and that it does not 'necessarily promote the kind of democratic politics social feminism purports to

foster'. On the contrary, she argues that the exclusiveness and inequalities of power associated with the mother-child relationship make it a poor model for democratic citizenship (1985, p20; 1987).

In the face of the critique of a maternalist construction of citizenship, a number of feminists, sympathetic to some of the values promoted by maternalism, are arguing for a non-maternalistic conceptualisation of difference in politics around the broader notion of care and an ethic of care. This is underpinned by a commitment to human interdependence rather than a concern with (in)dependence, as in the gender-neutral model (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). The case for care as a resource for political citizenship has been put by Bubeck (1995) on the grounds that the private concerns, values, skills and understandings associated with the practice of caring can all enhance public practices of citizenship. One arena in which they can do so, in particular, is that of informal, often community-based, politics, which is often grounded in concerns which derive from women's responsibilities for care (Lister, 1997). Part of Jones' case for a gender-differentiated citizenship is the need for 'a new grammar and ethos of political action' which incorporates women's political activities rather than simply mirroring male definitions of what counts as politics (1990, p789; 1988). [*cross ref Squires?*]

The momentum for the incorporation of care into our thinking about citizenship is, though, stronger in relation to social citizenship. Again, historically maternalism has played a pivotal role in attempts to forge a gender-differentiated conceptualisation of social citizenship. In the early twentieth century, in a number of countries, certain feminists drew on maternalist arguments to make the case for women's access to social rights. For instance, in both the US and Britain, the campaign for the endowment of motherhood drew on the imagery of motherhood as national service, the equivalent of men's military service, in the construction of their citizenship (Pederson, 1990; Sarvasy, 1992).

Today, a number of feminists are drawing on feminist theorising around care to make the case for the incorporation of 'care in the definition of citizenship, so the rights to time to care and to receive care are protected' as part of a more inclusive approach to citizenship (Knijn and Kremer, 1997, p357). One policy implication often drawn is that those who stay at home to provide care should receive payment. Others, while agreeing with the need to place more value on care for citizenship, are worried lest such payments should undermine women's claims to citizenship through equal participation in the labour market.

Thus even if the care approach, by focusing on women's responsibilities rather than their supposed qualities, is less vulnerable than maternalism to a biological essentialism that freezes the differences between women and men, it still shares certain risks with it. These are the risk of marginalisation, mentioned earlier, and also the risk of ignoring the differences between women. Some disabled feminists, for instance, reject the very language of care as casting disabled people in the role of dependants and argue that the discourse of caring is incompatible with a commitment to disabled people's rights to be equal citizens (Morris, 1993, 1996; see also Meekosha and Dowse, 1997).

More broadly, Mouffe criticises those who attempt to replace the false universalism of traditional conceptualisations of citizenship with ‘a sexually differentiated, “bi-gendered” conception of the individual and to bring women’s so-called specific tasks into the very definition of citizenship’. Instead of ‘making sexual difference politically relevant to its definition’ she argues for ‘a new conception of citizenship where sexual difference should become effectively nonpertinent’ (1992, p376).

The gender-pluralist citizen

This is not an argument for gender-neutrality but for what Mouffe terms ‘a radical democratic conception of citizenship’ (1992, p377). She interprets the feminist struggle for women’s equality not ‘as a struggle for realizing the equality of a definable empirical group with a common essence and identity, women, but rather as a struggle against the multiple forms in which the category “woman” is constructed in subordination’. Thus she favours ‘an approach that permits us to understand how the subject is constructed through different discourses and subject positions’ against one ‘that reduces our identity to one single position - be it class, race, or gender’ (1992, p382). Mouffe’s concern is with citizenship as a political practice and as a ‘common political identity of persons who might be engaged in many different purposive enterprises and with differing conceptions of the good, but who are bound by their common identification’ with pluralist democratic values (1992, p378).

Mouffe explicitly distinguishes her own pluralist position from that of Iris Young who proposes a ‘group differentiated citizenship’. In the name of a ‘heterogeneous public that acknowledges and affirms group differences’, Young makes the case for a ‘politics of group assertion’ which ‘takes as a basic principle that members of oppressed groups need separate organizations that exclude others, especially those from more privileged groups’. To this end, ‘a democratic public should’, she contends, ‘provide mechanisms for the effective recognition and representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of those of its constituent groups that are oppressed or disadvantaged’ (1990, pp10, 167 & 184).

A key criticism which has been made of Young’s proposal is that it runs the danger of freezing group identities, suppressing differences within groups and impeding wider solidarities (Mouffe, 1992; Phillips, 1993). More fluid pluralist approaches, which are less prone to these dangers, have been articulated around the notions of a ‘politics of difference’ (Yeatman, 1993); a ‘transversal politics’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997) a ‘politics of solidarity in difference’ (Lister, 1997) and a ‘reflective solidarity’ (Dean, 1996).

Gender-pluralist approaches are best equipped to accommodate the range of social divisions, such as sexuality, class, ‘race’, religion and age, which intersect with gender to shape the citizenship of women and men. They help to diffuse the gender binary at the centre of the equality vs. difference dichotomy. However, they do not offer guidance on one of the key questions for the re-gendering of citizenship which it raises: the respective value to be accorded to unpaid care work and paid work in the construction of citizenship responsibilities and rights. And a purely pluralist approach means that citizenship no longer offers a universal yardstick against which marginalised groups can stake their claim (Pascall, 1993). A gender-pluralist approach therefore represents only one half of the re-gendering equation.

Towards a woman-friendly citizenship

Key to the other half of the equation is the reconstruction of citizenship's yardstick so that it no longer privileges the male through its false universalism. This means, in particular, the incorporation of care as an expression of citizenship, in line with the gender-differentiated model. However, this must not be at the expense of undermining progress towards gender equality and therefore the gender-neutral model cannot be totally discarded. What is needed is a synthesis of the two, within the framework of gender-pluralism, which, in the words of Pateman, enables 'the substance of equality [to] differ according to the diverse circumstances and capacities of citizens, men and women' (1992, p29). Pivotal to the construction of the synthesis is the disruption of the public-private divide in recognition of the ways in which the interaction between public and private spheres sculpts the gendered contours of citizenship. From a policy perspective, this means, above all, measures to shift the gendered division of labour and to create the conditions in which both women and men can combine paid work and caring responsibilities (Lister, 1997, 1999b). Thus the re-gendering of citizenship will require change in both public and private spheres and in men's as well as women's relationship to citizenship.

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