

Hugh Starkey

SIKES, P., STARKEY, H. & CONNELL, R. (2009) Citizens for our times? The role of sociology. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30, 233-243.

Contribution to review symposium of Educating the Gendered Citizen: sociological engagements with national and global agendas

Madeleine Arnot 2009

A meeting in November 2008 at the House of Commons in London, convened by the Association of Citizenship Teachers and the Citizenship Foundation to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Crick Report *Education for Citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools* (QCA, 1998) gave visual expression to a rather obvious fact. The institutions of citizenship education, in the UK at least, are dominated by men. Eight panellists at the front of the room included just one woman, the only university professor present, and she was seated at the extreme end of the line. Characteristically, the physically marginalised female citizen reacted not by drawing attention to the irony of the situation but rather by simply being more sharply articulate than the ponderous males.

This framing of citizenship education may mirror understandings of citizenship as a largely male preserve, given that men gave themselves a head start in accessing democratically attributed political power. Women have always had to struggle for recognition as political and social equals. Achievements such as rights to vote, to stand for election, to own property, to access education, to contraception and abortion are necessary but not sufficient steps to social justice. Given the continuing disparities of income and wealth between men and women, to give a single example, in the UK and

Hugh Starkey

globally, there are many national and global agendas with which citizens concerned with human rights and gender equity will wish to engage.

Madeleine Arnot has, by her writing over many years, ensured that the gender dimension of citizenship education receives scholarly attention from a sociological perspective. This book draws together key authored and co-authored publications from the decade 1997 – 2006 all of which address gender in a context of citizenship and education. It is therefore uniquely well placed to challenge the male dominance of citizenship education. I therefore approached reading this very welcome book looking for some sociological insights that might inform a political engagement with national and global agendas. Indeed, since agenda implies action and citizenship is about agency, I was hopeful of finding key elements of a manifesto.

There is a political agenda articulated in the introductory chapter. I warmly concur with the observation that the ‘extent to which the study of gender education is marginalised in current discussions of citizenship education is therefore really quite shameful’. The twin aims of the collection of papers are to make a strong case for the ‘importance of researching the schooling of the gendered citizen’ and to highlight the ‘political significance of current gender struggles over education’. The admirable intention is to contribute to defining ‘the terrain within which schools can contribute to a form of democracy which offers women and men equal status’.

Hugh Starkey

The to inform policy on the schooling of the gendered citizen, Arnot and Jo-Anne Dillabough guide their readers through key feminist debates that engage with women's position in liberal democracies, in theory and in practice. Citizenship is a feeling a status and a practice and all of these can be inclusive or exclusive. Women may feel excluded from the political or public sphere, they may in some cases lack the status to be included and they may also lack the agency to participate. The work of Carole Pateman is acknowledged in several chapters as revealing the 'fraternal pact' or underlying masculine assumptions within liberal democracy. By drawing a rigorous distinction between the (male) public sphere and the (female) domestic sphere women are constructed as less politically capable and excluded from full citizenship. The authors raise the valid question of the extent to which 'the development of educational systems mirror and institutionalise the fraternal pact'. This is certainly a potentially rich research agenda.

A gendered approach to citizenship education, as Arnot argues, challenges ways in which democracy has traditionally been taught and conceptualised. Feminists have been concerned with 'debunking myths about the egalitarian nature of democratic citizenship in the nation-state'. Civic education, with its emphasis on formal structures and the imparting of knowledge, is inadequate to provide a basis for an inclusive citizenship education. The women's movement in the UK has challenged the political agenda, insisting that the personal and the private is also the political. As Ruth Lister has argued, the scope of politics has widened as women have used their informal meetings and networks to bring forward new agendas such as protection from domestic violence.

Much of the feminist critique of ways in which democracy and citizenship have been enacted has focused on disciplinary forces. Social and cultural influences within school structures and from wider society impact on the choices that girls and young women make. This is well illustrated in Osler and Vincent's award winning study *Girls and Exclusion* (2003), a prime example of an empirical research study of gendered citizens and cited in Chapter 6. However, as Arnot acknowledges at least implicitly, the liberal concept of citizenship based on individual rights is both disciplinary and emancipatory. The encouragement of women to participate in paid employment may be liberating, but it may also serve to restrict the choices of those women who wish to be full-time mothers or carers. The requirement for migrants to learn the official language of their country of residence may be perceived as controlling, but it may also open up opportunities to women who might otherwise feel isolated (Lister et al., 2007). If women seize on the emancipatory potential of citizenship they can feel a sense of collective belonging within the polity. They can claim their status as holders of universal human rights based on the principles of equality of dignity and equality of rights. They can use the democratic spaces ensured by state guarantees of fundamental freedoms of thought, conscience and belief; of peaceful assembly; of the right to receive and impart information to practice their citizenship, acting in solidarity with and for others.

Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume are based on the results of a European project exploring the understandings of citizenship of a number of trainee teachers from four EU member states. The fact that student teachers and their trainers were found to have little

Hugh Starkey

understanding of the concept of citizenship is suggestive of a crucial agenda for teacher education in Europe. The institutions of the European Union are founded on commitments to human rights and participative democracy as the social component of a compact with European citizens, the other side of which is economic policy and the development of markets. Thus Europe depends for its legitimacy with its citizens on explicitly promoting human rights and gender equality. Education policy needs both to promote understandings of these foundational principles and to ensure that they are observed and reflected in public institutions such as schools. On the evidence of this study, as of others (e.g. Wilkins, 2001) the education of teachers as gender and human rights aware citizens is much needed.

