The Nature of Citizenship in the United States and Great Britain: Empirical Comments on Theoretical Themes

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This study examines citizens' conceptions of rights, duties, and civic identities in the United States and Great Britain. By combining an information processing approach with a methodology—focus groups—that has seldom been used in political science, we have begun to explore empirical claims in contemporary theoretical controversies about citizenship. We find that in the minds of citizens citizenship is a complex matter, and that the roles constructed by citizens themselves blend together liberal and communitarian elements in ways unanticipated by many political theorists.

> *Citizen.* 1. An inhabitant of a city or (often) of a town; esp. a freeman of the city; a townsman (1514); a civilian. 2. In U.S. a person, native or naturalized, who has the privilege of voting for public offices, and is entitled to protection in the exercise of private rights (*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.*)

Concern about the quality of citizenship has become widespread in both the United States and Great Britain. On the American side, liberal individualism has been accused of creating a polity whose citizens are born alone, live alone, and die alone (Bellah et al. 1985). Educators lament the desiccation of civic education, and President Bush has called for a volunteer program of "a thousand points of light" to reinvolve people with one another and with their local communities. In Britain the topic is more politically

controversial. Thus, Muslim separatism has been criticized by the home secretary as a danger to the integrity of British citizenship. "Thatcherism" has been repeatedly accused of undermining community and Conservative ministers have responded by demanding that more British history be taught in the schools. And, worried about the decline of citizenship, the speaker of the House of Commons has been organizing conferences of political theorists to discuss these problems.

The speaker has turned to the right people, for citizenship is now being debated vigorously among political theorists. Their debates are often characterized as controversies between proponents of liberalism and proponents of communitarianism.[1] Moreover, this controversy among contemporary political theorists focuses on two views of citizenship, the contractual and the communal, which are prominent throughout the history of political philosophy (see Portis 1985; Dagger 1981; Walzer 1989). Much is known, therefore, about what political philosophers think about the desirability of these two basic approaches to citizenship. But much less is known about what ordinary citizens think about such topics. The meaning of citizenship to citizens in modern democracies is a subject of considerable importance to both politicians and philosophers who need to know what the present situation is before they can decide what should be done about it. In fact, recent political and philosophical debates have an air of unreality about them, because they are being conducted in what is virtually an empirical void.

In order to begin gathering the necessary information, we have selected for in-depth study two strategically different cases: the United States, which is often regarded as a polity with relatively contractual forms of citizenship, and Great Britain, which is often regarded as a polity with relatively communal forms of citizenship. However, before turning to our empirical findings we need to say something more about the theoretical issues involved and about the United States and Great Britain.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE CROSS-NATIONAL CONTEXT

Contractual and communal visions of citizenship are difficult to characterize concisely because they are not crystallized into two distinct positions. Hence, few representatives of either tradition would subscribe to all the claims that have been associated with the contractual or the communal vision. Nevertheless, it is possible to characterize broadly the central themes of each as follows.

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[1] Both the liberal and communitarian "schools" are quite diverse and even the "players" sometimes change. Nonetheless, statements and descriptions of the major liberal themes can be found in: Dworkin 1977; Gray 1986; Gutmann 1985; Hirsch 1986; Rawls 1971; Thigpen and Downing 1987. And the major communitarian themes can be found in: Barber 1984; MacIntyre 1984, 1988; and Sandel 1982, 1984. Walzer (1983) is categorized by some as a communitarian but he does not fit clearly in either category.

The contractual vision of citizenship, which forms the basis for contemporary liberal views, is rooted in the political philosophy of Locke and Hobbes. It tends to be legalistic and has at its core a strong conception of individualism and individual rights (Conover, Leonard, and Searing 1989). Citizens are regarded as autonomous individuals who make choices, as individuals who are bound together by a "social contract," rather than as friends and neighbors united by common activity (see Rawls 1971; Wolin 1986). Within this contractual context, political participation becomes mainly instrumental and mainly serves private interests rather than a common good. Hence, the liberal conception emphasizes the privileges of citizenship—in the language of liberalism, "rights"—and interprets them most often in terms of "negative freedoms," as protections for the individual against interference from government or society with his or her autonomy. Duties are usually relegated to the background because they constitute obligations that restrict freedom.[2] Although discussions of citizenship have, since the Enlightenment, concentrated on rights and duties, citizen identities also are important to this discussion. Liberal citizen identities are "thin" and occupy only a small part of the self, for liberal citizens are autonomous individuals who are neither rooted in nor encumbered by their public lives (Ackerman 1980; Dagger 1981; Sullivan 1986).

Liberalism has dominated modern discussions of citizenship, but its positions have recently come under attack by communitarians who speak for an older vision that originated in the "civic republicanism" of Aristotle and was recast by Medieval and Renaissance philosophers (Pocock 1975). Underlying this view, which is also frequently associated with Rousseau, is a conception of citizens who are not so much autonomous individuals making private choices, as social and political people whose lives are intertwined (Barber 1984; Sandel 1984). Such "communal" citizens share with their neighbors common traditions and understandings which form the basis for their public pursuit of a common good. And this public engagement has much to do with their identities. Indeed, identities are as central to the communal vision as rights are to the contractual. Communal citizen identities are "thick"—such citizens not only have the right to participate in public affairs but are expected to do so actively for the community's sake and for their own (Dagger 1981). Individual rights tend to drift to the background where they are regarded as contextually defined. Duties, by contrast, are brought forward because they involve responsibilities that are to be welcomed rather than shunned (Barber 1984; Sandel 1982).

As we have argued in another paper with Stephen Leonard, these philosophical accounts of citizenship are often empirical as well as normative

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[2] But even liberal citizens are not free from all duties. Minimally, they have a responsibility to respect the rights of others.

(Conover, Leonard, and Searing 1989, 6–8). Among their many empirical assumptions, two stand out. The first is the claim that *the discourse of liberalism is the dominant self-understanding of citizens in liberal-democratic societies* like the United States and Great Britain. Liberal theorists celebrate this state of affairs while communitarians criticize it. But both believe it to be true. Both also suggest a second claim: that even in liberal-democratic societies *some citizens continue to draw on communitarian self-understandings* (see Neal and Paris 1990; and Walzer 1990). It seems to us that these empirical claims, and many others like them, gloss over distinctions in the self-understandings of citizens that may require rethinking what is possible and desirable for democratic citizenship. Yet, to address empirically such claims, we need to know much more than we do at present about how citizens actually understand their rights, duties, and identities.

Of course, this is not to suggest that researchers have totally neglected the empirical study of citizenship. Over the years a variety of related topics have been explored. Socialization studies, for example, have probed the development of a sense of civic duty and political efficacy (see for example, Jennings and Niemi 1974, 1981). A burgeoning number of researchers have studied political tolerance through survey research (e.g. McClosky and Brill 1983; McClosky and Zaller 1984; and Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). And, in-depth methods have been used to probe how Americans think about justice (e.g. Hochschild 1981) and about their own political identities (e.g. Lane 1962). Such research notwithstanding, the landmark empirical study of citizenship still remains Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963), now more than 25 years old. Yet, none of these studies, not even *The Civic Culture*, provides us with sufficient information to address the empirical claims of contemporary political philosophers. This is true because most of them draw their intellectual inspiration more from sociological or psychological theory and public opinion studies than from political philosophy. What is needed now is research that explores the actual self-understandings of citizens and directly addresses the contemporary debates in political philosophy.

Our research seeks to fill this void by focusing on two contemporary democracies: the United States and Great Britain. Both are liberal-democratic societies with advanced capitalist economies, with similar electoral systems and with a great deal of political freedom. These similarities will facilitate our comparative analysis by holding constant many variables (see Eckstein 1975).

At the same time, there is good reason to expect the United States to be substantially more contractual than Britain, and therefore good reason to expect that a close look at the nature of citizenship in these two democracies will illuminate the theoretical debate. The United States has a written constitution, a prominent Bill of Rights, and a strong constitutional tradition that

provides checks and balances and many opportunities to vote representatives in and to vote them out. Britain has many fewer contractual frameworks. Its constitution is unwritten and "organic." And the notion of a British bill of rights has always been controversial.

