Dispositions of Good Citizenship:
Character, Civility and the Politics of Virtue

by

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A dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
September 30, 2002

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submitted by Melanie Allison White, B.A., M.A.
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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November 5, 2002

Abstract

This dissertation offers a critical account of the practical means by which normative Anglo-American citizenship discourses produce a conception of the good citizen as one who exhibits strength of character through civil conduct. It is situated in the context of recent intellectual debate over the constitutive features of good citizenship under conditions of late modernity, and is particularly concerned with those discourses that promote 'character' and 'civility' as important virtues of good citizenship. In this regard, my contribution in this dissertation consists in bringing normative reflections on good citizenship into dialogue with an approach to social theory that uses practices as the starting point for analyzing social relations. My argument is therefore located in the theoretical space opened up by the recent 'practice turn' in social theory, and triangulates among the respective contributions of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Norbert Elias in order to develop a relational conception of citizenship. Doing so allows me to develop a set of conceptual tools that shows how the image of the good citizen promoted by Anglo-American citizenship discourses is constituted through a process of 'civic regulation' that depends upon the double articulation of dividing practices of 'identity-difference' and 'virtue-vice'. These practices condition the emergence of character and civility as technologies of good citizenship that ostensibly work to contain self-interest and to negotiate differences. But my analysis reveals that when character and civility are advanced as pre-political goods, they neglect the extent to which citizenship is a condition of otherness that is constituted by and through power relations. Indeed my argument demonstrates that when the virtues of character and civility are put into practice, they work to cultivate a specific conception of civic life that often contains politics and limits the expression of difference. Within this context, I contend that the possibility of multiple forms of citizenship means that the attempt to ground good citizenship in character and civility is increasingly open to contestation. This insight creates the possibility for a new politics of citizenship -- that is, a kind of politics that challenges the form and content of so-called 'civil' practices and modes of conduct.

Acknowledgements

In writing this dissertation I benefited from the material, intellectual and emotional support of many members of the Carleton community and beyond. It is truly the case that this dissertation would not have been written without the financial support offered by specific individuals and organizations. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the support of Dr. Archie Kassirer on behalf of his late wife Eve Frankel Kassirer, the International Order of Daughters of the Empire, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship program, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the David and Rachel Epstein Foundation, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at Carleton University. Last, but not least, my father Robert White deserves special thanks for his financial support during the last few months of writing.

Many thanks are due to my committee who, despite vastly different intellectual interests and traditions, perceived the merits of my work. My supervisor Alan Hunt deserves special mention for creating the necessary conditions for me to exercise my freedom and to develop an independent line of inquiry. His support and friendship have been invaluable to my intellectual development. Amy Bartholomew's useful insights and valuable comments at every step of the way were crucial for transforming this project into its current form. Her commitment to my project despite not always being entirely convinced by my argument are testament to her support and conviction. Will Kymlicka offered a tough and engaged, but always respectful, reading of my work that fostered a useful exchange of ideas across sociological and philosophical boundaries. And while he was not an official member of my dissertation committee, Bruce Curtis must be mentioned for offering me wise counsel, advice and friendship throughout my time at Carleton. It was my pleasure to work as his teaching assistant, and through him I learned the importance of teaching theory well.

I have also benefited from various conversations from 1996-2001 with various members of the social theory reading group such as Howie Chodos, Alan Craig, Bruce Curtis, Alan Hunt, John Manwaring, Chris Powell, Trevor Purvis and William Walters. The Interlibrary Loans staff at MacOdrum Library were essential in finding often obscure materials and resources with relative ease. The often invisible labour of the support staff of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology such as Ann Carroll, Nazira Conroy, Lynn Gunn, Joel Nordenstrom and Kim Mitchell also deserves recognition. The support of the Sessional Instructors and Teaching and Research Assistants' Union under the management of Stuart Ryan also warrants my sincere thanks.

I have been blessed with supportive and loving friends who in their different ways helped to ease the pain of writing. Kirsten McAllister was a constant source of support, and truly inspired me throughout this unusually taxing, but also strangely exhilarating experience. I must also express my genuine thanks to Anne-Marie Kinahan for our weekend brunches together, Joyce Lundberg for her creative spirit, Shirley Anne Off & Bill Jeffrey for their positive self-talk, Val Percival for her sympathetic ear, Mythili Rajiva for laughing at my jokes, Danielle Takoff, Brad Sinclair, Isabelle and Naomi for our yearly camping trips together, Pum van Veldhoven for our Thursday afternoon chats, and Emma Whelan for surviving the program alongside me. My friends in Vancouver must also be thanked for their important contributions: Christine Barnard for setting me straight on the rules of 'Cranium', and Kirsten Gummesson for her fierce determination as 'house mother'. Others such as Monique Bohun, Renae Clarkson, Doug Lee, Simon Litherland, Patricia McAdam, Michelle Pante and Susan Sangha deserve thanks for putting up with me over the years through thick and thin.

Family members such as Audrey Axen, Robert White and my siblings Rob, Alex, Elizabeth and Callie offered crucial support in their own ways. But it is my mother, Margot White who must be thanked above all else for being behind me at every step of the way. And finally, but not least of all, Chris Powell deserves the most of my thanks. He patiently believed in life after the dissertation, and was truly fantastic even through the worst. He bore more than his fair share of domestic labour, offered extensive commentary on my written work at every stage of the process, and was a partner in the true sense of the word. This dissertation is for him.

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1 Introduction

My aim in this dissertation is to develop a critical account of the practical means by which normative Anglo-American citizenship discourses produce an image of the good citizen as one who exhibits strength of character through civil conduct. In so doing, my goal is not to generate a 'theory' of good citizenship, understood as a closed system of definitive and exhaustive statements about a given phenomenon; rather, it is to offer an *account* of its workings as a contingent product of social relations. By account, I mean a mode of engagement that seeks to 'read' discourses in a protean and open-ended way in order to explore the theoretical and practical conditions of their deployment. In other words, an account aims to *problematize* taken-for-granted aspects of social relations in order to transform them into a question (Foucault 1984:389). Problematizing social relations in this manner involves asking how 'obstacles to governing' are identified and how they are transformed into problems that require solutions. It is an approach that does not presume a prior objectification of 'society', but aims "to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a 'we' in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts" (1984:385).

My *account* of the production of the good citizen within Anglo-American citizenship discourses engages normative citizenship discourses from the perspective of an approach to social theory that uses *practices* as the starting point for analyzing social relations. Here, practices refer to any complex array of human activity that generates shared, but necessarily contingent, understandings of social life. In so doing, my dissertation aims to bring normative reflections on good citizenship into dialogue with a perspective on practices that draws on the contributions to contemporary social theory of

Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. In different ways, Bourdieu and Foucault both emphasize the role of practices in constituting social relations. Where Bourdieu emphasizes the practical sense that is inscribed in the dispositions of the *habitus*, Foucault interrogates ‘regimes of practices’ in order to determine how they constitute rules for the production of ‘truth’. For my purposes, their work helps to generate new ways of interrogating citizenship that enable us to see how citizenship works to entrench existing social relations at the same time that it can work to contest and to transform them.

One of the effects of reading normative debates on citizenship from the perspective of practices is that the ‘good’ citizen is no longer conceptualized as an always already constituted set of ideals; it is rather a complex of practices that emerges under specific social conditions in relation to particular configurations of power. In this context, the ‘virtues’ of citizenship come to be understood as ‘dividing practices’ that help to constitute citizens on the basis of principles that valorize certain attributes at the expense of others. Thinking of citizenship in this manner allows us to see practices as dynamic social relations that produce specific effects. This permits us to conceptualize citizenship as a form of conduct that generates distinctive ways of being and doing.

By approaching my dissertation in this manner, I do not wish to undermine normative approaches to theorizing citizenship; rather, my intent is to engage productively with them in order to make use of conceptual tools that demonstrate *how* citizenship relations both constitute and are constituted by power. I maintain that such an approach is necessary in order to see citizenship as an historically contingent complex of different practices. It helps us to clarify the potential dangers associated with uncritically

adopting particular ideals of good citizenship. Indeed, my aim is to use this approach in order to expose the ways that citizenship politics is shaped by and through the exercise of 'virtue'.

In this regard, my dissertation is motivated by the following questions: First, what conceptual tools are needed in order to understand citizenship as an ensemble of practices that is constituted by power? Indeed, what kinds of practices are involved in the constitution of the good citizen? Second, what image of the good citizen is advanced by contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses? What specific practices are connected to this citizenship ideal? Third, what problems do character and civility seek to address? How do they work to produce the good citizen? Four, what political implications can be drawn from this account of the formation of the good citizen? What does this discussion suggest for the politics of citizenship?

This dissertation is situated within a broader context of intense intellectual debate over what the constitutive features of good citizenship are under conditions of increased diversity. It pays particular attention to a popular and influential literature by contemporary normative Anglo-American citizenship theorists that promotes 'character' and 'civility' as important virtues of good citizenship. This literature celebrates these virtues because they ostensibly enable liberal-democratic societies to operate 'properly' by containing self-interest and enabling citizens to negotiate their differences. That the virtues of character and civility are endorsed by Anglo-American theorists across the political spectrum from right-wing conservatives to left-wing social democrats is indicative of their wide-spread appeal.

For my purposes, normative Anglo-American citizenship theorists produce discourses on citizenship that seek to clarify the relationship between the right and the good, to determine the attributes necessary for the exercise of citizenship, and to interrogate the kinds of obligations associated with citizenship. I am particularly interested in those Anglo-American discourses that are situated within the project of 'normative political philosophy'. By normative political philosophy, I mean a form of intellectual engagement that generates *prescriptive* claims about democratic political life, one that has traditionally been concerned to debate the legitimacy of coercive institutions over the members of a given society (Sterba 1995:628). In this context, Anglo American citizenship discourses constitute a specific *knowledge culture* that is produced by political scientists, philosophers and sociologists who develop 'citizenship' as a discursive category through debates over the relationship between public and private, rights and duties, and individual and community. Here, knowledge cultures produce epistemological boundaries that condition the emergence of specific truth-claims about the nature of citizenship (Somers 1996; 1999).

In this context, the knowledge culture generated by Anglo-American citizenship theorists is comprised of a self-referential body of competing approaches to 'citizenship' that is usually characterized in civic republican, civil society and liberal terms.¹ First, civic republicanism is notable for its commitment to the idea of an active citizen that strengthens political community through the exercise of civic virtues (Barber 1984;

¹ This conceptualization of Anglo-American citizenship discourses offers a convenient but problematic way of characterizing the complex network of these discourses. I use this method of distinguishing between these discourses here for the sake of convenience, all the while recognizing the extent to which this formulation is contested. It should be noted that these various strands of Anglo-American citizenship discourses are not exhaustive of debates on citizenship. Certainly not all citizenship theorists are necessarily Anglo-American, nor are they all explicitly preoccupied with normative questions.

Oldfield 1990; Sandel 1996). Second, civil society theorists approach the question of citizenship from the perspective of the kinds of association, participation and contestation that take place in the figurative space between the state and the economy (Cohen 1999; Cohen and Arato 1992; Eberly 2000). Third, liberalism traditionally emphasizes the importance of the state in protecting the various rights and entitlements of its citizens. And yet, while it has typically been conceived as neutral toward a conception of the good, recent work in liberal political philosophy has been concerned to develop a specifically liberal conception of the good that is attentive to the demands of difference in a pluralistic society (Galston 1991; Macedo 1990; Rawls 1971; 1993).

From the perspective advanced by this dissertation, the difficulty with many Anglo-American normative discourses is that they tend to neglect the extent to which citizenship is constituted through a complex network of power relations. Indeed, Seyla Benhabib has recently acknowledged that “[p]olitical philosophers have paid little attention to citizenship as a sociological category, as a social practice that inserts us into a complex network of privileges and duties, entitlements, and obligations” (1999:719). In so doing, the idea that citizenship is necessarily a *relation* between citizens and non-citizens tends to be neglected in favour of ideal-typical conceptions of citizenship that simply designate the status of membership in the nation-state. What this formulation tends to neglect is the extent to which citizenship relations are changing and evolving such that they do not always emerge in relation to the state. Moreover, it neglects the constitutive role of power in producing difference through citizenship. Ultimately, as David Burchell puts it, “[w]hat is missing is the sense of the citizen as a social creation,

as an historical *persona* whose characteristics have been developed in particular times and places through the activities of self-discipline and self-formation” (1995:549).

What is needed to complement the work of normative political theorists is an account of the ways that the capacities and attributes of the good citizen are developed in social and political life. Such an account would seek to examine the historical conditions that give rise to a specific configuration of citizenship practices in order to interrogate the ways that they produce differences at the same time that they seek to eliminate them. This form of engagement depends upon ‘problematizing’ specific practices in order to clarify how they respond to the problem of governing the self through the government of others (Foucault 1985:11). In other words, it identifies the conditions of emergence of specific problems in order to interrogate the kind of logic that informs the conceptual ontologies associated with the category or practice in question (Somers 1996:73). Such an account interrogates ‘how’ competing practices, rationalities and identities shape the contours of practices by interrogating the ways that specific concepts are constructed. This is an approach that does not ask “whether ideas are ‘true’ or ‘false’ but, rather how and to what effect ideas and ontologies are even considered to be true or false” (1996:74).

In seeking to produce an account of the practical means by which Anglo-American citizenship practices produce a conception of the good citizen that exhibits strength of character through civil conduct, I engage in what Margaret Somers terms an *historical sociology of concept formation* (1995a; 1995b).² This is a perspective that examines the specific web of relations associated with a given constellation of social

² An historical sociology of concept formation is similar to Foucault’s genealogical method, but it does not depend on the process of ‘eventalization’ to do its work. Genealogy is a mechanism of discovery that unearths ‘events’ in the passage of history that seek to reveal “breaches of self-evidence” (Foucault 1991b:76). An historical sociology of concept formation does not necessarily require evidence of a breach, disruption or epistemological break to interrogate the conditions of emergence of particular concepts.

practices, in this case citizenship practices. An historical sociology of concept formation has three broad dimensions: i) it involves *reflexivity* to the extent that it treats the concept to be investigated as an object of inquiry in its own right; ii) it defines concepts in *relational* terms; and iii) it understands concepts as ‘historical’ and ‘cultural’ artifacts, rather than as concrete representations of an objective reality (1995b:134-137).

Ultimately, an historical sociology of concept formation examines the structural organization of a given *conceptual network*.

An historical sociology of concept formation offers a method of interrogating the ways that the concepts of ‘character’ and ‘civility’ are mobilized by Anglo-American citizenship discourses. At first glance, the ideals of character and civility might seem to be self-evidently reasonable and attractive. But my approach seeks to show that these virtues are problematic, in part because they do not take into account the conditions of their emergence. As a result, even seemingly reasonable or attractive ideals conceal relations of power that can and should be contested. In particular, by ignoring the social processes that condition the rise of these ideals, these discourses place particular virtues beyond political contestation, with the (usually unintended) consequence of limiting politics and freezing difference.

Thus, my original contribution in this dissertation consists in bringing normative reflections on good citizenship into dialogue with an approach that triangulates between the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Norbert Elias in order to develop a set of conceptual tools that helps us to see that the image of the good citizen advanced by Anglo-American citizenship discourses depends upon a process of *civic regulation*. Civic regulation involves the double articulation of dividing practices of

‘identity-difference’ and ‘virtue-vice’. The double articulation of dividing practices conditions the emergence of character and civility as technologies of good citizenship that seek to contain self-interest and to respond to difference. Ultimately, I contend that the constellation of practices that constitutes character and civility inadvertently limits politics and contains difference.

To this end, my argument proceeds as follows: I begin by arguing that citizenship can be conceived as a complex ensemble of practices that generates specific ‘truth’ claims about the nature of political life. Here I demonstrate that citizenship emerges in relation to different fields through contests over material and symbolic projects. I use this perspective in order to highlight the ways that Anglo-American citizenship discourses constitute an image of the good citizen as one who participates actively in public life, who negotiates differences of opinion with civility, and who tempers personal interests for the sake of the common good. I contend that these citizenship discourses constitute the good citizens through a process of *civic regulation*. By civic regulation, I mean a process that generates citizens by means of dividing practices of ‘identity-difference’ and ‘virtue-vice’. I argue that contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses mobilize character and civility as specific technologies in order to address two problems of government. First, ‘character’ is deployed in order to limit self-interest in society; in so doing, it organizes the ‘good’ citizen in relation to a shared set of social and political goods that helps to privilege particular forms of conduct. Second, ‘civility’ designates a set of procedural and substantive mechanisms that is concerned to help citizens negotiate their political differences; it produces a ‘good’ citizen through processes of negotiation. Together these virtues constitute the good citizen as one who

exhibits strength of character through civil conduct. I examine each of these virtues of good citizenship in turn.

First, I argue that ‘character’ acts as a technology of good citizenship that operates as an idealized *habitus* that is organized by a logic of ‘disinterest’. I follow Pierre Bourdieu in conceptualizing the *habitus* as a set of dispositions, a conceptualization that involves a practical appreciation for the embodied and usually involuntary understandings of social life (1990b:69-70). Here I focus on the way that symbolic power generates a form of misrecognition that allows the contingent aspects of social goods to become naturalized in order to produce truth claims about the social world (1991:170). Indeed, when the dispositions of the *habitus* are developed in the context of a logic of ‘disinterest’, they are cultivated in relation to an ‘ethic of generosity’ that effectively suspends one’s personal interests for the good of the whole. I argue that understanding character in this manner helps us to see how character operates as a pre-political good that seeks to suspend political contestation over its moral grounds. It demonstrates that contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses adopt the language of character as a technology that mediates the shared values and the challenges posed by political and cultural differences in everyday life. Indeed, while its proponents argue that character is beyond political contestation, my examination reveals that it is constituted by local and particular world-views that can have the effect of limiting politics and containing difference.

Second, I argue that ‘civility’ can be understood as a technology of citizenship that provides a solution to the problem of negotiating ‘difference’ in democratic political life. I argue that civility can be conceptualized as the outcome of a *figurational* process.

Following Norbert Elias, figurations are complex social processes that signify patterned, but mutable, relations of interdependence and reciprocity. They are contingent social forms that are constituted by a specific *balance* of force relations (1978:130; 1994:443). Building on the analysis of civility that Elias provides in *The Civilizing Process* (1994), I argue that civility emerges as the product of ‘pacification’ and ‘distinction’. As a form of ‘pacification,’ civility appears as the outcome of a long-term process through which the means of violence are slowly centralized in state-formations. As a form of ‘distinction’, civility appears as a mechanism that distinguishes one social group from another. In this context, I argue that the language of figurations helps us to see how civility operates as a technology of citizenship by placing constraints on political dialogue. Indeed civility represents a distinction between ‘civil’ and ‘uncivil’ forms of conduct, at the same time that it signifies an attempt to ‘pacify’ the strong in order to balance unequal power relations. For Anglo-American citizenship theorists who use the concept of civility as a means to resolve the problem of difference, civility establishes constraints on the processes of political negotiation in order to facilitate peaceful and reasonable dialogue by limiting violence, incivility and harassment. I maintain that the general tendency for Anglo-American citizenship theorists to present civility as an already constituted set of constraints without accounting for its conditions of emergence potentially stands to retrench forms of domination. Indeed civility assumes a degree of commonality that may not exist. The extent to which civility produces political possibilities at the same time that it limits others suggests that it is an ambivalent phenomenon that gives rise to an ambivalent politics.

