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Citizenship-as-Identity in British political discourse: New Labour and the UK Citizenship test

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Citizenship-as-Identity in British political discourse: New Labour and the UK Citizenship test

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ABSTRACT

The British Citizenship Test was introduced by New Labour in 2005, as one of a raft of new procedures aimed at addressing the perceived problems of integration and social cohesion in migrant communities. In this paper, we argue that this new citizenship procedure signals a shift in British political discourse about citizenship - particularly, the institutionalisation of a common British citizen identity that is intended to draw citizens together in a new form of political/national community. In line with this, we examine the British Citizenship Test from a critical social psychological perspective, with the aim of examining the ways in which the test constitutes identity, constitutes citizenship and constitutes citizenship-as-identity. Analysis of the Test and its associated documents highlights three ways in which Britishness–as-identity is constituted, i.e. as a collective identity, as a global and national identity, and finally as both a destination and a journey. These findings are discussed in terms of their implications for both being and becoming British.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Citizenship, as one writer suggests, is "on everyone's minds today" (Joppke, 1999, p. 629) - a statement which is borne out by the considerable focus on citizenship in both political discourse and social scientific enquiry. Of particular concern, is the relationship between citizenship and immigration, with many pointing out that a significant dilemma facing many modern states is the need for migration to meet labour needs, amid concerns about integration and social cohesion (Joppke, 2007; Yuval-Davis, Anthias & Kofman, 2005). In response to these concerns, New Labour introduced a new agenda for citizenship and immigration – including mandatory citizenship tests where migrants are required to demonstrate that they have "sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scots Gaelic" and "sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom" before being granted citizenship[1] (Home Office, 2002)[2]. In this paper, we argue that the British Citizenship Test can be seen as a manifestation of New Labour's (re)conceptualisation of British citizenship as an identity. As such, we explore the Citizenship Test from a critical social psychological perspective, with the aim of interrogating the ways in which New Labour's policy discourse of citizenship-as-identity is instituted both in, and through, this new requirement for citizenship.

1.1. Citizenship and Identity in British Political Discourse

New Labour's approach to citizenship is set out in numerous policy and legislative documents, including the 2002 White Paper, *Secure borders, safe haven: Integration with diversity in modern Britain* (Home Office, 2002a) and the Home Office reports published after the 2001 disturbances in the North of England (e.g. The Denham Report, Home Office, 2002b). At the heart of these documents, is a marked shift in British political discourse about citizenship. In particular, a move away from models which define citizenship as a set of universal rights, and toward a model where citizenship is conceptualised as more than rights and responsibilities, but also a form of identity that is produced by (and productive of) a sense of belonging and loyalty to a political community. This can be seen in the 2002 White Paper, where considerable emphasis is placed on the need to foster

"belonging...identity and shared mutual understanding" (Home Office, 2002a, p. 28). Similarly, the Denham Report (Home Office, 2002b), states that: "issues of identity and values...raise questions which go to the very heart of what we mean when we talk about concepts of citizenship" (p.12).

Importantly, this reconceptualisation of citizenship as a form of identity represents more than a change in the prevailing model of *citizenship*; it also highlights a profound shift in political discourse about *Britishness.* In particular, New Labour sought to provide a reconstructed understanding of Britishness that moves away from previous exclusive ethno-national definitions based on "blood and culture" (Paul, 1997, p. 26), and toward an explicitly deracialised definition based on values abstracted from the 1998 European Human Rights Act. For example, in a statement about what it means to be British, it is claimed that:

> To be British seems to us to mean that we respect the laws, the elected parliamentary and democratic political structures, traditional values of mutual tolerance, respect for equal rights and mutual concern (The New and the Old Report, Home Office, 2003, p. 11).

A statement which sets out a definition of Britishness based on shared key values, whilst being silent about ethnic or racial distinctions (Kundnani, 2007; Parekh, 2000; Worley, 2005)

It is in this "broader and more meaningful" definition of Britishness (Kiwan, 2007) that the integrative aims of this citizenship agenda become clear. The notion of a unified (and unifying) British citizen identity is intended to address concerns about diversity, integration and social cohesion. Particularly, given the involvement of British nationals in 9/11, the July 7th bombings, and the 2001 Northern riots (Lewis & Neal, 2005; Joppke, 2007; Greenwood & Robins, 2002; Young, 2003); all of which have fore grounded the perceived failures of multiculturalism. Critics of multiculturalism have long argued that a commitment to cultural diversity has allowed cultural differences to proliferate at the expense of solidarity (Greenwood & Robins, 2002; Young, 2003).