If anything, the British frameworks seem, by comparison, communal. They begin with the assumption (an assumption that has worn thin in recent years) that the community's politicians will usually pursue the community's common good (Beer 1965). And they provide a monarch whose principal duty is to promote solidarity. Moreover, the United States is a large megademocracy, heterogeneous in its ethnic and religious traditions and characterized by a striking pluralism and geographic mobility. Britain, by contrast, is an island the size of Idaho whose population has for centuries been more homogeneous than the American and much less geographically mobile. It has also been molded more by social class. At the same time, the existence of the British welfare state is said both to reflect a sense of communal citizenship and to strengthen it (Titmuss 1970), in contrast to the political culture of the United States which is said to accent competition and individualism.

FRAMEWORK AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The present study, which is part of a larger study of citizenship and civic education, focuses on rights, duties, and citizen identities. Although these topics constitute only one segment of conceptions of citizenship in the United States and Great Britain, they lie at the core of these conceptions and therefore deserve special attention.

An essential part of understanding *what* citizens think about their rights, duties, and identities is understanding *how* they think about these matters. And an effective framework for understanding how citizens think about such matters can be found in recent work in cognitive psychology. Thus, we shall adopt an information-processing approach that emphasizes the role of cognitive structures and stored affective reactions. This suggests two lines of inquiry. First, we shall assume that people's thinking about rights and duties can be characterized in schematic terms.[3] Most people develop cognitive structures or schemata to organize their knowledge about rights and duties. We will explore the content of these schemata in terms of both the particular rights and duties that they encompass as well as in terms of the more general understanding of rights and duties that they suggest.

The second line of inquiry concerns how people think of *themselves* as

[3] A schema is a cognitive structure of "organized prior knowledge, abstracted from experience with specific instances" that guides "the processing of new information and the retrieval of stored information" (Fiske and Linville 1980, 543; for further discussion of political schemata, see Conover and Feldman 1984).

citizens. We shall assume that citizenship is a fundamental identity that helps situate the individual in society. The development of an identity can be described in terms of the evolution of a self-schema, a cognitive structure containing information about oneself (Conover 1984; Fiske and Taylor 1984). To say that people think of themselves as citizens is to suggest that they have self-schemata which intricately link their senses of self to their notions of what it means to be a citizen. Accordingly, because communitarian and liberal treatments of citizenship embody different conceptions of citizenship, they necessarily suggest different sorts of citizen identities. From a communitarian perspective, one's identity as a citizen entails identification with a community of people, and a sense of collective consciousness about the meaning of that identity. Such an identity creates an encumbered sense of self. By contrast, liberal approaches to citizenship suggest identification not with a community of people but instead with the abstract category "legal citizen," the bearer of rights.

We have employed a method seldom used in political science: focus groups. Focus group discussions are planned group conversations that are tape recorded and sometimes videotaped as well (Krueger 1988). Focus groups offer several advantages for researchers interested in discovering the commonplace meanings of political terms. Though carefully planned questions are used to stimulate conversation, the discussions themselves are not closely controlled. This encourages people to respond in terms of the language and categories they actually use in their own thinking and conversations (Krueger 1988). The same result is also promoted by the group character of the discussion: participants talk to one another in their own language, rather than simply reacting to the questions and language of an interviewer in a one-to-one situation. Finally, because individual participants may be influenced by one another, the focus groups mirror the group or social context within which many people actually experience citizenship.

There are, of course, drawbacks to this kind of qualitative research. The participants are not representative of any particular population, and thus the results are not generalizable in a statistical sense. Because of both group influence and our substantive focus on citizenship, there may also be social desirability effects. And, the discursive nature of the discussions makes coding and analysis difficult. Nonetheless, if we are to understand how people in liberal polities think about citizenship, we must begin by listening to how they talk about it and by analyzing the language that they use. Only after we have allowed them to articulate their own schemata in their own words does it become meaningful to contemplate more quantitative methods of study. Thus, we regard our analysis as a critical first step toward understanding how people think about citizenship.

In this essay, we shall analyze the results of our discussions with eight focus groups, four in the United States and four in Britain. In the United

States, two focus groups consisted of citizens of Chapel Hill, NC, a university community, and two of citizens from Pittsboro, a small rural community south of Chapel Hill. These four groups were stratified according to urban/rural residence and familiarity of the participants with one another. The four British groups were stratified by the same factors and also by social class. They were selected from four communities in East Anglia: a socially mixed district of Peterborough, which is a medium-sized new town with a sizable migrant and ethnic minority population; a middle-class suburb of Cambridge, which is a prosperous high-tech university city; Halesworth, a socially mixed small town in rural Suffolk; and the Chantry Estate of Ipswich, a large working-class council house estate. Previous research suggests that urban/rural residence as well as two of its correlates, community size and level of social integration, are likely to shape the nature of citizenship (see Barber 1984; Dagger 1981; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). By stratifying according to residence and, in Britain, social class, we sought to increase the variety in responses to our questions.[4] By stratifying according to whether the subjects were strangers or acquaintances, we sought to vary the impact of group influences over individual responses. These focus groups contained both men and women and ranged in size from 7 to 11 participants, including the interviewer who led the discussions.

Each group was asked 13 basic questions, most of which were accompanied by specific probes (see appendix A). Seven of these questions presented hypothetical dilemmas to be solved, while the remainder were more abstract inquiries about citizenship. The questions were identical in the United States and Britain, except for very minor differences of vocabulary. The discussions in the United States lasted two hours with a short break in the middle, and in Britain one and three-quarter hours without a break.[5] They each produced on average between 40 and 45 pages of transcribed text.

These transcripts were analyzed in three stages.[6] First, they were read through in order to identify descriptive and inferential codes for classifying the respondent's statements. Thus, the respondents' discussions more than the analyst's preconceptions were given the lead in developing the coding scheme. Next, the transcripts were reread to code each statement according to the scheme developed on the basis of the first reading. Finally, these

[4]The stratification by urban/rural residence in the American groups constitutes an indirect stratification according to social class.

[5]It is possible that the pattern of discussion in the two countries was influenced by the different formats. Because they were not given a break, the British discussants may have grown more weary toward the end of the session. However, there were no significant cross-national differences in the length of the discussion for the last half of the questions. Nor have we identified any other substantive differences that might be attributable to this structural difference in the two sets of focus groups.

[6]A detailed description of the coding categories is available from the authors upon request.

coded statements were subjected to a pattern analysis to identify common themes in the understanding of particular concepts (see Miles and Huberman 1984 for a discussion of the development of coding schemes for qualitative data analysis).

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF CITIZENSHIP

The focus group transcripts were analyzed with three key concepts in mind: rights, duties, and citizen identities. As we have seen, liberal and communitarian accounts of citizenship provide different perspectives on the nature of these concepts and the relationships among them. And, as we shall now see, our focus group participants also differ in this regard although not always in ways so easily categorized as "liberal" or "communitarian."

The Rights of Citizens

T. H. Marshall (1977), a political theorist, has suggested a three-fold classification of the rights of citizens: civil rights, political rights, and social rights. But, when our respondents were asked to think about their own rights, they certainly did not devote equal attention to all three types. Moreover, the varying emphasis given to each of the three types differed markedly between our American and British respondents. All four of the American groups focused overwhelmingly on *civil rights:* freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of movement. In the British groups, by contrast, the emphasis was equally clearly on *social rights:* what one discussant graphically described as "the basic rights that all human beings should have—a roof over their heads, food in their bellies, clothes on their backs, and an education for their children."

We do not wish to overdraw the differences between our American and British citizens, nor to exaggerate the predominance of the civil rights focus among the former or the social rights focus among the latter. Certainly some of our American respondents recognized the existence of political and social rights. But, they mentioned them far less frequently—civil rights were referred to 10 times more frequently than political rights—and, in the case of social rights, with considerably more ambivalence. Only one American respondent suggested that people have a right to "the basic necessities . . . a place to live, food to eat, . . . health care." Others went out of their way, in response to the hypothetical situations, to reject or at least express ambivalence toward the idea that people have a right to expect that their basic needs will be met by the community. Thus, the assumption of many political theorists that "welfare rights are integral to the contemporary sense of citizenship" (King and Waldron 1988, 417) may be much more convincing as a portrait of the British than the American public.

