Gender Justice and the English Citizenship Curriculum: A Consideration of Post–September 11 National Imperatives and Issues of "Britishness"

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ABSTRACT: Although much contention has surrounded the introduction of the English citizenship curriculum, its political agenda clearly reflects a transformative approach to issues of justice and equity. In light of this agenda, this article supports feminist work in further problematizing the curriculum's silence around relations of gender and citizenship. It extends this work by exploring the implications of such silence within the context of the contemporary post–September 11 climate, where discourses around security and militarism have amplified social/gender inequities worldwide while further reducing the spaces available for active social and political engagement toward the "common good." In the U.K. context, these trends are considered in light of the recent high-profile political debate around the issue of Britishness. Here, concern is expressed about how superficial engagement with this debate may be mobilized in exclusionary ways that do little to militate against the masculinist framings of the citizenship curriculum. Conversely, critical engagement in debates around British national identity are also presented as being potentially generative in terms of their capacity to strengthen the discourse of ideal citizenship in the United Kingdom in ways that foster a more critical and gender-just approach to citizenship education.

Although citizenship education as a mandated learning area is generally seen as a highly positive and timely initiative, much debate and contention has surrounded its formal introduction within the broader National Curriculum Framework for English schools. The warrant for a focus on citizenship education in schools is primarily associated with heightened concerns during the last decade or so—specifically in the United Kingdom and more broadly in many other Western democracies—regarding the growing malaise among youth in terms of their cynicism and alienation toward and subsequent lack of active engagement in political and civic life (Kerr, McCarthy, & Smith, 2002; Naval, Print, & Veldhuis, 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2002). Indeed, the future of many Western democracies is threatened by such apathy and disconnection. In terms of remedying this civic deficit (see Kerr et al., 2002; McLaughlin, 2000) toward ensuring the health and survival of these democracies, there has been widespread research, review, policymaking, and initiatives focused on reengaging and transforming

the political and civic indifference of young people—namely, through new approaches in schools toward teaching democracy and responsible citizenship (Naval et al., 2002).

Such research and policymaking have been framed by concerns associated with issues of cultural diversity, national identity, globalization, and social justice—particularly amid recent political and economic shifts in the United Kingdom in particular and Europe more broadly. For example, the transnational boundarylessness associated with Europe's move toward greater unity has thrown issues of national identity into sharper relief, as have concerns in the United Kingdom regarding how a sense of British citizenship might be maintained amid a climate that has seen greater political power devolved to Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales (see Osler & Starkey, 2002). This backdrop has prompted a reconsideration about what citizenship might mean within the increasingly complex context of the shifting, multiple, and conflicting individual and group ethnic, racial, religious, national, and indeed supranational allegiances in these regions—conflicting loyalties that have seen rises in community alienation and social fragmentation, violence, racism and xenophobia, and support for extremist groups (Naval et al., 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2002).

Recognizing educational institutions as playing a central role in not only reifying but also potentially transforming such fragmentation and conflict (Connell, 2000; Singh & Doherty, 2004), international reform agendas in general remain focused on how education can support the development of active and responsible citizens (see UNESCO, 1996, 2005). Such agendas are concerned with equipping students with the competencies to tackle the social, environmental, and economic challenges of a rapidly changing, complex, unequal, and conflicted world (Power, 2006). To these ends, one of the four pillars of the highly influential Delors report—*Learning: The Treasure Within* (generated from UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the 21st Century; see UNESCO, 1996)—is "learning to live together." Working toward this goal signifies, as Power (2006) argues, "a renewed sense of the purpose of education, one which restores harmony in human development by giving greater emphasis to the social, cultural and moral dimensions of education" (p. 165). Although such an emphasis is established as a priority at an international policy level, it is far from unproblematic in terms of its realization at the level of national educational policy and practice (Power, 2006). In terms of reconciling a balance between universally shared goals for justice and democracy with a respect for individual and group cultural diversity, educating for global citizenship is well recognized as a politically driven and thus value-laden project.