This polarisation of diversity and solidarity means that terrorism and 'disorder' can be attributed to problems of cohesion and integration, rather than to structural issues such as racism or deprivation. A common citizen identity is then proposed as a solution to the problems of integrating migrants into a 'national collective' (Kundnani, 2007) - the intention being to foster a diverse mosaic of cultures with a 'thick' common framework of citizenship (Etzioni, 1995; Young, 2003). Thus, rather than multicultural citizenship which encouraged the right to be different, this new citizenship-as-identity encourages variety within an overarching framework of national sameness.

Citizenship test are the practical way in which this new citizen identity is to be instilled by contributing, on a symbolic level, to the significance of becoming a British citizen, in that "citizenship is more esteemed and valued when it is earned, not given" (Home Office, 2003, p. 4). In addition, it is argued that knowledge of English and UK life will allow citizens to engage in public life and accept their citizen responsibilities (Kiwan, 2007). In this way, the Citizenship Test explicitly links ideas of identity to active participation and active citizenship (see Oldfield, 1990). Concepts which are in turn linked to diversity and integration, in the sense that "the more we know about each other, the less likely are serious problems to arise" (Home Office, 2003, p. 8). Moreover, citizenship tests serve the end of strengthening the moral and emotional bonds between citizens and their country, giving deeper and broader substance to the formal status of citizenship by "strengthening active participation...and a sense of belonging to the wider British community" (Home Office, 2003, p. 29).

1.2. Theorising Citizenship and Identity

New Labour's (re)conceptualisation of citizenship as a form of identity reflects academic wider debates about citizenship, which have become increasingly dominated by discussions of identity; although there seems little agreement about how these concepts are (or should be) related. For some, identity is central to understanding how people experience their rights and obligations, whether they participate, in what form, and why (Isin & Wood, 1999; Pell, 2008; Werbner & Yuval-

Davis, 1999; Taylor, 1994; Turner, 1999). Others, however, argue that citizenship and identity are antinomic attachments, because citizenship is universal, whereas identity is particular (Littleton, 1996; Morley & Robins, 1995). That is, people's identities and memberships of particular groups (and their assertion of their rights as members of these groups) are considered at odds with the promotion of universal human rights at the level of nation-state.

Central to these debates is the recognition that identity (much like citizenship) is an 'essentially contested construct' (Gallie, 1955; p. 169) - the subject of a fundamental dispute between those who wish to identify essential attributes of persons or groups, and those who claim that there are no durable attributes at all (Howard, 2000). Postmodern theorists have sought to destabilise the idea that there is some 'authentic' or essential content to any identity, e.g. as defined by a common experience, a common origin or both (Bruner, 1990; Hall, 1996; Howard, 2000). They posit instead that identity is a relational concept, as the boundaries and meanings of identities and social categories are constructed and reconstructed through talk and social interaction (Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 1991; 1994; Hall, 1996; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Importantly, this re-theorisation of identity has profound consequences for citizenship, as it requires us to move beyond models of citizenship where individuals are assumed to practice and experience citizenship in the same way. Instead, anti-essentialist theorisations of identity require a notion of citizenship that can deal with "the diverse communities to which we belong, the complex interplay of identity and identification in modern society" (Hall & Held, 1989, p.4). In this way, identities have come to be constituted as a problem of (and for) citizenship, by fundamentally challenging our notions of what citizenship is (or should be) in a postmodern world (Howard, 2000; Isin & Wood, 1999).

1.3. Social Psychological Approaches to Citizenship and Identity

Social psychologists have only recently begun to address these questions about the relationship between identity, citizenship and the meaning of belonging (Condor, 2011a; Condor & Gibson, 2007;

Barnes, Auburn & Lea, 2004; Haste, 2004). Indeed, psychologists have paid relatively little attention to citizenship, and where attention has been paid it has focused primarily on the nature and extent of citizen behaviours, e.g. by characterising those who participate in politics, or by looking at processes of political decision making (e.g. Tyler, Rasinski, & Griffin, 1986). However, while little attention has been paid to citizenship, social psychologists have contributed much to anti-essentialist theorisations of the self. In particular, critical social psychologists have sought to relocate a number of psychological constructs like identity from the private realm of cognition, to the public realm of discourse and social interaction, arguing for a focus on language and dialogue - not just as a channel to underlying mental processes or as an unproblematic reflection of events in the world - but rather talk and text studied as situated social practices (Billig, 1996a; Gergen, 1991;1994; Potter, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