Similarly, some of our British citizens acknowledged the existence of po-

litical and civil rights. But in three of the four focus groups, they did so only after fairly heavy prompting by the moderator. Spontaneous mentions of civil rights were particularly rare, and then couched in indirect and negative terms quite different from those adopted by the Americans: "the right not to be murdered," "the right not to be molested," "the right to expect others to be law-abiding." Moreover, when asked directly, "What are the most important rights?" the majority of our British citizens had no hesitation in according primacy to social rights: "If you were starving you wouldn't give a damn whether you had the vote or not. It's got to be the basics hasn't it?" And the basics, as we have seen, are the rights to a minimum standard of living, to medical care, to a job, and to education. One dissenter did object, in the course of his group's discussion about the "right" of every school child to equal educational opportunities, that "it's selling the concept of rights a bit short to say you have the right to a computer in every classroom . . . the right to protection against unjust arrest seems to me much more important." But his was a lone voice.

What accounts for these apparent differences in the content of the rights schemata of our American and British discussants? Two complementary explanations seem plausible. On the one hand, different political environments in the two countries may cue different aspects of our discussants' schemata thereby making the cross-national differences appear greater than they really are.[7] Thus, our British respondents do recognize the existence of civil and political rights when prompted to do so by our questions. But, in the everyday course of events such rights are simply not uppermost on their mental agenda perhaps because they are not on Britain's political agenda, playing only a minor role in civic education and popular discourse.

On the other hand, there is also good reason to think that some of the cross-national variation may reflect very real differences. In general, our understanding of political concepts is shaped by politics itself (and vice versa) (Farr 1989). Thus, the understanding citizens have of a political concept such as rights reflects the particular historical context in which they are situated. The history of rights in the United States and Great Britain is quite different. It is to be expected, therefore, that citizens in the two countries will have different understandings of the concept.

Thus, for our American citizens the existence of a bill of rights appears crucial. It is much more than a political symbol; its listing of civil rights actually defines the very substance of how Americans think about rights (e.g., the content of their schemata). Accordingly, when Americans are asked "What are your rights as a citizen?" they think about the rights that are

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[7] In psychological terms, environmental stimuli can repeatedly cue a particular schema so that it is more readily accessible in a person's memory, and consequently may be used more readily in discussion.

necessary for the preservation of their private lives, the rights that are essential for the maintenance of independence and individualism, the rights that are central to a liberal account of citizenship. In contrast, when British citizens are asked "What are your rights as a citizen?" they immediately mention the rights that are necessary for the preservation of everybody's basic standard of living and for protecting people from economic misfortune.[8] It is not a bill of rights, but instead an equally impressive legislative achievement, the welfare state, that seems to define the rights schemata of British citizens.

The apparent influence of the historical context is further suggested by both the language people use to discuss rights as well as the actual meanings associated with the concept. Once again, the differences between the American and British citizens were revealing, albeit not always straightforward. And, once again, the differences seem to reflect the particular histories of the two countries—the prominent role of the Bill of Rights in the United States and the gradual development of political and social rights in Great Britain. Underlying the dominant focus on civil rights among our American citizens was an understanding of rights as legal guarantees: "rights is a strong word . . . it gets legal" . . . "rights are things legally guaranteed by a document." Specifically, there was a sense that rights are guarantees that ensure people's choices against interference by other people as well as the government; they prevent people from doing things that "may impact negatively on someone else." Thus, Americans tend to have a legalistic, negative view of the nature of rights, a view in keeping with liberal politics.

The fact that our American discussants thought of rights as legal protections makes their ambivalence over social rights more understandable. Many found it difficult even to talk about whether their fellow citizens have a *right* to expect help in a disaster or a right to the basic necessities of life. It simply offended their liberal sensibilities to describe such actions as rights. As one woman protested, "It's not kosher to talk about people having a right to help"; or, as another noted with frustration, "You don't say, 'Do people have a right to love?' or 'Do people have a right to be nurtured?' . . . there's certain innate things that I don't even associate as being a right." Most of the American discussants expressed genuine compassion for the homeless and for the victims of disasters—but they nonetheless balked at the idea that such people have a *right* to be helped.

Their objections to the idea of social rights stemmed from two related

[8]Indeed, it was notable that, with one exception, the British discussants never referred to individual rights but always to the rights of a group or category to which an individual might belong. The exception occurred when one person asked her fellow discussants, "Has anybody actually ever said, 'I've got my rights'?" The question produced peels of laughter. The discussants, even though relatively well-educated and affluent, could not imagine themselves saying it and evidently regarded the kind of person who did as something of an "odd duck."

sources. First, as forcefully explained by members of the rural focus groups, the idea of social rights rubs up against individualism and the work ethic and thus offends the liberal spirit. To say someone has a right to food, shelter, or help is "like saying you owe me"; and, as one citizen angrily added: "I'm sorry but there are no free lunches. Nobody owes you *anything* anymore." Secondly, some people felt very strongly that talking about helping other citizens and meeting their basic needs as a matter of rights diminishes the moral worth of these acts and renders them passionless. The notion of rights, they said, "leaves out the moral issue of citizenship." Most discussants felt that it was far preferable to provide food or shelter to a needy person because one is virtuous rather than because one is coldly and legally compelled to do so by some social right. This ambivalence about the existence of social rights reflects the influence of liberalism on American political language and on Americans' understanding of rights as legal guarantees rather than as moral claims.

The emphasis given by British respondents to social rights suggested a different understanding of the term, an understanding that reflects the evolutionary development of social rights in Britain. Two themes ran through their thinking. First, rights were neither legal guarantees nor moral claims but instead benefits to which British people were entitled as financial contributors to the social funds from which the benefits were drawn. Education, medical care, and other social rights were seen not so much as a citizen's basic right, nor as an entitlement that accompanied a legal status, but as a taxpayers' due return. The language of exchange rather than legal guarantees was frequently invoked: "[A right is] anything where you are involved in paying high taxes when part of those taxes are for education, hospitals, etc. . . . you have a right to use those facilities because you have paid for them." . . . "When you pay the rates [local property tax] you have the right to have your bin [trash can] emptied and the road swept." Thus, unlike their American counterparts, our British discussants did not associate social rights with "free lunches." They did not think of social provision as free, or costless, because they considered they were paying for it.

The second theme depicted social rights as a form of equality—equality of opportunity. When challenged about where the limits to social rights should be drawn, British discussants were careful to distinguish social rights from unlimited handouts. The "right to work" did not mean that jobs "should be handed to people on a plate"; the unemployed were expected to make an effort to find a job. It meant "the right to the *opportunity* to work." The "right to higher education" did not mean that every school-leaver, however idle or unable, was entitled to a place in college; students were expected to work hard to pass their examinations. It meant the "right to the opportunity to enter higher education:" the able should not be denied the chance to go to college simply because they could not afford the fees. In other words,

social rights were regarded as a way of ensuring that everybody had a fair chance of "getting on," of "making something of themselves."

Not surprisingly, therefore, our British respondents had less difficulty accepting the notion that their fellow citizens had a right to expect help in a disaster. Some, like their American counterparts, did consider it inappropriate for a disaster victim to *claim* a right to help. But few denied that the victim had such a right. Making the claim might be inappropriate, but that was because it might reflect "the wrong attitude." Their vague uneasiness (none were bristling with indignation) stemmed from a suspicion of the character and motives of someone actually claiming the right, when help was likely to be forthcoming. Again, the language of exchange intrudes: someone claiming a right to help was "the sort of person that you would expect to take but not to give" . . . "the type of person without insurance, a person who is always ready for a handout."

The understandings that underpin our British citizens' emphasis on social rights suggest that it would be simplistic to identify social "rights," as might easily be done, with a communitarian conception of citizenship. The substance of social rights, especially universal and "noncontributory" rights such as the health service, education, and basic income support, might be communitarian in their form and consequences. But the communitarian arguments frequently adopted by social and political theorists (e.g., Goodin 1985) in defense of social rights—the protection of the vulnerable, the unpredictability of misfortune, the strong helping the weak—found few echoes in the thinking of our British discussants. On the contrary, they used a language of exchange that, though relatively less contractual than the language of legal guarantees, is still basically contractual, individualistic, and closer to a liberal than a communitarian vision of citizenship.