Such concerns continue to stimulate debate regarding how citizenship education might contribute to the development of stable and socially just multicultural societies (see Kerr et al., 2002; Naval et al., 2002). This debate is far from new—the relatively recent formal introduction of citizenship education

in the United Kingdom belies the long and intensive interest and political contention associated with this learning area and the many projects and initiatives promoting such education (see Frazer, 2000; Naval et al., 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2002). The history of reluctance to the introduction of education for citizenship in the United Kingdom tends to be associated with a pervasive antipathy toward any teaching in schools related to politics and political concerns (see Frazer, 2000). For many, the contention lies in the question of the values that might underpin citizenship education and, in particular, the contestation surrounding the values that should or should not be promoted (see Frazer, 2000; Kerr et al., 2002). Along these lines, Frazer (2000) points to the weakness of the discourse of ideal citizenship in the United Kingdom and argues that the difficulties associated with the implementation of citizenship or political education relate to "the lack of any wide assent to, consensus on, or even well articulated dominant account of the nature of politics, civic life, or the constitution" (p. 89). For others, the increasing levels of government control imposed on schools has engendered suspicion and skepticism around the political agenda that might accompany the introduction of deliberate citizenship instruction (see Pring, 1999). Another argument is that citizenship education, rather than be structured as a separate subject area, should be addressed in schools through its embeddedness in democratic schooling processes and other areas of the curriculum (Pring, 1999).

As these issues illustrate, the formal introduction of citizenship education has been fraught; nevertheless, its current status since 2002 as a mandated learning area for all secondary school students signifies widespread agreement that the virtues of a politically engaged citizenry should be explicitly taught in schools (see McLaughlin, 2000; Naval et al., 2002). Such virtues within the curricular framework, though evident in other areas of school learning, are expressed along the lines of three interrelated strands that seek to develop (1) children's sense of moral and social responsibility, (2) their positive engagement in and service toward the community, and (3) their political literacy (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002). These strands encompass an agenda that seeks to transform the current culture of political apathy within the United Kingdom toward an active, responsible, critically informed, and culturally inclusive polis working for the common good of society and humanity as a whole (Kerr et al. 2002; McLaughlin, 2000; Naval et al., 2002)—a common good, as Osler and Starkey (2002) point out, that aims to address and prevent issues of discrimination and so encourage young people to value cultural diversity. This agenda has been said to promote a maximal notion of democratic and socially just citizenship (see Miller, 2000). Particularly within the context of the considerable inequities and social fractures that exist in the United Kingdom, such an agenda—which Tooley (2000) goes so far as to suggest is resonant of left-wing and anticapitalist political creeds—is, of course, necessarily critical and inevitably controversial (Osler & Starkey, 2002).

In light of this transformative agenda, especially given the broader concerns and residues from past contentions surrounding the introduction of citizenship education, this article explores the significance of the curriculum's silence on issues of gender identity, gender justice, and citizenship. Although feminist concerns have long illuminated the injustices normalized and perpetuated through masculinist constructions of citizenship that privilege the "free" autonomous individual of the public sphere (see for example, Pateman, 1988), Arnot (2004, 2005; see also, Lees, 2000) has highlighted such concerns with reference to the citizenship curriculum. She is critical about the absence/lack of engagement with feminist debates and gender-equity principles in informing and framing this learning area (Arnot, 2005). The curriculum's failure to engage in the questioning of gendered power relations is considered within the context of the contemporary post–September 11 climate, where the discourses around security and militarism have amplified social/gender inequities worldwide, further reducing the spaces available for active social and political engagement toward the common good (see Giroux, 2006). In light of the recent high-profile political debate around the issue of Britishness, this article raises concern about how superficial engagements with this debate may be mobilized in ways that do little to militate against these broader trends and the masculinist and overly consensualist model framing the citizenship curriculum. Against this backdrop, the limitations of the citizenship curriculum are illustrated, particularly as its silence on issues of gender provides a vehicle for masking and perpetuating inequities (Arnot, 2005). Finally, the potential is acknowledged that Britishness debates may strengthen the social/gender justice focus of the citizenship curriculum.

The Citizenship Curriculum and Issues of Gender

The ways in which concepts of citizenship are exclusionary in their marginalizing of the needs and concerns of culturally and economically disadvantaged groups are well documented (see, e.g., Arnot & Dillabough, 2000; Fraser, 1997; Young, 1997). Within the context of the high levels of *cultural diversity* characterizing the United Kingdom and the contention surrounding this term, significant criticism of the citizenship curriculum concerns its lack of focus on issues of diversity, power, inequity, and justice. Here the curriculum is seen as being inadequate in terms of addressing the formal and informal political, social, and economic barriers to citizenship faced by minority groups (see Osler & Starkey, 2002, 2003). The curriculum's failure to sufficiently acknowledge and account for structural inequalities associated with cultural difference is generally understood as arising from its framing of notions of citizenship within liberal and neoliberal philosophies. Olssen (2004) and others (see Arnot, 2005; Osler, 2000; Olser & Starkey, 2002) argue, for example, that the liberal philosophies underpinning and informing the citizenship curriculum—principally, the displacement of social justice concerns