In conclusion, my discussion reveals that the task at hand is to think critically about the ways that normative accounts of good citizenship are embedded within particular relations of power. In so doing, I do not contend that normative accounts *always* need to be accompanied by an account of their unfolding. Rather I seek only to emphasize the benefits that stem from this attempt to clarify how particular conceptions of the good citizen operate in order assess their social and political effects. In my view, this underscores the utility of forms of engagement that do not seek to construct a unitary truth about the social world. Indeed, my discussion emphasizes the idea that attempts to cultivate norms of good citizenship are always contingent and never fully realized. I suggest that when the idea that citizenship articulates with different subject positions is pushed to its full conclusions, a new context for citizenship politics is produced that further destabilizes the ability of character and civility to contain self-interest and to resolve differences. The presence of competing forms of citizenship points to a *disarticulation* of the dividing practices advanced by Anglo-American citizenship discourses, and, in so doing, suggests the possibility that new articulations between identity-difference and virtue-vice can emerge. This underscores the extent to which processes of articulation and disarticulation are always already part of the broader process of citizenship formation.

My discussion proceeds in the following manner. In the next chapter, I argue for an approach that conceptualizes citizenship as an ensemble of practices. In Chapter 3, I develop a set of conceptual tools that enables us to see that Anglo-American citizenship discourses produce a conception of the good citizen by means of a process of civic regulation. In Chapter 4, I consider the ways that Anglo-American citizenship discourses

deploy character as a technology of 'good' citizenship that responds to the problem of self-interest. In Chapter 5, I examine the ways that civility is mobilized as a technology in response to the problem of 'difference'. I conclude by offering some reflections on the implications of my discussion for a politics organized around the 'virtues' of good citizenship.

2 Towards an Understanding of Citizenship as an Ensemble of Practices

My goal in this chapter is to sketch the contours of a relational conception of citizenship that is conceived as a complex ensemble of social, juridical and political practices. In so doing, I locate myself within the context of an analytical shift in contemporary social theory that begins with practices as the starting point for analyzing social relations. My orientation to citizenship can thus be situated within an emerging tradition of citizenship theorists such as Bryan Turner (1993:2; 1994:159), Margaret Somers (1993:589), Engin Isin and Patricia Wood (1999:4), James Tully (1999:170), and Nikolas Rose (2000:97) who all conceive of citizenship as a set of practices.

My discussion is organized by the following questions: What are the limitations of a status-based conception of citizenship, and what conceptual remedies are needed in order to address them? If a relational conception of citizenship founded on practices can ameliorate these limitations, how might the practice ‘turn’ in social theory be found useful in this context? Indeed, how might the respective contributions of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault be used to develop a relational conception of citizenship? And finally, what might such a conception of citizenship look like?

This chapter begins with a brief consideration of T.H. Marshall’s work in *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950). His work often serves as an important touchstone for those who conceive of citizenship as a status of membership in a political community. Although Marshall’s conception of citizenship emerges through contingent social relations, it tends to present the concept of citizenship in static terms. I suggest that a relational notion of citizenship that is characterized as a complex of different practices can help to ameliorate this limitation.

In order to develop my approach to citizenship, I offer an overview of the theoretical insights advanced by the ‘practice turn’ in contemporary social theory. Here practices are seen to be complex arrays of human activity that signify shared understandings of social life. What is significant about this perspective is that practices become the starting points for analyzing social relations rather than classes, systems, individuals, or structures. When practices concentrate in a localized arena, they constitute ‘nodal points’ that can form the basis for different subject positions. Subject formation thus comes to depend on a process of ‘identification’ that itself relies upon the presence of ‘structures of recognition’ that are germane to a given field. I suggest that what is significant about this orientation toward practices is that it reflects a renewed engagement with ontological questions about social life.

From here, I turn to a more detailed examination of the respective contributions of Bourdieu and Foucault. I contend that while Bourdieu’s sketch of the generative potential of the relationship between habitus and field is useful for theorizing citizenship relations, it founders on an objectivist orientation to truth that appears to homogenize what are actually complex and differentiated experiences of the social world. Despite these limitations, however, I argue that it is possible to appropriate selectively the concepts of habitus and field from his overall corpus without trading on their conceptual utility. This makes it possible to benefit from Bourdieu’s conceptual insights without committing to his entire framework. It is here that I suggest that Foucault’s focus on conditions of emergence of specific social relations and forms of subjectivity offers a way of conceptualizing practices that manages to avoid an *a priori* objectification of a given field of study. Practices emerge as an outcome of social processes rather than as an

always already constituted set of social relations. It is in this context that his work provides a way of interrogating specific 'regimes of practices' that give rise to particular configurations of knowledge-power relations. These insights make it possible to conceive of citizenship as a technology of government that governs the self through the government of others.³

This discussion helps to prepare the groundwork for an approach to citizenship that is understood as a complex ensemble of practices. Here, citizenship is conceived of as an ensemble of practices that is organized in terms of different games of 'truth.' It emerges in relation to specific fields through the negotiation and contestation over material and symbolic projects. In this context, the 'citizen' comes to be understood as a subject position that signifies one of many different points of attachment in a complex network of other positions. The articulation of the 'citizen' with other subject positions produces different forms of citizenship, such as aboriginal citizenship, environmental citizenship and consumer citizenship, that each operates in relation to specific fields.

Before proceeding, let me first consider briefly the contribution of T.H. Marshall to conceptualizing citizenship. From there, I turn my attention to the general outlines of the practice turn in social theory before engaging more closely with the individual contributions of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. Finally, I provide an overview of

³ Although my approach to citizenship is inspired by Bourdieu and Foucault, it is important to acknowledge that I use their work in ways that neither would have sanctioned. In other words, I recognize that my attempt to make use of what I consider the most helpful aspects of their work does great violence to the conceptual integrity of each perspective. This is a difficult problem, for taken individually, neither would have captured as fully the citizenship relations that I wish to explore here. In choosing to utilize both contributions for my project, I embark on what purists might argue is problematic. Although I realize that acknowledging the problem will do little to assuage all concerns, it is nonetheless the case that I am aware of the dangers of eclecticism.

a relational conception of citizenship that is conceived of as an ensemble of different practices.

2.1 The Limitations of a Status-Based Conception of Citizenship

Marshall offers an important account of the evolution of modern rights discourses and citizenship under conditions of modern capitalism. He famously defines citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (1992:18). His principal contribution rests with the way he connects the rise of capitalism to the expansion of citizenship rights within the broader political community of the nation-state (Bottomore 1992; Mann 1987; Turner 1986). He argues that modern rights and duties appear initially with the emergence of state formations in Europe and are subsequently developed with the rise of industrial capitalism. This sets the stage for an examination of the development of civil, political and social rights from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century. He argues that civil rights, such as guarantees of individual liberty and equality before the law, first appear in the eighteenth century. This is a distinctly ‘modern’ form of citizenship to the extent that rights are supported by state formations such as courts and parliament. In the nineteenth century, he argues that political rights were extended to a broader cross-section of the population, leading to the eventual enfranchisement of women and aboriginals in the twentieth century. He maintains that social and economic rights emerge with the turn of the twentieth century and are cemented with the rise of post-World War II Keynesianism. Indeed the

institutionalization of the welfare state provides the conditions for the growth of social and economic rights.

Notwithstanding Marshall's insights into the historical conditions for the emergence of modern citizenship rights, many scholars have since argued that the relationship between the rise of capitalism and civil, political and social rights is more complex than his seamless portrayal might suggest (Fraser and Gordon 1992; Mann 1987; Sarvasy 1997; Turner 1986; 1993). Others have noted that his schema does not address the experiences of women, immigrants, ethno-cultural minorities, and slaves, not to mention those of colonized and indigenous peoples whose full and equal participation in political life has often been severely restricted (Kymlicka 1995; Stasiulis and Bakan 1997; Yuval-Davis 1999). Feminists have further challenged the way that Marshall implicitly privileges a conception of the white, western, straight, propertied male as citizen to the exclusion of others (Lister 1997a; 1997b; Pateman 1988; Phillips 1991; Sarvasy 1997; Walby 1994).

In addition to these critiques, others have argued that the conceptual basis of Marshall's approach is limited because it depends upon an understanding of citizenship that effectively operates as an ideal type. In this regard, the idea that citizenship merely designates the status of membership in a community is problematic because it advances an ideal-typical conception of citizenship that does not correspond to the experience of actually-existing democracies under contemporary political and economic conditions. Indeed Marshall's approach to citizenship rests upon a historically specific conception of the state that is situated in the context of post-WWII expansion. And yet, the current decline of the welfare state, the increase of structural forms of unemployment, the rise of

neo-liberal governments and the existence of transnational communities suggest that a new way of conceptualizing citizenship is needed, one that better attends to the ways that citizenship operates as a condition of otherness.

In general, the difficulty with ideal-typical conceptions of citizenship is that they tend to perpetuate the idea that citizenship exists “either in the form of a static relationship of an abstract individual to an abstract state or as a thing-like status, granted to ‘deserving’ individuals on the basis of achievement, natural attributes or accident of birth” (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997:115). In other words, they tend to present citizenship as a non-relational entity that reifies the social conditions of its emergence. Ideal typical notions of citizenship are often conceived in status-based terms that position the concept outside social relations. The problem is that ideal-typical conceptions of citizenship hypostatize its conditions of emergence by rendering the concept in substantialist, and non-relational terms.⁴

The approach to citizenship that I develop in this chapter seeks to respond to the kinds of limitations associated with status-based notions of citizenship identified above. Before turning to my own conception of citizenship, I begin by elaborating the theoretical context of my approach. I move then to consider how the work of Bourdieu and Foucault might bear productively on conceptualizing citizenship.

⁴ Mustafa Emirbayer explains that ‘substantialist’ approaches to conceptualizing social relations emphasize the extent to which substances of things, beings or essences act as primary units of analysis (1997:282). In this regard, the methodological individualism of Max Weber offers a good illustration of a substantialist orientation in social theory. Here, methodological individualism maintains that individual action is the primary unit of analysis for the analysis of the social world (Weber 1968:3-26). In Weber’s case, this is because an examination of the subjective meanings which actors attach to their own behaviour and to the behavior of others is held to be necessary in order to understand social action. This kind of substantialism offers a contrast to relational approaches, or what Emirbayer terms ‘transactional approaches’. Relational approaches tend to reject the idea that discrete, pregiven units of analysis like the ‘individual’ or ‘society’ can offer an appropriate point of departure for investigating the nuances and complexities of social life (Emirbayer 1997:287-289; see also Frazer 1999:78).

2.2 The Practice Turn in Social Theory

Social theorists have become increasingly preoccupied with the conceptual utility of 'practices' in recent years. The range of perspectives that focus on practices is protean and broad; indeed, the diverse lines of inquiry pursued by philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein (1972) and Charles Taylor (1985) and social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990b), Anthony Giddens (1984) and Michel Foucault (1977a; 1978) all demonstrate a concern with practices. Even though they are located in different intellectual traditions, each of these various approaches attempts to sidestep the antinomies of long-standing debates over objectivism versus subjectivism, individuality versus totality, and structure versus agency by recourse to the language of practice. The concentration of interest in 'practices' has led Theodore Schatzki to herald the beginning of a 'practice turn in social theory' (2001). The practice turn attempts to decentre metaphysical conceptions of agency, to avoid totalizing accounts of social life, and to emphasize the contingent and historical aspects of everyday life.

Following Schatzki, the term *practice* designates any complex array of human activity (2001:2; 1996:89-90). It signifies a shared or mutual understanding of social life that is historically and culturally specific. Here, practices are viewed as historically contingent social phenomena that reflect shared understandings between social actors. More specifically, practices enable the conditions of intelligibility for mutual understandings between actors (1996:12). Practices are constitutive of subjects *and* objects, structures *and* agents, theory *and* practice. As such, they are always relational entities that are situated locally and contingently in specific fields, games or

assemblages.⁵ These networks make up a complex arena where variegated social phenomena such as power, knowledge, institutions, structures, activity and action are mutually constituted. They form an interconnected matrix of human practices that designates specific relationships between different practices (2001:2). In this view, practices become the primary starting point for analyzing social life rather than individuals, groups, classes, structures or systems.

An important consequence of the idea that practices are starting points for the analysis of social relations is that ‘identities’ are produced through temporary and unstable subject positions. When practices concentrate in a localized area, they constitute specific ‘nodal points’ that operate as temporary points of attachment for particular subject positions such as ‘citizen’, ‘worker’, ‘student’, and ‘activist’ that are constructed by means of a process of *identification*. This process depends upon “the recognition of some common origin, shared characteristics, or solidarity” that serves “to temporarily consolidate a particular identity” (Hall and du Gay 1996:2). The contiguity of overlapping points of contact temporarily sutures the identity of an individual *as if* it were a unitary whole, but is always already permanently fractured and unstable.⁶ It is in this context that identity forms at the intersection of various subject positions and emerges as the product of multiple points of attachment (Mouffe 1992b:10; 1993:77).

Identification depends on the presence of particular *structures of recognition* that ensure that individuals can recognize themselves as subjects at the same time that they

⁵ Here, the term ‘field’ is derived from Pierre Bourdieu who insists that the ‘field’ designates an arbitrary network of social relations (1990b:67). However, interestingly in Schatzki’s constitution of ‘practices’ he does not discuss the way that the field is constituted by relations of force or power.

⁶ Before the linguistic turn, identity was typically conceived as being a seamless, undifferentiated self that represented an ‘all-inclusive sameness’. Even if one accepts the extent to which identities are fragile, multiple and fragmented, the language of ‘identity’ always suggests some degree of fixity. The apparent homogeneity of the term makes it appear as if it were always already natural (Hall and du Gay 1996:4-5).

are recognizable to others (Owen 1994:63). Structures of recognition are the nexuses of discursive and non-discursive norms, practices and processes that dialogically construct the shared understandings of subjects within a particular field. They are products of particular social, cultural and historical circumstances and, while durable, are capable of mutating and changing over time. Structures of recognition are what make it possible to hold an identity (or identities) and have it (or them) be recognized by others. They are constantly produced and reproduced, but all the while contain the potential for reversal and transgression. As such, identification and recognition are always involved in a perpetual process of unfolding that operates at once as a 'narrativization of being' and as a 'spatialization of being' (Rose 1996:143). Narrativization is the process by which one weaves a variegated web of subject positions together in order to fashion the *appearance* of a coherent whole. It reflects a process of story-telling that locates individuals firmly in time and space. Spatialization is the process by which subjects are constituted in space by means of functional sites such as the classroom, the hospital, the grocery store, and the city. While space operates as a set of material constraints on subject formation, it also represents a constellation of non-essential unfoldings that help to organize subjects (Natter and Jones 1997:151).

One effect of these reflections on identity formation is that even if individuals share a particular subject position, it does not mean that they will share a set of common practices (Schatzki 1996:8). In other words, a collection of shared subject positions does not immediately constitute a 'we'; it simply creates the conditions for the emergence of a collectivity. Any 'we' must be developed, constituted and worked up in a political process of 'becoming' through which individuals negotiate and contest the constitutive

features of this 'we'. The lessons from the feminist movement are especially instructive here. The fact that one may be biologically categorized as 'female' from birth neither guarantees that the category of 'woman' will necessarily constitute a subject position, nor does it ensure that one will identify as 'woman'. Indeed, the adoption of the subject position of 'woman' signifies the suturing of a complex ensemble of nodal points such as class, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, and religion. As such, no shared subject position of 'women' can emerge that represents the collective experiences of an aggregate group unless one is formed through a political process of becoming a 'we'. This is an important political point that affirms the extent to which collective projects cannot be assumed to exist by virtue of shared subject positions. Such projects imply and demand a process of identification that involves coalition-building and solidarity-building in order for subjects to organize politically (J. Dean 1996).

The practices that constitute particular subject positions rely on shared understandings, mediated by bodies that are themselves contingently located in time and space. The 'body' is understood here as a social construct located at the convergence of a spatial and temporal network of symbolic and material practices (Schatzki and Natter 1996:5).⁷ The body articulates the discursive and the non-discursive and is both socially constructed and materially constituted.⁸ Thus understood, the body highlights the importance of the material as a constitutive, yet contingent, feature of social life. Practices are therefore understood as "*materially mediated* nexuses of activity" that are

⁷ Indeed, the social construction of the body has become an increased object of intellectual attention within social theory; see for instance Shilling (1993), Grosz (1994), Turner (1984).

⁸ I use the language of material here to signify general elements of the physical world. The term 'material' often contrasts the 'ideal' or the 'spiritual'. My use of the term therefore differs from the Marxist sense of the term to designate specific modes of production.

organized by and through the social constitution of various forms of corporeality (Schatzki 2001:11, emphasis in original). The practice turn thus exhibits a strong materialist current that highlights the ways that practices are incorporated, transformed, and ordered by non-human entities at the same time that they are configured, organized and propagated by human bodies (Schatzki 2001:3, 8). While bodies are discursive entities, they are also material entities that mark the point of contact between practices and social life. As such, discursive practices, such as language, and non-discursive practices, such as building, share the human body as a pivotal point of attachment. For example, speaking or writing involves manipulating the tongue and vocal cords or the hands, while in physical construction the transformation of non-human entities by material bodies is frequently organized by verbal or textual codes (e.g. plans, designs, and blueprints). Just as the term 'practice' typically designates the activities of human agents, it also represents the incorporation into social life of non-human actors such as machines, scallops, and door-closers (Callon 1986; Johnson [Latour] 1988).⁹

The interest in the nature and constitution of practices represents a renewed engagement with questions of ontology in social and political theory. While ontology traditionally refers to a form of philosophical reflection that is generally concerned with determining the conditions and possibilities of human existence, the meaning of ontology has recently shifted within philosophical circles. Stephen White (1997; 2000) contends that this shift has occurred for two reasons. First, the changing conceptual underpinnings of the language of ontology can be attributed to W.V.O. Quine for whom "ontology refers to the analysis of those basic entities whose existence is presupposed by a given

⁹ Indeed these concerns reflect a broader engagement between the social studies of science and practice 'theory'.

proposition, theory, or research tradition. If one makes truth claims about the latter phenomena, one thereby takes on a logical 'commitment' to the existence of the former" (White 1997:502-503; see Quine 1953). This sense of 'ontology' affirms the presence of ontological commitments in almost every aspect of social life. Second, the insights of feminist, postmodern and poststructuralist thought have contributed to the interrogation of previously taken-for-granted notions such as subjectivity, truth, and knowledge that have had the effect of disturbing typical ways of seeing and doing (White 1997:503). The combination of these disruptions in social and political theory is to question necessarily the fixity, certainty and surety of categorical presuppositions. It is in this context that White proposes the notion of a 'weak ontology' in order to draw attention to the interpretive dimensions of an anti-foundationalist position developed under conditions of late modernity (1997:506-507). The notion of weak ontology signifies particular structures of meaning that are cultivated by a contingent array of practices. In contrast with the 'strong' ontological conception of a universal 'teflon' subject that transcends the specificities of time and space, a 'weak' ontology underscores the 'stickiness' of the constitutive intersection of contingent practices that locates ontologies spatially and temporally. The effect is to open up a non-foundational conceptual space that reaffirms the interpretive dimensions of social life which are always already open to contestation.