Finally, both our American and British discussants offered relatively sophisticated accounts of the origins of rights, accounts that have a strikingly communitarian flavor to them. Nearly everybody on both sides of the Atlantic was skeptical about the existence of natural rights. "You're definitely not born with rights just by virtue of the fact that you are a human being," our American discussants argued. Similarly, with regard to animal rights, "they [the animals] are not born with them [rights] any more than we are. We give each other rights."

In keeping with both the legacy of the Bill of Rights and their legalistic interpretations of the nature of rights, our American citizens understood rights as something guaranteed by law and "given" by government. Moreover, although they may refer to their "inalienable rights," their discussion of these rights clearly suggested that they viewed them as "alienable." Just as the government could "give us a right," so the government "can take it away."

In contrast, our British discussants gave a more historical and evolutionary

account of the creation of rights, reflecting a consciousness of British tradi-
tion and continuity. The prevailing view was that rights had to be fought for.
"Nobody bestows them [rights], do they? Rights have to be won." They were
not given by government or a group of founding fathers but extracted piece-
meal from government by the suffragettes, trade unions, and other cam-
paigning movements.

These subtly different accounts of how rights are created led discussants
in both countries to agree nonetheless that rights are not universal but in-
stead depend on the country and the historical period in which one lives.
Rights are "relative to where you happen to be born." Rights are "a way of
society constructing itself," one of our Cambridge discussants argued. An
unemployment benefit is not a natural right but "a certain right within this
particular form of society." At the same time, there was this persistent rec-
ognition, absent in the United States, that today's rights had evolved over
the centuries: "We are going back to the rights of every century when people
have fought and died to give us our rights in this century." Rights are created
by historical communities, which pass their heritage from generation to gen-
eration. To our British respondents, rights seem "inalienable" not because
they are "entrenched" in a bill of rights but because they have stood the test
of time.

In summary, our focus group discussions reveal that many citizens share
common schemata that organize their understanding of the content, nature,
and origins of rights. But, not surprisingly, American and British citizens
operate with somewhat different schemata that reflect the particular history
and political traditions of their country. Thus, the Bill of Rights dominates
our American discussants' understanding of rights. When they think about
rights, they most naturally think about civil rights. Underlying this common
focus is a legalistic, basically negative understanding of the nature of rights,
an understanding that fits easily with the existence of civil rights but that
renders problematic the existence of social rights. When British citizens
think about their rights they most naturally think about social rights. Under-
lying their common perspective is a less contractual, albeit still contractual,
conception of rights, accompanied by a sense that these rights have gradually
accumulated over the centuries in the course of popular campaigns and
struggles. Both the Americans' legalistic interpretation and the British dis-
cussants' evolutionary interpretation leads to an understanding of rights as
alienable and contextual in origin.

Thus, as anticipated in the introduction, in both countries our discussants
present a complex mixture of liberal and communitarian notions. Liberal
conceptions predominate in the United States, whereas some communi-
tarian conceptions can more easily be seen in Britain; yet there are impor-
tant elements of both in each country and, moreover, discussants often
combine both types of conceptions in their understanding of rights. Our

American discussants' list of rights was a liberal list; their understanding of rights a liberal understanding; their language of rights a liberal language. But, their views about the origins of rights and the importance of historical context in the creation of rights was decidedly more communitarian. Our British discussants' account of the creation of rights was perhaps even more communitarian; their list of rights focused on the "positive" social rights that communitarians might be expected to endorse. But, their understanding of rights revealed a contractual and individualistic ethic that was more akin to liberal than communitarian models of citizenship.

The Duties of Citizens

"What are the duties or responsibilities of citizens?" As with rights, our four groups of American discussants shared a common schema, which they articulated in response to this question, as did our four groups of British discussants. Once again, the American and British schemata differ in ways that reflect the comparatively stronger tradition of liberal thinking in the United States and of communitarian thinking in Britain. But we were again struck by the danger of caricaturing these differences. For one thing, the cross-national differences are less marked than they were with rights. For another, they are still more subtle. In both countries, but especially in Britain, many discussants adopted coherent but mixed schemata of citizen duties, combining the language and reasoning of one tradition with the concepts of the other.

Among our American discussants, the question about citizens' duties immediately brought *political* responsibilities to mind. The "duty to pay taxes," the "duty to defend the country" and the "duty to vote" were mentioned repeatedly. Once again, the core of the common schema that our American discussants share is basically liberal in character (see Galston 1988).

The citizen duties schema shared by our British discussants contained relatively more communitarian elements. As in the United States, *bad* citizenship was defined almost wholly in terms of lawbreaking and trouble-making rather than as a failure to make a positive contribution to the community good. And, in defining the *good* citizen, very few British discussants spontaneously mentioned any nonobligatory and positive action (such as making a citizen's arrest or protesting against bad laws) as a basic duty. Instead, duties such as jury service, voting, paying taxes, and serving one's country in war were mentioned though less frequently than by the American discussants. But, far and away the most commonly cited British duty was obedience to the law, and this was combined with a more general emphasis on civility, and on obedience to community norms ("working within the system," "accepting the majority situation"). At first glance, then, the British

schema concerning duties appears more limited and clearly more passive than its American counterpart. However, the discussion of our British res- pondents belies this simple interpretation and suggests one more commu- nitarian in tone. Their strong emphasis on civility as a citizen duty does not always result in passive behavior. Instead, such a commitment may some- times necessitate active behavior in order to maintain a civil community.

Moreover, the British schema of citizen duties is understandable when the historical context is remembered. Britain is an "elitist" democracy in which citizens have traditionally thought of themselves as "subjects." In such a context, it may seem natural to place a strong emphasis on civility and the preservation of community norms while downplaying the impor- tance of those political duties which involve considerable political partici- pation.

But so far we have only touched the core of our discussants' understanding of citizens' duties—what a British discussant called "the bottom-line duties." Once we move beyond this core, we find considerable disagreement about what further responsibilities, if any, citizens should fulfill. Most of this dis- agreement concerns public involvement and social needs: political partici- pation beyond voting, community service, helping those in need, educating children (both one's own and those of strangers), protecting the vulnerable, and preserving the environment. Evidence regarding the status of these ac- tivities as citizen duties comes from two sets of questions.

The first question explicitly asked whether people who engage in volun- teer work and participate in the community are "extra good citizens or simply behaving as all citizens should?" There was much discussion and dis- agreement here. Less than a quarter of our citizens, on both sides of the Atlantic, answered it using a language of duty or responsibility.[9] Those who did so expressed their feelings strongly: "We *all* have a moral obligation to help in any disaster," an American discussant argued. "People have an obli- gation to help out and do things in the community," asserted another. Far more common, however, were those who struggled awhile with the same question, and then eventually answered it using a language of virtue. That is, they had a sense that such activities are clearly desirable, and that those who perform them are probably virtuous, indeed admirable; but such be-

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[9]Our distinction between a "language of duty" and a "language of virtue" was based on more than simply the presence or absence of a particular verb, though the verbs employed were often valuable clues. ("Duty" responses often used verbs such as "must" and "obligated"; "vir- tue" responses more typically used verbs such as "should" and "ought".) Rather, the interpre- tation of language was made on the basis of entire phrases and responses to questions. We labelled as "duty" responses those suggesting that citizens performed certain behaviors because they were compelled to do so by a legal or moral obligation. "Virtue" responses, in contrast, were those suggesting that the performance of particular behaviors by average citizens was optional or a matter of choice.

haviors are nevertheless voluntary activities that definitely go beyond the obligations of citizens in a liberal polity (see Galston 1988). As one noted, "I think all citizens ought to do things like that, but . . . those of us who *do* go out and contribute . . . are extra good because . . . to get out and to it is . . . a little bit more."