and interventions from state to citizen through a privileging of the individual over community—are more likely to sustain and polarize, rather than challenge and transform, social inequities. This is particularly so within what Olssen describes as the overly consensualist model of society embodied within conceptions of citizenship within the curriculum materials that support the following: first, a universalism, "whereby a uniform standard is applied to all no matter what the differences in their life circumstance," and, second, "what could be referred to as 'unitarism,' or the 'politics of consensus,'" where there is suspicion about "recognising as legitimate the particular claims of different cultural groups" (p. 181).

For Olssen (2004), this consensualist model has promoted the "notion of a single national identity to which all is referred and to which citizenship education aspires . . . [where] certain uniform conceptions of moral values and social development constitute an essential precondition for citizenship" (p. 182). Distinctly ambivalent to addressing issues of difference (see Fraser, 1995), these conceptions are criticized as disguising or diverting "attention away from the need to address social inequities and forms of exclusion" (Olssen, 2004, p. 183). As Arnot (2005) points out, such unified and invariably abstracted models of citizenship are

> an attempt . . . to counter the anomie; the normlessness of a globalised economy by re-creating the bonds of social solidarity. Through this regulative and integrative work, citizenship education can perform the task of masking the differentiations and hierarchical values of society within notions of the "common good." (para. 6)

Against this backdrop, the citizenship curriculum has been criticized as tending to categorize difference or minority as being problematic and limited in its capacities to effectively address cultural marginalization—particularly, issues of race and gender discrimination. Osler and Starkey (2002), for example, argue that the curriculum is inadequate for antiracist work in its depoliticizing of multiculturalism manifest in a lack of critical approach toward issues of race, identity, and structural disadvantage. The authors describe the uncritical and monological ways that race, national identity, and common citizenship are addressed in the curriculum documentation—specifically, as being narrow in terms of conveying a sense of cultural paternalism and assimilation. More broadly—and consistent with Frazer (2000)—they contend that the depoliticizing of citizenship is associated with a vagueness or a lack of clarity in the basic values of Britain and England—a "lack of clarity that acts to fundamentally undermine democracy" (p. 157).

These critiques are also associated with the silence surrounding issues of gender within the citizenship curriculum. Such silence—particularly, that regarding the myriad social structures and processes that constrain women's citizenship—points to how the construction of the citizen in the curriculum is focused on the male-centered public sphere (Arnot, 2005; see also, Arnot, 2004; Arnot & Dillabough, 2000). Although this construction is presented

as an apparently neutral model of the active citizen, it sustains masculine conceptions of citizenship premised on the subordination of women (Arnot, 2005). This is so because it does not acknowledge the differences between men's and women's situations and experiences associated with, for instance, the ways in which female agency is circumscribed by conventional notions of gender. As Arnot (2005) observes, although the framework supports learning such concepts as human rights, discrimination, and equal rights, there are no references to how gender-specific modes of exploitation and marginalization arising from the enduring public–private division of labor continue to socioeconomically disadvantage females as a group or how females as a group continue to suffer cultural domination and disrespect in a world that devalues activities connoted as *feminine*. Such omission ignores the prevailing social and cultural injustices that constrain women's citizenship relative to men's, such as their comparatively lower salary levels and fewer career opportunities, their overrepresentation in part-time work, and their underrepresentation in leadership positions and in all areas of public life and civic decision making. Also ignored is how women's citizenship is delimited by their greater share of domestic responsibilities and their experiences of sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000; Brabazon, 2002; Fraser, 1997; Jackson & Jones, 1998; Lees, 2000; Mohanty, 2003).