When they are conceived in weak ontological terms, practices are neither grounded in an absolute truth, nor are they the product of a unified metaphysical conception of the human subject. Rather, they represent specific 'do-ings' and 'say-ings' that generate certain truth claims about social life. The truth that they generate is always

already capable of being contested, challenged, reconfigured and interrogated. Practices thus generate a social ontology where mutual understanding is not necessarily shared by all, but needs only to be understood by more than one. This allows for the possibility of different configurations of social practices that can be oriented towards a range of social and political projects. Understood in this manner, practice theory offers an approach to theorizing social relations that makes an interrogation of the shared understandings of social life both possible and necessary.

2.3 A Consideration of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault

Missing from this general account of practices thus far is an account of the way that power configures social relations. It is with this concern in mind that I turn to consider the respective contributions of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault who each emphasizes the role of power in constituting practices. Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' is organized in terms of a dynamic relation between *habitus* and *field*. Here, *habitus* signifies a way of being that emerges in relation to a field that is structured according to struggles over economic, cultural and symbolic capital. Capital is conceived as something that is acquired within the objective relations of a specific field. Bourdieu's work emphasizes the emergent relations between individuals and institutions rather than the conditions of emergence of specific practices.

Although Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* and *field* is useful for conceptualizing the structured and structuring elements of human agency, it falters on an objectivist orientation to truth that appears to homogenize multiple and differentiated experiences of the social world into a single and unitary notion of *habitus*. This concern leads me to

consider the work of Michel Foucault who offers an orientation to theorizing practices that emphasizes the historical conditions of their emergence. Although Foucault is primarily interested in the constitution of subjectivities, I want to suggest that it is possible to see in his work an orientation to practice that is consistent with the practice turn in social theory. In Foucault's writings, practices emerge as the outcome of specific configurations of power. Power is neither acquired nor possessed, but circulates as an assemblage of force relations through the social body. This is a conception of power that gives rise to a concern for the ways that subjects come to govern themselves through the government of others. 'Governmentality' is organized by means of conduct that is formed in relation to specific 'truth' games. This orientation to practices provokes an examination of the ways that ethical subjects come to tell the 'truth' about themselves and others.

A. Pierre Bourdieu: A Theory of Practice

Let me begin with a consideration of the work of Pierre Bourdieu who grounds his orientation to practice in the idea of *habitus*. He defines habitus as "*a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*" (1977:214, fn.1; 1990b:52-53, emphasis in original). The habitus represents the kinds of shared understandings that allow social agents to take things for granted. It involves what Bourdieu terms *le sens pratique* or 'practical sense' which is a "quasi-bodily involvement in the world" (1990b:66-69). Practical sense designates the kinds of embodied, involuntary understandings that one has of the way things 'work'. It is conceptualized as a 'feel for the game' that reflects an intuitive

‘know-how’ that cannot be adequately captured by the language of rules.¹⁰ It signifies a dynamic relationship between individual and collective practices that makes *dispositions* the basis of social practices (1997:231). Dispositions are those durable and transposable orientations to social life that are reflected in the way that individuals learn how to present themselves by means of speech, bodily movement, and personal conduct.¹¹ They are not natural to the body, but are rather cultivated in relation to one’s social location.¹² The habitus thereby entails a mutually constitutive relationship between individual and social practices. To this end, Bourdieu argues that the habitus is simultaneously comprised of ‘structured structures’ and ‘structuring structures’ that, while regular and transposable, are not collectively determined (1977:72; 1990b:53).

Habitus is always activated in relation to a *field* (Bourdieu 1990a:116; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:96-97). The notion of ‘field’ designates an arbitrary network of social relations that is structured by relations of force that determine the nature of struggle over economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:99). The field is the site where individuals and groups seek to alter, reduce,

¹⁰ Bourdieu argues that it is possible to think of fields as ‘games’ with some degree of caution: “[w]e can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game (*jeu*) although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified. Thus we have *stakes* (*enjeux*) which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an *investment in the game*, *illusio* (from *ludos*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:98).

¹¹ The language of dispositions has a long and complicated history. Dispositions may simply refer to properties or attributes that emerge under specific conditions. It is in this sense that Bourdieu uses the term. However, dispositions can also refer to ethical attributes that are characteristic of specific ‘virtues’ such as honesty, loyalty, and trustworthiness that are associated with the ‘moral’ person. See D.M. Armstrong, C.B. Martin and U.T. Place (1996) for a overview of the philosophical debates associated with the term.

¹² For Bourdieu, one’s social location is defined in terms of one’s orientation to the means of production. Social location is rendered visible by means of dispositions that make the amount of capital (economic and otherwise) that one possesses intelligible to others.

enhance the distribution of capital (Bourdieu 1986:243). Here capital is conceived in relational terms as both a resource that conditions different strategic possibilities and a principle that structures the constitution of habitus (1986:241). Depending on the context of the relationship between habitus and field, capital can take the form of embodied, objectified or institutionalized relations (1986:243). Economic capital symbolizes the accumulation and struggle over material goods, whereas cultural capital represents a form of power that is developed through education, artistic knowledge and skill development. Social capital signifies resources, such as manners, that are situated within a network of relations of mutual recognition (1986:248). Symbolic capital is based upon shared valuations of the significance of certain dispositions, such as honour, valor, generosity, and goodness. It depends upon the logic of ‘disinterestedness’ that infuses dispositions with a form of selflessness towards one’s community or society (1997:233).

Each field constitutes “a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are *dynamic borders* which are the stake of struggles within the field itself” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:104, emphasis in original). The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. First, it operates as a relation of ‘conditioning’ where the habitus recognizes elements of the field. Second, it operates as a relation of knowledge or ‘cognitive construction’ where the habitus invests in the field and thereby makes it meaningful (1992:107). Although the field is patterned and contains certain ‘rules’ of engagement, it is not fixed (1990a:118). In this respect, the relationship between habitus and field is one of “generative spontaneity” that is constantly invented and reinvented by the specific practices of individuals and groups (1990a:55). Habitus facilitates a degree of ‘homogeneity’ that allows one’s practices to be intelligible to others, but also reflects a

level of ‘homology’ in the distinctiveness of individual orientations to social life. The homogeneity of habitus enables “practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted” (1977:80). In other words, the shared understandings between individuals reflect and reproduce the social practices that are constitutive of a given field. Despite the level of homogeneity, however, habitus also exhibits some degree of homology (or diversity) that is the product of different social locations, ethno-cultural backgrounds and conditions of life (1973:76; 1977:86). Within certain objective limits, the habitus generates a potentially infinite number of patterns of behaviour that are ‘relatively unpredictable’ and ‘limited in their diversity’ (1990a:55).

In sum, Bourdieu’s work exemplifies an approach to practices where dispositions are constitutive of mutual understanding. Habitus emerges in a generative relation to the field where practices unfold over the struggle for particular forms of capital. Practices are organized by discursive, yet embodied dispositions of the habitus. The generative spontaneity between habitus and field suggests that while habitus is durable and persistent, it is mutable and capable of change within the objective limits set by the field.

A difficulty with this approach to practices, however, is that practices appear to be always already objectified as they emerge in relation to a field. Although dispositions emerge relationally, Bourdieu does not offer an account of their specific conditions of their emergence. This gives rise to a somewhat static model of social relations that reinforces the unity of a fully-enclosed system of social relations (Brubaker 1985:770). This is problematic to the extent that it does not adequately provide an account of emergent conditions of possibility for alternative configurations of the relationship between habitus and field. In short by emphasizing the durability of social relations,

Bourdieu does not sufficiently address how social change comes about. While he suggests that the relation between habitus and field contains a generative potential, the difficulty is that his notion of habitus suggests a fairly unitary understanding of habitual knowledge. Put differently, the concept of the habitus tends to emphasize the shared understandings between different individuals, at the expense of an elaboration of how they are different (Isin and Wood 1999:44; McNay 2000:72). By means of the habitus, Bourdieu advances a unitary conception of subjectivity that stands in tension with an orientation toward practices that is consistent with an emphasis on the idea that subjects are multiple and permanently fragmented. The implication is that this unitary conception of habitus advances a singular, unitary truth about social relations. In other words, the concept of habitus tends to homogenize differently situated experiences of the social world into a unitary whole. Thus, there is neither an adequate account of the complex unfolding of multiple and contingent positions in social relations, nor a rendering of how, and in what ways, one comes to identify with a particular habitus. Although the formation of habitus is not the product of a set of calculated responses, the question of how the process of identification develops needs to be better addressed.

With these criticisms in mind, I want to suggest, nevertheless, that it is possible to retrieve a conception of habitus that operates as a multiple and competing arrangement of subject positions. Doing so requires that one transforms the unitary conception of the 'field' so that it is conceived in multiple terms. Severing the connection between field and 'society' means that the concept of the field can be used to refer to a range of different social contexts such as communities, classrooms, ballparks and pool-halls. In each context, the generative potential of the relation between habitus and field conditions

the acquisition and struggle over different forms of capital.¹³ This is an understanding of practices that emphasizes their multiple conditions of possibility.

B. Michel Foucault: A Genealogy of Practices

This reading of Bourdieu is indebted to the contribution of Michel Foucault who does not offer a ‘theory of practice’ *per se*, but rather offers what can be best described as an *orientation* to theorizing practices. Because the language of theory can often imply a set of abstract and static explanations for social life, it can reify practices out of their contingent historical contexts. As such, Foucault cautions against any theoretical or methodological approach that is founded on an *a priori* objectification (1982a:209). Instead, he offers an orientation to practices that is grounded in an examination of the historical conditions of their emergence. Here, practices are situated in relation to a discursive field that is understood as a *dispositif*.¹⁴ Discursive practices are characterized by the “delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories” (1977b:191). Even though Foucault insists that ‘discursive’ practices are largely responsible for processes of objectification, he acknowledges that non-discursive practices can also be significant.

¹³ Although my conception of power is principally Foucauldian, I want to hang onto the Bourdieu’s conception of capital because his notion of symbolic capital offers a way of seeing the extent to which dispositions can be informed by a logic of disinterest. I develop this line of inquiry in my discussion of character formation in Chapter 4.

¹⁴ Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest that the *dispositif* may be translated as a ‘grid of intelligibility’ (1982:121). Also, according to Gilles Deleuze, the *dispositif* can be characterized as a “multilinear ensemble” that is composed of heterogeneous, yet entangled lines of fracture and of sedimentation. These lines exist in tensile, yet *potentially* dynamic relations with one another (Deleuze 1992:159)

His orientation to practices examines the intelligibility of specific regimes by means of a genealogical method (1991b:75). After Nietzsche (1967), Foucault uses genealogy as a mechanism of discovery that unearths events in the passage of history. These accidents or breaks mark new beginnings that signify new ways of knowing and new ways of being. As such, genealogy does not involve a search for origins, but rather seeks moments of disparity and dissension (1977:142). Here, history is not understood as a series of continuous lines, but emerges rather out of a series of fragmented breaks and disruptions. The genealogical method represents an intervention into what Foucault terms the 'history of the present' (1977c:154). It transforms what is given into a question in order to cultivate an 'effective history' that challenges the perception of an unbroken sequence of historical events. Genealogy seeks to produce 'an historical ontology of ourselves' that relies on three lines of inquiry: an investigation of the *truth* through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge, an examination of the field of *power* through which we become subjects that act on others, and an interrogation of the *ethics* through which we fashion ourselves as ethical beings (1982b:237).

For Foucault, any 'regime of practices' is always already organized in relation to power. Power is conceived here neither at the level of conscious intent nor decision, but is rendered intelligible through its effectivity. It is understood as a productive capacity that constitutes human beings as subjects (1982a:208).¹⁵ This is a conception of power that is articulated as a 'disciplinary' power in his early work but eventually gives way to a conception of 'governmentality' that he calls the 'conduct of conduct' in his later work.

¹⁵ Foucault famously plays on the double-meaning attached to the word *subject* in French. On one hand, it signifies a form of control and dependence where one is subject to another. On the other, it is tied to processes of identification where one acquires a knowledge of one's self (1982a:212).

When conceived in *disciplinary* terms, power circulates in a capillary fashion that extends into the depths of the social body. Here power and knowledge exist in relation to each other: power operates as a condition for knowledge, and knowledge produces power. Power/knowledge relations are embedded in regimes of disciplinary practices such as the army, the school and the medical system that target the body in order to transform the soul through techniques of modification and correction (1977a:28). The body becomes a vehicle for the constitution of particular subjectivities that are shaped by practices of correct training, such as techniques of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the partitioning of social space (1977a:170-194). When conceived as a mode of *government* that is understood as the 'conduct of conduct', power is organized as a strategic rationality that produces specific programmes, strategies and techniques in order to foster the government of the self through the government of others (Foucault 1982a:220-221; Gordon 1991:2). Governmentality signifies the ensemble of discursive practices that enable an individual to be recognized as a 'competent' member of the community (1994:7).

Specific regimes of practices are sometimes called *discourses*. Here discourses signify complex webs of mutually-referential truth claims that combine to form accounts of social life by generating a knowledge about specific objects or concepts (Foucault 1970; 1972). They are historically contingent and change and evolve according to changes in material conditions. Configured according to certain conditions of possibility, discourses generate 'truths' about a particular object of knowledge. This truth is not the product of the self-present subject of modernity, but is rather the product of the articulation of multiple practices. As such, discourses take many different forms, such as

‘medical discourses’, ‘sexual discourses’, ‘legal discourses’ and, as we will see, ‘citizenship discourses’.

Foucault often uses the term ‘practices’ alternately with the notion of *techniques*. But where ‘practice’ designates a generalized form of discursive or non-discursive activity, ‘technique’ specifically refers to repetitive forms of human activity, such as writing, reading, and swimming, that tend to foster certain capabilities in a given subject.¹⁶ It represents the kinds of ‘minute disciplines’ that are performed on and enacted by the human body. Techniques and practices are also often mentioned interchangeably with the language of *technologies*. In general terms, technology signifies an organized complex of knowledge relations that produces particular effects. Foucault argues that techniques become technologies when they cross a ‘technological threshold’ that signifies the concentration of various disciplines into a network that is linked to and reinforced by the constitution of particular forms of knowledge (M. Dean 1996:54-55; Foucault 1977a:224). Technologies can be organized into four principal kinds, recognizing at the same time that they may overlap and reinforce one another: technologies of production (involving the transformation of objects and things); technologies of sign systems (involving the performance and constitution of discourse); technologies of power (specifically, conduct that determines the conduct of individuals); and technologies of the self (including the specific activities that individuals perform on themselves) (Foucault 1988b:18). The intersection between technologies of power and technologies of the self is of particular interest because it marks the emergence of governmental relations (1991a:102). Technologies of government represent

¹⁶ For Marcel Mauss, virtually no form of human activity exists that is not embodied in some kind of repetitive framework (1985:2)

configurations of power that are harnessed in specific combinations that can be “unlocked, extracted, stored, transported or distributed” for particular purposes and effects. They signify a heterogeneous assemblage of relations between different objects and constitute particular forms of practical knowledge that designate specific “modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgment, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscription techniques and so forth” (Rose 1999:52). In other words, technologies of government constitute “those over whom authority is exercised as subjects of performance” in order to “act on the action” of subjects so that “they engage their own conduct as something that is testable, monitorable, and calculable” (M. Dean 1996:60, 61).

Foucault’s emphasis on the determining qualities of governmental relations shifts in the last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* (1985; 1986) where he focuses on the ‘care of the self as a practice of freedom’. The care of the self signifies an “ensemble of rules for the production of truth” that involves practices such as self-reflection, self-mastery, and self-examination (1994:16). It is an ethical relation that demands self-mastery over the limits that one imposes on oneself.¹⁷ The *ethics* of the care of the self as it was conceived in ancient Greece therefore involved “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria” (1985:10).

Those practices that transformed one into an ethical subject were central to the “practice

¹⁷ Foucault famously distinguishes between morals and ethics. Morality is “a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth” (1985:25). Ethics involves the way that “individuals are urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct” (1985:29).

of a virtuous life” of a “free man in the full, positive and political sense of the word” (1985:77). Indeed, freedom not only signifies the ontological condition for ethical practice, but it is inseparable from relations of power (1982a:221). The cultivation of truths about the self demands that they be recognized by others. Truth is conditioned by the practice of freedom such that one makes certain choices about how to conduct an ethical life.¹⁸ Thus, the ethical care of the self comes to be organized by relations of governmentality to the extent that it signifies the government of the self alongside the government of others. It is in this context that Foucault argues that the problem is “to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth” where the production of truth means “not the production of true utterances, but the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent” (1991b:79). Practices thus come to signify modes of conduct that are constituted in relation to particular games of truth. Truth games signal the specific arena or field where truth is constituted as an object of discourse.¹⁹ Human practices can be ordered as ‘rules’ that are open to interpretation and contestation. The art of government therefore entails an *agonistic* process where strategies and tactics suggest possible points of reversal (1982a:221). Here, governing people entails a “versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself” (1993:203-204). This suggests that every power relation holds the possibility of contestation and struggle

¹⁸ The distinction between ethics and politics is problematic to the extent that it suggests a kind of ‘radical voluntarism’ that encourages individuals to pursue ethical projects without elaborating how they coordinate or relate to the government of others (White and Hunt 2000:100).

¹⁹ Foucault argues that truth games are not always discursively constituted by power relations; indeed, there are some truth games such as mathematics that are non-discursive entities (1994:296). See David Bloor (1976) for a discussion of the discursiveness of mathematics.

through which subjects come to constitute themselves and reconstitute themselves as subjects of government.