Our discussants gave three reasons why voluntary work and other forms of active participation in the community should not necessarily be regarded as a citizen's duty, all of which challenge the identification of activism with good citizenship that is often drawn by communitarian theorists. First, several made the practical point that not everyone has the resources or the opportunity to be an active participant. "I think you *should* make some kind of contribution, but I don't think everybody can necessarily get involved in working for a political movement," said an American discussant. "You can be an elderly housebound person who can't actually go out and do much and still be a good citizen," a British discussant pointed out. Secondly, respondents in both the United States and Britain wondered exactly how virtuous community activists actually are: "It's not all giving," the Americans said, "They're receiving some things back or they wouldn't be doing it"—a common and striking example of individualistic skepticism about the motives of the public-spirited.[10]

The third objection to the identification of active participation with citizen duty followed from the second. It was confined to British participants and was frequently voiced, thereby providing an important clue about the distinctive nature of citizen duties in Britain. Although on balance our British discussants respected the people who served on parent-teacher associations or provided meals on wheels for the elderly, good citizenship, they argued, was not only, or even primarily, a matter of "sitting on committees" and "creating miracles" in the community. Being a good citizen did not necessarily involve public roles, constant activity, or communal participation. "You can be a good citizen really just by looking after your own family, your own patch." Bringing one's children up "to do right," doing one's job to a high standard, being professionally competent and conscientious, caring perhaps for just one other person ("but properly and genuinely")—all were identified as equally valuable elements of good citizenship. In effect, our British discussants recognize that any one person's ability to lead "a good life" is dependent on the civility and good performance of others, thus they place a high premium on such behavior. It is tempting to characterize this quietist view as decidedly liberal in its rejection of activism and formal participation in the wider community as the standard of good citizenship. Yet, our British dis-

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[10] Members in one of the Pittsboro groups engaged in a lengthy discussion of whether one can judge an act virtuous without considering the underlying motives: "In order to classify someone as good—good citizen, good person—you've got to look at their motives." Another said, in response: "But if the end result is good, then what difference does it make?"

cussants clearly saw such behavior as a critical, positive contribution to the community.

For some, the hesitancy to extend their understanding of citizen duties beyond voting and obeying the law eased when they were presented with a series of hypothetical dilemmas. Responding to the dilemma of a young mother being hassled by teenage boys as she waits in an airport line, they assure us that they would intervene, because "We *really* have a *responsibility* to protect the vulnerable and to help people in distress." Or, "I feel it's my *duty* that women should be treated in a proper way . . . I would feel that very strongly." Similarly, when asked what to do about a small boy who is destroying public property, they say, "People have a *responsibility* to try and educate the young about what is appropriate behavior . . . Somebody's got to teach this child." Thus, citizens who abhor the notion of duty in the abstract nevertheless sometimes adopt the language of duty when confronted with specific situations that force them to consider the practice of citizenship in context.

These two sets of questions suggest that once we move beyond the commonly agreed core duties of citizenship, there are several patterns of thinking found among our British and American discussants. First, significant minorities in both countries extend their communitarian schema of citizenship duties to encompass active engagement in community and political activities. For them, community service is as much a responsibility of citizens as is voting. Moreover, contrary to a liberal perspective, their understanding of citizen duties even goes so far as to encompass the recognition that sometimes they may be required to place the community's interest—the common good—above private interests. Consequently, in some contexts they are willing to curb individual rights to further the good of the community. So, for example, immigrants may be required to speak English because we "need a common language to run the country"; or gardeners may be compelled to curtail their use of water, despite great inconvenience and cost, because "the community is dependent on it"; or smokers may be prevented from smoking in public in order to preserve "the clean air" of the community.

Second, a majority in both countries seems to have a different and fundamentally liberal understanding of citizen responsibilities which leads them to restrict their listing to the core set of activities described earlier. At the same time, however, they have obviously developed a second schema of virtuous behaviors that the "extra good" citizen engages in as a matter of choice, or that the "ordinarily good" citizen adopts as a matter of habitual practice. Moreover, for at least some people, the boundaries between these two schemata are fluid; when confronted with specific situations, what they had previously regarded as merely virtuous behaviors sometimes seem to them to become responsibilities.

These different schemata and their languages suggest two basic understandings of duty or responsibility. Those discussants who limit their notion of citizen duties to core responsibilities tend to have an individualistic and, especially in the United States, legalistic understanding of duties, an understanding that parallels their legalistic interpretation of rights. From this perspective, duties are a threat to personal autonomy, the opposite of choice and freedom, things "you sort of have to do," things one is "compelled to keep by the laws of the land." Moreover, duties are also viewed negatively. They are the "things they can get you on"; or, as one American discussant observed, "duty is a four-letter word." Moreover, such duties are seen as sterile activities bereft of normal human emotions and goodwill. People who understand citizen duties in this individualistic, legalistic, and negative fashion prefer a world with relatively few of them, a polity where people engage in virtuous behavior because they "want to do it," because of a "sense of humanity," because "it's the Christian thing to do"—but definitely *not* because they are compelled to do so by a legalistic commitment or pressured to do so by the authorities. "I would do it (help in a disaster)," one British woman said, "if I wanted to do it and it was a *human* response; but if someone just came along and said it was your duty, I would say, 'Naff off.'" That is, they prefer a polity where they can choose freely as autonomous individuals (rather than obey dutifully as citizens) whether or not to engage in desirable civic behaviors.

A second, minority, view of the concept of citizen duties stands in clear contrast to this first understanding. Here people see duties positively, less as legal requirements than as *moral* obligations. They do not find it easy to express. They try with phrases such as "They (duties) aren't written; they're just there." "You know that as a person that's what you do." For them, the responsibilities of citizenship seem a natural, unquestioned part of life—a positive, emotional experience. When fulfilling one's commitments toward the community, one naturally feels "sympathy and passion for others." "It's not a question of 'You have a duty,'" said a British discussant in a mock-stern voice, "it's because you are caring." In effect, these people are comfortable with a language of duty and a world where people engage in virtuous behaviors out of a sense of duty, because "they must," because they "have a responsibility," because it is the "natural thing to do." Such people tend to view duties in a positive sense, in a way that is alien to how liberals think about these matters.

These differences in perspective are further illustrated by considering the origins of duties. Not surprisingly, those who have a negative understanding of duties explain such origins in utilitarian and legalistic terms. As our American discussants put it, citizens have legal responsibilities "in order to keep society and government running." By virtue of being a "legal resident you have certain responsibilities." In contrast, those who see citizen duties

in a more positive light understand them as natural elements of communal life. British discussants, in particular, prefaced their accounts by saying "It's natural," "It's instinctive," "You know as a person that's what you do." Duties grow naturally out of the attachments that people feel for one another, and out of the sense of community and tradition that develops over time. They are taught from generation to generation as an almost unconscious part of the socialization process.

Again, one must be careful not to exaggerate the communitarian perspectives or the cross-national differences. Among our British discussants, easily the most common account of the origins of duties invoked reciprocity in the form of a homespun version of Christ's "Do unto others . . .": "I would want them to help me if I was in the same position," or, as was said repeatedly, "There but for the grace of God go I." This does not necessarily involve calculation, or even utilitarian motives. It is not so much a matter of calculating, "If I help them this time, they will help me next time," as a matter of regarding empathy ("How would I feel?") as the most comfortable terms in which to think about virtuous behavior toward others. Communitarian feelings about citizenship are in these ways blended into what are essentially liberal conceptions of how duties evolve.

In summary, our focus groups in both countries share a common understanding of the core responsibilities of citizenship. Central to this basic understanding are the fundamental duties that are necessary for the preservation of civil life (e.g., obedience to the law, respect for the rights of others) and for the preservation of the political system (e.g., paying taxes, serving on juries, voting). This is not to suggest that there are no cross-national differences concerning the core responsibilities of citizenship; the British listing, in fact, does tend to be more passive reflecting a "subject" orientation. But, the most obvious cross-national differences involve not so much the content of the core as they do an appreciation for the routine performance of the core duties. Specifically, our British discussants seemed far more sensitive to the value of civility and the reliable performance of other basic duties than did our American discussants.

Setting aside the core duties, in both countries people differ sharply over other forms of citizen behavior such as public service, aid to the needy, and political participation beyond voting. Most argue that these are not so much *responsibilities* of citizenship as they are virtuous behaviors that individuals might or might not choose to do. Underlying this assessment is a liberal perspective: a basically negative view of duties as legal requirements stripped of emotions, as unavoidable byproducts of legal citizenship. At the same time, a sizeable minority of the discussants incorporate such citizen behaviors into their conceptions of the *duties* of a citizen. Underlying their interpretation is a more communitarian perspective: a basically positive view that characterizes duties as moral obligations infused with a sense of care

and concern, as natural manifestations of a shared life; and a view that allows for the possibility that one's duty to the community may in some instances override one's rights as an individual.

