

## Urban Citizenship: Defining Citizenship as it Pertains to City Spaces

Although citizenship is evolving to address social inequities, there can be no assigned citizenship without some level of exclusion/social inequity. T.H. Marshall says that citizenship is “the architect of legitimate social inequality”<sup>1</sup> because there are different qualities, or degrees, of citizenship based on class. Despite the evolution of civil, political, and social rights, which are necessary parts of citizenship, I believe that the recipe for citizenship also must include exclusion, cultural and social belonging, an underclass, socially created vulnerabilities, assimilation, and specific duties and obligations of citizens. These elements of citizenship will be explored in this paper and conclude with the idea of exclusion as an inherent part of citizenship. First we will start with the basic elements of citizenship.

T.H. Marshall breaks down citizenship into three separate elements; civil, political, and social rights<sup>2</sup>. Civil rights are individual freedoms such as speech, liberty, the right to own property, choose religion, the right to seek justice. Political rights allow a citizen the ability to participate in politics and policy-making within a community, and have their voice be heard with respect. Social rights are the right to basic needs, such as education, that are part of a guaranteed minimum based on the “standards of the prevailing society”<sup>3</sup>. All of these rights, or elements, are meant to be the foundation for Marshall’s revolutionary concept of universal equality. Marshall believed that the freedom of citizenship must be universal for our society to continue evolving<sup>4</sup> however, in examining these rights I find that they are very focused on individualism. Our society today is a progressive one that values individualism which contributes to social inequities still being present today.

Marshall says that we need to think about social rights for all citizens in a society, but we can’t do so properly without equality<sup>5</sup>. In capitalism there must be inequity in order for there to be a market, so without unemployment present in the market, labor would be too expensive. Marshall discusses

equity in employment, specifically in the ability for a citizen to choose where to work<sup>6</sup>, but he wants to extend that equity to the social element of citizenship. But I don't think equality will fully solve the presence of social inequities. Because of our culture's value on individualism we all may start in the same place, yet we end up in many different places.

Social class is something that exists and is based on a system of inequality<sup>7</sup> that has developed within capitalism, and social rights are the mechanism by which we challenge that system of class inequality. All citizens deserve the right to pursue and be able to live the standard quality of life and get the guaranteed minimum. I think the idea of a guaranteed minimum is great, but it doesn't truly exist because there are still people with needs in our society that are not actually being met. Marshall gets us to ask ourselves what we as a society can and will do to address and create equality, but I think in that thought itself we base a lot on social inequality.

The collective idea of universal equality does not challenge the system of class inequality itself; it still supports a system of inequality. Because we value individualism and individual choices, the idea of universal equality and the guaranteed minimum are still not a just system because the system still produces inequality. The guaranteed minimum is based on "the standards of the prevailing society"<sup>8</sup>, but those standards are decided by an entity that does not represent every individual point of view in a society, especially one that values individual freedoms. Despite the guaranteed minimum for universal equality, this supposedly collective bond to include every person in society is formed based on some level of exclusion.

Marshall's "standards of a prevailing society" are based on a collective bond that exemplifies the idea of social belonging. Social belonging represents differences in how people experience citizenship in a society. Cities are good example of social belonging and exclusion, especially in Anna Secor's case study in Istanbul. Cities are supposed to be places where people can make claims and identify their

social belonging and rights<sup>9</sup>, yet there is some level of assimilation and exclusion present in order to claim those rights. In Istanbul, belonging to some larger community and/or collective is not a universal status for all because there is exclusion based on background (Kurdish, Turkish). There is no defined collective without something that is decidedly *not* part of the collective. One of the oldest forms of exclusion is in what William Julius Wilson calls the “underclass”.

Wilson identifies structural constraints that do more than just create an underclass<sup>10</sup>, but they also perpetuate the concentration of the underclass. We must examine various parts of the structure to understand poverty. Wilson says that there is no chance for equal opportunity and equal social worth when our culture values individualism attributes the status of being poor to a lack of moral fiber<sup>11</sup>. Our society has a history of segregation, isolation, and concentration of poor people. Poor inner-city populations have very little opportunity, mobility, or resources to move out, leading to socially created vulnerabilities.

Susan Cutter points out, like Wilson, that there are structural constraints in our society that create social inequities and lead to socially-created vulnerabilities<sup>12</sup>. In her case study of the Hurricane Katrina disaster the poor inner-city population had few resources to evacuate the city due to social inequities in structural support. The inequity of the poor was built into the government structure, and they became an extremely vulnerable population that displays the failure of our social support system. Going back to Wilson’s individualistic explanation of poor people, we learn that when people attribute the status of “poor” to having poor moral fiber, there is also an element of duties and obligations one must fulfill in order to be considered a citizen<sup>13</sup>.

I think there are definitely some elements of duty and obligation to achieve the status of citizenship, but these rules provide a form of exclusion from citizenship. In exploring all these parts of my “recipe for citizenship” I have found that there must be some inclusion and exclusion in society in

terms of citizenship. Despite Marshall's concept of universal equality, we see learn that citizenship is something that must be achieved by some and ascribed by others. Not everyone is allowed to be a citizen, for instance Wilson says that people getting social assistance aren't considered full citizens<sup>14</sup>. This exemplifies a somewhat clear definition of duties and obligations of people to be considered citizens, but more importantly these rules exemplify exclusion. They are the foundation for the "underclass" as well as structural and social inequalities that are, unfortunately, part of defining citizenship.

The term "citizenship" requires a definition, and in defining citizenship there is an inherent level of exclusion. Working through the readings and class discussions in the last few weeks, I have come to the conclusion that universal equality and social equity cannot co-exist with a definition of citizenship. You cannot define something without naming something that is not a part of it. Citizenship cannot be achieved or ascribed if universal equality exists. Spatial stories/grids of difference would not exist without exclusion. Although citizenship is meant to be inclusive, and despite Marshall's revolutionary concept of universal equality, there will always be someone excluded from the rights of citizenship.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>. T.H. Marshall 1998 "Citizenship and Social Class" in Gershon Shafir ed. *The Citizenship Debates*, Minnesota U Press, pp. 93-111.
- <sup>2</sup>. Marshall, 94.
- <sup>3</sup>. Marshall, 94.
- <sup>4</sup>. Marshall, 98.
- <sup>5</sup>. Marshall, 98.
- <sup>6</sup>. Marshall, 102.
- <sup>7</sup>. Marshall, 96.
- <sup>8</sup>. Marshall, 94.
- <sup>9</sup>. Anna Secor 2004 "There is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me": Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City, in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 94 (2): 352-368.
- <sup>10</sup>. William Julius Wilson 1994 "Citizenship and the Inner-City Ghetto Poor" in *The Condition of Citizenship*, Bart van Steenberg editor, Sage, pp. 49-65.
- <sup>11</sup>. Wilson, 53.
- <sup>12</sup>. Susan Cutter 2006 "The Geography of Social Vulnerability: Race, Class, and Catastrophe," Social Science Research Council, Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences, <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Cutter/> , p. 1-5.
- <sup>13</sup>. Wilson, 50.
- <sup>14</sup>. Wilson, 50.