In the Name of Citizenship: The Writing Classroom and the Promise of Citizenship

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Kathleen Yancey's 2009 NCTE report, "Writing in the 21st Century," invokes the concept of the "citizen writer" throughout in order to support new models of writing available in the twenty-first century. In the introduction, Yancey declares, "This is a call to action, a call to research and articulate new composition, a call to help our students compose often, compose well, and through these composings, *become* the citizen writers of our country, of our world, and the writers of our future" (1; emphasis in original). The charge of producing citizens has long been a mission of education in the United States, beginning with the work of Horace Mann through John Dewey and other Progressive-era pragmatists, and continuing in New Left education movements (for example, Students for a Democratic Society) and the more recent rhetoric of the Spellings Commission. Production of the citizen often remains at the center of recent discussions about higher education, which has incorporated shifts in educational goals over time from more explicit civic skills toward vocational ones. Whether for vocational or liberal education, production of the citizen remains an uncontroversial stronghold in the rhetoric surrounding educational objectives. As Yancey and the many references to citizenship in syllabi, textbooks, policy documents, and scholarship demonstrate, the will to produce citizenship through the teaching of writing is strong.

Scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition often promotes the idea that successful writing instruction plays a key role in the preparation of good citizens, situating the classroom as a space that can reinvigorate democratic and participatory citizenship (see Campbell; Eberly; Ervin; Flower; Gilyard; Simmons and Grabill; and Weisser, to name just a few). Writing teachers often see citizenship building as an

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integral goal of the classroom, and scholarly investigations about writing classrooms take up the compelling concept of citizenship in a variety of ways, offering some familiar configurations: a potential antidote for students' impoverished citizenship through the transfer of skills to critically engage (for example, critical pedagogy); a space to encourage participation in the outside world (for example, service learning, community literacy, and ethnography); or a way to cultivate the use of writing skills to participate in citizen discussions (for example, public writing, letter-to-the-editor assignments, and blogs). But what often goes unarticulated in these configurations is how writing skills and other literate practices actually make citizens—that is, what kinds of citizens we hope to cultivate when we talk about citizenship in relation to literacy.

Defining citizenship in the context of writing instruction means trying to figure out the seemingly central importance of citizenship to education in general, and for our purposes, to literacy learning. To this end, writing teachers must ask two crucial questions: (1) What assumptions and implications surround the frequent use of citizenship as a rationale and goal for literacy learning? (2) What kinds of civic behaviors are administered through university-styled literacy? Embedded in these questions is the assumption that successful writing instruction plays a key role in making good citizens and situates the classroom as a space that can reinvigorate democratic and participatory citizenship. We want to foster a more participatory and democratic citizenship, a more literate citizenship, a more active citizenship—all familiar refrains in the field and beyond. Yet despite our dependence on these concepts, the terms and boundaries we use to define citizenship are vague at best and often go uninterrogated. While citizenship has become a super-term, one that can encompass many definitions, the lack of specificity that often accompanies it allows us to elide critical concerns about the access, impact, and exercise of citizenship.

This article examines the will to make citizenship central in the writing classroom and unpacks the "ideological freight" (Brandt 20) connecting literacy and citizenship production. First, I analyze how scholars and professional organizations (as the public face of the field) frame the conversation about citizenship. I examine the rhetorical function of citizenship, namely how the flexibility of the term can imbue the work of higher education—and more specifically, the writing classroom—with a sense of its larger societal impact while the term's ambiguity allows for unspoken and sometimes conflicting beliefs about what citizenship is. In order to counteract what I will call the *ambient* nature of the use of citizenship, I analyze three key factors that have helped establish citizenship as a super-term and underlie its unspoken assumptions in the teaching of writing: (1) the infinite flexibility that comes from shifting definitions of citizenship; (2) the pervasive belief that citizenship is an achievable status by individuals who have the will for it; and (3) the implicit understanding

that equality and social mobility are synonymous with and can be achieved through citizenship. With the introduction of these three influences on our thinking about citizenship, I articulate and clarify how citizenship often serves as shorthand for a variety of objectives in the writing classroom. In the conclusion, I discuss how these influences come together in the current connections among citizenship, work, and the writing classroom by situating literacy learning within the larger project of higher education and its vocational trends.

This article does not intend to recommend specific teaching practices designed to activate citizenship. Rather, I work from the belief that we all have a hand in the production of citizens, whether explicitly or not, and I seek to examine critically what gets invoked in the name of citizenship more broadly and across instructional methods. Ultimately, I argue that despite extensive scholarly research that historicizes and problematizes the connection between literacy and citizenship (Graff; Young), engaging citizenship as a classroom practice remains a murky undertaking with potential to undermine aspirations for the democratizing aspects of literacy. I hope to outline a way of thinking about citizenship that acknowledges the multiplicity of its definitions and uncovers its assumptions in order to clarify citizenship as a goal and literacy's role in it. Because the capacious nature of the term *citizenship* contributes to the lack of attention to concrete civic goals and allows for its too-infinite flexibility, tensions in the long-standing equity project within the field of composition and the vocational ends of higher education often go unaddressed in the writing classroom. I suggest that citizenship as a concept may be better integrated into the fabric of literacy teaching by understanding this practice as the *cultivation of habits of citizenship*.