Thus, our focus groups suggest that the discourse of liberalism is indeed dominant in America and, to a lesser extent, in Britain. They suggest further that in Britain and, to a lesser extent, in America, citizens nonetheless have significant communitarian self-understandings—and that all these beliefs are far more complex and subtly interwoven than anyone had anticipated. They are also deeply embedded in citizen identities, to which we now turn.

Citizen Identities

We shall begin by considering how our American discussants think of themselves as citizens and as Americans and how our British discussants think of themselves as citizens and British. We shall then explore the centrality of these political identities to their self-conceptions.

Commentators from Tocqueville (1969) to Huntington (1981) have noted that abstract ideals of the "American Creed" like freedom, individualism, constitutionalism, democracy, and social egalitarianism play a central role in defining the American identity. But in many other countries, including Britain, national identity is characterized as more "organic," as rooted in a love of the land, a common culture, or cherished traditions.

So, when asked, "What does it mean to be an American?" and "What makes you feel like an American?," all four American focus groups offered the same response: freedom. "Being an American is to be free, to speak up for yourself, to fight for your freedom." Being an American is to be an individual with choices, to be "in control of your own destiny." Being an American is to savor the fruits of individual choice: "economic achievement," "Yankee ingenuity," "self-expression." Similarly, when asked, "When do you feel most American?," our discussants cited emotional events that involved powerful symbols of freedom and individualism: the Iranian hostages returning to freedom; the playing of the national anthem; young American olympians who have become the best that they can be. At the core of our discussants' identities as Americans is a fundamental sense of having important rights that ensure freedom and encourage the development of the individual. "*As an American* you're born with rights." In essence, to be an American means "you've got rights."[11] Constitutionalism, egalitarianism, and even democracy were seldom mentioned. Thus, Americans forge their identities by drawing on those elements of the American creed that are relevant to the

[11] How Americans think about rights is central to understanding how they think of themselves as Americans. Their rights schemata are incorporated into their self-schemata, or identities, as Americans. From the perspective of the individual, what it means for "an abstract person" to have rights becomes what it means for "me" to have rights.

conduct of their private lives and less on those elements that mold the nature of public life.

When our British discussants were asked the same questions, a very different set of responses resulted. For one thing, they encountered more difficulty in articulating their Britishness. Despite the country's cultural homogeneity, no common or dominant theme emerged, and certainly no political equivalent of the American Creed. Across the four focus groups, only a single discussant defined Britishness in constitutional or political terms. For the rest, their sense of being British was, indeed, "organic." A few found it in an attachment to the physical land: "I feel proud of the countryside . . . I feel intense pleasure at being able to *live* in England." A few found it in a variety of supposedly distinctive characteristics: being British meant "eccentricity and tolerance of eccentrics"; "queuing"; "putting up with things and not complaining." But the majority understood "Britishness" in cultural terms. It was "a matter of attitude," "a feeling," "a sense of belonging." Where did this feeling and sense of belonging come from? Certainly not from a legal document. It could only be acquired slowly and "naturally," as a legacy of values handed down by one's parents and grandparents; as a result of living in Britain for a very long time; by "fitting in" with the rest of the community. It was a heritage: being British was to take pride in past national triumphs, especially military ones against the odds: the Armada, Trafalgar, Waterloo, World War II (the most often cited), and the Falklands.[12] Moreover, it was a shared heritage: to feel British was to submerge one's sense of individuality into a collective identity and not, as in the American case, to accentuate it.

How do our discussants' identities as Americans or British fit with their sense of themselves as citizens? More generally, "What does it take to be a citizen? What makes someone a citizen?" As Walzer (1989, 216) notes, there have been two main responses to these questions in the history of political philosophy, one basically communitarian, the other basically liberal: "The first describes citizenship as an office, a responsibility, a burden proudly assumed; the second describes citizenship as a status, an entitlement, a right or set of rights passively enjoyed. The first makes citizenship the core of our life, the second makes it its outer frame. The first assumes a closely knit body of citizens, its members committed to one another; the second assumes a diverse and loosely connected body, its members (mostly) committed elsewhere."

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[12] A woman discussant said: "I was proud to be British when I was in America. I wouldn't give up British citizenship . . . I just felt I didn't want to be an American citizen . . . even though I really liked it. I wanted to retain being British." Interviewer: "When you say that you wanted to go on being British, what did you associate being British with?" Discussant: "'Cause of the Royal Family, I think. The traditions. You look back and you think—'cause America is different to us—They haven't got a royal family . . . so it's different."

Both understandings of citizenship are found among our American and British discussants. The majority in both countries view citizenship strictly as a legal entitlement. From this perspective, citizenship "is simply a condition recognized by law which entitles you to protection by passports . . . to pay your taxes . . . Don't ask me for the precise list. There's a sequence of legal rights." Citizenship "is a question of legality really. You were born here and you were registered here—that's as far as it goes." Moreover, the notion that obligations might be associated with this citizenship is almost always regarded as troubling. For example, a British discussant objected that he "didn't see how you can earn citizenship when you're planted here by birth." Yet, other discussants clearly saw citizenship as much more than a legal entitlement. While "technically" people might become citizens by virtue of the circumstances of their birth, they argued that there is a more fundamental sense in which people become citizens "by being involved in what's going on, a part of the community." "A citizen means someone who represents their community . . . They are involved in whatever small way." "Legally you're a citizen if you have a passport," they acknowledged. "But, you have to earn it to *really* deserve the title." This was the minority view, especially in Britain.

Because the nature of national identity differs so markedly between Britain and the United States, the relationship between our discussants' sense of identity and sense of citizenship also differed considerably. Let us consider the Americans first. Many of them merge their sense of identity as Americans with their sense of identity as citizens into a *single* identity or self-schema. What it means to be a *citizen* in America is simply what it means to be an American: a person with rights. And these are precisely the same people who defined their citizen duties very narrowly, legally, and negatively. For them, rights far outweigh duties in defining their sense of citizenship. Furthermore, they lack a sense of citizenship beyond that defined by their national identities. When asked what it meant to be a citizen in their local communities, they replied: "I don't think the term citizen is used that way"; and "When you talk about citizenship, I don't really think of the local, I think more of the national." By focusing on the national level, such discussants are able to live in their local communities as private individuals unencumbered by the demands of a public identity. For these Americans, citizenship is simply not a central aspect of their identities. They seem to experience citizenship largely as liberal theorists would have them experience it.

This ability to "wear" their citizenship lightly is reflected in their relative lack of interest in discussions about the traditions and history of their country. And when they do talk about such topics, they speak cognitively and abstractly rather than emotionally and concretely because they do not feel rooted in their communities. Similarly, compared with their community-

oriented neighbors, they display fewer signs of "civic wisdom," by which we mean a capacity to envisage a common good and take this into account in their discussions. Thus, even when they act in ways that benefit the community, they give these acts a liberal interpretation, devoid of notions of common good. For example, when they explain why they would intervene to prevent a child from destroying property in a public playground, they say it is because "*my* taxes are paying for the playground"; or "if it's a public park, it's *my* property too."

By contrast, a minority of our American discussants describe their sense of identity as Americans and their sense of identity as citizens as complementary but not blended, not as one and the same. In psychological terms, their two self-schemata remain somewhat distant. Being an American is to be a person with rights. But being a *citizen* in America is to be a person with rights *and* duties. This understanding of citizenship is based on a broader conception of duties as positive moral obligations toward one's fellow citizens. And the roots of this identity naturally extend below the national level to experiences within the local communities where people live their everyday lives and develop their connections with one another. To be a citizen is in this sense to be encumbered, desirably encumbered. "It's just *what I am* to be involved in what's going on in my community, in my children's lives, in my family's lives, in my neighbors' lives." Citizenship for these discussants is a central aspect of their identities. They seem to experience citizenship largely as communitarian theorists would have them experience it.

The encumbered character of their lives is revealed by the fact that they talk about their country's history and traditions much more than their more liberal neighbors do; and their "rootedness" comes through in their concerns. They are disturbed that the beaches where they once played as children are now spoiled by "beer cans, soda cans and dirty water." And they are concerned that "If you don't study those things [their country's history]," and understand them, "you become like those people who think that being an American has to do with being able to go to a McDonald's on every corner." Finally, our communitarian citizens express signs of some of the "civic wisdom" that their liberal counterparts appeared to lack. When explaining why they engage dutifully in activities that benefit the community, they are more likely to suggest a vision of the common good. They, too, would stop the destructive child in the playground, but they would do so because "it's *our* property, *community* property."