Foucault's orientation toward practices is especially useful for my purposes to the extent that he offers a way of analyzing the processes by which practices come to constitute specific technologies of government. When practices are configured as discourses that generate knowledge claims about complex configurations of practices, it becomes possible to examine the myriad of ways that practices work on, but are also acted on by specific subjects engaged in self-government. Thus, it is with his conception of governmentality that a conception of practices emerges as the government of the self and the government of others. His approach offers a way of investigating the conditions of emergence of specific 'regimes of practices' that allows one to examine the ways that ethical subjects come to tell the truth about themselves and others. And as we will see in the next section, both Bourdieu's and Foucault's approaches to practices are helpful in constructing a relational conception of citizenship that responds to the limitations of a status-based notion of citizenship.

2.4 Citizenship as an Ensemble of Practices

The practice turn offers a way of examining the kinds of practices that constitute 'citizens' as subjects of government. It provides a way of interrogating different forms of citizenship that emerge in relation to specific fields or games (Rose 2000:97; Tully 1999:170). Whether one adopts the language of fields or games, this relational conception of citizenship engenders a kind of analysis that moves the discursive context of citizenship beyond traditional spheres such as the state, and extends citizenship into

other arenas such as the public sphere, civil society, the community, the council meeting, the protest and the internet. Citizenship is no longer tied to the principle of sovereignty and is not limited to formally 'political' institutions and practices such as voting, jury duty, or public office.²⁰ To think of citizenship in these terms is to break with a state-centred conception of citizenship. Instead, this understanding of citizenship focuses on the constitutive relations between citizens and field in addition to relations between citizens, and those between citizens and non-citizens. Significantly, it does not presume any *a priori* content of citizenship; rather, substantive dispositions, attributes, rights and entitlements emerge as a product of their relation with a specific field. This conception of citizenship does not always already depend upon a shared conception of what constitutes the common good. Instead citizenship emerges through the course of active *participation, negotiation and contestation* over material projects (e.g. Medicare, welfare, and educational services) and symbolic projects (e.g. nationalism, oaths of allegiance, and patriotism). This conception of citizenship points to the ways that specific dispositions are cultivated and embodied as sources of tension and struggle.

Understood this way, citizenship comes to be defined as the outcome of different juridical, political and symbolic practices through which citizens negotiate access to material and symbolic goods.²¹ It is no longer adequately characterized as a bundle of rights and duties that signify membership in a nation-state. Rather 'citizenship' signifies those practices (that may include rights and duties as practices) that construct the 'citizen' as a particular subject of government, and those that she adopts in the process of her own

²⁰ The work of Michael Dillon (1996) and R.B.J. Walker (1993) is particularly important here.

²¹ In this view, the concept of citizenship may be used to *signify* a particular formal or legal status, but this status is always already the discursive product of a network of contingent social relations.

self-governance. Citizenship therefore includes a range of practices that govern one through the government of others, such as voting, public service, committee work, political protest and civil disobedience (White and Hunt 2000:110). But it also includes other practices such as civility, character, and public reasonableness. Conceptualizing citizenship as an ensemble of practices in this manner provides a way of side-stepping the chronic oppositions between active-passive and public-private that confound status-based conceptions of citizenship. Not only is the citizen always already active, but it is both public and private to the extent that it exists as a range of practices that govern both the private aspects of the self and the public forms of engagement with others.

The practice turn in social theory, as seen through the lens provided by Bourdieu and Foucault, helps us to see how discourses of citizenship are themselves ensembles of practices that organize citizenship practices into specific games of 'truth'. These practices generate knowledge claims about what constitutes the truth of citizenship. As practices of citizenship, they articulate with different social fields that in turn produce a truth that is itself multiple and multifarious. This is to say, that 'citizenship' is not a homogeneous category that merely signifies membership in a community. It reflects rather a set of *contested* ideas about how citizens come to tell the truth about themselves and others. The truth of any given configuration of citizenship depends upon its relation to a field and can signify notions of justice, citizenly conduct, tolerance and respect. It is important to note that 'citizenship' does not symbolize a coherent and untrammelled set of beliefs; it is a discursive category that represents often opposing, but generally shared basic truths about the nature of citizenship practices within a discursive field. This is not to suggest that 'citizenship' simply designates any aggregate of different kinds of

practices. Rather it suggests that 'citizenship' is a category that is produced by and through its relation to a specific field of social relations.

Here, 'citizen' is understood as a subject position that is just one of many temporary points of attachment in a network of other subject positions such as 'mother', 'catholic', 'lesbian' and 'student' (Isin and Wood 1999:12; Mouffe 1992a:235-236; 1992b:10-11; 1993:77; Purvis and Hunt 1999:461). The citizen-subject is neither antagonistic to identity, nor does it supercede identity. Rather citizenship symbolizes the transient point of contact or *articulation* between the practices that form the citizen and those of other subject positions. Indeed, the multiple articulations that give rise to an identity create the impression of coherence, but one's 'identity' is in fact the product of a permanent process of narrating the self. The shared points of overlap between and across different subject positions make *possible* the constitution of group identities, but they do not presume group identification from the start. Rather, group identification emerges through a constitutive process of solidarity- or coalition-building that creates the conditions for the emergence of group identity that is always temporary and contingent (J. Dean 1996). The articulation of the citizen-subject with other subject positions, such as queer, aboriginal, mother, and environmentalist, thus generates different forms of citizenship practice that emerge in relation to different fields. In this context, queer citizenship may involve political organizing over the right to gay-marriage. Aboriginal citizenship may involve forms of engagement and struggle over land-claims. Maternal citizenship may take the form of practices devoted to organizing temperance movements or child-welfare groups. Environmental citizenship may take the form of recycling practices and a concern for energy consumption. What these different forms of

citizenship reflect are attempts to engage and challenge specific truths about social life that are fostered in relation to a given field. That they each emerge in relation to different fields suggests that there is a diverse complex of overlapping fields that give rise to multiple forms of political engagement.

Citizenship is thus distinct from other types of social relations because it emphasizes forms of political *negotiation* over the exercise of power. As James Tully argues, “[c]itizens participate by ‘having a say’ and ‘negotiating’ how power is exercised and who exercises it” (1999:169). This process of participation and negotiation is what forms citizens in relation to the field of practices. In this view, neither the field nor the citizen is always already constituted, but both emerge in relation to each other and determine the form and content of specific practices in the process. Citizenship is therefore not generated by an *a priori* agreement on what comprises common goods or shared values; rather, it is through a process of negotiation that bonds of solidarity are formed that foster a sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘connectedness’ to others. Citizenship emerges from a process of negotiating resources in relation to a given field that is also constitutive of relations between citizens and non-citizens. As Tully puts it, “participation is a strategic-communicative game in which citizens struggle for recognition and rule, negotiate within and sometimes over the rules, bargain, compromise, take two steps back, start over again, reach a provisional agreement or agree to disagree, and learn to govern and be governed in the context of relatively stable irresolution where the possibility of dissent is an implicit ‘permanent provocation’ which affects the negotiations” (1999:171). (And yet, it must be remembered that citizenship

participation does not always generate solidarities; it can easily generate dissent and discord if one refuses to agree).

The importance of negotiation and contestation reaffirms the extent to which citizens are constituted by practices in relation to a given field. To view citizenship in this manner points the way toward an interrogation of specific 'regimes of practices' in order to determine the possibility for processes of negotiation and strategic reversal. This suggests an emphasis on analyzing the regimes of practices, techniques and technologies that constitute the citizen, and an examination of the attributes and dispositions that emerge as forms of truth-telling in relation to a particular field of citizenship practices.

2.5 Conclusion

These themes are elaborated in subsequent chapters where I explore the implications of conceptualizing citizenship as an ensemble of practices for Anglo-American citizenship discourses. I will argue that the language of practices has important consequences for analyzing the constitutive relations of 'good' citizenship. Indeed, one of the significant effects of reading normative debates on citizenship from the perspective of practices is that the 'good' citizen is no longer conceptualized as an always-already constituted set of ideals; it is rather a complex of practices that emerges under specific social conditions in relation to particular configurations of power. I turn now to examine the implications of these insights in more detail.

3 Anglo-American Citizenship Discourse and the Double Articulation of Dividing Practices

My aim in this chapter is to prepare the analytical framework for an interrogation of the ways that Anglo-American citizenship discourses seek to constitute ‘good citizens’ by means of civic virtues, particularly those of ‘character’ and ‘civility’. I develop an account of ‘civic regulation’ that draws on the work of Foucault and others in order to demonstrate how norms of good citizenship are constructed by means of a *double articulation of dividing practices*. In the next two chapters, this account of civic regulation will provide the conceptual foundations for an interrogation of the possibilities and limitations of attempts to promote civic virtue that depend on ‘character’ and ‘civility’. There I will try to show that a greater awareness of the mechanisms of civic regulation should lead us to be more wary of the current enthusiasm amongst Anglo-American citizenship theorists for these particular civic virtues.

This chapter is motivated by the following questions: First, what process guides the construction of the good citizen? What kinds of practices shape its emergence? Second, what are the constitutive features of Anglo-American citizenship discourses? What problems does the concern for civic virtue seek to address? What normative ideal of the ‘good citizen’ attends to these concerns? Third, what technologies do Anglo-American citizenship discourses employ in order to cultivate the ‘good citizen’? What practices or mechanisms of truth-telling do they require?

This chapter begins with an account of a process that I propose to call ‘civic regulation’. Civic regulation creates ‘good’ citizens through a complex assemblage of practices that govern the self through the government of others. Here, civic regulation is

viewed as a specific form of moral regulation, one that constitutes the 'good citizen' as a subject of government. It depends upon the 'double articulation' of dividing practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice in order to cultivate 'good' citizens.

It is in this context that I turn to examine Anglo-American citizenship discourses as an example of civic regulation. Although this configuration of citizenship discourses is internally diverse, I argue that it is possible to discern a generalized conception of good citizenship that is organized in relation to a concern with 'difference'. At the same time, it is a conception of citizenship that is governed by a fear of civic decline, and is motivated by the persistent anxiety that social trust and civic cohesion in civil society are in danger. Indeed, for the majority of Anglo-American citizenship theorists, the good citizen is one who participates actively in public life, negotiates differences of opinion with civility, and displaces personal interests for the sake of the common good.

I argue that when viewed from the perspective of 'civic regulation', contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses can be seen to mobilize specific technologies in order to address problems of government in democratic society: the problem of self-interest and the problem of difference. The language of 'character' is marshaled in order to mitigate self-interest in society, and in so doing, organizes the good citizen in relation to shared social and political goods. The language of 'civility' is similarly used as a set of procedural mechanisms aimed at helping citizens negotiate their political differences. These two virtues form axes of good citizenship in which strength of character circumvents the problem of self-interest, and in which civility negotiates the pressing demands of difference in late-modern social life.

Before proceeding, I will first provide an overview of the process of civic regulation and the double articulation of dividing practices in constituting good citizenship. From there, I turn to analyze the specific configuration of Anglo-American citizenship practices. Finally, I provide an examination of the ways that character and civility are deployed as technologies of good citizenship.

3.1 Civic Regulation and the Double Articulation of Dividing Practices

A. Civic Regulation

The conceptual apparatus of ‘civic regulation’ offers a useful set of analytical tools for interrogating the normative underpinnings of ‘civic virtue’. For my purposes, civic regulation is a process that constitutes the ‘citizen’ by means of an assemblage of practices, techniques and discourses that governs the self through the government of others. This concept of ‘civic regulation’ provides the means to interrogate governmental practices that are bound up with creating, shaping, and promoting the capacities of virtuous citizens. Although my understanding of civic regulation is related to processes of moral regulation (Dean 1994:153), it is distinctive insofar as it is oriented toward the constitution of ‘good citizens’ as opposed to ‘moral persons.’ Indeed moral regulation and civic regulation may depend on similar practices, but what distinguishes them is the specific subjects that they produce. This kind of analytical specificity is needed because the qualities required of the good citizen are not necessarily the same as those of the good person (Benhabib 1999:729; Walzer 1991:299). My understanding of civic regulation draws on the project of moral regulation envisaged by Emile Durkheim, but differs in

some important respects. Let me begin by sketching the broad contours of Durkheim's approach to moral regulation.

One of the clearest expressions of Durkheim's orientation to morality is contained in his *Moral Education* (1903) which consists of a series of lectures on the constitutive relationship between morality and society. Durkheim argues that morality is a social phenomenon, and indeed can be considered a 'social fact'. Morality consists of prescribed duties that conform to pre-established rules (1961:23). Like other social facts, morality is external to the individual (and is thus shared by all members of society), in addition to being organized by constraint (1982:50-59) What distinguishes morality from other social facts is that it is embedded within relations of approbation that Durkheim terms 'sanctions'. Morality also exhibits other features: it is generalized across society, it is organized in relation to relations of power (i.e. sanctions), and it is dependent on relations of self-discipline. This final element is especially important for Durkheim: discipline is the 'spirit' of morality (1961:31). Durkheim worries that without the rules, regulations or constraints provided by morality, individuals would be unable to reign in their desires, or to set limits on their passions. This would have deleterious consequences for both the individual and for society as a whole. Indeed society would be unable to grow and develop without the guiding force of discipline. In other words, discipline is a necessary precondition for both individual and societal well-being. *Moral* discipline is therefore necessary in order to develop and to cultivate dispositions that are oriented toward the good of the whole, as opposed to the self-interest of the individual. To act morally is necessarily to act in the collective interests of society.

This argument is further developed in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* (1890-1900). Durkheim argues that professional associations become a crucial site for small group identification in the context of growing individualization and a declining *conscience collective*. But where professional associations produce ethics appropriate to specific occupations, civic morals represent those morals that are sanctioned by society at large. In this context, professional ethics are specialized rules of conduct associated with a given profession, while civic morals are those normative codes that constitute relations between citizens and the state (1992:15, 42). Here the state operates as the 'organ of moral thought' in order to guide collective conduct. It implements civic morals upon the recommendation of a broad corporation of professional associations that mediate between the individual and the state (1992:51, 72). These associations serve a critical role in limiting the tyranny of the state and in enhancing the freedom of the individual by cultivating the conditions for individual self-discipline.

Although Durkheim offers an important account of the constitution of the moral individual through the productive capacity of disciplinary constraint, his project depends upon an understanding of society as an objective reality *sui generis* (1961:59-63). This understanding stands in tension with the orientation toward practice that I developed in the previous chapter. For Durkheim, society is a bounded unit that operates as a singular and unitary field defined on the basis of membership. Here society operates *as if* it were a real entity that is enacted through social structures. The difficulty is that this conception of society is premised on an already existing set of objective relations that advances a singular and unitary truth about social life. This is problematic to the extent

that it does not account for the possibility of multiple, competing and overlapping interpretations about the ‘truth’ of social relations.

A further difficulty with Durkheim’s account is that he privileges the State as ‘the’ sole agent of moral regulation. Here, Durkheim conceives of the ‘State’ in the same unitary and undifferentiated terms as he theorizes ‘society’. He characterizes the State as a homogeneous entity and does not adequately allow for the possibility of opposing, interpenetrating, and diverse modes of governing; indeed, the State can more adequately be characterized in terms of a variegated complex of ‘state formations’ (Abrams 1988). Moreover, the singular agential capacity accorded to the State by Durkheim does not account for the multiplicity of different agents that act on oneself and others. This is not to suggest that state formations are not important contexts for regulatory projects, but rather that they are not the only sites for projects of governing. Communities and other non-state arenas, such as churches and voluntary associations, as well as protest sites, the internet and other civic spaces, are also important sites of ‘moral’ and ‘civic’ regulation.

While Durkheim’s emphasis on the social aspects of morality is useful for my purposes, I distance myself from the epistemological foundationalism contained in the language of ‘social facts’. Instead, my account of civic regulation depends upon Foucault’s reworking of two Durkheimian themes: the productive capacities of power and discipline as constitutive of ‘morality’. Indeed, I am particularly interested in the ways that these themes can account for the construction of ‘good citizens’. As we will see shortly, my account of civic regulation depends upon a process that I term the ‘double articulation of dividing practices’. I argue that the dividing practices of identity-

difference and virtue-vice create the conditions for the emergence of particular norms of good citizenship.

B. The Double Articulation of Citizenship Practices

Projects of civic and moral regulation typically govern through *dividing practices*. By dividing practices I mean practices that produce subjects that are ordered in relation to one another according to standards of differentiation and comparison. Dividing practices are those processes and techniques that act upon human beings in order to transform them into subjects (Foucault 1982a:208).²² In the context of ‘civic regulation’, the dividing practices of citizenship constitute citizens on the basis of principles that valorize some attributes at the expense of others. Historically, principles such as “good versus evil, virtue versus vice, black versus white, inferior versus superior, healthy versus unhealthy” provide a standard for comparison that constitutes citizenship relations (Isin 2002:33). While these codes can configure citizenship practices in hierarchical relations, they usually operate in a dynamic network of rival and competing practices that can work to reinforce one another and yet also stand in tension with one another. Significantly, they organize citizens in relation to one another at the same time that they constitute citizens in relation to non-citizens.

My use of ‘dividing practices’ is derived from Foucault’s insistence that subjects are constituted by triangulating relations of power, truth, and ethics (1982b:237).²³ This

²² Dividing practices are themselves only one of several possible forms of subjectification; others include (i) the means by which speaking subjects become objectivized through scientific discourses discussed in earlier work such as *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972); and (ii) the means by which human beings turn themselves into subjects, as elaborated in *The History of Sexuality* (1978).

²³ Although the language of ‘dividing practices’ emphasizes the ways that specific practices operate on subjects, I want to suggest that dividing practices also require citizens to work on themselves, as part of

triangle of power, truth and ethics operates as a grid that supports various technologies, techniques and practices of government that organize games of 'truth' through which certain rules and procedures constitute what is accepted as ethical conduct (1988b:18). As we have seen, government represents the ensemble of practices that govern the self and others where truth is not "the production of true utterances," but rather establishes "certain domains in which the practice of true and false can be ordered" (1991b:79). Foucault discusses dividing practices most explicitly in his genealogical analyses of the emergence of 'insanity' and 'delinquency'. In *Madness and Civilization* (1965), for instance, he argues that 'insanity' is the result of psychiatric discourses that produce the 'insane' by means of a logic that divides on the basis of reason and unreason. In a similar fashion, he argues in *Discipline and Punish* (1977a) that 'delinquency' is the product of a complex of politico-juridical discourses that rely on techniques of surveillance, examination, training, and record-keeping to produce the 'delinquent' subject.