The Cultivation of Ambient Citizenship in Writing Classrooms

From Mann onward, American education has been steeped in the job of creating citizens. However, citizenship is often relegated to a rhetorical flourish in policy and practical discussions without specificity regarding how one achieves citizenship through classroom practices. Citizenship becomes an easy trope to deploy because of its immediate associations with positive civic activities such as voting. Pervasive and nonthreatening, citizenship provides a convenient and agreeable greater goal for writing instruction, intimately connecting the role of the classroom with democracy. Perhaps citizenship plays such a central role because it facilitates political activity in the classroom without an overtly political charge. Or perhaps its prominence can be explained via Joseph Harris's critique of the term *community*—with no negatively charged opposite, citizenship becomes completely and unquestionably acceptable (12). In his landmark 1976 book *English in America*, Richard Ohmann succinctly explains why democratic citizenship, education, and literacy are often viewed together:

"Democracy can't work unless citizens are literate and informed" (124). Who would disagree? Yet while citizenship or a more robust enactment of the citizen is a worthwhile goal for writing instruction, a closer investigation of the term can help writing teachers and scholars better understand the concept's limitations and perhaps even improve the efficacy of the writing classroom's influence on citizenship.

Although a handful of writing textbooks (for example, Jon Ford and Marjorie Ford's *Citizenship Now*; Dominic Delli Carpini's *Composing a Life's Work*; Michael Berndt and Amy Muse's *Composing a Civic Life*) address the issue of citizenship directly, more often than not, the term is left largely underexamined. Two general approaches to engaging citizenship are common in our scholarly conversations. One is a reference to citizenship in a general list of student goals in syllabi or pedagogical studies (and on a larger scale, departmental and institutional goals and outcomes). Such casual references to citizenship often pepper conference conversations and pedagogical discussions in which citizenship production may not be the primary focus. For example, Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe's introduction to the useful collection *Multimodal Composition* references citizenship briefly, noting that "a central goal of contemporary education within U.S. colleges or universities is the preparation of literate graduates—intelligent citizens who can both *create meaning in texts* and *interpret meaning from texts* within a dynamic and increasingly technological world" (8; emphasis in original). Similarly, Yancey's previously discussed *Writing in the 21st Century* focuses on using twenty-first century "composings" to "foster a new kind of citizenship" (7) and refers to the citizen writer in order to encourage a more engaged, informed, and literate citizen through the teaching of writing. The citizen writer is expected to use writing skills toward action, particularly in a Web 2.0 world in which the author writes to share, dialogue, and participate (5). While Yancey does much to advance new, technologically inflected models of literacy, she also depends on an assumed connection between producing writers and producing a particularly participatory brand of citizenship. By doing so, Yancey yokes citizenship to a kind of political action, suggesting that "through writing, citizens might exercise their own control" (2) over their lives and produce a sense of empowerment.

The second approach takes on this same association, but is more focused in its attention to citizenship and the production of participatory action through writing. In this configuration, scholars give more explicit attention to how the classroom can serve as a "protopublic" space for public discourse and participation, which Rosa Eberly describes "as a means of reinvigorating public life and citizenship" (168)[1] through providing a training ground for active and participatory citizenship. Similarly, Christian Weisser expresses wanting to "help my students become active citizens who are capable of using language to defend themselves, voice their opinions, and take part in the public debates" (94). Underlying this approach is a belief in using the classroom as a space to cultivate the ability and desire to read the world

critically, to participate in the public sphere as a marker of good citizenship, and to build the community necessary for a strong citizenry. This training engages the public with varying levels of directness, from positioning the writing classroom as a space where students hone their writing and therefore, citizenship skills (Eberly; Gilyard; Weisser) to putting students into situations in which they are involved with a particular non-school community (Cushman; Flower; Goldblatt).

Important work has been done in the areas of public writing, participatory writing, citizen journalism, citizen rhetoric, and service learning. But using "citizenship" as shorthand to describe all of these different goals obscures the distinctions among them, because it assumes that citizenship is synonymous with the most overt of these civic activities. Instead of letting, for example, "deep democracy" (Gilyard) or "community literacy" (Flower) stand in for the kind of citizenship we hope to cultivate, we should take care to distinguish the different shades of meaning. By overlooking these distinctions, the casual reference to citizenship and the more specific attention to participation work together to create an "ambient awareness" of citizenship in writing instruction. This phrase was originally used to describe the casual awareness of another person's life through electronic media (Thompson), but is a fitting concept to describe compositionists' "awareness" of citizenship. Journalist Clive Thompson describes "ambient awareness," namely through Facebook updates, as "insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your friends' and family members' lives, like thousands of dots making a pointillist painting" (2).

The application of ambient awareness to citizenship is apt, describing both the frequency and the surface nature of dealings with citizenship in writing instruction, but simultaneously acknowledging the cumulative impact of these small bits of knowledge to form a more complicated understanding of citizenship. Yet as Thompson acknowledges, ambient awareness has its limits because it amplifies "weak ties" (4) rather than deeper social relationships. Our field's ambient awareness of citizenship may be similarly tenuous, especially if the message is often the same or similar: citizenship is participation in a public achieved through the good writing learned in our classrooms. These moments of implication and inference about citizenship in our scholarly works can both make this citizenship unspecific and obscure the assumptions and values that animate a definition (or definitions) of citizenship.

Teachers, whether implicitly or explicitly, play a role in shaping the citizenship produced in educative spaces, not only by issuing calls to adopt active citizenship, but because the skills we want to teach—public writing, public engagement, citizen critique, critical literacy, or technology—are inextricably, although often silently, linked to what we imagine as the ideal "good citizen." What's significant about the teaching of citizenship through writing is that arguments for a particular skill are also implicit arguments for what a person needs (and needs *to be*) in order to be

prepared for a future, to act as a citizen: a good citizen is one who participates, who is engaged, who can critique society, and who is a productive, satisfied member of the nation, using advanced literacy skills as a means to achieve these civic acts. In these instances, scholars use citizenship and its rhetorical cachet as a way to imagine students as agents beyond the institution; understanding that student subjectivity is transient and temporary, they aim to replace it with a citizen-oriented subjectivity.