National identity and sense of citizenship stand in a quite different relationship to each other among our British discussants. In Britain, unlike the United States, the individual's sense of identity as British and sense of identity as a citizen are certainly not blended nor even complementary. As we have seen, most of our British discussants adopted comparatively communitarian schemata of national identity but comparatively liberal schemata of

citizenship. As a result, their conceptions of national identity and citizenship were quite distinct and, in some cases, opposed. The large majority regarded "Britishness" as a cultural and communal heritage that was not necessarily a birthright and could not be easily or automatically obtained. By contrast, they viewed "citizenship" as a technical term that defined the legal entitlement and duties of people who were either born or lived in Britain—as a formal status that did not have to be earned.

The distinction between these two schemata was underlined in discussions about the relationship between nationality, citizenship, birthplace, and residence. There was general, although not universal, agreement that people born in Britain should automatically be entitled to British citizenship. But by no means could all British citizens be considered truly British: "Sikhs and Hindus and Muslims, they are born here, their children go to schools. And what I find very hard to understand is why they are living in such close-knit communities . . . in a separate part of town to everyone else . . . as though they are living in Pakistan or India or whatever. I can understand them not saying that they feel British even though they are born here." Equally, to have neither lived nor been born in Britain did not preclude people from being "British" if they had a sense of being British through feelings for or connections with Britain, as for example the people of the Falklands and Gibraltar appeared to do. One British discussant drew the distinction between her identity as British and her identity as a citizen even further:

> I sent off my passport a little while ago. That said that I was a citizen—and I didn't particularly want to be a citizen, I wanted to be a subject.
> Interviewer: Why would you rather be a subject than a citizen?
> Discussant: Because I think if I am a subject, then that means that me and my family go back a long way in this country. But if I am a citizen, that means that anybody could come over here and after they have been accepted they can be a citizen—and they are not the same as I am.

It is clear from this and many other remarks that most discussants attached far more importance and value to their sense of Britishness than to their sense of citizenship. In stark contrast to some of their American counterparts, their sense of citizenship played only a peripheral part in their self conceptions, whereas being British was central to these identities. Indeed, a minority possessed such a decidedly cultural concept of Britishness that they wished to restrict citizenship to those who were not only born in Britain but were, in addition, obviously "British."[13] Contrary to the assumptions of

[13]The following exchange in one focus group is illustrative. Interviewer: "Do you think of everyone born here as being a British citizen?" First discussant: "I'd like to think that, but I don't think I do. I'd like to think that all colors and creeds are British citizens. But I think that in reality . . . I might say they are not. They come from another culture . . . I think that I have a slight antifeeling toward them if I am truly honest, in that I feel they are invading our coun-

some communitarians, a strongly communal sense of national identity need not translate itself into a communitarian concept of citizenship, and when it does, it may produce exclusionary attitudes of a kind they would abhor, as liberals have warned.

CONCLUSION

Although the liberal-communitarian debates have been mainly concerned with normative ideals of citizenship, they have put forward important empirical claims which we have used to focus our cross-national investigation. One is that the discourse of liberalism is the dominant self-understanding of citizens in liberal democratic polities, a claim we have explored in relatively communitarian Britain where, presumably, it is less likely to be so than in relatively contractual America. The second is that some citizens nonetheless continue to draw on communitarian self-understandings, a claim we have explored in America's highly mobile and culturally plural society where, presumably, it is less likely to be true than in Britain's comparatively stable and homogenous environments. With regard to the topics of rights, duties and identities, our empirical data suggest that both claims are essentially correct. But they also suggest that the meaning of citizenship is far more complex and ambiguous than the generalities in these debates imply.

The dominance of the discourse of liberalism can best be seen in the common—yet nationally distinct—schema that nearly all our respondents share about rights. In the American case, liberal assumptions underpin both the content and language of rights. In the British case, the content of rights may be more social, but the language of justification is again liberal. More diverse segments of the public may hold different rights schemata which we have not yet seen. But we are impressed by the extent to which a single understanding of rights, a liberal understanding, has shaped the conversations in all of our focus groups.

Thus, our American discussants nearly all conceive of rights as legalistic protections against interference with their individual choices—protections against interference from government, society or other individuals. In their discussions, they concentrate on the rights that are necessary for maintaining their independence and individualism: civil rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of movement, freedom to become whatever one wants to become. British discussants, on the other hand, give primacy to social rights which place responsibility for basic provision in the hands of the community and reallocate resources on the basis of need. Yet these rights are justified in a liberal language of exchange and individual

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try." Second discussant: "Don't you feel that might change? If they are born here . . . and grow up here, they (would) be more accepted as citizens?" First discussant: "Yes, well obviously they become more and more English-oriented with each generation."

opportunity—not in a more communitarian language of "protecting the vulnerable" (Goodin 1985). This Anglo-American difference in the listing of rights seems to reflect historical differences in the evolution of rights. And it calls into question the assumption that a sense of community is a prerequisite for ensuring a just distribution of basic goods (Walzer 1983). It was the most communitarian Americans who were most suspicious of social rights, and the most contractually minded British who took then most for granted.

The most liberal of our discussants are mainly concerned with rights, though they accept that citizens have a set of core duties (obeying the law, paying taxes, voting, and defending the country). They part company with their more communitarian neighbors over the nature of responsibilities toward public involvement and community service. The most liberal citizens see such activities as virtuous but not as obligatory. Their view of citizen duties tends to be negative, legalistic, and utilitarian; albeit when discussing particular situations some of them, almost despite themselves, lapse into the language of duty. By contrast, those citizens with the most communitarian sentiments place a much greater emphasis on citizen duties, particularly on public involvement, and community service. They regard such activities as moral obligations that are grounded in membership in the community and are positive, pleasurable experiences. And in some instances, they are even willing to curtail individual rights in order to further the good of the community. It is striking that most citizens with strong communitarian predispositions come from the small rural communities of Pittsboro, NC and Halesworth in Suffolk, although there were also more in Cambridge than in Chapel Hill. This is consistent with the notion that communitarian forms of citizenship flourish more among people who regard themselves as friends and neighbors rather than as strangers.

Judged by their conception of citizen duties, there were more citizens with communitarian leanings in Britain than in the United States, as we had expected, although they constituted a minority in both countries. It is perhaps not surprising that citizenship in America, or even in Britain, is predominantly liberal in character. Nor is it surprising that within this liberal context some communitarian orientations can be plainly seen. What is surprising, however, is the many different ways in which our discussants combined liberal and communitarian themes. In both countries, we found mixed types whose self-reported conduct seemed to reflect one tradition but whose discourse seemed to reflect another. This was particularly true of Britain where communitarian behavior was often explained from a liberal perspective. For example, just as British citizens justify social rights in individualistic terms, so, too, do they explain their communitarian views of citizen duties more by reference to self than by reference to community. *Pace* some communitarian theorists, a strong sense of community may not always be necessary for citizens to learn civic virtues effectively.

An adequate theory of democratic citizenship in modern polities must

address the different ways in which liberal and communitarian themes can be and are combined, for the most intriguing finding of our work thus far is not so much that there are two types of citizens, as that these types are very broad "umbrella" types each of which covers a range of mixed types that contain important elements from the other side. We need to know much more than we do at present about the nature of these empirical types and to understand how citizens blend together elements into a mix that many liberal and communitarian theorists regard as improbable. For example, the most liberal citizens in our study are most liberal with regard to their citizenship in the nation. When they focus on the local community, they begin to behave and speak more like communitarians, although not like communitarian *citizens*. That is, they participate in community and political activities, but they participate mainly for individualistic reasons rather than for civic motives.

From this perspective, surely the most important implication of our research for a theory of democratic citizenship is that it is possible to have some of the benefits of communitarianism in a basically liberal polity. It is not true, as liberal theorists sometimes claim, that communal citizenship is only feasible in very small and very homogeneous communities and therefore cannot be achieved in modern societies (Hirsch 1986, 441). Perhaps it is most likely to flourish in *relatively* small and homogeneous communities, and perhaps it cannot be *fully* achieved in a modern liberal democratic polity. But even huge, pluralistic societies like the United States encompass close-knit local communities.[14]

In a society of strangers, it makes sense to cast one's role as a citizen in liberal terms. In a community of friends, it makes sense to pursue communitarian ideals. Yet modern liberal-democratic polities are neither societies of strangers nor communities of friends. Instead they are both—and our citizens seem to have accommodated themselves to this fact by developing modes of citizenship that encompass both liberal and communitarian themes.