Typically, dividing practices work by establishing a field of objects that defines a "legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories" (Foucault 1977b:191). They signify a principal means by which human beings are transformed into subjects through the productive capacity of power where "the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (Foucault 1982a:208). They usually depend on a signifying logic that, according

their own self-governance. Viewed this way, dividing practices overlap with practices that involve the 'care of the self' and others that also involve seeking the truth of the self. Some may find my use of dividing practices problematic, especially those who want to make a sharp distinction between the genealogical aspects of Foucault's work in *Discipline and Punish* (1977a) and his later work on governmentality (1991a). I think that this exaggerates the discontinuities between the different strands of Foucault's work; I want to suggest that it is possible to see discipline as one aspect of governmental relations. Indeed, Foucault himself maintains that "[w]e need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government" (1991a:102).

to Jorge Ardití, is “informed by a principle of discrimination and comparison, according to which things are related to each other through a common unit or sign that allows us to measure and order them in a hierarchical experience” (1998:231, n.16).²⁴ Put somewhat differently, dividing practices rely on oppositions between rationality and irrationality, good and bad, and truth and falsity in order to produce particular subjects. In so doing, the signifiatory power of dividing practices produces individuals that are both ‘subject’ and ‘subjected’ (Foucault 1982a:212).

Historically, dividing practices are often credited with effectively barring ‘Others’ from full and equal participation as citizens in a multiplicity of different social and political contexts. At specific junctures, these ‘Others’ have included women, immigrants, ethno-cultural minorities, and slaves, not to mention colonized and indigenous peoples (Kymlicka 1995; Stasiulis and Bakan 1997; Tully 1995; Yuval-Davis 1999). Feminists have repeatedly challenged the conception of the white, straight, propertied male that has informed the image of the citizen in the Western world (Pateman 1988; Phillips 1991; Walby 1994). Others such as Rogers Smith (1997) and M. Jacqui Alexander (1994), have examined the gender, race and ethnic hierarchies that inform the constitution of North American citizenship relations. In addition, recent contributions to the area of ‘sexual citizenship’ highlight the extent to which citizens have been normatively constructed as heterosexual subjects (Bell and Binnie 2000; Evans 1993; Kaplan 1997; Phelan 2001; Richardson 2000; Weeks 1999).

²⁴ As previously indicated, although dividing practices can work in hierarchical relations with one another, they constitute a dynamic network of interpenetrating complexes that at once reinforce and oppose one another.

The processes by which 'Others' come to acquire full and equal recognition suggests that dividing practices are never fully successful in their deployment. As a result, the discursive construction of the good citizen is never complete. Categorical boundaries are always porous. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that the remainders of dividing practices are themselves constitutive of citizenship relations. Remainders are those who may once have been citizens, but are citizens no longer; or they are those who are citizens in waiting, that is, those who have the potential to practice full citizenship, but who are not-yet-citizens. Those occupying this in-between state may sometimes legitimately practice certain aspects of citizenship but not others. They may be homosexuals who vote, who pay taxes, but who may not participate without recrimination in other state-sanctioned citizenship practices like military service or marriage. They may be refugees who are entitled to minimal social service benefits, but who are unable to vote, or to travel between and across nation-state borders, or to pursue public office. They may also be those who are incarcerated and therefore no longer entitled to travel, to work at paid employment of their choice, to vote, or to participate in military service, and yet upon release, may become full citizens once more; for the meantime, they exist as citizens *in potentia*.

Because dividing practices depend upon oppositions between binary terms, it is often easy to couch them in the context of a 'logic of exclusion'. The logic of exclusion emphasizes the extent to which non-citizens are 'excluded' from practicing citizenship. The difficulty is that when dividing practices are understood in this manner, they are not characterized as mutually-constitutive relational entities. Rather they appear as attempts

to solidify and to naturalize the boundaries of specific subjectivities. Following Machiel Karskens (1991:84), Engin Isin argues that:

“[t]he logic of exclusion presupposes that the excluding and the excluded are conceived as irreconcilable; that the excluded is perceived in purely negative terms, having no property of its own, but merely expressing the absence of the properties of the other; that these properties are essential; that the properties of the excluded are experienced as strange, hidden, frightful, or menacing; that the properties of the excluding are a mere negation of the properties of the other; and the exclusion itself (or confinement or annihilation) is actuated socially” (2002:3).

As such, Foucault uses a logic of exclusion when he details the dividing practices of ‘reason’ and ‘madness’ in *Madness and Civilization* (1965). Here the ‘mad’ are confined and indeed ‘excluded’ from the rest of society.²⁵

In order to avoid the pitfalls of a logic of exclusion, it is important to emphasize the extent to which not all dividing practices operate according to an exclusionary logic. For example, dividing practices such as the ‘normal and pathological’ are significant insofar as they are ‘inclusive’ oppositions; dividing practices like ‘good’ and ‘bad’ operate according to a logic of ‘contrariety’ (1991:86).²⁶ Isin avoids the problem of a ‘logic of exclusion’ by developing a relational conception of citizenship that assumes that ‘otherness’ is a *condition* of citizenship (2002:3-4).

My resolution to the problem of the logic of exclusion is similar to Isin’s in that I also depend on a relational conception of citizenship. I supplement his approach by developing the idea of the ‘double articulation’ of dividing practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice. My use of the concept of double-articulation is prompted by a

²⁵ According to Karskens, this is paradigmatic of a ‘blocked privative relationship’ where a given property “is used exclusively in relation to its absence” (Karskens 1991:80). It is blocked because it does not enable one to think positively or productively about the property in question.

²⁶ A logic of contrariety signifies those oppositions that are organized in terms of intrinsic qualities, but does not necessarily imply an exclusion.

discussion in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). In championing 'rhizomatic' as opposed to 'arborescent' modes of theorizing, Deleuze and Guattari target sedimented ideas about things-in-particular (that include anything from atoms to rock formations to continents to words and values) in favour of a historicized understanding of things-in-general that is always in process, always dynamic, always changing.²⁷ Operating on an abstract conceptual level, but one that is materially grounded, they explore the processes through which undifferentiated matter -- termed a 'plane of consistency' or a 'body without organs (BwO)' -- comes to be differentiated, stratified, and organized according to particular logics. These ongoing processes of stratification involve the constant territorialization, coding and recoding of strata that morph into new configurations. Coding is not static, but operates in a dynamic process of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This process is explained by means of a 'double articulation' where the conventional opposition between form and content is extended by a second articulation that further distinguishes 'form and substance' from 'expression and content' (1987:40).²⁸ The effect is to denaturalize the

²⁷ According to Deleuze and Guattari, arborescent systems are "hierarchical systems with centres of significance and subjectification" that fixes a particular order of things (1987:16). A rhizome, in contrast, 'ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power' (1987:7) and contains a multiplicity of lines of flight.

²⁸ For Deleuze and Guattari, articulation begins with a distinction between substances and forms: unstable, unsedimented substances are given form through a "statistical order of connections and successions" (1987:40). A second articulation involves the stabilization of particular forms (e.g. structures) by further actualizing the substances of which they are composed. The language of first and second articulations suggests successive articulations: first, one then, the other. But the authors caution that this impression is necessarily deceptive to the extent that the articulation of form and substance is always already accompanied by a second articulation of 'expression' and 'content'. Expression refers to the ways that functional structures can be examined both from the perspective of 'the form of its organization' and the nature of its 'substance'. This first articulation of expression coincides with a second articulation that concerns the content of the form, and the content of substance. The double articulations of form and substance, and of expression and content reflect the multiplicity of different manifestations and distinctions that exist between different kinds of matter. Each distinction necessarily articulates twice -- from 'B-A' to BA'. And while these distinctions are decidedly 'real', they must be understood in relative terms. As Deleuze and Guattari argue that on every stratum 'there are double pincers everywhere...everywhere and in

conventional static opposition between form and content in favour of a notion of double articulation that reconfigures processes of stratification as perpetual and ongoing. It seeks to retrieve an understanding of 'natural' forms that are in dynamic flux even though they may appear to be solid and unchanging.

The language of 'double articulation' is instructive as a heuristic device for thinking about how the 'good citizen' is constituted. It is intended as an analytic strategy to interrogate the circumstances that give rise to a specific constellation of citizenship practices. At the heart of thinking about the double articulation of dividing practices is a commitment to the dynamic ebb and flow of historically located social relations. This is grounded in the complex reality of actually existing discourses of citizenship revealed by the complicated and tensile relations between overlapping, but often contradictory practices and techniques. The language of double articulation offers a useful way of *analytically* separating the dividing practices of identity-difference from the dividing practices of virtue-vice. In other words, it is important to emphasize that the dividing practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice always work in tandem with one another in order to produce the 'good citizen'.

C. The Dividing Practices of Identity-Difference

Let me first examine the ways that good citizens are partially formed by dividing practices of identity-difference. Depending on the particular social and historical context,

all directions there are double binds and lobsters, a multiplicity of double articulations affecting both expression and content' (1987:45). Although the form-content distinction is central to Deleuze and Guattari's conception of 'double articulation', it is not important to my usage. I simply want to emphasize the extent to which the language of double articulation involves the simultaneous articulation of two kinds of distinctions that have practical effects on the constitution of subjectivity. In so doing, the idea that citizenship practices are doubly-articulated serves to emphasize the perpetual unfolding of citizenship relations.

dividing practices of identity-difference valorize specific attributes such as heritage, class, and sex that eventually become constitutive of citizenship. Those who exhibit the salient attributes are constituted as citizens in relation to non-citizens. Identity is understood here as a set of narrative practices that represents a process of 'identification' that reflects 'the recognition of some common origin, shared characteristics, or solidarity' (Hall and du Gay 1996:2). Identity is commonly narrated through discourses of gender, race, nation and sex, and also through other shared characteristics such as heritage, class, physical ability, religion, and geographic location. Citizenship is therefore not only constitutive of identity-difference, but also already constituted by it. Thus, although the dividing practice of identity-difference is one that may appear to be oppositional, it is one in which citizens are necessarily constituted in *relation* to non-citizens. Non-citizens, therefore, are not simply a by-product of the ensemble of practices that constitute the citizen; they actively *enable* the discursive identification of individuals *as* citizens. Just as identity is an unstable point of attachment that is always in process, so too are the differences that it seeks to fix.

My use of the conceptual language of 'identity-difference' is borrowed from William Connolly, who argues that in order for identities to appear as solid and distinct they must also recognize socially meaningful differences. In other words, differences condition the emergence of identities (1991; 1995). Although identity-difference relations have no essential quality or character, they rely on the creation and maintenance of boundaries in order to reinforce the appearance of a unitary solidity. Even though identity-difference relations are never permanently fixed, they often appear as rigid and unchanging because their perimeters are continually policed and maintained. It is

through the vigilant regulation of these boundaries that identities become sedimented. Once boundaries are fixed, what is actually a *relation* between identity and difference becomes articulated in static oppositional terms. Relations of identity and difference therefore represent the desire to solidify the transient quality of social relations in binary terms. Although these boundaries appear to be rigid, they never neatly contain the remainders that are shunted to the perimeter. In other words, boundary limits fortify the *appearance* of identity as solid and immutable while never neatly containing the differences that enable identity construction in the first place. The only way differences can be maintained *as* differences is through the assiduous preservation of boundaries.

Thus, citizenship always already depends upon the presence of non-citizens in order to make the exercise of citizenship socially and politically meaningful. In other words, dividing practices of identity-difference are always at play whenever a citizen is constituted. For the practices of identity-difference to work effectively as a means of distinguishing citizens from non-citizens, they are often institutionalized within social relations. As John Torpey puts it, “identities must become codified and institutionalized in order to become socially significant” (2000:13).²⁹ In other words, they must become embedded within existing ‘structures of recognition’. As dividing practices, identity-difference ‘naturalizes’ identities on the basis of shared attributes like geo-political location, ethno-cultural heritage, sexuality, gender and class by means of institutionally sponsored techniques and practices. Categories such as ‘landed immigrant’, ‘guest-worker’, and ‘alien’ are institutionalized by systems of registration that require intense

²⁹ However, juridical mechanisms are not the only operative processes that work to codify individuals. In Northern Ireland for instance, religion becomes important in the de facto ‘exclusion’ of Catholics from full participation in political life from 1920s-1960s.

documentation that, depending on the specific context, might include visas, passports, licenses or identity cards (Torpey 2000:12-13).

D. The Dividing Practices of Virtue-Vice

It is important to recognize that the ‘good’ citizen is also a product of dividing practices of virtue and vice. As with dividing practices organized on the basis of identity-difference, practices of virtue and vice constitute relations between self and others.

Where practices of identity-difference distinguish citizens from non-citizens, practices of virtue and vice separate ‘good’ citizens from ‘bad’ ones. As with identity-difference, the dividing practices of virtue and vice emerge in dynamic relation to one another. They depend on the assiduous regulation of boundaries in order to ‘fix’ specific attributes as virtuous. In this regard, virtue typically represents qualities of moral excellence such as honesty, goodness, charity, chastity, and trustworthiness. These qualities are usually designated as virtues when “they are culturally regarded as admirable or beneficial, when there is social pressure to develop and exercise them” (Rorty 1988:146). By inference, vices are those attributes that signify qualities that are viewed to be unseemly or undesirable such as “cruelty, hypocrisy, snobbery, treachery and misanthropy” (Shklar 1984:2). While virtue and vice are also constitutive of the ‘moral person’, as dividing practices of *citizenship* they valorize specific attributes and qualities such as patriotism, civic participation, and public reasonableness in the constitution of the ‘good citizen’.

Two differing conceptions of virtue prevail within contemporary approaches to the topic. On the one hand, the language of virtue is often associated with attempts to codify and prescribe ‘moral’ responsibilities and obligations. Such is the meaning

entailed by the second entry under the heading ‘virtue’ in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989c). Here, virtue is defined as “conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality; voluntary observance of the recognized moral laws or standards of right conduct; abstention on moral grounds from any form of wrong-doing or vice” (1989c:675). In this definition, virtue is equated with a conception of morality that is grounded in duty and obligation. This is a conception of morality that depends on prescribed codes of conduct. Historically, this understanding of virtue lies at the heart of Victorian efforts to moralize forms of conduct deemed unseemly and uncivilized (Hunt 1999a; 1999b; Valverde 1989).³⁰ Prostitution, gambling, drinking and other forms of vice gave rise to a moralistic conception of virtue that fostered forms of civic politics animated by a fear of corruption (Collini 1985:42).³¹ But it also underlies theories of international legal rights and conceptions of global justice such as the Kyoto accord.

On the other hand, the language of virtue has also been mobilized in the context of attempts to cultivate an ethical subjectivity that does not depend on *a priori* prescriptive codes (Anscombe 1958; French, Uehling Jr., and Wettstein 1988; Galston and Chapman 1992). Indeed, many contemporary virtue theorists reject the idea that virtue involves an orientation toward what is right or obligatory (Trianosky 1990:335). This conception of virtue is customarily distinguished from deontological theories that attempt to codify moral conduct according to codes, as well as from utilitarian theories

³⁰ This is also the conception of virtue that informs much of the moral regulation literature. For instance, in an attempt to explicate the conception of ‘morality’ at play in processes of moral regulation, Hunt argues that morality represents a normative judgment that implies that some conduct is either bad or harmful. Moral regulation is therefore typically characterised by ‘blame and responsibility’ (1999b:410).

³¹ Stephan Collini argues that the Victorian era was punctuated by a distinction between a politics of virtue and a politics of character. Where the politics of virtue was marked by a fear of corruption, the politics of character was motivated by a fear of stagnation. Both traditions depend upon the abhorrence of apathy (1985:42-3).

that strive to maximize the greatest happiness for the greatest number.³² Rather virtue here is oriented toward *human flourishing*, and is based on the assumption that one can never accurately anticipate what ethical course of action might be required in a morally ambiguous situation. As such, it is virtually impossible to prescribe appropriate rules of conduct in advance.³³ Hence *character* becomes significant as the foundation for virtue, where character is understood to be a contingent ensemble of different dispositions that guides one's ethical conduct. Virtue theories, therefore, tend to be 'agent-centred' rather than 'act-centred' and are usually oriented toward assessing the virtuous person over the *longue durée* (Crisp 1996:5; Crisp and Slote 1997:3; McKinnon 1999:1).

Many virtue theorists accept the idea that virtue is socially constructed and emerges from the nexus of social, legal and political structures that shapes individuals (Galston 1992:3). Here Alisdair MacIntyre's work in *After Virtue* (1984) often serves as a point of departure.³⁴ He defines virtue as "an acquired human quality the possession

³² Aristotle's work in *The Nicomachean Ethics* (1976) and *The Politics* (1981) is typically cited as an important point of departure for contemporary virtue theorists. For Aristotle, virtue is understood as *aretê* which translates roughly as human excellence.

³³ In other words, 'lying' is not unethical because it is 'wrong', it is unethical because it is dishonest. Dishonesty refers to the dispositions of character, as opposed to the idea that one is breaking the 'rule' of honesty.

³⁴ In *After Virtue* (1984), MacIntyre argues that the Enlightenment project that spawned liberalism as a distinctive political philosophy inadvertently heralded the end of a coherent moral project. He argues that liberals are misguided to think that our current moral dilemmas are the result of disagreement. Rather, he maintains that our contemporary moral dilemmas are at once a product of the fragmentation of our moral language and the loss of a coherent moral framework. He argues that because all that we have left are fragments of a once coherent morality, when we engage in moral disagreement what we in fact appeal to are our personal preferences rather than to any moral principles. In other words, because we are guided by our preferences as opposed to any substantive moral grounding, we are unable to negotiate our moral dilemmas. This is what gives rise to the so-called 'emotivism' of liberalism: "[f]or what emotivism asserts is in central part that there are and can be *no* valid rational justification for any claims that objective and impersonal moral standards exist and hence there are no such standards" (MacIntyre 1984:19). Rather than extend his argument to a Nietzschean moral skepticism (Crisp 1998:624), MacIntyre heralds a return to the Aristotelian project of the virtues where virtues are understood as "settled dispositions, acquired by practice, which enables us to behave in ways that allow us to flourish, whilst engaged in human activities, which are themselves vehicles for pursuing the good life" (McMylor 2001:27). The criticisms of MacIntyre's position are numerous. Peter Berkowitz argues for instance that he offers an atrophied

and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any goods” (1984:178).³⁵ Phrased somewhat less turgidly, virtues are understood as historically contingent dispositions that are acquired by practices that constitute moral goods.³⁶ But even so, there is some dispute among virtue theorists about whether the capacity for virtue is innate or socially conditioned.³⁷ Nonetheless, all virtue theorists agree that virtue is something that needs to be cultivated. Generating virtue involves investing energy into cultivating a range of dispositions and capacities that are viewed as beneficial to social and political life. Here virtue theorists are especially interested in processes of character formation that contribute to developing the human good. Institutions such as families, schools, communities, religious organizations, the workplace, and volunteer associations, are typically considered to be the seedbeds of virtue (Eberly 2000:17; Glendon 1995:8).

Whether virtue is understood to be a set of prescriptive codes, or characterized as a set of non-codified dispositions, it operates as a *dividing practice* that emerges in relation to ‘vice’. Vices such as dishonesty, untrustworthiness, or cruelty form the

conception of social life that depends on a history of ideas as opposed to the examination of historically specific and contingent practices that are invested with power relations. Moreover, Berkowitz accuses MacIntyre of exaggerating the level of moral decline in contemporary society, and of not appreciating liberalism’s various contributions (Berkowitz 1999:18-19). For other critiques, see Levine (1983) and Tester (1999).