In this respect, the unified or normative stance adopted by the citizenship curriculum along masculinist lines excludes the private and familial sphere; to these ends, alternative models of citizenship that might focus on, for instance, the caring ethos and maternal values of this sphere, are disregarded (see Arnot, 2005; Noddings, 1988). Of further detriment to gender justice goals, the curriculum fails to acknowledge the significant societal changes in relation to gender and power that currently hinder women's civic participation. Against a backdrop that problematizes the gender injustices of dominant heteronormative discourses, Lees (2000), for instance, highlights how recent changes in patterns of family life in the United Kingdom—such as the rises in divorce and female-headed/single-parent households—have constrained women's civic rights in areas such as education and employment. Ignoring these gender inequities and disparities of experience and, indeed, masking them through an apparently neutral model of the citizen renders them invisible—giving the false impression that feminist concerns have been resolved. Without explicit acknowledgment in the curriculum of how gendered structures and practices continue to constrain the political, civic, and social engagement of the female citizen, such inequities are left unchallenged—their taken-for-grantedness reinforced (Arnot, 2005).

Gender Justice and the Contemporary Post–September 11 Context

The silence surrounding issues of gender in the citizenship curriculum represents particular significance in light of how the post–September 11 climate has amplified social/gender inequities worldwide. The political responses in the United States and the United Kingdom in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the subsequent London bombings in 2005—principally, the propelling of security and military imperatives to overriding national significance and the generation of cultures of fear and resentment—have severely curtailed social justice goals. Indeed, Eisenstein (2001) and others (see Giroux, 2006; McLaren & Faramandpur, 2005; Rizvi, 2004) argue that the war on terrorism is a war on social justice.

Giroux (2006) foregrounds how such imperatives have intensified the already regressive impacts of the global neoliberal agenda in terms of further reducing the space of shared responsibility and the social obligations of citizenship. He points to how the post–September 11 cultures of fear, insecurity, and resentment have flourished within existing conditions that rationalize discrimination and marginalization—on the basis of poverty or gender, for example—as individual concern and private failure rather than arising from broader power inequities and injustices. Far from conducive to supporting an engaged, compassionate, and critical citizenry, such cultures have generated suspicion and closed the spaces of inclusive politics. Under these circumstances, the social critique and democratic debate so central to challenging the masculinized conventions that constrain the gender justice project have been severely curtailed (see hooks, 2003). According to Giroux (2006; see also, Ben-Porath, 2006), these trends have signaled a growing authoritarianism of the state—particularly in the United States but also in the United Kingdom and other Western contexts, such as Canada and Australia (see, e.g., Aijaz, 2001; Bibby, 2006); furthermore, they have disciplined civil society in ways that undermine "responsible dissent and public dialogue" and perpetuate a "highly retrograde notion of the social" (p. 6).

In the United States and the United Kingdom, this climate has seen a clear erosion of civil liberties in the name of state protection (see Ben-Porath, 2006; Dabydeen, 2004; Giroux, 2006; hooks, 2003). The cultures of fear that, according to Giroux (2006), have generated a sense of public apolitical dependency have enabled personal safety and national security imperatives to be elevated as the most important dimensions of political culture and life. Fueled by an upsurge in morally righteous nationalisms, not only are hypermilitarism and state surveillance legitimized as being central to national identity, but they are also signifiers of effective governance (Giroux, 2006). In this climate of undemocratic public inclinations, as Ben-Porath (2006) argues, belligerent forms of uncritical citizenship curtail the claims of excluded groups and so further marginalize their representation in public political discourse. These forms of belligerent citizenship, in the face of a conservative security state, are seen as being highly detrimental to gender equity goals in terms of suppressing democratic commitments to gender justice (Ben-Porath, 2006). The masculinist discourses and politics of nationalism and militarism are, of course, well recognized (see

Ben-Porath, 2006; Connell, 1995; Nagel, 1998). Militarism, nationalism, and patriarchalism—as closely aligned social phenomena—are vehicles for accomplishing a masculinity that is highly conventional and conservative in its circumscribing of roles for men and women (see also Enloe, 1990). As Nagel (1998) contends, these movements, which embrace "tradition as the legitimating basis for nation-building and cultural renewal, are often patriarchal and point out the tenacious and entrenched nature of masculine privilege" (p. 254). Within the context of the war on terror in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom—where the dominance of security concerns have mobilized these movements and where neoliberal regimes have tended to displace social justice concerns from state to citizen—gender-related issues have lost their standing in public discourse (Ben-Porath, 2006). Along these lines, "such issues have tended to be diverted to the private sphere to be solved (or neglected) there" (p. 80).