In treating talk as a 'performative discourse' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 218), researchers have already begun to critically re-examine the nature of political subjectivities - demonstrating the ways in which the boundaries and meaning of the nation are constituted in and through discourse. For example, in the speeches of politicians (Hopkins & Reicher, 1996; Wodak, de Cilla, Reisigl & Liebhart, 2009), in the construction of social memories by national groups (Lyons, 1996), and in racist discourse (Gray, Delany & Durrheim, 2005; Lynn & Lea, 2003; van Dijk, 2000). These studies demonstrate that nationhood is not simply a 'top-down' political strategy, but also a socio-historical process residing between members of nation. Moreover, this work addresses the ideological processes involved in the production and maintenance of 'nation-ness'. A key example being the work of Billig (1995; 1996b) who examines the ways in which 'nation-ness' and 'national identity' are continually reproduced through mundane reminders or 'ideological habits' (e.g. postage stamps or national newspapers). Billig argues that explicit appeals to national identity are rendered possible by these mundane reminders that sustain the concept of the nation (in a world of nations) as the natural order of things.

In her work on the ways in which 'ordinary actors' construct themselves as nationalised subjects, Condor (1996; 2000)highlights that top-down assumptions about political subjectivity do not always correspond well with everyday accounts of selfhood, nationhood and civil society. For example, in a study of English respondents' talk about 'this country', Condor (2000) demonstrates that, far from being an unproblematic basis for subjectivity, national categories can be orientated to as a matter of intolerance and prejudice. In addition, studies of English and Scottish national identity have demonstrated that constructions of nationhood can vary across different national contexts, and across normative and rhetorical requirements. For example, Condor and Abell (2006a) highlights that 'nation-ness' is constructed as a progressive moral value in Scotland, but as retrogressive in England. Moreover, Condor and Abell (2006b) demonstrate the ways in which citizenship is constructed in communitarian terms in Scotland, and in terms of liberal individualism in England. Finally, questions have been raised about the degree to which national categories are necessarily realised as a form of collective 'identity', as the boundaries of the political community can also be constituted in institutional, geographic or territorial terms (Abell, Condor & Stevenson, 2006). Similarly, it is not clear that people will automatically construct citizenship at the level of the nation-state (Condor & Gibson, 2007; Condor & Abell, 2006a). Thus, rather than assume that citizenship is always understood as a form of (national) political subjectivity, it may be more useful to ask when (and why) different forms of representation are used.

It is argued that the questions posed here require a new agenda for a social psychology of citizenship– one that explores the *practice* of citizenship as manifest in and through discursive action (see Condor, 2011a). This is echoed by Haste (2004) who argues that the relocation of subjectivity from the cognitive to the discursive realm undermines the idea that citizenship resides inside people's heads (see also Barnes et al, 2004). Similarly, Shotter (1993) argues that political objects do not exist in some objective sense; rather citizenship always entails the members of a community debating the meaning and scope of such membership, in terms of 'who should belong and why'

(Shotter, 1993, p. 193). Thus, he argues that citizenship is not automatically conferred upon individuals, but is always being revised and argued over as part of the 'cultural politics of everyday social life' (p. 187). This means that it is something of a simplification to assume that certain entitlements will unproblematically flow from establishing oneself as a citizen. Instead, what really matters is the process of negotiation and contestation in which these identities are mobilised.

In this paper, we draw on this critical social psychological work on nationhood, identities and citizenship in order to examine the discursive construction of citizenship and identity in the British Citizenship Test. Given the stated aims for citizenship testing - involving notions of identity, belonging, and the promotion of meaningful citizenship – we argue that the Citizenship Test provides a useful place from which to explore the *practice* of citizenship, insofar as the Test sets out the boundaries and meanings of citizenship, as well being an important arena within which social actors are positioned as politicised (and indeed nationalised) subjects. Moreover, we argue that these ways of constructing citizenship, identity and citizenship-as-identity have important implications for the construction of national and citizen identities in Britain, both in terms of understanding of what it means to be 'British' and how one comes to be 'British'. The methods of the study, the data and our analytic strategy are discussed in more detail below.

2. METHOD

The data corpus for our analysis comprised the various books, study guides and web resources provided by the Home Office and UK Borders Agency, including:

1. *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*. This is the official handbook for the Citizenship Test. Currently in its second edition, this handbook contains nine chapters covering a variety of topics, including political structures, traditions and everyday practical information.

Currently, applicants are only required to learn six of these chapters, but all nine chapters were included in the analysis.

2. *The Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* and *Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers.* These two handbooks contain practice tests and questions based on the content of the Life in the UK Handbook. All material in these two books was included in the analysis.

3. Material from the Life in the UK website (http://lifeintheuktest.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk). This website contains additional resources and information for applicants. All material from the website was downloaded (21st April 2011) and included in the analysis.