Such work is critical in recognizing the role that writing instruction can play in students' public actions in the classroom and the world beyond, but these invocations are premised upon unspoken, casual, or ambient assumptions about citizenship itself: the belief that one only needs to act as a citizen through participation in a community or society in order to become a citizen, or the resulting wholesale acceptance of citizenship as a meaningful product of effective writing instruction. This is not sufficient. In order to counteract the ambience and ascertain what assumptions have become embedded in the idea of citizenship, I trace three different influences on the uses of citizenship in connection to literacy—the flexibility of its definition, the belief in citizenship as an achieved status, and the view of citizenship as not just equal political standing but also access to resources—to articulate their cumulative effect on how literacy is imagined to contribute to citizen-making, and the limits of this imagination.

Struggles over Defining Citizenship

Responding to the ambient use of citizenship as a term requires examining its multiple definitions to sort out how and why citizenship is used in conjunction with literacy. Here I look to political theorists, sociologists, and historians in order to make visible these struggles over definitions in ways that could help writing teachers better define their own uses and connect their practices to the larger process of citizenship production.

Citizenship at its most basic is defined legally as membership in a particular nation-state. Strict legalists may be puzzled by debates over definitions of citizenship or even discussions of citizenship in educative spaces because they view citizenship as a legal category, with conferral of status occurring in the legal realm and certainly outside of the classroom or other social institutions. But citizenship theorists have expanded thinking about citizenship beyond legal status to understanding citizenship as cultural identity, standing and status, civic virtue, everyday habits, and participatory action. For example, T. H. Marshall developed a rights-oriented perspective of citizenship in the mid-twentieth century (categorizing certain practices into civil, political, and social rights), and more recently, scholars such as Danielle Allen, Eamonn Callan, Derek Heater, Judith Shklar, and Bryan Turner have broadened the term's meaning.

Such discussions confirm the view that citizenship must be understood as more than simply conferral of official nation-state membership by a government, and that the process of creating the citizenry of a nation involves a number of practices other than simply granting legal status. For example, political theorist Shklar argues for moving beyond the idea of citizenship as purely legal standing, defining it as "nationality, as active participation or 'good' citizenship, and finally, ideal republican citizenship" (3). Legal scholar Linda Bosniak echoes Shklar by categorizing citizenship in four different ways: legal status, "fundamental rights," "a state of active engagement in the polity," and identity (241). Using identity, Bosniak expands citizenship to include cultural orientation, demonstrating how citizenship functions to give an individual entry into a particular society or social group. She explains that "in psychological or cultural terms, the term citizenship is invoked to refer to an experience of identity and solidarity that a person maintains in collective or public life" (241). There are, of course, many variations on these definitions, but both Shklar and Bosniak allow for approaches that incorporate a more qualitative element into how citizenship is produced through rights, involvement in public life, or identification with other citizens. The sum of these ideas is implied through terms like "full citizenship," which represents the cultural dimensions and acceptance of an individual's citizenship and identity in addition to legal rights.

These foundational discussions often highlight struggles over definitions; building a more complex taxonomy as Bosniak or Shklar have done is a common starting point among citizenship theorists, not only to get a sense of the variations that are possible, but to name those variations and the values inherent in the different categories and viewpoints. Multiple political theories ground the range of definitions in these different taxonomies—communitarian, republican, liberal democratic, and more. The varied political tradition of the United States draws from Jeremy Bentham, Edmund Burke, Alexis deTocqueville, John Dewey, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others, and the distinctions among them can, of course, be quite large. Each of these theorists emphasizes certain principles over others—whether liberty, democratic participation, the public good, social equality, or some other value—that establish boundaries and possibilities for citizenship.

For instance, Peter Kivisto and Thomas Faist discuss the distinction between the republican and liberal traditions: "The republican tradition is particularly concerned with activities that contribute to the public good and thus is prepared to ask a considerable amount from the citizenry, while counterpoised to it and with an emphasis on the individual, the liberal tradition seeks a more minimalist set of duties on the part of citizens" (50). These two approaches make the distinction between a societal contribution that prioritizes the larger public good of the republic and one that values self-sufficiency above all else. These goals—one thinking about a contribution to

the larger public good, and one emphasizing individuality—both have purchase for thinking about the literacy learned in the writing classroom.

This raises an important question: does our field always (and endlessly) seem to want better citizenship because, in part, we have established two potentially competing expectations that come into unrecognized conflict with each other? Our teaching practices tend to shape certain civic behaviors, such as participation in civic life and the building of a collective through public writing assignments or even an activity like peer review. But we also must emphasize the individual, or at least individual literate skill, through grading and evaluation, as well as changes in curriculum that may reflect external or institutional pressure to guide individual academic and economic success. These varied and sometimes conflicting expectations demonstrate different approaches to cultivating citizenship within the scope of literacy learning. Applying a more critical lens to citizenship in connection to teaching writing could expose the various ways we envision the citizens we are creating, whether the term citizen is used explicitly or not, and make explicit the implications, responsibilities, differences, and rationales that accompany citizenship.

In many ways, disciplinary discussions about citizenship have embedded the idea that citizenship is shaped beyond its legal boundaries through institutions like literacy training spaces. But meaningfully incorporating the material and legal consequences of citizenship status would mean articulating a specificity of terms that describes citizenship beyond its ambient definition. So when legal scholars T. Alexander Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer explain that citizenship should be understood beyond legal status as a set of institutionalized policies, and that how a group administers citizenship is "a powerful measure of its core commitments" (1), we are reminded that there are certain, unarticulated commitments being asked of students in our classrooms. Emphasizing critical thinking, argumentation, Web 2.0, and service learning, to name just a few, reveals a classroom's commitment to a particular approach to citizenship; each of these different skills encourages specific civic behaviors. Articulating such commitments is essential if we want to think deeply about the consequences that literacy teaching has on citizenship; to take up this project, it is necessary to see what is happening with citizenship outside the classroom door, both legally and theoretically.