Set alongside resurgent nationalisms and fed by a rhetoric of political absolutes, imperatives of security have also served to escalate rises in religious fundamentalisms (Giroux, 2006; Mohanty, 2003; Rizvi, 2004). The cultures of fear and mistrust post–September 11—in particular, the heightened anti-Western/anti-Muslim sentiment—have further strengthened the grip of religious orthodoxy (see Rizvi, 2004). Giroux (2006) argues here that the "shock and awe" tactics of the media's "spectacle of terror" (p. 67) feed into these cultures in ways that endorse allegiances to fundamentalist organizations. The highly regressive impacts of the deeply masculinist and often racist doctrine of religious fundamentalisms on the economic and cultural status of women are well documented (see Keddie, 1991; Mohanty, 2003; Nagel, 1998). Consistent with the tendencies of nationalism, such orthodoxies clearly compromise gender justice principles in their inherently patriarchal agendas that embrace the conservatism and tradition of entrenched male privilege.

The reassertion of the global authority of the United States post–September 11 (see Rizvi, 2004), in terms of further escalating ethnic/religious divisions in its legitimizing of Western superiority, poses additional threat to the pursuit of gender justice. The Western alliance in "nation-building" imperatives in Afghanistan and Iraq has reinscribed the cultural hegemony of the West—reproducing gross dominative harm (Eisenstein, 2001) that has had deleterious impacts on gender equity goals. Anti-Western sentiment within and beyond Western contexts—perhaps most notably manifest in the ever-growing resentment associated with how Western/liberal ideologies are especially undermining the identity, heritage, and tradition of Islamic communities—is associated with a resurgence in fundamentalist views around gender issues and a regression of the status of women in these communities (Eisenstein, 2001; Keddie, 1991; Mohanty, 2003; Sayed, 2005). In such communities, it is often the case that the home and family act as last bastions against the political, economic, and cultural domination of the West; thus, attempts to retain the Islamization of women's roles can be concerted because this is a touchstone of Islam (see Keddie, 1991). As Keddie (1991) illustrates, this is partly so because "a return to Quranic injunctions on dress, polygamy, and so forth are a highly visible way to show one is a good Muslim" (p. 17) and because being a "good Muslim" operates as an act of defiance and resistance to a perceived Western cultural imperialism.

Gender Justice, Education, and Issues of "Britishness"

Such trends, as they are amplified by the Western-led war on terror, will do little to disrupt the enduring masculinist structures and practices that construct barriers to women's citizenship; indeed, they are likely to perpetuate the taken-for-grantedness of the specific modes of economic and cultural marginalization in the United Kingdom and beyond that contribute to gender disadvantage. The current emphasis in the United Kingdom surrounding the construction of a British national identity adds a further dimension to these trends. The focus on issues of Britishness—largely a move instigated by new prime minister Gordon Brown—responds to concerns associated with maintaining a strong national identity in the face of, for example, increasing decentralization and disunity within and among Britain's constituent countries and increasing social, ethnic, and religious tensions post–September 11. Against this backdrop, the construction of a British national identity raises some key gender justice concerns. These relate to the ways that the debates may be mobilized within the context of the consensualist model framing the citizenship curriculum—a model, to refer again to Olssen (2004), that supports a single national identity with uniform conceptions of moral values and social development. A superficial and uncritical engagement with the key media sound bites associated with current Britishness debates—notably, the calls to celebrate British unity through creating stronger allegiance to the flag and through the creation of a national holiday much like America's Fourth of July celebration—may be deployed in ways that reflect what Giroux (2002) disparagingly refers to as a hollow jingoistic patriotism. This form of uncritical patriotism—along the lines of the belligerent citizenship described earlier, as is well recognised historically—tends to be assimilationist in its exclusion of minority groups. In England, of course, such versions of national identity have had a long history of circumscribing and subsuming difference and diversity under an umbrella of imperial ethnocentrism and chauvinism. Through the consensualist lenses of the citizenship curriculum, such take-up of Britishness debates will likely endorse the masculinist constructions of the citizen underpinning this learning area and its ambivalence to addressing issues of gender, power, and structural disadvantage.