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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Listed below are the basic focus group questions and the first set of planned probes. For each question there were additional planned probes that were used depending upon responses to the first set of probes. However, in the interest of space, we do not present those here.

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[14] Indeed, in light of modern transport and telecommunications, even the assumption that meaningful communities must be territorially based should perhaps be questioned.

1. Suppose there was a major disaster—such as a flood or fire—that hit a
    part of your community, but *not* your own home. Would you be willing to
    do something to help those people out?
    If "YES:" What would you do? Why would you help? Would you still be
        willing to help if the disaster was in another town? Another state? An-
        other country?
    If "NO:" Why wouldn't you do something to help those people? Would
        you do something if there were specific directions about what needed
        to be done? . . . For example, if the Red Cross announced that it
        needed clothes or food left at a specific place? What if the disaster af-
        fected your neighbors right down the street? Would you help then?
    Ask of All Discussants: In circumstances like these, do people have a *right*
        to expect that other members of the community will help them out?
    Ask of All Discussants: In circumstances like these, do members of the
        community have a *duty* to help out those affected by the disaster?
2. Think back through American history. What are the tales and legends
    that you remember best? Which of those tales make you feel most proud
    to be an American? What is it about "event named" that makes you proud?
    What are the tales and events that make you ashamed to be an American?
3. What makes you feel like an American? That is, what are the events or
    experiences that make you feel most like an American? What ideas or
    characteristics make you feel like an American?
4. When people say they are "citizens" of a nation what do you think they
    mean? That is, what makes someone a citizen of a nation?
    If Because They "Live" There: What is it about living somewhere that
        makes people citizens? Does the fact that an immigrant—that is some-
        one born in another country that comes to this country—lives in a place
        entitle him or her to say that he or she is a citizen?
    If Because They Are "Born" There: Do you mean that citizenship is a
        birthright?
    If Discussants are Unsure: Does citizenship have to be *earned* or are we
        just *entitled* to it by virtue of our birth or residence?
    Ask of All Discussants: What about when people say they are "citizens" of
        a local community, do they mean the same thing as when they say they
        are citizens of a nation?
5. It is often said that *citizens* have certain *duties*. What do you think these
    duties are? Any others? What would you say are the most important du-
    ties? Which are the least important? What duties would a *very good* citi-
    zen undertake? What duties would a *particularly bad* citizen ignore?
    Where do duties come from? That is, when people say they have duties
    as citizens on what grounds do they base their claims? We have been
    talking about duties now for several minutes, so let me ask one last ques-
    tion about duties. What exactly do *you* mean when you say that citizens
    have certain duties? Do you mean that they have certain legal obligations

or do you mean that there are certain things that people *must* do if they
are citizens even if it is not their legal responsibility?

6. It is often said that *citizens* have certain *rights*. What do you think these
    rights are? Any others? What would you say are the most important
    rights? Which are the least important? Where do rights come from? That
    is, when people say they have rights as citizens on what grounds do they
    base their claims?   Only If Necessary Probe: Are people born with rights
    or are they granted rights by their communities and nation? Do people
    have certain natural rights just by virtue of the fact that they are human
    beings?

7. Think about those people who give blood, or do volunteer work in the
    community. Do you think such people are "extra good" citizens or are
    they simply behaving as "all" citizens should?

    If "Extra Good:" Why can we only expect extra good citizens to perform
       this way? In what sense are these activities "above the line of duty"
       from what we expect of one another as citizens?

    If "All:" What allows us to expect that all people should behave in these
       fashions? In what sense are these activities those that we would expect
       of all citizens?

    Ask of All Discussants: Do citizens have an obligation to help one another
       and to help the community as a whole?

8. Suppose that there was a drought that led to a water shortage. To con-
    serve water, the town ordered all citizens to stop all watering of lawns and
    shrubs. On your way to work, you notice that I am watering my lawn.
    Assuming you had the time, would you stop and talk to me?

    If "Yes:" What would you say? What if I told you: "I've just invested a
       thousand dollars in landscaping and countless hours watering and caring
       for the yard. I have a *right* to water." If I wouldn't agree to stop water-
       ing, would you turn me in to the authorities? Why or why not? Would
       you still stop and talk to me if I was your neighbor and friend? Would
       you turn me, your friend, in?

    If "No:" Why wouldn't you stop and talk? Even if you don't say something
       to me *would* you like to say something to me? What? If you wouldn't
       talk to me would you turn me in?

    Ask of All Discussants: In your reaction to the stranger, would it make any
       difference if you knew that there had been many such droughts and the
       town had nonetheless failed to enlarge the water supply? Suppose your
       family had also planted a new lawn, but you had stopped watering when
       the town ordered it? Would it make any difference in your reaction to
       the stranger? Would it make you more angry? Or any more likely to
       stop and talk to me, or to turn me in?

9. Suppose you were at the airport in a long line waiting to check in. Behind
    you is a young woman, alone, with two small children. Suddenly you no-

tice that two young men, well-dressed and with expensive luggage, are pushing their way into the line ahead of the woman. And, in addition they are loudly making crude remarks about the young woman. Pretend that I am one of the young men. How does my behavior make you feel? Would you say anything to me?

If "Yes:" What would you say? Why would you say that? What if I replied: "Why we're just having some fun . . . it's not hurting anyone," or "Why do you care . . . we're not bothering you?"

If "No:" What would you like to say to me, even if you don't say anything? Why wouldn't you say anything?   Probe for Reasons: Does it happen so much that it isn't worth the effort? Would you be afraid that they might say or do something to you? Do you simply see it as not your responsibility?

Ask of All Discussants: Would you be more or less likely to say something if the person they cut in front of was a man? What if the person they cut in front of was elderly? Do we as individual citizens have a responsibility to ensure that our fellow citizens behave in public? Do we have a responsibility to protect vulnerable people like this woman from the rudeness of others?

10. You are walking in the park and you see me, a small eight-year-old boy, destroying some playground equipment. How does it make you feel? Why? Do you stop and say anything to me?

If "Yes:" What do you say? What if I reply: "Mind your own business. . . ." Or, "Its not your property, what do you care?"

If "No:" What would you like to say to me, even if you don't say anything? Why don't you say anything? Would you call the authorities?

Ask of All Discussants: Would it make any difference in your answer, if the boy was defacing a dirty tunnel wall that many people had already defaced? Do we have more of a responsibility to ensure that children don't destroy public property than we do with adults? Do we have a responsibility as citizens to help preserve public places?

11. To change the topic a bit, some people have proposed that the United States should have a program of compulsory community service: something like the Peace Corps but helping here at home, in the United States. This program would *require* all young men and women to spend two years working for the country after they graduated from high school. Would you be in favor of such a program?

If "Yes:" Why? How would it benefit the country? How would it benefit the young person?

If "No:" Why not? Would it matter if it was only for one year?

Ask of All: Do countries have a right to expect such service from their young people?

12. Let's say that *personally* you would benefit from tax cuts. But at the

same time you feel certain that it is not in the country's interests for taxes to come down, that if taxes are reduced it will seriously damage the nation's economy. Would you vote for the party that promised to cut taxes or, at worst, to maintain them at current levels, or would you vote for the party that felt taxes would have to be raised?

13. Suppose you are a school superintendent in a small school district in Southern California. Your school district is a mixed district with a large number of Mexican-American children. Many of the parents of these children are campaigning for the schools to be made bilingual—that is, basic instruction in Spanish as well as English. Are you going to support them or not?

If "Yes:" Why? Do people have a *right* to have their children taught in their first language? Can these children become good American citizens if they can't speak English?

If "No:" Why? Do people have a *duty* to have their children learn English? Do they have a *duty* to make English their first language? Is speaking English important to being a good citizen? Is this fair; don't they have a *right* to preserve their culture? Isn't that what America is all about? Is it enough for citizens to learn the language or should they have to give up their native culture and traditions as well? Would it make a difference if the parents were very new immigrants?

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