For example, the widely shared goal of increased participation should be seen as more than a singular approach, and could have many different meanings. If we follow the logic equating literacy with civic behavior, then improved literacy skills mean an individual is better equipped to participate. Of course, literacy can bolster the participatory elements of citizenship with possibility and potential. But I wonder if we limit possibility or make assumptions in the way that we conceive of citizenship as participatory, not only because there are multiple approaches and definitions, but also because what is meant by *participation* is not articulated. A more literate student

(however that literacy may be defined) is assumed to be a better citizen because of his or her ability to participate more effectively (however that effectiveness may be defined). But even in invoking participatory citizenship, the terms of that participation must be considered: What counts? What is most effective: voting? critical reading? letters to the editor? public writing on blogs and wikis? societal change? What kind of citizenship is being produced and promoted? Most important, do all students have access to the same types of citizenship? These questions often go unasked and unanswered when we talk about the citizen, but those answers need to be clear to us as teachers if we hope for them to be clear to students.

As literacy teachers, we may connect communication skills with the ability to participate, yet our practices dictate what that participation looks like and how heavily we enforce that version of participation through literacy. Shklar, by contrast, views participation as political participation, engagement in public affairs; her definition of a good citizen is "a political agent who takes part regularly in politics locally and nationally, not just on primary and election day" (5). If these are the expectations that we have for our students, then we must distinguish whether the goal is to acquire communication skills through writing and literacy, or to engage in something specifically action oriented, civic oriented, or academically oriented. And if the latter goal, participation in what realm or community? The question then becomes, what do we ignore when we limit our ideas about citizenship to a certain kind of participation? And what happens when we do not make explicit the values behind these calls for citizenship or the kind of participation that we want to cultivate? When we encourage student participation in ways that foreground writing skills and literacy, we are often motivated by implicit values like self-government, being informed, or becoming active citizens, and we need to make these values more explicit to our students and ourselves.

Although participation seems to be the most prominent value connected to literacy, I question this ambient approach to participatory citizenship, which assumes an unspoken agreement about its definition and the possibility of using the classroom to distribute politically neutral participation skills. This assumption of a neutral "goodness" elides citizenship's other definitional possibilities as *status* or *standing*, possibilities not easily accessible to all students merely through participation. Enhancing participation does not necessarily mean enhancing equality, yet literacy skills and associated participation skills often perpetuate the illusion of equality. This has dangerous implications when we affably state citizenship's importance in our writing goals but don't acknowledge that it has different kinds of meanings that correspond to ideas about work, productivity, status, and access to resources, in addition to one's ability to participate. Historically, literacy's relationship with citizenship is fraught with consequences such as the literacy test within the 1917 Immigration Act (see King), yet as writing teachers, we are quick to use citizenship

as a way to ground the work done in the classroom. The difficulty in acknowledging the burdened association between literacy and citizenship arises from a foundational belief that citizenship is a status that can be achieved and entered into simply at will.

Citizenship as Achievable Status

While citizenship's multiple definitions evoke feelings of possibility, assumptions about the achievability of citizenship gloss over the spectrum of potential meanings. In the broadest strokes, citizenship can be acquired legally in a variety of ways: by birth, by naturalization, or by blood (parentage). But the path to acquire full citizenship—citizenship *beyond* the legal status to include cultural citizenship and access to all of society's resources—is not as clear-cut. Yet this cultural realization of citizenship is often at work in literacy education and the writing classroom. The practices and scholarship of those in composition and rhetoric rely on a foundational belief that citizenship is not just a legal status, but a state of being that can be cultivated and shaped by literacy teaching. An underlying value in literacy teaching's integration of citizenship promotion is the core belief that citizenship is not just a static status, but a standing one that can change through behavior and desire. The United States has cultivated the idea that citizenship is not just a birthright, but an achievable status, which residually has resulted in a citizenship based on individual actions and behavior. This fundamental value of U.S. citizenship results in a view of citizenship as not simply a conferred legal status, but cultivated through a number of civil, political, and social rights and obligations, which as Marshall explains, have become layered onto the status of legal citizenship over the past couple of centuries. That literacy skills are intertwined with the realization of these rights and obligations influences the role of the literacy teacher as civic educator. Thinking about citizenship as an achievable standing, rather than something born into, undergirds the connection between citizenship and literacy for the writing teacher, implying that it is possible to activate the civic behavior of an individual through activating his or her critical literacy.

The foundations of U.S. citizenship as an achievable status lie in what James Kettner describes as the "idea of volitional allegiance," a result of American colonialism in which (white and European) individuals voluntarily moved to a territory and built allegiances there.[2] This identity shift from subject of a monarch to citizen of a country brought with it a subsequent movement from dependence to independence and the belief that citizenship was something to be learned or achieved. The dependent subject relied on the monarch for care and rule, but the independent citizen took on these responsibilities himself (and at the time, it was *him*self). U.S. citizenship became defined through its sovereignty, in contrast to that of the monarchies of England and to France's own quest for sovereignty and the development of its

citoyen. In order to make use of this sovereignty, those deemed citizens are required to participate, to take an active role in the shaping of government. This shift in thinking about an individual's relationship to larger society highlights the ability to rule oneself, with education becoming an important part of fulfilling this status.