Since Simone de Beauvoir declared that one is not born a woman but one becomes one ([1949] 1972), the discursive link between ones sex and supposed capacities and dispositions is broken. Although gender is socially constructed, however, the characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity are profoundly rooted in cultures and institutions. In Chapter 6, which explores parallel campaigns for gender and race equality, the characteristics of male and female citizens, as proposed by Ruth Lister (1997), are introduced. The identification of masculinity with action and rationality, whilst femininity requires emotions and passivity, for example, was also evident in the discourses of the student teachers in Chapters 3 and 4. One way to challenge these persistent binaries is to present them as cultural features, which in a liberal society can be borrowed, used, adapted or rejected. If men wish to develop their range of emotional expression, to act as carers or parents or home makers, these are legitimate aspirations

Hugh Starkey

and part of developing new subjectivities and life politics. The ascription of gendered characteristics by society or by schools can be challenged individually and collectively on the grounds of freedom of cultural expression. Educational projects to challenge homophobic bullying or heteronormativity are potentially sites of emancipatory citizenship education. They are likely to use ‘a pedagogy that engages critically with the affective domain’ (p.150).

By linking race equality and gender agendas in Chapter 6, Arnot engages with the influential Parekh Report on the *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (Runnymede Trust, 2000). From this she takes a transformative recognition strategy based on a ‘pluralist human rights agenda’. This addresses the tensions between human rights principles of equality and right to cultural expression or difference by re-thinking the concept of difference in terms of complex identities and cosmopolitanism.

There is a logic in the development of the arguments from national to European to engagement with minorities and then in the final three chapters to global citizenship education. Once a discourse of human rights is adopted as a powerfully emancipatory discourse of entitlements and solidarity, the focus widens to include what the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) conceptualises as ‘all members of the human family’. This metaphor of human family is in itself a cosmopolitan perspective, as is the claim in the title that the rights are universal.

Hugh Starkey

Human rights, democracy and development are acknowledged by the United Nations as essential partners. Emancipatory citizenship and effective democracy depend on the ability to claim equality of rights and access to fundamental freedoms. Development involves increasing capability. In a globalised and interdependent world, struggles to support the dignity and rights of others and to secure the environment for future generations require the kind of solidarity and reciprocity that comes from a global perspective. By adopting a human rights perspective, struggles for gender equality in one country take on a wider, universal significance. The fact that many UN declarations, conventions and policy commitments focus on gender equality suggests that the status of women in any society is a hallmark of democracy.

I readily support the main thrust of the argument in the final three chapters of the book and the conclusion that citizenship education requires a global perspective. I take issue with the adoption of the expression 'global citizenship education'. This is rightly attributed to the influence of the NGO sector in the UK and it is also true that there are contradictions and disagreements over terminology in that sector. My experience of working with UK NGOs on development education and global education over many years suggests that there is much continuity in their work, particularly in their active and participative pedagogies including engagement with the affective which have been developed and disseminated by, amongst others, some committed feminists. The gender dimension has not been overlooked by these NGOs who have ensured its presence within materials for global education. When citizenship education was introduced in England first as a theme from 1990 and then as a formal curriculum entitlement from 2002,

Hugh Starkey

development NGOs rightly saw a space for increased interest in global education. To draw attention to this some used the shorthand of global citizenship education. However, this has the disadvantage of implying an interest in developing forms of global governance. As I have developed the argument elsewhere, the more appropriate formulation is 'education for cosmopolitan citizenship' (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

This is an important book that fills a gap in the literature. It would have benefitted from another few weeks of editing to develop it from what is effectively an edited collection, albeit with the author associated with each chapter. The current format means considerable repetition and, perhaps the most significant disadvantage, the lack of a unified bibliography, although it has an index. Whilst the introductory and concluding chapters attempt to engender coherence, the revisions to the chapters would ideally have been more substantial so that the argument developed rather than emerged. That said, there is much impressive scholarship and analysis gathered here and the book invites serious intellectual engagement with its multiple sociological perspectives.

Hugh Starkey

Institute of Education, University of London

deBeauvoir, S. ([1949] 1972) *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth, Penguin).

Lister, R. (1997) *Citizenship: feminist perspectives* (London, Macmillan).

Lister, R., Williams, F., Anttonen, A., Bussemaker, J., Gerhard, U., Heinen, J.,
Johansson, S., Leira, A., Siim, B., Tobio, C. & Gavanas, A. (2007)

Hugh Starkey

Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe: new challenges for citizenship research in a cross-national context (Bristol, Policy Press).

Osler, A. & Starkey, H. (2005) *Changing citizenship: democracy and inclusion in education* (Maidenhead, Open University Press).

Osler, A. & Vincent, K. (2003) *Girls and exclusion : rethinking the agenda* (London, RoutledgeFalmer).

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1998) *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools: Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (the Crick Report)* (London, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)).

Runnymede Trust (2000) *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. The Parekh Report.* (London, Runnymede Trust).

Wilkins, C. (2001) Student teachers and attitudes towards "race": the role of citizenship education in addressing racism through the curriculum, *Westminster Studies in Education*, 24(1), pp. 7-21.