³⁵ MacIntyre defines practices as a “coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity, through which goods internal to the form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity” (1984:27).

³⁶ Yet in a recent move, MacIntyre recants his earlier argument that practices are independent of biology and argues that “[n]o account of the goods, rules and virtues that are definitive of our moral life can be adequate that does not explain – or at least point us towards an explanation – how that form of life is possible for beings who are biologically constituted as we are” (1999:x).

³⁷ For instance, the idea that virtue is tied to an *a priori* conception of human nature is also common (Baechler 1992:27-9).

conditions of emergence for virtue. Indeed, virtue and vice emerge in relation to one another. When virtue is conceived as a regulatory principle, it is perhaps easier to see the extent to which virtue and vice operate as a dividing practice. In this context, the practices of virtue and vice organize social relations on the basis of prescribed rules and procedures that valorize certain forms of conduct over others. This process is somewhat more difficult to see with virtue theorists. While virtue theorists avoid prescribing specific ‘acts’ as virtuous, they nonetheless establish a specific domain in which truth and falsity are ordered such that certain forms of conduct are valued and others not (Foucault 1991b:79). In this context, virtue operates as an organizing principle that is conditioned by ‘vices’ that may take the form of harassment, disobedience or unkindness, among others. Here, character reflects this dividing practice to the extent that subjects who have or aspire to good and strong character are internally divided by their ability to ‘recognize’ their own conduct as virtuous or vice-ridden, at the same time as they are also divided from others on the same basis. Indeed when one exhibits ‘good’ character, one is divided from those who display ‘poor’ character.³⁸

In general terms, when the dividing practices of virtue and vice operate in combination with identity and difference, they generate a ‘moral’ subject that is the product of moral regulation. When they are oriented toward the production of the *good citizen*, the double articulation of dividing practices represents a process of civic regulation. Because dividing practices are relational entities, the ‘others’ of identity and virtue create the conditions for the emergence of the good citizen. In both cases, the signification logic of the ‘good’ serves as a limit effect on what is judged a desirable set

³⁸ See Chapter 4 for an elaboration of the differences between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ character, as well as the distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ character.

of civic relations. This produces practical effects in terms of one's ability to negotiate and participate in projects of citizenship that emerge in relation to a given field. This observation suggests the need for examination of the specific techniques and technologies by which good citizens come to tell the truth about themselves and others. With this in mind, let me turn now to consider the ways that the dividing practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice work to constitute the 'good citizen' within the specific configuration of Anglo-American citizenship discourses.

3.2 The Contours of Anglo-American Citizenship Discourses

My aim in this section is to sketch the contours of the contemporary configuration of Anglo-American citizenship discourses in order to see what conception of the good citizen is produced. Although Anglo-American citizenship discourses are internally diverse, I argue that it is possible to discern a generalized conception of good citizenship that is organized in relation to a concern for 'difference'. At the same time, it is a conception of citizenship that is governed by a fear of civic decline and by a persistent anxiety that social trust and civic cohesion in civil society are in imminent danger. Let me begin by providing a conceptual overview of the constitutive features of Anglo-American citizenship discourses.

Anglo-American citizenship discourses are a complex of integrated and opposing approaches to 'citizenship'. My use of the phrase of 'Anglo-American citizenship discourses' is derived from Margaret Somers who uses it to signify the network of discrete, internally diverse conceptions of citizenship that emerge in the context of debates such as public and private, rights and duties, and individual and community.

This network is constituted by specific *citizenship concepts* such as ‘civil society’, ‘political culture’ and the ‘public sphere’ that overlap in a field of contestation (1995a; 1995b; 1999). Anglo-American citizenship discourses operate as “a structured configuration of relationships among concepts that are related to each other by virtue of sharing the same conceptual space” (1995a:235). The complex of citizenship discourses produces a *knowledge culture* that is created by political scientists, philosophers, sociologists and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic who constitute ‘citizenship’ through discussion, dialogue and debate. Knowledge cultures develop specific “cultural and epistemological constraints” that produce the conditions for the development of contingent truth-claims about the nature of ‘citizenship’.³⁹ In Foucauldian terms, Anglo-American citizenship discourses constitute a ‘regime of practices’ that organizes self-government through the government of others. Citizenship discourses are thus comprised of practices that produce ‘citizens’ who exhibit certain dispositions and enact specific practices that allow them to be recognized as competent members of their community. These dispositions and practices generate specific truth claims that are organized in relation to the knowledge culture of Anglo-American citizenship discourses.

In general terms, this citizenship network is comprised of civic republican, civil society, and liberal approaches to citizenship. First, civic republicanism characteristically

³⁹ Here, knowledge “includes not only the ‘facts of the matter’ but also the presumption that those facts have gained the status of truth and passed the test of epistemological accountability and credibility” (Somers 1999:124). Culture, alternatively, signifies the “intersubjective public symbolic systems and networks of meaning-driven schemas organized by their own internal rules and structures that are (more or less, depending on the situation) loosely tied together in patterns of relationships” (1999:124-125). This understanding of the relationship between knowledge and culture highlights the extent to which the truth claims advanced by citizenship discourses are contingent phenomena that are bounded by a culture’s historically specific ways of thinking and reasoning (1996:63). Because knowledge cultures are contingent, they do not correspond to narrowly conceived notions of ‘truth’. Rather, each knowledge culture reflects local and specific conditions of possibility.

relies on the presence of an active citizenry that cultivates political community through the exercise of civic virtues (Barber 1984:224; Oldfield 1990:6, 173-4; Sandel 2000:271). Here, citizenship functions as a moral identity that negotiates the demands of private interest in order to cultivate the common good. The citizen is usually characterized as the political and moral compass of political community. Second, civil society theorists approach the question of citizenship from the perspective of the kinds of association, participation and contestation that take place in the figurative space between the state, the family and the economy (Cohen 1999; Cohen and Arato 1992; Eberly 2000).⁴⁰ Left-wing orientations to civil society are typically characterized by an interest in the transformative potential of new social movements such as feminism (Ackelsberg 2001) and environmentalism (Light 2000; Wapner 1994). More conservative approaches sometimes emphasize the importance of civil society as a site for politics, but in so doing, they tend to highlight the role that voluntary associations such as churches, professional associations, and sport and leisure clubs play in cultivating the 'seedbeds of civic virtue' (Eberly 2000:17; Glendon 1995:8). Third, conventional interpretations of liberalism typically emphasize both the role of the state in protecting the various entitlements of its members and its neutrality toward a specific conception of the good. However, recent work in liberal political philosophy is notable because it has been concerned to generate a specifically liberal conception of the good (Galston 1991; Macedo 1990; Rawls 1971; 1993).

Generally, contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses all accept the extent to which 'difference' is an important feature of the contemporary social and

⁴⁰ To some extent, civil society approaches overlap with 'communitarian' projects that highlight the importance of community in social and political life (Kymlicka and Norman 1994:363).

political context. Concerns for difference appear in the context of debates over 'minority rights', 'group-differentiated citizenship rights' and, in appeals for 'diversity' and 'value-pluralism'. These concerns first appeared primarily in the context of debates over whether (and how) to extend group-specific rights to ethno-cultural minorities (Spinner 1994; Taylor 1992; Tully 1995; Young 1990). Although these issues have been a characteristic feature of citizenship debates in the last ten years, it seems to be the case, as Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman point out, that most theorists accept the notion that group-differentiated rights are necessary in order to remedy the effects of economic, cultural and social barriers to 'full and equal citizenship' (2000:4). Indeed, it appears that this aspect of contemporary citizenship debates "is coming to a close, with the defenders of minority rights having effectively made their case" (2000:4). Most recently, however, the concern for ethno-cultural difference has emerged in relation to a new set of debates over the virtues and practices of democratic citizenship. The question has become one of determining what sorts of civic virtues should be promoted within democratic societies under conditions where ethno-cultural difference and group-differentiated rights are constitutive of democratic societies (2000:7). It is indeed to the complexities of this second debate that my dissertation is addressed.

The concern for civic virtue among contemporary Anglo-American citizenship theorists can be itself situated in the context of two related debates (Cohen 1999).⁴¹ The

⁴¹ David Burchell remarks that the intense concentration of intellectual and practical activity can be seen to comprise a contemporary 'civic revival' (1995:541). At the heart of this civic revival is a concern with how to cultivate good citizens. This project of civic revivalism is uneasily situated against neo-liberal policies and programs of government that seek to generate self-responsible and autonomous subjects. Neo-liberalism seeks to shift the welfare burden of the state toward the individual. Here citizens are portrayed as rational economic actors responsible for their own actions. At the same time, recent studies have shown that civic revivalism is not necessarily incompatible with neo-liberalism (Larner 2000; Larner and Walters 1999).

first debate is characterized by a hotly-contested assertion that ‘civic participation’ levels are in decline, and that this decline stands to undermine the health of democratic politics and democratic society. The second debate is organized in relation to an equally contested concern that excessive self-interest generated by an overly commercial and litigious society is eroding necessary thresholds of social cohesion and social trust. Let me provide a brief overview of each of these debates in turn.

First, many Anglo-American citizenship theorists accept the claim that deteriorating associational networks within civil society have contributed to reduced levels of civic participation (Eberly 2000; Elshtain 1999; Putnam 2000). The assumption guiding this debate is that the health and stability of democratic life depends upon an active citizenry that is engaged in associational life. Fears that civic decline is immanent are usually animated by research findings that suggest that decreased voter turnout, declining public participation rates, and reduced literacy in public affairs are becoming increasingly characteristic of American political life. Indeed, the civic republican contribution of Robert Putnam is especially important to consider in this context (1983; 1995a; 1995b; 2000). In a mammoth study of civic participation rates in the American context, Putnam uses the term ‘bowling alone’ to describe the extent to which ‘social capital’, measured by associational memberships and civic participation rates, has been in decline since WWII (2000). He argues that ‘bowling alone’ rather than in leagues characterizes the changing nature, and indeed the decline of the ‘American’ civic tradition (1995b:69; 2000:101).⁴² The increased number of those who ‘bowl alone’ represents a significant reduction in the kinds of formal and informal networks that tie

⁴² To this end, Putnam argues that while the total number of bowlers in the US increased by 10 percent, league bowling decreased by 40 percent (Putnam 1995b:69).

people together. This tendency is further compounded by reduced voter turnouts, by diminished interest in public service and by low participation in other civic and fraternal organizations like 4-H Clubs and the Boy Scouts.

Many left-leaning Anglo-American citizenship theorists do not find Putnam's argument entirely persuasive. Jean Cohen, for instance, maintains that Putnam emphasizes formal organizations at the expense of other equally relevant sites of civic participation such as informal discussion networks and self-help groups (1999:226). Others have found that levels of civic activism within community organizations have actually increased during the post-WWII era (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). What this implies is that the sites for civic participation have shifted away from the traditional sites such as the Elks and Rotary associations toward issue-oriented activities through organizations such as the Sierra Club or the National Rifle Association (Schudson 1996), in addition to other forms of social participation and civic activity found in new social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the feminist movement (Boggs 2001).

Amitai Etzioni also argues that building associational networks is necessary to strengthen civil society. He proposes a brand of 'new communitarianism' that is characterized by a concern for social order that balances individuality and autonomy (1993; 1996; 2000). He affirms the extent to which the viability of civil society hinges on arresting the decline of organized religion, increased divorce rates, decreased voter turnout, heightened diversity and increased fragmentation (1996:119). But he maintains that the decline of civil society is the product of the reduced importance of obligation and responsibility in America (2000:356). As such, he argues that the shortcomings of civil

society can be corrected by means of moral dialogue based on the presence of a 'moral voice' within individuals.

Here too, critics maintain that Etzioni's communitarian philosophy depends on older sociological models of structural functionalism that deliver a myopic and highly conservative vision of American society (Prideaux 2002). For instance, liberals such as William Lund argue that Etzioni's notion of a 'new' communitarianism depends upon a vision of society in which individuals stand to be coerced into following a particular conception of the good life and is closer to traditional forms of social conservatism than he might think (Lund 1999). Still others argue that his thesis suffers from an inadequate consideration of the role of power in his conception of 'moral dialogue' (Rosenthal 2000).

Both Putnam and Etzioni implicitly subscribe to the view that civic participation levels are declining because social trust is eroding in civil society (Fuyukama 1995; Misztal 1996; Seligman 1997). Adam Seligman's argument in *The Problem of Trust* (1997) offers a good account of the main features of this aspect of the argument. Seligman argues that trust is currently in crisis for two reasons (1997:165). In the first place, global transformations in the division of labour have eroded the shared social conditions that make familiarity possible (1997:97). An increasingly differentiated division of labour has created the conditions for increased conflict thereby provoking the concern that individuals no longer share a common moral code (1997:158). In the second place, an increasingly litigious society has contributed to the erosion of social trust because of identity politics organized on the basis of 'ascribed' rather than 'shared' characteristics (1997:152-155). He argues that the conflict comes as a result of the

increasing institutionalization of the rights and entitlements of the individual in the public sphere (1997:99).

Although she doesn't name Seligman directly, Jean Cohen maintains that arguments of this sort are "theoretically impoverished and politically suspect" because they tend to focus on how *traditional* models of associational life generate social trust and civic participation (1999:212). Indeed, others suggest that the general emphasis on trust within social and political theory harbors potential dangers to the extent that trust often exists alongside profound inequalities. To this end, the moral philosopher Annette Baier maintains that "what we risk with trust is not just mutually lethal betrayals and breakdowns of trust, but exploitation that might be unnoticed for long periods of time because it is bland and friendly" (1994:131).⁴³ Another worry is that trust is often characterized as something that exists outside the realm of power. In other words, the claim that we need to develop trust tends to ignore the potential for exploitation and power within relations of trust. Invocations of trust tend not to recognize that when we entrust something of value to another, relations of power are not eliminated, they are simply transformed.

In spite of the contested character of these debates, many Anglo-American citizenship theorists maintain that the project of developing civic virtues, and indeed of determining which virtues are compatible with the demands of a heterogeneous society, is an important one. It is in this context that civic republican, civil society, and liberal citizenship theorists each produce a distinctive conception of the good citizen that responds to the presence of difference in society, but is nonetheless situated within the

⁴³ Although it is doubtful whether Baier could appropriately be considered an Anglo-American citizenship theorist, her critique of the emphasis on trust is revealing nonetheless.

context of concern that civic decline is imminent.⁴⁴ Civic republicans emphasize the importance of a participatory style of politics that emphasizes the role of the good citizen in cultivating specific virtues.⁴⁵ While some civic republicans highlight the intrinsic value of political life over private life (Beiner 1995:13-14; Oldfield 1990:173-4), most civic republicans have moved away from advocating “the sort of aggressively public-minded, self-sacrificing behaviour praised by earlier representatives of the republican tradition” (Burt 1993:361). Instead they highlight the importance of public deliberation through a participatory politics that seeks to develop the common good by means of a virtuous citizenry that possesses excellence of character, civility and good judgment. For some, the image of the good citizen is produced by customs and mores that are embedded within the collective memory of a community (Oldfield 1990:163). Others argue that good citizenship, and indeed strong democracy, depends upon a politics of contestation

⁴⁴ While liberals have typically been characterized as indifferent to human flourishing and inattentive to questions of the common good, recent contributions to the field by ‘liberal virtue theorists’ have done much to alter this impression (Berkowitz 1999; Callan 1997; Galston 1991; 1995; Macedo 1990; McKinnon and Hampsher-Monk 2000; Sinopoli 1992). William Galston (1991:8-11) and Stephen Macedo (1990:12) maintain that it is possible to see a conception of liberalism that rests on a distinctive conception of the good that does not undermine liberal commitments to autonomy and diversity. While this ‘new’ liberalism does not depend on a strong distinction between public and private morality, it requires that at least some personal interests are minimally subordinated to moral principles (Macedo 1990:256).

⁴⁵ The image of the good citizen developed by contemporary civic republicans is one that extends beyond the classical language of virtue typically associated with early civic republican attempts to trace the historical emergence of a virtuous citizenry to its origins in Ancient Greece or Renaissance Italy. J.G.A. Pocock is often celebrated as one of the visionaries of the contemporary civic republican tradition. His elaboration of civic virtue is situated in the context of an overall argument that aims to reconsider the contribution of civic republicanism to classical political theory from the perspective of a Renaissance civic humanism. He argues that the emphasis on natural law in much political theory has misinterpreted the contribution of important republican thinkers such as Machiavelli who, because they bear little relation to the natural law paradigm, are erroneously seen to undermine or subvert it. Thus, the attention given to liberalism as a critique of the natural law paradigm occupies “a place in history a good deal more central...than it has in fact occupied”(1981:354). He argues that where law conceives of liberty in negative terms, republican thinkers tend to view liberty in positive terms. For Pocock, this goes some way to explaining why the language of rights and the language of virtue have not been easily reconciled within contemporary political theory. To phrase this somewhat differently, the extent to which virtues are conceived in positive terms suggests that historically they have not been compatible with the language of jurisprudence. They come to be harmonized with the introduction of the idea of ‘manners’, a concept that served to combine a republican ethos with juridical principles where virtue was conceived in terms of the practice and refinement of manners(1981:367). See also Pocock (1975) and Skinner (1978).