The achievement of citizenship through "individual choice," one's own volition, and self-responsibility can reflect potentially complicated beliefs in individual responsibility for behavior and life situations. Historian Michael Katz describes the availability of the rights to citizenship for those with a preexisting status compared to those who earn a citizenship in which rights are deemphasized "in favor of obligations or merit; it is earned through contributions to society" (344). This emphasis on earning citizenship brings to bear the importance of personal responsibility, which could translate in our world to the expectation of responsibility with the literate skills taught in class. If citizenship is earned partially through literacy, students' ability to self-govern and achieve citizenship also becomes dependent on their literacy and how they may contribute to society; as a result, writing courses that take on this goal implicitly promote an ability to self-govern and the cultivation of this ability. Although the dynamic process of achieving citizenship is critical to a nation open to immigrants, some implications of this process should give us pause.

U.S. citizenship, and therefore the citizenship taken up in many writing classrooms, is consistent with a belief that any individual has the ability to access citizenship, at least in theory. This results in a classroom in which citizenship becomes a fixed object to be created and attained, or a situation entered into easily or provided at will. Literacy instructors like me, who view the citizenship-making project as an integral part of their work, hold an implicit belief that citizenship and associated civic behavior can be influenced or achieved; in turn, acquisition of literacy becomes embedded in the achievement of full citizen status. The belief that writing classrooms can create spaces for the cultivation of better citizenship (or rather, the particular model of citizenship that the teacher or the curriculum identifies as "better") prevails, but this individualized and fixed orientation of citizenship embeds two potentially problematic assumptions.

First, if literacy comes with responsibility, then it is implied that there is a "right way" and a "wrong way" to employ it, especially if such literacy is used in service of a particular brand of citizenship. If, as Callan claims, the encouragement of certain kinds of civic behavior means cultivating "public virtue" (3), then might we also think about literacy as a way to cultivate public virtue? Are we trying to invoke morality? Or as educational historian Heater describes, do we desire "a sense of justice and a moral and rational conscience [in which] the true citizen seeks the realization of the General Will, the common good, not the satisfaction of his own selfish interests" (41)? Thinking about literacy as shaping a sense of morality or virtue uncovers the inherent value embedded in how we define such traits. But in many ways, citizenship

is just that—a code of behavior that affects interaction with one another, whether that code translates to participation, individual liberty, responsibility, or other civic virtues through critical literacy.

Second, an individualized conception of citizenship does not fully acknowledge the process of cultivating citizenship and the idea that students come to the classroom with differing opportunities for cultural and legal forms of citizenship, with the varied definitions of citizenship and points of access to citizenship barely acknowledged. Often absent from citizenship cultivated in the writing classroom are the overt connections to economic and personal gains of citizenship, particularly related to how higher education contributes to the citizen-making process. Within a classroom, we may imagine that every student's access to citizenship is equal, and that it is merely a matter of activating a desire to practice citizenship, but that is not always the case. In the rhetoric of the literate citizen and critical thinking, citizenship and associated civic behavior seem to be available to anyone who wants it. As a result, the term becomes merely palliative, at the risk of ignoring issues of inequality.

The Function of Inequality and the Access to Resources

Literacy pursued in the writing classroom has long been linked to an equality project, such as the development of basic writing pedagogy, as described in Patricia Bizzell's "Composition Studies Saves the World!" Shklar traces the roots of these ideals about the equality of U.S. citizenship to the "participatory aristocracy" of ancient Greece. Instead of a "perfect form of democratic activity" for a privileged few, Shklar argues that disenfranchised Americans have strived for a configuration of citizenship that is "equally distributed, so that their standing might also be recognized and their interests be defended and promoted" (30). Yet while citizenship in itself seems to imply the guarantee of a certain equality in its distribution of rights and obligations, the realization of citizenship brings with it inequalities, like the varying levels of access to education. This desire for equal distribution of citizenship (along with the role that literacy plays in it) lies at the heart of the expansion of higher education and the middle class in the twentieth century, as demonstrated by the place of first-year composition at the core of many general education philosophies. In this context, individuals believe in a narrative of equality against the realities of restricted access to resources such as certain jobs or education. Aspirations for equality motivate much of the way citizenship is invoked in service of literacy, but behind these aspirations remains an ever-present inequality that conflates a definition of citizenship as cultivated status with one of citizenship as access to societal resources.

If the fully produced citizen is one who has gained multiple attributes of citizenship (that is, has access to all of the rights and privileges of citizenship and the ability to easily perform its obligations by choice), then in what ways can literacy

cultivated in the writing classroom help students gain this access, and in what ways can it not? The most obvious of the rights and privileges of citizenship is, perhaps, voting, which can be impacted by a critically literate approach to one's voting choices; another may be using one's literacy skills toward participatory action, as discussed earlier. But access to society's resources, such as certain jobs or education, is also a privilege of citizenship that educators influence, and it, in turn, influences us and our practices. The pervasive approach to citizenship as a general sense of increased participation within the writing classroom falls in sharp contrast to the view of literacy scholars such as Deborah Brandt, who describe how "literacy skill is treated primarily as a resource—economic, political, intellectual, spiritual—which, like wealth or education, or trade skill or social connections, is pursued for the opportunities and protections that it potentially grants to its seekers" (5). We imagine that as literacy teachers, we are helping to distribute this resource, yet literacy as a skill integral to citizenship does not lie solely in the act of participation, as has been configured by the most explicit of our scholarship that addresses citizenship. Although participatory action can help to ease certain inequalities (for example, the civil rights movement), participation does not necessarily guarantee equality. Enduring faith in the equality of citizenship perpetuates the belief that college-cultivated literacy will guarantee both participation in society and the achievement of personal and economic success.