The data were analysed using a discourse analytic method, where close attention was paid to constructions of citizenship and nationhood and constructions of identity and 'self-hood'. To start, we conducted a close textual analysis, where data were coded on a concept-by-concept basis, and where recurring discursive and rhetorical elements were identified and then named. These codes were organised into categories, and analysed both for content and for the rhetorical and organisation features of talk (cf. Billig, 1991, 1996a). We then revisited the data from a critical discursive perspective, with the aim of examining the ideological features of the discursive practices identified. Thus, in this second stage of analysis we were not only concerned with the ways in citizenship and identity were constituted in the Citizenship Test, but also to begin to relate these to current socio-political contexts and debates in the UK (cf. Billig et al, 1988; Van Dijk, 1995; 1998). We drew specific analytic direction from van Dijk (1995; 1998) who argues that it is through discursive practices that the dominant ideology is reinforced, as well as challenged, or resisted. Thus, he argues that it is important for analysts to direct their attention to the ways in which discourse structures and patterns function as representations of the ideologies of the social groups involved. The value of this approach for this study is that it enables us to explicitly link discursive practices with the ideological processes involved in the discursive construction of British citizenship as an identity.

3. ANALYSIS

In summarising our findings, we focus on three ways in which British citizenship-as-identity is constituted across the data, i.e. that citizenship is constituted as a collectively defined identity; that citizenship is contextually located as a global and national identity; and finally that the process of acquiring citizenship-as-identity is constituted as both a destination (i.e. as a cognitive accomplishment) and as a journey (i.e. as a practical accomplishment)**.**

3.1 Citizenship as a Collectively Defined Identity

Ultimately, one the main functions of the British Citizenship Test is to articulate and regulate what it means to be a British citizen, both in terms of the values and traditions that constitute a British citizen identity, as well as the practices and procedures that enable one to be called a 'good citizen'. In this way, the Test discursively constitutes the *content* of Britishness as a citizen identity, and constitutes Britishness as comprising factual content that can be learnt. Importantly, this is positioned as a collective activity. That is, Britishness as a citizen identity is constituted as being socially articulated and as collectively defined. Consider the following extracts, all of which are taken from the Life in the UK Handbook (hereafter referred to as LITUK):

**Extracts 1-4: '*Constituting a Consensus'*

1. Many parents believe that part-time work helps children to become more independent as well as providing them (and sometimes their families) with extra income (LITUK Handbook, pg. 31).

2. Many parents are involved with their child's school (LITUK Handbook, p. 33).

3. Research shows that very few people today believe that women in Britain should stay at home and not go out to work (LITUK Handbook, pg. 29).

4. All good citizens are expected to help the police prevent and detect crimes whenever they can...If you are stopped by the police you should give the officer your name and address. You do not need to answer any more questions, although usually people do (LITUK Handbook, pg. 88).

These extracts highlight a number of the issues that aspiring citizens are required to learn about for the Citizenship Test, e.g. about the role of women, parenting and policing. However, beyond this, they also highlight a prevalent discursive strategy found across the data corpus – one which we have labelled "most people believe that". This strategy takes several forms throughout the data, but generally involves the dictation of a set of actions or values that many, most, few or all people in the UK ascribe to. For example, in Extracts 1 and 2 we see that "many" people in the UK allow their children to work, and are involved in their child's education, whereas in Extract 3 it is claimed that "few" people in the UK believe that women should not go out to work. Importantly, these claims are rendered factual through recourse to 'research' – something which was widespread across the dataset where 'facts' were often taken from sources of representative accounting, e.g. the Census or the British Social Attitudes Survey. Finally, Extract 4 uses an extreme case formulation to make the claim that "all good citizens" are expected to help the police to solve crimes (Pomerantz, 1986). This goes beyond the rights and obligations of citizenship, as a citizen's right to silence when questioned by the police, is posited against what (good) citizens "usually" do in circumstances like these. In this way, the Test constructs British citizen identity as being about different forms of collective agreement about what citizens should and should not value, and what citizens should and should not do.

Several discursive studies have highlighted the way that discourses of consensus can act to produce "out-there-ness" (Potter, 1996, p. 150), insofar as they construct accounts as being shared across producers. These 'externalising devices' are often considered to have the function of fact construction, as accounts are formulated in such a way as to appear independent of the producer, thereby resolving dilemmas of both stake and accountability (cf. Potter, 1996; Edwards & Potter, 1992).Looking at the extracts above, this discursive strategy of 'most people believe that' has this function, in the sense that agency (and therefore accountability) for articulating a citizen identity is transferred from the producers of the account (in the case the Government) to the 'many people'.