(Barber 1984:117, 132). Second, civil society theorists underline the generative potential of the relation between citizens and civil society for democratic politics. For left-leaning theorists, good citizenship is one that tends to emphasize intermittent virtues and the agonistic dimensions of political conflict within civil society (Keane 1998:53; Walzer 1991:298-9). More conservative theorists maintain that good citizenship straddles public and private life in order to “nourish the character-shaping institutions and democratic character upon which a human public order rests” (Eberly 2000:21). Third, liberal conceptions of good citizenship are characterized by attempts to balance individuality and social pluralism, a balance that is to be achieved by means of liberal virtues such as ‘public reasonableness’ and a ‘willingness to engage in public discourse’ (Callan 1997:7; Galston 1991:222; Macedo 1990:46).⁴⁶

From the diverse range of views that are expressed within the complex of Anglo-American citizenship discourses, a generalized image of the good citizen appears as one who participates actively in public life in order to negotiate political differences. She also displaces her personal interests for the public good as political necessity requires. When viewed from the perspective of ‘civic regulation’, good citizenship is a product of the double articulation of dividing practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice. These dividing practices produce citizens who are internally divided by their ability to recognize

⁴⁶ Like civic republicans, liberal virtue theorists consider the capacity to distance oneself from one’s personal preferences an important feature of good citizenship. But where civic republicans tend to stress dialogue and deliberation (Barber 1984:133; Sandel 2000:298), liberals tend to emphasize discernment and judgment (Galston 1991:224-5; Macedo 1990:275-6). Shelly Burt argues that “while republican citizens place their critical abilities in the service of an expansive and directed dialogue with their fellow countrymen, good liberal citizens (as befits the liberal satisfaction with representative democracy) are primarily good judges – of the actions of their representatives, of the achievements of their government, of the state of their liberties” (1993:362). Furthermore, some liberals contend that a significant difference between the two is that liberal citizens are not *required* to participate in political community as a function of their citizenship (Galston 1991:225; Kymlicka 2001:271, n.6).

forms of conduct that conform to normative standards, at the same time that they are divided from others. The image of the virtuous citizen emerges in relation to a conception of the 'corrupt' citizen. Where the good citizen is one who participates actively in public life through civil conduct, the corrupt citizen is one who is guided by self-interest and uncivil behaviour toward others. As such, what is most significant about the perspective of civic regulation, is that it emphasizes the extent to which good citizenship emerges in response to specific problems of government. It is in this context that some citizenship theorists deploy 'character' as a solution to the problem of self-interest. Character comprises a specific set of dispositions that ostensibly enables one to put aside one's own interests for the sake of the common good. But because character is not something that emerges over night, it must be cultivated and encouraged by a range of institutions devoted to character formation. Other citizenship theorists deploy 'civility' as a solution to the problem of negotiating difference in a heterogeneous social context. Indeed civility takes the form of an orientation toward deliberation, public reasonableness and a tolerance for difference that enables one to negotiate differences in everyday political life. Thus, the civic revival implied by the emergence of the good citizen within Anglo-American citizenship discourses is organized in terms of the virtuous citizen who exhibits strength of character through civil conduct. Let me turn now to consider the specific ways that Anglo-American citizenship discourses deploy notions of 'character' and 'civility' as integral aspects of good citizenship.

3.3 Technologies of Good Citizenship: Character and Civility

As we have seen, contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses are characterized by a concern for self-interest and an interest in facilitating the negotiation of differences. It is in this context that character and civility are employed as specific ‘solutions’ to the problems of government in democratic society. As we shall see, the language of ‘character’ is marshaled in order to mitigate the problem of self-interest in society, and in so doing, organizes the good citizen in relation to shared social and political goods. The language of ‘civility’ is similarly used as a set of procedural mechanisms in order to help citizens negotiate their political differences.

A civic regulation approach enables us to see that ‘character’ and ‘civility’ are deployed as particular *technologies* of good citizenship. By technology, I mean an organized complex of social relations that are situated in relation to a specific knowledge culture that produces particular effects (Foucault 1988b:18). The language of technology highlights the relationship between knowledge production and practices of government (2000:407). Technologies are distinct from techniques which are repetitive forms of activity that produce specific capacities in an individual subject. As a technology of citizenship, character is mobilized in response to the problem of self-interest in order to effect a virtuous citizenry. Character designates an ensemble of dispositions that are organized by self-control and self-discipline. As a technology of citizenship, civility addresses the problem of difference by providing citizens with specific practices that are oriented helping them to negotiate their differences. Civility is a disposition that designates a set of practices such as ‘reasonableness’, ‘listening’ and ‘negotiation’

through which citizens come to deal with others. Both technologies are constituted in discrete knowledge cultures, and work together to produce the ‘good citizen’.

As we will see, the portrait of the virtuous citizen that emerges from this engagement with Anglo-American citizenship discourses is one that exhibits strength of character through civil conduct. Together, character and civility form the axes of good citizenship upon which competing conceptions of the virtuous citizen are based.⁴⁷ It is a vision, however, that is haunted by a fear of civic decline generated by a chronic worry that nascent self-interest and increased diversity might further erode the kind of civic cohesiveness required for successful democratic politics. Indeed, character and civility can be seen as both the cause of and the cure for the problem of civic decline. Where weak character and incivility contribute to instability in the civic order, strong character and civility are assumed to create the conditions for a healthy and robust democracy. I now turn to provide a brief overview of the ways that civility and character are mobilized within Anglo-American discourses.

A. Character

Contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses employ the language of character to encourage the cultivation of civic virtues so as to address the problem of self-interest. In this respect, character discourses offer an attempt to balance individual expression with the interests of the community. But they do so from the perspective of a recognition that differences abound in democratic societies. ‘Character’ is the term usually given to

⁴⁷ This idea bears some resemblance to the idea of the ‘community-civility game’ discussed by Nikolas Rose (1999:188-190). The community-civility game involves a particular form of ‘ethico-politics’ that is concerned with “the *self-techniques necessary for responsible self-government* and the *relations between one’s obligation to oneself and one’s obligation to others*” (1999:188, emphasis in original).

the complex of idealized qualities called virtues such as honesty, trustworthiness and kindness that are nominally associated with the moral person. These private virtues provide the foundation for the cultivation of public virtues of citizenship. In the context of Anglo-American citizenship discourses, ‘character’ designates an ensemble of civic virtues such as public reasonableness, civility, and patriotism.⁴⁸ And thus, we find civic republicans like Michael Sandel arguing that citizens “must possess, or come to acquire certain qualities of character, or civic virtues” that provide the citizen with the ability to “deliberate well about the common good” (2000:271). Conservative civil society theorists like Mary Ann Glendon suggest that “a regime of ordered liberty demands certain character traits in its citizens. If liberty is not to degenerate into license, citizens have to learn to exercise their own freedoms responsibly and to respect the liberties of their neighbors” (1995:4).⁴⁹ Finally, liberal virtue theorists such as William Galston (1991:217; 1995:56) and Stephen Macedo (1990:267) also attest to the important role that character plays in cultivating virtuous citizens.

Character addresses the problem of self-interest to the extent that it involves a mastery of the self that enables one to balance one’s personal interests and maintain a commitment to the public good at the same time. In other words, it involves self-discipline at the same time that it involves a concern for others. For many Anglo-American citizenship theorists, character is not seen as an end in itself, but rather as a means of facilitating a common good. For civic republicans like Michael Sandel, citizens draw upon “certain excellences – of character, judgment, and concern for the whole” in

⁴⁸ At the same time, “[e]ven the most far-reaching account of good citizenship will not demand that good citizens be perfectly virtuous people; in fact, it can be seen as a desideratum of an account of good citizenship that it does not make this demand” (McKinnon 2000:144).

⁴⁹ It is important to stress that most calls for character by civil society theorists are conservative in nature.

order to negotiate the conflict stemming from the incipient contradictions between private interests and public life (2000:272). Civil society theorists such as Don Eberly argue notions of respect and responsibility lie at the heart of character: “[t]o act with responsibility for one’s actions, one must be willing to take into account the consequences of one’s behaviours on others” (1995a:26). Similarly, for liberal virtue theorists like William Galston “[l]iberal virtues help strengthen what would otherwise be the inadequate *motivations* of the more powerful to make sacrifices on behalf of the less powerful members of a community” (1992:14, emphasis in original). Stephen Macedo also argues that “[t]he liberal ideal of character is one with ‘horizons’ broad enough to sympathize with a variety of different ways of life” (1990:267).

The operation of the double articulation of dividing practices in the field of civic regulation not only produces the ‘good’ citizen; it also generates a conception of the ‘vice-ridden’ citizen. Some Anglo-American theorists associate the ‘bad’ citizen with weak character. Indeed, Michael Sandel argues that bad citizens are the product of ‘bad communities’ that are corrupted by ‘fundamentalism’ or else, by ‘unencumbered citizens’ who are detached from their communities. For Sandel, the bad citizen is a product of a community that has not been able to cultivate effectively the type of character necessary for effective political practice (2000:275, 298). For civil society theorists like Mary-Ann Glendon, weak character is associated with the “deteriorating circumstances of child-raising households in the United States” that is the result of “children being raised in fatherless homes under conditions of social and material deprivation” (1995:1). And the problem of insipid character is also significant for liberal

virtue theorists like Stephen Macedo who argues that weakness of character consists in the failure to develop liberal virtues of autonomy, independence and resolve (1990:280).

As a technology of citizenship, character assembles a set of practices in response to the needs of a knowledge culture that perceives excessive self-interest to be responsible for undermining families, communities and civil society. 'Good character' therefore emerges in relation to a notion of 'bad character' which is held to be responsible for many social ills. Indeed character emerges as a technology that is organized in terms of a set of knowledge claims about how self-interest can be undermined. In so doing, character produces a set of dispositions that seeks to govern individuals through the government of others.

B. Civility

Many Anglo-American citizenship theorists contend that civility is a necessary foundation for democratic politics given the fact of value pluralism and deep diversity in social and political life. Typically, civility refers to qualities that include politeness and the display of good manners, but it has also come to represent civic virtues such as tolerance, non-discrimination and public-reasonableness. In this context, 'civility' is more than good manners; it is a contingent configuration of practices that involves the exercise of self-constraint and a concern for others through specific practices such as public reasonableness and tolerance. It is a mode of conduct that is informed by an orientation toward reason and principle that allows one to negotiate the differences in public life fairly and reasonably. For Benjamin Barber, civility promotes "reciprocal empathy and mutual respect" (1984:223). It does so because it relies on reason in order

to help citizens deal with conflicts of public life (1984:190). It is in this regard that civil society theorists like Christopher Bryant maintain that civility is a 'cool' concept that bears none of the passionate excess associated with the emotionality of nationalistic fervor (1995:145). The idea that civility works as a social lubricant to ease the demands of difference is also found in Michael Walzer's comment that: "[c]ivility tempers tensions that arise out of different impressions of the 'good'" (1974:602). Here civility represents a cognitive capacity that enables citizens to treat one another with respect. For liberals such as Will Kymlicka, civility is an integral component of principles of non-discrimination that require citizens to treat one another equally (2001:298-300). Mark Kingwell also argues that civility entails a willingness to engage in public discourse (2000:viii). Here civility offers an important means of negotiating the demands of plurality and diversity. In this respect, civility "operates as social lubricant" that is not "oriented toward cultivating agreements, but rather towards facilitating some kind of mutual understanding between moral agents" (1995:230).

In much the same way that character is produced alongside a conception of the 'corrupt' citizen, so too, does civility emerge in relation to a notion of 'incivility'. Incivility is associated generally with practices of discrimination, intolerance and a breakdown of civic virtue. As we will see in the next chapter, civility operates as a set of dividing practices that bolsters the articulation of identity-difference and virtue-vice. John Keane argues that incivility is a chronic feature of civil societies. Here incivility is equated with forms of political violence that includes violent protests and violent conflicts in addition to violent behaviour such as rape, child abuse, cruelty and homicide (1998:134-136). Similarly, Rainer Bauböck associates incivility with the presence of

violence in society (2000:91). As a technology of citizenship, civility produces a set of practices in relation to a knowledge culture that is organized in terms of how to facilitate the negotiation of political differences in society. Indeed it organized in terms of a set of knowledge claims about how differences can be addressed, and governs individual citizens through the government of others.

3.4 Conclusion

The argument of how character and civility operate as a technologies of citizenship is taken up in the following two chapters. In Chapter 4, I argue that character operates as an idealized *habitus* that is organized by a logic of disinterest in order to contain the problem of self-interest. I maintain that understanding character in this fashion helps us to see that in some formulations at least, character can operate as a pre-political good that seeks to suspend political contestation over its moral grounds. In Chapter 5, I argue that civility can be conceptualized as the outcome of a *figurational* process. In this context, civility emerges as the product of twin processes of ‘pacification’ and ‘distinction’. I argue that the tendency for Anglo-American citizenship theorists to present civility as an already constituted set of constraints without accounting for its conditions of emergence stands potentially to retrench forms of domination.

4 Character as a Technology of 'Good Citizenship'

My purpose in this chapter is to provide an understanding of how character operates as a technology of 'good' citizenship within Anglo-American citizenship discourses. In the last chapter, I argued that citizenship discourses mobilize 'character' as a solution to the problem of self-interest. In this chapter, I will show that 'character' operates as an idealized *habitus* that is the outcome of struggles over symbolic power. Following Bourdieu, symbolic power makes contingent and mutable social relations appear *as if* they are natural. I will argue that symbolic power produces a conception of character that *appears* to consist of a set of shared dispositions that are organized in relation to an ethic of 'disinterest' or 'generosity' directed toward the common good. I will show that arguments that maintain that character consists of a set of shared dispositions toward the good do not address the ways that character is itself an outcome of relations of power. In this respect, I will argue that appeals to character by Anglo-American citizenship theorists stand in tension with the idea that character offers a way of respecting 'difference' in democratic political life. As a result, citizenship theorists should be more cautious about deploying the language of character as a way of responding to concerns about self-interest.

This chapter is motivated by the following questions: First, what is meant by the concept of 'character'? What are the constitutive features of character discourses? Second, what conceptual tools are necessary for an interrogation of 'character' as a technology of citizenship? Third, what lessons might an examination of the historical literature on character offer for the contemporary literature? To this end, how is character distinguished from other modes of conceptualizing the self such as 'habit' and

‘personality’? What distinguishes contemporary character discourses from their historical antecedents? And lastly, how does character operate as a technology of ‘good’ citizenship within both historical and contemporary citizenship discourses? What implications does this have for contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses that use the concept of character in order to resolve the problem of ‘self-interest’?

I argue that character is a discursive category that consists of attributes called ‘dispositions’. The dispositions of character are practices of the self that produce private virtues that constitute the ‘good’ person. They also generate public virtues that form ‘good’ citizens. It is on this basis that I argue that character is a citizenship concept organized in relation to a distinctive knowledge culture, one that is derived in part from moral education discourses. Moral education has traditionally been the critical vector for programmes of character formation in the home and at school. Character formation depends upon various techniques that seek to instill virtues by means of self-discipline.

Although the problematic of character can be situated within a Foucauldian framework that emphasizes the extent to which disciplinary projects target the body by means of ‘little disciplines’, another productive account of character can be produced by drawing on the intellectual tradition inspired by Pierre Bourdieu. The concepts of ‘habitus’, ‘symbolic power’ and ‘disinterest’ are helpful in bringing into relief different aspects of the process of character formation. I conceive of character as an idealized habitus that is produced by relations of symbolic power and organized by the logic of ‘disinterest’. Conceiving of character in this way helps us to see how specific norms of citizenship come to be perceived as pre-political social goods despite being always already constituted by relations of power.

The debate over the differences between ‘character’, ‘personality’, and ‘habits’ at the turn of the twentieth century offers a useful point of entry into an examination of the way that character has been configured historically. This examination offers insight into the historical mechanics of character formation, and establishes the groundwork for a consideration of the ways that contemporary character discourses mobilize the concept of character as a pre-political virtue, one that is intended to resolve the alleged problem of moral decline. Once again, conceiving of character as an idealized habitus allows us to examine the extent to which character may appear to be a shared universal good while being mobilized with respect to specific social and political projects such as the ‘family’.

I turn finally to consider the ways that character operates as a technology of citizenship within both the early twentieth century and the contemporary literatures. Although each of these discourses is historically contingent, both produce an image of the good citizen that depends upon the exercise of shared virtues such as independence, trustworthiness and cooperation. Contemporary discourses are distinct to the extent that character is not simply mobilized as a solution to the problem of self-interest, as is the case for the historical discourses, but appears as a mechanism that seeks to mediate between shared values and the challenges posed by political and cultural differences in everyday life.

This chapter begins with an overview of my conceptual approach to ‘character’. This discussion prepares the theoretical groundwork for an examination of the way that character is conceptualized as an idealized habitus. I turn next to consider the historical debate over the differences between character, personality and habit. This sets the stage for an examination of the ways that contemporary character discourses mobilize character

as an idealized habitus that celebrates the ‘family’ as a significant social and political good. From there, I interrogate the historical and contemporary configurations of the relationship between character and citizenship in order to consider what implications ‘character’ has for Anglo-American citizenship politics.

4.1 Conceptualizing Character

The term ‘character’ signifies an idealized conception of the qualities and traits that are nominally associated with the ‘good’ person and the ‘good citizen’.⁵⁰ I argue that ‘character’ is comprised of an ensemble of discourses that overlaps with moral education discourses. Here character emerges as a combination of attributes normally called ‘excellences’ or ‘dispositions’. Typically these attributes require the exercise of discipline and self-control in order to cultivate personal virtues such as trustworthiness, kindness and compassion. In so doing, they help to cultivate the ‘good’ person. But

⁵⁰ Formal definitions of ‘character’ tend to reflect a conceptual ambiguity that permeates many character discourses. Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* offers an early definition of ‘character’ as “a representation of any man as to his personal qualities”, and is followed by a subsequent entry that defines it as “an account of anything as good or bad” (1755a, page numbers unavailable). Another entry regards a character as “the person with his assemblage of qualities” or, simply “personal qualities”. Johnson’s definitions are interesting insofar as they move between a descriptive account of character as the sum total of a person’s qualities and a normative view of character as something capable of being evaluated as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Nonetheless, they remain decidedly descriptive. The shift toward understanding of character as the sum total of *moral* qualities – a definition common for many historical and contemporary character discourses – is expressed in the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989a). Here character is defined first as “the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogenous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; mental or moral constitution” (1989a:31). The normative tendencies of the concept are underscored here even though the definition refers to the aggregate of an individual’s settled dispositions in a more descriptive sense. A subsequent entry, however, more clearly connects character with “moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed; distinct or distinguished character; character worth speaking of” (OED1989a:31). Although this definition reflects a normative understanding of the concept, the meaning behind the term ‘moral’ is ambiguous. As Stephan Collini notes, one could conceivably use the term to classify virtues and vices as moral attributes in a neutral fashion. At the same time, it could also be interpreted more narrowly in order to indicate those qualities that meet with ethical approval (1991:96).

when these dispositions form the basis of public virtues such as patriotism, honour, and courage, they help to constitute the ‘good citizen’.

Character is initially imagined into being as discursive object by a network of moral educators, social reformers, psychologists and academics on both sides of the Atlantic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. ‘Character’ emerges as the product of a complex of opposing and overlapping discourses. It is not a monolithic category; rather, it reflects an ensemble of discourses that changes and evolves over time. It joins together a historically contingent cluster of attributes that are upheld as ‘virtues’ by members of a given community. Character is not a single or unitary phenomenon that represents a coherent and uncontested set of beliefs; it is instead a discursive category that is constituted by a complex of sometimes opposing but usually shared claims about the ‘good’ that are grounded in a common language of virtues, dispositions and habits. Character is more than a *collection* of attributes; rather these attributes are practices of the self that ostensibly create the conditions for ethical self-actualization. These practices render ‘character’ visible by means of attributes such as a stiff upper lip, straight back, self-control and self-discipline. As such, character typically requires the exercise of self-discipline in an effort to inspire personal virtues such as honesty, trustworthiness, kindness and courtesy, as well as public virtues such as patriotism, nationalism, civic duty, and participation in political life. When these private virtues are in evidence, an individual is said to exhibit not only good character, but also strength of character.⁵¹

⁵¹ It is important to note that good character and strong character are not synonymous. Joel Kupperman’s work on character helps to clarify this point (1991:8). Mindful of the relationship between good character and virtue, he notes that bad character represents the presence of vices. He cautions, however, that one should not equate vice-ridden character with an absence of character. To be precise, he suggests that a lack of character suggests the absence of backbone or fortitude such that one becomes “morally unreliable”. In

When private virtues exist in combination with public virtues, one is said to be a good citizen.