Continued inequality and the desire for access to resources often motivates the work done in the writing classroom, directly in the case of critical pedagogy but even in that work's fundamental role in the earning of an undergraduate degree. Meanwhile, college educations have shifted in purpose from the maintenance of an upper-class privilege to the creating and sustaining of a middle class after the GI Bill and onward. As those who are maintaining, administering, and creating writing curricula, we both respond to and cultivate this sense of contributing to social mobility and equality. The civic habit of literacy affords different possibilities for different kinds of students, most obviously those who are marked as "other," either linguistically or visually, such as international students, naturalized citizens for whom English is a second (or third) language, and non-white students, to name but a few. Participation through literacy skills allows for the sense, maybe even the illusion, of equality; but I wonder if it is possible that investment in this narrative is dangerous, as we imagine that equality and full citizenship through participation can be accessed via classroom-cultivated literacy. We must, however, also acknowledge that the writing classroom represents a space where other practices develop to help define oneself as a citizen—an acceptable, competent, and productive member of society. Put bluntly, gaining access to resources is what gives individuals the ability to enjoy these rights and to live as full citizens.

In this way, the designation of "citizen" acts as a gateway to societal resources, but not all citizens have equal access. Literacy, then, can be seen as a specific response

to the inequalities of citizenship that are obscured by the appearance of equal footing for all individuals. By recognizing citizenship's limitations, the view of literacy as a means to reconcile inequalities can serve as an important complement to the participation model of citizenship so prevalent in rhetoric and composition scholarship. We believe that the literacy we teach can be only good, can only help students achieve their goals, succeed in college, and ultimately gain access to society's resources if they would just succeed in our classes.[3] But literacy not only brings about healthier citizenship through participation; it also enforces certain legal, economic, and cultural exclusions, which often go unacknowledged and should be made more visible in the citizenship-producing efforts in the writing classroom. Despite the theoretical and legal conferral of equal citizenship rights to individuals, the resulting equality narrative accompanying discourses around rights, privileges, and obligations obscures the fact that citizenship itself cannot be realized equally by all. Believing that the growth of civil, political, and social rights of citizenship coincided with the growth of capitalism, Marshall explains that the conferral of rights creates a "single uniform status of citizenship," but not power, which "provide[s] the foundation of equality on which the structure of inequality [can] be built" (21).

For my purposes, I would explain this inequality by also acknowledging an equally present narrative of individualism as part of citizenship in the United States. Literacy creates a tension between these two narratives of equality and individualism, which is particularly useful in thinking about citizenship practices and how they develop. When the focus is only on an individual's literacy, the burden of realizing citizenship remains on the individual rather than on a larger system of inequality. Understanding the function of inequality in definitions of citizenship is critical, particularly because I read many of the efforts to invoke citizenship as efforts to fight inequality, to level the abilities of students by training them (or inoculating them, as Charles Paine describes in *The Resistant Writer*) with advanced literacy and with critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Lack of discussion about these uncontested and unspoken narratives of equality and competition in writing classrooms only compounds this burden. Access to resources (or lack of it) highlights the inequality among students' citizenship and the inadequacy of literacy as a sole solution. Yet hope in literacy does not seem to wane.

The Good Citizen, General Education, and the Vocational Turn

These influences on citizenship—the malleability of its definition, the consequences of seeing citizenship as a status anyone can achieve, the ways citizenship helps mask certain kinds of inequalities—are not merely theoretical issues that get worked out in scholarship and teaching philosophies. Citizenship is a state of being that continues

to be in flux because of its real and urgent consequences. The ideas discussed thus far—common goals of equality, achievability, and participation—take on an even greater urgency for a growing body of students who may have economic reasons to support a more instrumental version of general education and a perhaps necessary vocational turn in higher education. Reflecting on schooling, particularly higher education, in the twentieth century and moving into the twenty-first, educational theorists such as Henry Giroux, Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, and W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson have described its trajectory as moving away from the teaching of moral and civic values to a more vocational effort. Yet this move also struggles to reconcile more traditional liberal educational goals of civic and moral values with newer vocational ones, creating a tension indicative of those found across higher education. Citizenship seems to offer this reconciliatory path.

The previously discussed NCTE report *Writing in the 21st Century*, with its articulation of the stakes of teaching writing and connections of citizen-making to education, is one of many documents that have circulated in the past five years regarding the role and impact of college, illuminating current anxieties about what kind of citizen higher education is supposed to produce. Perhaps most influential is the September 2006 report *A Test of Leadership* from the U.S. Department of Education, which depicts a domestic higher education system at risk and outlines a plan to reinvigorate it. Better known as the Spellings Commission report, after Bush-era Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, the report kicked off a flurry of concern about issues of "access, affordability, quality, and accountability" (xiii). The last paragraph of the report's preface tells readers that the strengthening of higher education (through the implementation of the report's proposals) would have numerous benefits for both the nation and individuals, highlighting the need for a highly educated workforce and raising the specter of global competition by citing statistics of how other countries have quickly surpassed U.S. education on a number of metrics. The section concludes, "What individuals would gain is full access to educational opportunities that allow them to be lifelong learners, productive workers, and engaged citizens" (xiii). Providing a model of citizenship in which an engaged citizenry is inextricably linked at the individual level to both education and productivity, the Spellings report underscores the importance of accountability, much like No Child Left Behind, asking colleges to find (presumably curricular) ways to achieve this model of citizenship for their students.