Thus, it is not the government who has defined (good) citizenship as being about independence, active parenting, tolerance, and participation in the processes of policing. Instead, these are reformulated as values that are defined by the wider British community of citizens.

However, mobilising this discursive strategy of 'most people believe that' is not only related to the construction of 'out-there-ness', but also to the construction of 'in-here-ness' - most obviously in the way that the values and practices articulated in the Test are constructed as reflecting what the majority of people in the UK unproblematically believe. Thus, the Test does not articulate what 'in here' should look like, but rather what 'in here' already does look like, in that it is based on a set of normatively agreed principles. This discursive strategy is only drawn on in certain contexts. For example, while the Test is silent about what "most people" in the UK believe about immigration, despite this being a substantial portion of the handbook. Thus, some government and policy goals are reformulated as social and citizenship goals, through positioning particular ideological values about tolerance, diversity, and liberal independence as being what "most people" would believe, or what "most people" would do. Moreover, the values of citizenship are legitimated in terms of a normative consensus of views and/or practices, as opposed to the perspective of the powerful elite.

3.2   Citizenship as a Global and National Identity

A second key finding from our analysis is that citizenship-as-identity is located at a variety of levels – including global and national. In this way, the Test articulates not only the *content* of Britishness as an identity, but also the *contexts* within which this identity can (or should be) realised:

Extracts 5-6: '*A Super-ordinate Identity...*'

5. The UK has been a multi-national and multicultural society for a long time without this being a threat to its British identity, or its English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish cultural and national identities (LITUK Handbook, pg. 25).

6. The adjective 'British', however, usually refers to everyone in the UK...In the United Kingdom, national identity and citizenship do not mean the same thing.

> The Scottish and Welsh will usually say that they have British (or UK) citizenship, but that their nationality is Scottish or Welsh. In Northern Ireland some people say they are British, some people say they are Irish and some people say they are both. This depends on their political and cultural allegiances. People born in England will more often say that their nationality as well as their citizenship is British (LITUK Handbook, pg. 7).

These two extracts demonstrate the positioning of citizenship as a global or super-ordinate identity that is deliberately divorced from identities of nation or culture. That is, Britishness as a citizen identity is carefully located as a global form of collective belonging that is different from, and irreducible to, 'Englishness', 'Scottishness', 'Welshness' or 'Irishness'; which in contrast are constituted as particularistic forms of national (or in some cases cultural) identity. As in the extracts above, this global location of citizenship is often achieved discursively by the explicit invoking of a categorical distinction between citizenship and nationality (Billig, 1995; 2003) – i.e. that "national identity and citizenship do not mean the same thing". However, across the data this is also achieved more implicitly. For example, as in Extract 7, through the establishment of Britain and the United Kingdom as 'multi-national society', and by consequence 'British' as a multi-national identity.

This location of 'Britishness' at a global level performs important discursive work. For example, as in Extract 5, such positioning allows for a critique of (often unstated) arguments about how multiculturalism poses a threat to British identity (usually articulated around 'race'). Moreover, such positioning constitutes British identity as inclusive rather than exclusive (as in Extract 6), by detaching citizenship from notions of 'race' and descent (anyone can be British no matter what country of the UK they are born in), and by detaching citizenship from notions of national territoriality ('the adjective 'British' usually refers to everyone in the UK'). In this way, the Test side-steps ethno-nationalist understandings of Britishness and avoids politically-charged accusations of Anglo-centrism. Instead, Britishness is located as a more global, and therefore more inclusive, form of commonality (see Abell et al, 2006). Conversely this means that national identity (in relation to

English, Scots or Irish identity) often becomes constituted in explicitly ethnic (and more exclusive) terms, e.g. as being about shared descent.

Across the data this careful location of 'British' as a global category of identity is far from unproblematic. In almost direct contrast to the descriptions outlined above, there are numerous examples across the Test documents where both Britain and the UK are constituted in explicitly national (rather than multi-national) terms:

> **Extract 7: *'Nations and Regions...'***
>
> The UK is a medium sized country. The longest distance on the mainland, from John O'Groats on the north coast of Scotland to Land's End in the south west corner of England, is about 870 miles (approximately 1,400 kilometres). Most of the population live in towns and cities. There are many variations in culture and language in the different parts of the United Kingdom. This is seen in differences in architecture, in some local customs, in types of food, and especially in language. The English language has many accents and dialects. These are a clear indication of regional differences in the UK (LITUK Handbook, pg. 37).