This is perhaps particularly so given that, as Osler and Starkey (2002) point out, there is a lack of critical consideration of such concepts as nation and state in the curriculum guidance for citizenship. They express concern regarding how the lack of reference to "the role of the state in protecting rights" and "to

the concept of the state as a political entity transcending diverse ethnic and cultural groupings" (p. 155) within the guidance materials does not encourage an inclusive and pluralistic framework for examining issues associated with national identity and Britishness. Especially in light of the depoliticizing of these issues within this curriculum area, such limitations are not amenable to making transparent and challenging how concepts such as state and nation—as highly gendered entities—are exclusionary and unjust. Of significant concern here, this depoliticizing does not recognize how broader security and military imperatives, such as those currently mobilized in the Western war on terror, tend to shape education systems in ways that conform to mainstream responses along the lines of a unified or belligerent citizenship that supports the military effort (see Ben-Porath, 2006). Such conformity, as Ben-Porath (2006) argues, can manifest itself in ways that delimit the civic education curriculum and aspects of progressive or democratic teaching.

In countries of the Western alliance against the war on terror—for example, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia—education systems have been conscripted to the teaching of belligerent citizenship in many ways (Ben-Porath, 2006). In these contexts, there have been a number of schooling initiatives aimed at unifying cultures toward not only instilling nationalistic pride and loyalties but also containing cultural difference and division. Many of these initiatives, however, have been counter to democratic principles and have worked as mechanisms of regulation, control, and alienation that have endorsed an exclusionary model of nationalism through, for example, the valorization of a masculinized and ethnocentric version of military history in the curriculum that offers marginalized portrayals of women; the censoring of expressions of religious affiliation in terms of uniform, such as the banning of Muslim headwear; and the greater surveillance and policing of Islamic schooling practices (see Ben-Porath, 2006; Giroux, 2006). Additionally, schooling systems in these countries have been subject to intensive debate and political backlash from conservatives regarding how politically correct or progressive education might be destructive to broader social cohesion. For example, the excessive nihilism and apparently uncritical philosophies of postmodern curricula and pedagogy have been blamed for increasing social divisions by placing too much emphasis on the recognition and acceptance of multiple identities and cultures (see, e.g., Donnelly, 2006). Such pedagogy, as the argument goes, is damaging to social cohesion in its excessive legitimizing of diverse cultural perspectives and its encouraging of dissent and subversion of dominant or mainstream (and invariably Anglocentric) versions of the state and nation (for a critique of this argument, see Giroux, 2002, 2006; hooks, 2003).

These broader trends are clearly damaging for the gender equity project in terms of pushing "the curriculum and other educational practices in the direction of less recognition, space, and voice for [girls and] women"

(Ben-Porath, 2006, p. 86). It is well established that the social critique and debate of dominant ideologies are cornerstones to facilitating pedagogies of gender justice in schools (see Alloway, 1995; Davies, 1993; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005). Stifling such questioning and debate in the area of identity politics and sociocultural justice, particularly within a schooling context where performative cultures have already skewed equity concerns and sidelined social outcomes, is likely to be constraining for gender justice. Moreover, such overarching trends would seem to support, rather than challenge, the silence in the citizenship curriculum surrounding issues of gender and the curriculum's lack of critical consideration of issues of identity, power, and structural disadvantage. In this respect, the depoliticizing tendencies of the citizenship curriculum, its overly consensualist frame, and its failure to acknowledge issues of gender and the nation-state seem to support belligerent, rather than democratic, versions of Britishness.

However, a critical engagement with current Britishness debates may be highly generative in terms of strengthening the discourse of ideal citizenship in the United Kingdom (see Frazer, 2000) and providing greater understanding about how notions of Britishness might frame the citizenship curriculum in critical and socially just ways. Key social commentators have clearly expressed their concerns about the difficulties around the defining of a uniquely British identity (see Ansari, Gilroy, Hunt, Klug, & Marsden, 2006). The contentions arising from attempts to unify difference within a notion of national identity are well recognized and refer, for example, to the problematics of defining and imposing a set of universal and essentially British values—particularly in terms of the potential for this unifying to reflect a whiggish, or triumphalist, narrative of British national heroism that pays little attention to the more unpleasant elements of British history and ascribes the responsibility for adaptation and change to minority British identities (see Fabian Society, 2005). The foregrounding of such concerns has been particularly useful in furthering debate about how notions of Britishness might better encapsulate the interests of minority groups and how education can better support inclusive models of learning about national identity—through, for instance, a more rigorous and critical teaching of the "warts and all" past of imperial Britain (see Fabian Society, 2005). To unfold the multiple layers of expectations that citizens and the state have for each other, Ben-Porath (2006) identifies here the importance of looking at citizenship through democratic lenses of nationalism and patriotism. Along these lines, debates about what it means to be British within the context of the citizenship curriculum would be necessarily political in their problematizing of, among many other things, the gendered assumptions that delimit constructions of nationalism, militarism, and patriotism. This approach would support complex and nuanced understandings of nationhood as a mutual social construct that can foster unity without abandoning critical perspectives—an approach that, most

important, according to Ben-Porath, would support notions of nationalism and citizenship as shared fate that