In 2007, the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, released its own report, *College Learning for the New Global Century*. Composed of a diverse cross section of "educational, business, community, and policy leaders,"[4] LEAP attempted to articulate the role of college education for a wide range of stu-

dents in the United States, providing a counterpoint to the Spellings Commission's vision. The National Leadership Council report "spells out the essential aims, learning outcomes, and guiding principles for a twenty-first-century college education" and links higher education with the future of an American society "that will depend on graduates' future leadership and capabilities" (vii). For LEAP, these outcomes "should be fostered and developed across the entire educational experience, and in the context of students' major fields." LEAP underscores the essential idea that the educational aims, outcomes, and principles of a college education should prepare students for "work, life, and citizenship" (2) in order to build the foundations for their promising futures. The report's examination of three intertwined goals of work, life, and citizenship makes explicit the increased attention to citizen-making and preparatory elements of higher education, and reinforces a long-standing relationship among these goals. No longer is "liberal education" the domain of the privileged, but rather a way to access "America's most valued economic asset" (13–14).

Instead of preparing a privileged few (see Berlin), higher education positions itself as a key component of the broad creation of a productive and satisfied citizenry.[5] These reports on higher education show how the use of *the citizen* as a commonplace term often channels tensions about growing vocationalism and waning citizenship privileges. As Grubb and Lazerson assert, this transformation of education from liberal to vocational marks a central tension in educational policy today, as policymakers and educators feel unable to reconcile civic and moral goals of liberal education with the goal of employable skills through vocational education (48).

Because first-year composition and other institutional writing courses serve a preparatory function and are common elements of most general education curricula, they become positioned as integral to student success and achievement through attempts to transform students into literate and engaged citizens. The first-year writing classroom, the primary space for literacy distribution at the university level, often lies at the nexus of tensions between the higher education goals of vocational and citizenship training. For example, in the *Goals for Student Writing* (Queens College) document that my own institution uses to guide all writing-intensive courses across disciplines, the second sentence asserts, "The professional success and personal satisfaction of twenty-first century citizens require fluency with a broad range of modes of communication" and notes that writing instruction "aims to enable students to take ownership of language and to develop a capacity for both critical analysis and considered reflection." Such statements make a common connection between critical literacy and citizenship, and represent the realization of citizenship as both work success and personal satisfaction through the efficacy of one's literate communication skills. Implicit is the idea that civic behavior will emerge from these traits, and that a certain level of writing skill and education can help individuals attain economic

goals and advance personal citizenship. Thus, first-year writing classes function as a microcosm of the anxieties put upon the university; additionally, they represent what higher education seeks to accomplish and the expectations of what literacy can do.[6]

Underlying these discussions about citizenship and vocationalism are actually questions about the relevancy of education. This question of citizenship is especially important at a moment when questions about the relevance of a college education have been asked both within academia, as in Gerald Graff's *Clueless in Academe*, and in the popular media, as in Kate Zernike's "Making College 'Relevant'" in the *New York Times*. Every question about assessment, general education, accountability, and the like serves to demonstrate the relevance of education in addition to its effectiveness. And in all of these debates, one term endures: citizenship. Citizenship has made education appear relevant beyond its instrumental goals, but as these examples demonstrate, institutions may also end up undertaking the risky task of measuring effectiveness only by the employability of their graduates.

If, as Grubb and Lazerson claim, institutions of higher education have turned increasingly to preparing students for employment (5), then it must follow that the kind of citizen being created has also changed from that previously produced by a robust liberal education. Educational theorist David F. Labaree, in categorizing educational purposes into three goals—democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility (41)—describes how "the democratic equality goal arises from the citizen, social efficiency from the taxpayer and employer, and social mobility from the educational consumer. The first goal expresses the politics of citizenship, the second expresses the politics of human capital, and the third expresses the politics of individual opportunity" (42). Like Grubb and Lazerson, Labaree argues that the increasing importance of social mobility as a goal of education allows vocational goals to dominate the other two. I contend, however, that in addition to being dominated by vocational goals, the differences among educational goals are often obscured and subsumed by the concept of citizenship as seen in our own rhetoric around writing. The communication-based skills described by Grubb and Lazerson as key characteristics of vocational higher education could also be used to describe the long-standing connection between literacy and citizenship. Because of this connection, citizenship has not been overshadowed by vocational goals or efficiency goals; rather, the citizenship constructed by higher education often simultaneously encourages civic behavior, productivity, and social mobility. And the use of the citizen to link these endeavors within general education reveals how debates about the goals of education in general can influence the work of the writing classroom and university-styled literacy, both implicitly and explicitly.

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Acknowledging this use of citizenship alongside the multiplicity of other possible definitions is key to rethinking assumptions about citizenship. When political theorist Allen defines citizenship as "basic habits of interaction in public spaces" (5), she recognizes that these habits are not always the most explicit, most obvious activities in the enactment of citizenship, such as those with legal guarantees like the right to vote. In deliberating on anxieties around citizenship after *Brown v. Board of Education*, she reaches beyond the idea of citizenship as consisting primarily of rights and duties by examining a photo of Elizabeth Eckford being taunted by Hazel Bryan in Little Rock, Arkansas, on the first day of school, September 4, 1957. Allen describes the habits of citizenship demonstrated through the photo, using the concept of habits to account for the spatial distance and demeanor between black and white, male and female citizens. She describes how "[p]olitical order is secured not only by institutions, but also by 'deep rules' that prescribe specific interactions among citizens in public spaces" (10) and help guide "political tasks" beyond duties like voting that help shape the order of public life. Habits of citizenship influence what "political tasks" and corresponding behaviors are deemed "appropriate" for interaction (or lack of interaction) with other citizens. In the Little Rock example, these tasks vary from protecting Hazel Bryan to taunting her. Allen contends that these deep rules, or habits of citizenship, promote a feeling of unity among certain groups of citizens, who must imagine themselves as part of a "whole." And with this desire for wholeness "come[s] also particular *practices*" (17; emphasis in original) that overcome individuals.