In this extract, 'Britishness' is located very differently to in Extracts 5 and 6 above. Rather than being positioned as a multinational entity, the UK is explicitly located as a country – a descriptor which was prevalent across the data corpus. Moreover, it is described as having a land mass as well as territorial and geographic boundaries, which define it (and its limits) in relation to other countries, e.g. the UK is classified as medium-sized, presumably in comparison to other countries in the world (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004). In this way, the United Kingdom is constituted as a nation in a world of nations, and 'Britishness' is constituted as a national form of belonging (Billig, 1995). In other parts of the LITUK test handbook, this is also achieved through descriptions of Britain as having a 'national spirit' (p. 22), a 'national leader' (p. 24), and also national institutions, e.g. 'national banks' (p. 60).

In many ways, this location of Britishness as both a global and a national identity is indicative of a wider debate about the correct meaning and use of the terms 'Britain' and the 'UK' (see Condor & Abell, 2006a). Indeed, it has been pointed out that even academic research often employs highly

variable accounts of nationhood (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). However, these different ways of locating citizenship are orientated to the management of accounts of diversity and accounts of sameness. That is, these test documents are clearly orientated towards providing celebratory accounts of diversity - something which has been identified as a key element of appeals to British identity in formal political rhetoric (e.g. see Condor, 2011b). However, these documents are also orientating to the need to articulate a singular and enduring 'national character' (cf. Billig, 1995; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Condor, 2011b) that promotes unity. Thus, the endorsement of values of cultural and racial diversity does not preclude the need for some kind of account of enduring national sameness.

This tension is managed in different ways across the data. For example, in Extract 6 the endorsement of plurality is positioned not as a value, but as an enduring property of the category 'Britain', and hence a key feature of *what is means to be like us* (i.e. "UK has been a multi-national and multicultural society for a long time"). In addition, in both Extracts 5 and 6, the singularity of a British identity is juxtaposed against the fluidity of 'English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish' cultural and national identities. For example, it is noticeable in Extract 6 that while people's national identification is described as changeable, Britishness as a citizen identity is not. Finally, in Extract 7 these accounts of diversity are managed by shifting from a multinational to a national framework, which also allows for the shift from descriptions of national variation within a supra-national framework, to descriptions of regional variation within a national framework. In this way, the category 'British' is constructed as a container or wrapper of diversity, rather than something which is, itself diverse.

3.3   A Journey to Citizenship

In this final section, we focus on the ways in which the Test discursively constitutes the *process* of acquiring British citizenship-as-identity, and hence the ways in which a person comes to be called

(and call themselves) 'British'. In particular, analyses reveal two contrary constructions across the

data – namely that citizenship is constituted as both a journey and as a destination:

Extract 7-11: 'Citizenship as a Destination'

7. By passing the Life in the UK Test, you will show that you have the knowledge of English and of UK life that you need for citizenship (LITUK Website, Introducing the Test).

8. Which of the following statements is correct?
    A. The UK was a founder member of the European Economic Community
    B. B. The UK was a founder member of the Council of Europe
(Page 13)
	9. At what age do children in Scotland start secondary school?
	    A. 10
	    B. 12
	    C. 13
	    D. 14
	
	(Page 104)

10. How many women with children are in paid work?
    A. Nearly a quarter
    B. Nearly a half
    C. Nearly two-thirds
    D. Nearly three-quarters
(page 14)
	11. Which of these statements is correct?
	    A. Many people from Liverpool speak with a Scouse dialect
	    B. Many people from Tyneside speak with a Scouse dialect.
	
	(Page 74)

(LITUK Official Test Practice Booklet, pg numbers above)

These extracts demonstrate many of the findings discussed above, e.g. the concern with what 'most

people do' (Extract 10), and the location of citizenship at supra-national (Extract 8) and national

(Extract 10) levels. This, along with the "most people" discourse of consensus, invokes a strong sense

of the power of the normative in the constitution of Britishness. However, beyond this, these

extracts demonstrate the ways in which citizenship-as-identity is constituted as a destination - as a

series of 'facts' that can be learned, passed or failed. Indeed, citizenship here is constituted as an

identity that one can have (or achieve), as a result of learning (and showing that one has learnt) the

"knowledge of English and of UK life that you need for citizenship" (Extract 7). In this way, the

Citizenship Test explicitly constructs citizenship-as-identity as being about *knowing,* as it is only

through knowing about women and work (Extract 10), the relationship between the UK and Europe