> encourages students and teachers to understand and identify with their nation (or group) with its complex history, to own it, and thus to be willing to amend what needs to be amended. . . . Citizenship as shared fate . . . expands the limits of the national group to include denied or silenced perspectives and groups, as well as aspects of history. It thus supports the evolvement of a shared vision of the nation that is more inclusive and thus more democratic. (p. 103)

Along these lines, there is strong support for a pluralistic but critical approach to how issues of national identity are presented in schools but more generally to the importance of addressing issues of identity and difference within a context that acknowledges, deconstructs, and seeks to transform the inequitable structures and institutions that constrain access to citizenship.

Drawing on these tools of deconstruction enables a differentiated approach that can begin to work toward an inclusive and cosmopolitan understanding of citizenship. Important here, especially in light of the Britishness issue, is creating a balance between difference and universalism where respect for diversity is framed by democratic and social justice principles (Runnymede Trust, 2000). This balance, though recognizing and accepting irreducible differences (see Young, 1997), is necessarily discerning and critical about differences that compromise the principles of equity and social justice. Olssen (2004) argues,

> Clearly cultural minorities whose practices are based on deeply illiberal oppressive relations based on gender, or sex, or any other basis of difference, cannot be tolerated, and neither can group practices that fail to respect the fundamentally important principles of democratic politics, such as respect for the other, a willingness to negotiate, tolerance, or the institutional basis of deliberation, or the rule of law. (p. 187)

Olssen goes on to suggest that, particularly within the cultural and religious struggles and volatilities of the post–September 11 context, certain presumptions of cosmopolitanism must necessarily infuse citizenship. Here, although multiculturalism is endorsed and celebrated, there are principles of social justice—including, of course, gender justice—that are seen as being universal and that should comprise a sense of common humanity, solidarity, and shared responsibility (Osler & Starkey, 2003). Within the context of understanding citizenship as shared fate, such philosophies can provide a discerning lens to envision and strengthen more democratic and inclusive models of national affiliation and citizenship to those that reflect belligerence and exclusion.

Concluding Remarks

The maximal or transformative capacities of the citizenship curriculum—particularly, its aims to address and prevent issues of discrimination and encourage a valuing of cultural diversity—are clearly undermined by a lack of focus on issues of gender and gender justice. Although these aims

might be overly optimistic (see Kerr et al., 2002)—and to these ends, it is important not to overstate the difference that teachers can make in relation to such transformative goals (see Callan, 1999; Kymlicka, 1999)—it is important to recognize that teachers can and do make a difference in terms of enhancing students' critical awareness of and active engagement in working for equity and social justice (see Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006). Teaching that aims to foster a critically engaged citizenry concerned with democracy and the public good necessitates making transparent and acting against the grain of the current gendered status quo (Giroux, 2002). Such a focus requires a disruption of the neutral citizen and a politicizing of gender relations in ways that identify and problematize the structures and practices that produce gender-specific modes of economic disadvantage and cultural marginalization. In so doing, the unified and gendered stance framing the citizenship curriculum that masks the gross social, political, and economic disparities between males and females can begin to resemble a differentiated approach that acknowledges how access to citizenship is circumscribed by the differences between men's and women's situations and experiences. Such a focus would be underpinned by a politics of gender difference that teaches about "men's and women's social positions, values and expectations [and recognises] the particular circumstances which have shaped women's lives and the contributions they can and have made to the development of society" (Arnot, 2005, para. 17).

A differentiated but cosmopolitan approach to citizenship—where the principles of social/gender justice provide an overriding and discerning critical framework for understanding and addressing issues of difference and diversity—is amenable to supporting citizenship education as a political device that can work toward gender equity goals. This approach will be particularly important in light of the insidious ways that the current security and military priorities of the post–September 11 environment are hindering the gender justice project. Especially in light of how such priorities are curtailing responsible dissent and socially critical dialogue, an explicit problematizing of the gendered assumptions behind current notions of citizenship will be central in mobilizing the current Britishness debates in ways that strengthen rather than undermine the principles of democracy and gender justice.

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