For Allen, these habits of citizenship are made evident by people's interactions with one another. Thus, habits of citizenship take on more subtle meanings, not simply defined as explicit civic activity through participatory action, or as just legal boundaries. Rather, citizenship needs to be understood as also located in more everyday activities that may be mediated through habits and practices like the literate skills learned in classrooms and beyond. Perhaps one consequence of making this shift in thinking, for those teachers who hope to be more mindful of how to integrate citizenship into literacy instruction, is a shift in scale: rather than only try to amplify those citizenship habits that seem most obvious, we should also consider the other multiple ways that habits of citizenship are encouraged through literacy learning. So although literacy can certainly improve an individual's ability to be a participatory citizen through the improvement of critical and communicative skills, thinking about literacy as a habit of citizenship can more accurately describe its wider impact. And as Allen suggests, habits, as practices that become ingrained into a person's behavior, are shaped by both institutions and deep rules.

Educational institutions can have a great influence on producing citizens, but within and alongside those institutions, the choices of teachers, administrators, and students, and the influence of laws, policies, and life circumstances (the list could

go on) also have a hand in enforcing those deep rules that help shape habits of citizenship. In a writing classroom in which students are already engaged in learning practices of writing, a teacher might choose to assign, for example, readings and critical conversations about work, collaborative writing using wikis, or a project that asks students to collect data from a surrounding community. All of these activities also teach students how to be citizens in relation to one another, and create multiple habits and practices that reach beyond the classroom, which we must learn to articulate to ourselves and to our students.

In conclusion, I ask writing instructors to pause and reconsider what is behind that rote invocation of citizenship. Reflective deliberation has the potential to refocus and broaden the common disciplinary discussion about citizenship, making more concrete the aspiration for a more robust citizenship in relation to our own classroom practices. Rather than make a simple call to action in name only, we need to deliberate on the habits of citizenship that are being cultivated through our actions so that we may respond more effectively to recent and continuing changes of citizenship, whether through globalization, transnational migration, law, or public policy. We should acknowledge the limitations of what citizenship can do for students, as well as the limitations put on students by the idea of citizenship. And we should create a space where our own citizen-making through the teaching of literacy is a more deliberate activity, one that enlivens the concept of citizenship by connecting classroom practices to other instances of citizenship production.

A composition course is not supposed to be a class in civic education. There is, of course, too much other work to do, too many other demands put upon the course. But at the same time, we must acknowledge how the distribution of literacy at multiple levels cultivates certain habits of citizenship. At its core, the citizenship that we create through literacy is aspirational, a promise. And it's a promise we should consider how we keep.

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Notes

1. Eberly distinguishes "citizen critic" from public intellectual by defining "a person who produces discourses about issues of common concern from an ethos of citizen first and foremost—not as expert or spokesperson for a workplace or as member of a club or organization" (1). Her book about public discussions of controversial books over the course of the twentieth century explicitly responds to "publics

theory" and reflects a wider response to the 1991 English translation of Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in speech communication and English studies scholarship. Much of this scholarship on participatory citizenship is also a reflection of the field's historical legacy of classical rhetoric and a response to the U.S. brand of democracy.

2. Kettner explains that the thirteen colonies developed a "modern view of citizenship, based on voluntary allegiance to a community defined by a territory, instead of the medieval concept of personal allegiance, involuntary because it was acquired by virtue of birth" (31). In his view, "the status of 'American citizen' was the creation of the Revolution [. . .] Americans came to see that citizenship must begin with an act of individual choice" (208).

3. Lamos's study of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign demonstrates the movement of responsibility from institution to the individual. He writes how a proposal for the program places "primary responsibility for change and reform not upon the institution in general or the EOP program in particular, but rather upon students themselves: it is students who will need to 'additively learn' this superior standard English" (53).

4. Members include Derek Bok (interim president, Harvard University), Myles Brand (president, NCAA), Barbara Lawton (lieutenant governor, Wisconsin), Stephen Mittelstet (president, Richland College, Dallas County Community College District), Keith J. Peden (senior vice president, Human Resources, Raytheon Company), Deborah Traskell (senior vice president, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company), and Jack M. Wilson (president, University of Massachusetts system). The diversity of stakeholders in the future of college education seems to speak to the importance of shaping all kinds of higher education to the intellectual, political, and economic future of the country.

5. These goals are reflected in a number of strategic plans produced in recent years by a variety of institutions. For example, one of two "Strategic Themes and Intent" of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's plan is to "[e]ducate students to act as citizens of the nation and an ever-shrinking and interdependent world, cultivating through our curricula the idea that the betterment of humanity is our business" (University of Illinois 12). Others don't express a sense of citizenship explicitly, but will still include citizenship ideals in their goals. Iowa State University's strategic plan seeks to provide a diverse education that helps students "[c]reate, share, and apply knowledge to make Iowa and the world a better place" and "prepare students for lifelong, productive participation in society" (2).

6. In "Composing in a Global-Local Context," Min Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner depict a similar contest between critical pedagogies and instrumentalist or pragmatic pedagogies within the field of composition and rhetoric. They describe an "impasse" in which the pedagogical choices are to "accommodate unjust social relations or consign students to economic deprivation; address students' and teachers' immediate concerns with individual financial security and career, on the one hand, or on the other, their concerns with making the world a better place for all." Lu and Horner suggest ways to articulate the "mutually constitutive relationship" between the two approaches to teaching writing and "identify strategies for pedagogies that engage teachers and students in composing career mobility and security with and against 'the regimes of fordism and fast capitalism'" (114). Their solution aims to reconcile the traditional call of composition classrooms to "save the world" with vocational turns of higher education in a changing economic landscape.

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