(Extract 8), national differences in education (Extract 9), and local dialects (Extract 11) that people can access citizenship. Additionally, British citizen identity is primarily constructed as a cognitive accomplishment – as a set of facts to be learnt and as a test that can be passed or failed - as it is only through internalising this knowledge that one can move from 'out-there' to 'in-here'. This is in contrast to the notion of citizenship as a 'right', a legal status, or as a felt allegiance to a nation. Across the data corpus, this understanding of citizenship as a destination is contrasted with the construction of citizenship as a journey - as being more than passing the Citizenship Test. Instead, citizenship is constituted as an on-going process that is reliant not on *knowing*, but on *doing*, as it is through participation that citizenship is realised. Thus, alongside this construction of citizenship as a cognitive accomplishment, citizenship-as-identity is also constituted as a practical accomplishment:

Extracts 12-13: 'Citizenship as a Journey'

12. The purpose of this book is to help new migrants who want to become British citizens to become more aware of the laws, customs and traditions here. Knowing about these things will make it easier to become a full and active citizen, but reading a book is no substitute for being a part of society. By getting to know and understand your community, life will be better for everyone (LITUK Handbook, p. 107)

13. English-speaking friends, neighbours or people at work might be able to help you. This is also a good way to get to know people better, because even British people don't know all the answers (LITUK Study Guide, pg. 9)

In these Extracts, we see a very different understanding of citizenship to those presented in Extracts 7 to 11 above. Extract 12 shows an interesting discursive shift, in the sense that the Test is no longer described as providing the knowledge that is needed for citizenship (as in Extract 7). Nor, is such knowledge enough to become a 'full citizen'. Instead, it is participating in society that enables one to claim this status, and knowledge is constructed as enabling this process to occur. This extract also makes an implicit distinction between knowledge gained through books and reading, and knowledge gained through participation and doing. Thereby retaining the link between knowledge and citizenship - although, clearly it is the participatory form of knowledge which is prioritised, since it is

only knowledge gained through *doing* that makes 'life better for everyone' (Extract 12). Interestingly, Extract 13 also contains the claim that "even British people don't know all the answers". A claim which runs contrary to Extracts 7 above, where knowledge is constructed as essential to the category 'citizen'. This undermines the claim that passing the Citizenship Test can be taken as evidence of citizenship status. Instead, referencing another potential meaning of citizenship - as a felt allegiance linked to national identity. Moreover, it creates a hierarchy of a hierarchy of citizens, differentiating between those who are required to pass the Test, and already-existing citizens who do not need to even take it (or have the knowledge to take it).

According to Billig et al. (1988), these contrary constructions of citizenship-as-identity can be taken to indicate a wider ideological dilemma – in this case a dilemma of citizenship. This is perhaps not too surprising given that citizenship is a contested concept in both formal and everyday discourse (cf. Condor, 2011a; Condor & Gibson, 2007). Moreover, the distinction between citizenship as knowing and citizenship as doing echoes wider debates about the degree to which citizenship should be conceptualised as a set of unconditional rights, as opposed to political participation meaningfully constituted in interaction (e.g. see Isin & Wood, 1999; Oldfield, 1990). However, these contrary constructions of citizenship also relate to an underlying tension within the Citizenship Test itself, between the regulatory function of the Citizenship Test (determining who is able to call themselves a British citizen) and its identity function (instilling a sense of belonging to the British community). The regulatory (and legal) function of citizenship testing requires that a set of criteria be established that allows someone to be granted citizenship status. However, the identity function of citizenship testing requires that people not only have this knowledge, but to use it to claim a British citizen identity that enables them to integrate into British society. These two functions are contradictory, and lend themselves to similarly contradictory constructions of citizenship as knowing and doing.

4. DISCUSSION

In this paper, we have argued that the introduction of citizenship testing in the UK represents a fundamental change in British political discourse about citizenship, insofar as it institutes (and institutionalises) the notion of citizenship as a form of identity that migrants can visibly attain by 'internalising' a set of 'core values'. The Test is also based on a concept of citizenship-identity that can be learned (and not just 'felt' or claimed). In our analyses, we have outlined the parameters of this citizen-identity, focusing on the ways in which the Test and its associated documents, constitutes citizenship as a collectively defined identity, as a globally and nationally located identity, and as both a cognitive and a practical accomplishment. In this way, the procedures and processes of attaining citizenship are reformulated as identity practices – as a way of articulating, instilling and testing whether someone has assumed the core national values or sense of belonging to the British national collectivity, which is now a pre-condition for gaining formal British citizenship.

This (re)conceptualisation of citizenship-as-identity raises a number of key concerns. For one thing, defining citizenship as a collectively agreed identity constructs it as a form of democratic practice that represents, and emerges from, the values and actions of the majority. However, this raises questions about the right for minority values to be 'heard' within a citizenship framework, or to be part of a British citizen identity. Indeed, it has been argued that such claims move us away from affirmations of multiculturalism, toward demands for cultural sameness - albeit within a newer language of community (Kundnani, 2007; Worley, 2005). The onus is on immigrant communities to "subsume their cultural heritage within Britishness" (Kundnani, 2007, p. 26), as it is the lack of integration in these communities that is linked to extremism. However, it has been argued that it is not a lack of acquaintance with British values that is to blame. Instead, many have argued for the reverse, i.e. that widespread cultural inclusion, followed by structural exclusion create conditions for protest (Young, 2003). As these institutional and interpersonal forms of discrimination are not

addressed by the Citizenship Test, many argue that it can do little to promote cohesion and, instead, will merely promote the hegemony of White (male) Britishness (Kundnani, 2007).

Likewise, there are issues with the ways in which the form of 'Britishness' presented in the Test relates to wider social understandings of the meanings and practices associated with being a British citizen. For example, it has been argued that the 'core of Britishness' arguments ignore the centrality of both ethnicity and religion to the cultural construction of British identity (Greenwood & Robins, 2002; Sales, 2005). However, it is precisely these issues which undermine the claim that anybody, insofar as they pass their Citizenship Test and meet the criteria of entry, can have unproblematic access to citizenship-as-identity (Sales, 2005; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). Similarly, attempts to locate citizenship as either a 'global' or a 'national' identity ignores the ways in which such identities are mobilised within and across particular contexts. For example, while people in England tend to construct Britishness as a form of 'national' identity, people living elsewhere in the country typically dissociate their British citizenship from their (e.g. Scottish or Welsh) national identity (Condor & Abell, 2006a; Abell et al, 2006). This highlights that these identities cannot be unproblematically 'acquired', but rather are contested and negotiated at all levels (see Shotter, 1993). Overall, this is a question of identity legitimacy, and whether the version of 'Britishness' provided here provides people with the ability to account for themselves in ways that others find legitimate (cf. Shotter, 1993; Bruner, 1990).

Central to these concerns is the notion of citizenship (and citizen identities) as something which can be learned – transforming citizenship from a set of universal rights to a matter of technical expertise, where individuals 'levels' of attainment can be tested, passed and failed. This conflation of citizenship with knowledge is a problematic construction of citizenship, as it constitutes some citizens as more 'qualified' than others, enabling arguments that political decision-making should be rightly devolved to those with domain-specific expertise (see Condor & Gibson, 2007). Likewise, it is

a problematic understanding of identity, in the sense that the Citizenship Test broadly equates knowledge of values with the internalisation of those values in some form of identity process. However, the Citizenship Test cannot determine the degree to which a citizen identity has been instilled - all it can indicate is the degree to which knowledge has been acquired; something which is problematic given that the stated aim of the Citizenship Test is explicitly focused on identity as a means to integration. It could be argued that the aim is to promote some form of 'trickle up' effect, in the sense that the Test assures a level of knowledge that then promotes the process of identity construction – hence the constitution of citizenship as 'doing' as well as 'knowing'. However, given that the Citizenship Test visibly enables migrants to attain British citizenship as both a legal status and an identity, it is unclear how such migrants would negotiate constructions of citizenship as an emergent and on-going process that extends beyond the formality of becoming a British citizen.

Currently in the UK, there is little research into these issues. Citizenship tests were formally introduced in 2005. However, since then there has been no research on how newly instituted processes for becoming British play out 'on the ground' and amongst different sections of the population. As a result, there is little understanding of how these citizenship processes are negotiated and understood, nor of how these practices relate to the particular ways in which people are constructed, and construct themselves, as citizens or as members of a national community. Further research in this area is required, particularly given that the idea of identity is becoming further entrenched in the process of acquiring legal rights in Britain. For example, the extension of testing to those seeking indefinite leave to remain, alongside talk of migrants needing to pass "tougher tests" that focus more on British history and culture (Cameron, 2011). As such, the consequences of asking people to 'sign up to' these values, and/or pass a test of identity needs to be explored in light of other possible ways that that identity, and its boundaries, can be constructed. Without this, we necessarily have an incomplete account of the process of either being or becoming British.

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[1] This is alongside already existing requirements that applicants must have five years more or less continuous residence, stay "closely connected to the United Kingdom" and have no serious criminal record. It should be noted that previous to this rule there was an English language requirement for citizenship. However, this was never formally tested has been described as "undefined…often perfunctory and sometimes uselessly minimal" (Home Office, 2003, p.4).

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[2] Immigrants who seek "indefinite leave to remain", i.e. apply for permanent settlement status in the UK also have to pass the Citizenship Test or complete a pertinent ESOL course.