For my purposes, character is one of many *citizenship concepts* such as civil society and the public sphere (1995a; 1995b; Somers 1999). Although citizenship and character are related concepts, they are not interchangeable. Where character represents the qualities and traits that are associated with the moral person, citizenship specifies those practices that organize access to material and symbolic resources. Character thus extends beyond citizenship to include extra-citizenship ideals such as “*work, building, golden deeds, outdoor life, conquest, honour, reputation, morals, manners, integrity*, and above all, *manhood*,” at the same time as it is associated with concepts such as duty and democracy that are typically associated with citizenship (Susman 1979:214, emphasis in original). Character is the product of a distinctive ‘knowledge culture’ that is not entirely subsumed under the umbrella of citizenship discourses. Here, character is situated within a symbolic arena that relies on ‘public’ notions of manliness, conquest, outdoor life and reputation that extend beyond the sphere of citizenship relations. At the same time, character also signifies a ‘private’ dimension that is expressed by virtues that uphold a commitment to ideals such as the ‘family and ‘fatherhood’.⁵²

The emergence of character discourses is closely tied to the rise of moral education discourses that emerged initially in the eighteenth century and rose to prominence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For my purposes, moral education refers to the broad set of formal and informal programmes and techniques at

contrast, if one’s vices are strongly cemented, they reflect a certain strength of character. Thus, strong character is independent of the ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of one’s character.

⁵² As such, character (along with citizenship) has traditionally been a highly gendered category.

home, school and in the community that aim to inculcate an individual with moral virtue. Proponents of moral education claim that character is not innate to the individual; rather, it must be shaped and formed. Thus, character emerges as something that needs to be cultivated by means of programs and exercises that aim to bring an individual's conduct as close as possible to a specific ideal. The instruments and techniques of moral education are deeply rooted in attempts to develop individual character in order to foster community well-being. Moral education projects are especially concerned to cultivate good citizenship, and are sometimes presented in terms of 'character education' or, even 'citizenship education'.⁵³ What is significant about moral education projects is that they are usually bound up with projects of moral or civic regulation that tend to present contingent and historically specific relations as either natural or taken for granted aspects of social life (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:4).

The critical vectors for character formation have conventionally been moral education initiatives that focus on informal and formal training at home and at school in order to create moral persons with strong character. Initially, moral education was oriented toward the cultivation of 'gentlemen' and 'gentlewomen', but by the turn of the twentieth century it was increasingly focused on the constitution of 'good citizens'. The family was, and continues to be, considered an essential factor for creating the necessary conditions for character development in young children.⁵⁴ Once children become of

⁵³ Where character education typically endorses a focus on moral virtues such as honesty, courage and kindness, citizenship education programs do not necessarily operate in relation to the cultivation of character. Indeed, citizenship education have often simply focused on the technical and legislative aspects of government.

⁵⁴ B. Edward McLellan suggests that the gendering of moral education began in the mid-eighteenth century. Girls were encouraged to develop traits of 'modesty, meekness, compassion, affability, and piety' that would complement a maternal role in the home as women. Boys were encouraged to develop virtues of courage and honour for roles outside the home in a competitive political and economic arena (1999:12). As

school age, the school traditionally serves to extend the foundations learned at home. In addition, the church (through vehicles such as Sunday school) along with community clubs (such as the 4H Club, Red Cross, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides) are also considered to be important sites of character formation that also incidentally serve as bases for good citizenship. Whether at home or at school, the instruments of character formation typically include pedagogical aids such as textbooks, guidebooks and treatises, in addition to devotional texts and inspirational literature.

The techniques for successful character formation are varied, but they usually emphasize activities such as accuracy in school work, attention to details of composition (spelling and punctuation); reading, writing and arithmetic. The learning and reading of moral fables, the memorization of 'moral rules', and the periodic use of special days and holidays in order to cultivate nationalism and patriotism are especially significant.⁵⁵ Active participation in school government, along with extensive physical exercise and outdoor skills are also viewed to be important vehicles for character development. This combination of techniques is intended to cultivate personal virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, obedience, and courtesy, and others such as duty, responsibility, and conscientiousness. To this end, devices such as character-rating scales were once a popular technique for measuring the effectivity of moral education programs before they

such, McLellan argues: "From this point forward, women would be thought of as the special conservers of morality and piety in the society and moral education would have a decidedly feminine cast" (1999:12). The gendering of moral education extends into the early twentieth century where mothers were charged with an almost exclusive responsibility for early childhood education (1999:16-17). Schools extended and reinforced the foundations of moral education in the home. Female teachers were preferred because of an assumed relationship between women and morality. Teachers would ideally reinforce the lessons learned at the hand of the mother. Teachers were also expected to display virtue both within and outside the classroom (1999:23).

⁵⁵ See for instance, the collection of moral fables compiled by William Bennett in *The Book of Virtues* (1993), and in the follow-up publication *The Moral Compass* (1995).

fell into disrepute.⁵⁶ Even so, they have emerged again as an important tool for assessing character development.⁵⁷

4.2 Habitus, Character and the Field of Disinterest

This section offers an overview of the conceptual tools that I use in order to interrogate ‘character’ as a technology of good citizenship. Although character is easily situated within a disciplinary project that targets the body through a micro-physics of power, my intent is to develop an account of character using Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘habitus’, ‘symbolic power’ and ‘disinterest’ in order to shed light on different aspects of the process of character formation. These concepts help to explain how ‘norms’ of good citizenship are produced by symbolic power and are organized by a logic of ‘disinterest’. This helps us to see how character is mobilized by Anglo-American citizenship theorists as a response to a knowledge culture of citizenship that perceives excessive self-interest to be responsible for undermining families, communities and civil society. This Bourdieu-inspired account of character complements a Foucauldian account of character formation that emphasizes the ways that character is generated by programmes of ‘correct training’ that seek to modify conduct through a series of ‘normalizing judgments’. But it

⁵⁶ Their proponents argued that rating scales offered a convenient method of measuring the habits and attitudes of character and good citizenship among young children (Chassell, Upton, and Chassell 1922; Hill 1927; Upton and Chassell 1921). For example, the ‘Upton-Chassell Scale’ introduced in the Horace Mann Elementary School represents a good example of the range of habits that were indicative of good character: “(1) Takes care of His Health; (2) Keeps a Good Posture; (3) Is Orderly; (4) Exercises Thrift; (5) Is Prompt; (6) Thinks Clearly and Purposefully” (1921:21-7). However, the studies by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May raised serious questions about the effectiveness of these devices for assessing the successfulness of character education programs (Hartshorne and May 1928; 1929; 1930). In a series of studies, they examined the behaviour of children who were given the opportunity to lie, cheat or steal in different social contexts. They discovered that it was difficult to predict whether evidence of ‘bad character’ in one context might transfer to another. They argued that honest and dishonest behaviour is variable and ultimately determined by the ‘doctrine of specificity’ (e.g. that behaviour is context-specific).

⁵⁷ Revised attempts to measure character have emerged with the publication of ‘character-building’ manuals such as Michael Loehrer’s *How to Change a Rotten Attitude* (1998).

extends Foucauldian analyses by offering a more complex account of the ways that norms are generated and produced. Let me begin with a brief overview of how character operates as a disciplinary mechanism before turning to elaborate in more detail on the way that notions of 'habitus', 'symbolic power' and 'disinterest' contribute to an interrogation of character as a technology of citizenship.

In Foucauldian terms, 'character' represents a classic instance of a disciplinary project that targets the body in order to act upon the interiority of the soul (Foucault 1977a). Projects of character formation induce the operation of a micro-physics of power that circulates through sites such as the family and the school by means of techniques that are not only designed to be repeatable, but also to have calculable effects, and to render social action predictable. These disciplinary techniques are embedded within programmes of 'correct training' that inspire obedience and submission in order to connect one's individual conduct to social norms. Correct training is rendered effective by means of a system of normalizing judgments that aims to modify conduct so that it comes in line with a given set of objectives. The system differentiates individuals from one another by arranging them in hierarchical fashion according to whether they conform to prevailing social norms. As such, normalizing judgment introduces a dividing line between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal', the 'good' and the 'bad'. It is reinforced by a system of gratification and punishment that is very often articulated in terms of an arithmetic scale.⁵⁸ In this view, character emerges as the product of disciplinary practices such as exercise and outdoor life. It is cultivated over time through a series of techniques

⁵⁸ The 'examination' is especially significant in this context. It situates individuals in a "field of surveillance" that involves "a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them" (Foucault 1977a:189). The examination makes each individual a specific 'case' that can be ordered, measured, and compared with others often according to an arithmetic scale.

that aim to bring conduct in line with a set of idealized norms. If attributes of honour, chastity, and courage are valorized, then practices and activities help to effect the desired qualities within arenas such as the family and the school. Individuals are then subjected to forms of normalizing judgment that distinguish those with 'strong' character from those with 'weak' character, and those with 'good' character from those with 'bad' character.

Although Foucault's insights into the disciplinary aspects of character formation are useful for an understanding of how character is produced by disciplinary techniques, I want to complement his analysis with Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'symbolic power', and 'disinterest' in order to see how character operates as a technology of citizenship.⁵⁹ Bourdieu's notion of habitus is particularly useful for explaining how character offers a way of addressing the problem of self-interest within contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses. Bourdieu's work helps us to see how character can be conceptualized as an idealized habitus that is organized by relations of power. Here the dispositions of the habitus are embedded within a classificatory system that organizes specific structures of recognition. Symbolic power works by ensuring that specific beliefs *appear* as social goods that are beyond dispute when they are always already constituted by relations of force. Indeed, when character operates according to a logic of 'disinterest', it encourages individuals to displace their personal interests for something that is larger than themselves. Let me begin with an overview of Bourdieu's

⁵⁹ Others have also found Bourdieu's work useful for interrogating processes of character formation. For example, Mariana Valverde (1994) modifies Bourdieu's interpretive framework by introducing the notion of 'moral' capital. This account does not adequately take into consideration the analytical utility of the notion of symbolic capital. See Curtis (1997) for a critique.

conception of the relationship between symbolic power and the logic of disinterest before turning to consider how character operates as an idealized habitus.

Bourdieu offers a theory of agency that makes *dispositions* (as opposed to consciousness, or intention) the basis of social practices (1997:231). The language of habitus enables one to situate the mechanics of character formation within the context of large scale social structures without falling prey to the psychologistic underpinnings typically associated with character discourses. Rather than view dispositions as the outcome of ‘willed’ behaviour, Bourdieu gives us tools that enable us to understand dispositions as durable and transposable ways “of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking” that comprise one’s *habitus* (1990b:69-70). As we saw in chapter two, the habitus is a system of ‘structured structures’ and ‘structuring structures’ that is activated in relation to a field (1990a:116). The field is a network of social relations that is “an arbitrary social construct, an artifact whose arbitrariness and artificiality are underlined by everything that defines its autonomy” (1990b:67). The relationship between habitus and field reflects a “generative spontaneity” that is constantly invented and reinvented through the practices and activities of individuals and groups (1990a:55). Because an individual habitus is always defined in relation to a field, it reflects, but also reproduces, collective practices. In other words, the concept of habitus produces individuality, but it is an individuality that is developed in the context of an interplay between homology and homogeneity. Homogeneity is what enables “practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for-granted” (1977:80).⁶⁰ While this might seem to suggest that habitus is determined,⁶¹ this

⁶⁰ Although these practices are harmonized, they are organized without any intentionality or explicit coordination. Thus, they are not the product of direct intervention or calculation (1990b:58).

is not so, for the generative potential that habitus maintains with the field means that it necessarily “*goes hand in hand with vagueness and indeterminacy*” (1990a:77, emphasis in original).

As we saw previously, the dynamic relation of habitus and field is situated in the context of struggles over the acquisition of different forms of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital.⁶² Capital operates as a relation of force that structures the field of play. Every field gives rise to a specific form of ‘interest’ that operates as a “tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:117). Interest is implied by participation in the game and is dependent on one’s position in the game. Here recognition involves the myriad of pre-reflexive assumptions that social agents engage in by “the mere fact of taking the world for granted, of accepting the world as it is, and of finding it natural because *their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world*” (1992:168, emphasis in original).

The dispositions of the habitus reflect one’s social position and, therefore, serve as marks that distinguish between different social groups (1977:82). They give rise to symbolic and material differences that constitute distinctive ways of engaging, interpreting and understanding the world. To have character is therefore ‘to differ, to be different’ from those who lack it. Thus, difference only becomes

⁶¹ See Jenkins (1992), Honneth (1995), and Alexander (1995) for arguments that Bourdieu’s notion of habitus is overly deterministic. These criticisms, however, do not adequately take into account the implications of the generative potential between habitus and field.

⁶² There may be some tension between the economism often associated with the language of capital and the Foucauldian idea of a micro-physics of power. Bourdieu, however, stresses that capital is a social relation that is “an energy which only exists and only produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced” (1984:113).

“a visible, perceptible, non-indifferent, socially *pertinent* difference if it is perceived by someone who is capable of *making the distinction* – because, being inscribed in the space in question, he or she is not *indifferent* and is endowed with categories of perception, with classificatory schemata, with a certain *taste*, which permits her to make differences, to discern, to distinguish” (Bourdieu 1998:9, emphasis in original).

The differences implied by a different combination of dispositions, indeed by a different habitus, are the product of struggles over different forms of capital within a given field. These struggles give rise to dispositions that enable one to recognize certain attributes in oneself and in others. But this is only possible if one is aware, or becomes aware, of the differences that are constitutive of habitus. What is significant is that dispositions always include within themselves classificatory schemes that enable one to distinguish certain qualities, attributes and characteristics.

When character is understood as an idealized habitus, it implies that the constitutive dispositions associated with character such as personal hygiene, comportment, respectability and decency, can only be understood and indeed appreciated by those who share a similar habitus. Because habitus emerges in relation to a given field, the idea that people may share a given conception of what makes up character is a product of general shared social positions such as citizenship. This implies that character is not only the product of force relations, it also reproduces power relations. The different dispositions of the habitus enable us to distinguish between different forms of character, and indeed between good, bad, strong and weak character.

The notion of symbolic capital is also particularly helpful for considering the mechanics of character formation. ‘Symbolic power’ generally refers to the ways in which different forms of power are deployed and routinized in everyday life. It is a form of power that expresses a ‘legitimacy’, one that is ultimately arbitrary (Thompson

1991:23). In other words, symbolic power is a way of “constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world” and is “exercised only if it is *recognized*, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary” (Bourdieu 1991:170, emphasis in original). Because symbolic power only emerges in relation to a given field, it is the particular structure of the field that produces specific ‘beliefs’ that are produced and reproduced. These ‘beliefs’ symbolize the extent to which this form of power operates as a form of *misrecognition*. For symbolic power to be effective, the recognition of one’s virtues operates as a form of misrecognition where the contingent basis of the symbolic goods in question appears to be naturalized. In other words, symbolic power is an ‘invisible’ force that is not recognized as ‘power’ (i.e. it is misrecognized) and is thus viewed to be legitimate (Thompson 1991:23). It is a form of power that necessarily rests upon a foundation of shared beliefs.

To this end, symbolic capital is based on the mutual recognition of attributes such as honour, nobility, patriotism, and valor that are “only available to agents endowed with dispositions adjusted to the logic of ‘disinterestedness’” (Bourdieu 1997:234-235). When individuals take for granted certain aspects of established relations, they share to some extent in a system of evaluation that can sometimes work to reinforce specific relations of power. When dispositions are developed according to ‘disinterest’, they are cultivated in terms of an ‘ethic of generosity’ that transcends one’s particular ‘interests’ in relation to a given field. Indeed, the idea of disinterest stands in opposition to the notion of interest and is sometimes equated with the language of gratuitousness or generosity (Bourdieu

and Wacquant 1992:116).⁶³ As such, disinterest tends to be expressed through a commitment to social goods such as the 'good of the community', the 'American way' or 'Canadian identity.'⁶⁴

The idea that symbolic capital can operate according to a logic of disinterest is useful for thinking about the ways that character is mobilized by Anglo-American citizenship discourses as a response to the problem of self-interest. Projects of character formation can be seen as attempts to cultivate character by means of acquiring symbolic capital. Symbolic capital produces beliefs that appear as naturalized, always already legitimate understandings of the social world. It presents what is actually an outcome of power relations as something that can be taken-for-granted, and indeed, taken as 'truth'. Symbolic power can operate in this manner because it is 'misrecognized' as something other than the outcome of power relations. When it takes the form of idealized dispositions that are associated with the logic of 'disinterest', symbolic power is used as means of reinforcing specific practices that are not always in the 'interest' of the individual. When character is cultivated in this way, it displaces individual self-interest for the benefit of others. This offers a way of understanding how character is mobilized as a solution to the problem of self-interest, but it also underscores the extent to which character is a product of force relations at the same time. In other words, character is

⁶³ Bourdieu situates disinterest in the context of a gift economy where the 'gifts' are larger than oneself. In other words, they are those that ultimately culminate in gifts to the community such as the 'supreme sacrifice' or 'dying for one's country' (1997:233).

⁶⁴Bourdieu argues: "[i]n other words, at the basis of generous action, the inaugural gift in a series of gifts, there is not the conscious intention (calculating or not) of the isolated individual but the *dispositions* of the *habitus*, which is generosity and which tends, without explicit and express intention, toward the conservation and increase of symbolic capital" (1997:233, emphasis in original).

mobilized as a political response to the social problem of encouraging individuals to contribute to ‘something larger than themselves’.

As a technology of citizenship, character operates by means of a logic of selflessness (or disinterestedness) in order to organize an ethic of generosity in the service of specific socio-political projects. The particular dispositions of character emerge as a product of the generative relation between habitus and field. Character acts a vehicle for harnessing the productive energy of this relationship. It serves to configure social relations by means of a logic of selflessness that is grounded in an ethic of generosity *toward the field*. Whether the field is configured in terms of the ‘community’ or the ‘nation-state’, character operates as a technology for organizing ‘selflessness’ in the productive service of ‘community-building’ or ‘nation-building’ projects. Because character reflects and reproduces collective practices, those dispositions that are rooted in the logic of disinterestedness become translated into citizenly virtues such as loyalty and patriotism that work to displace one’s self-interest for the greater good of the community. That one is capable of being recognized as having character, and of recognizing it in others, suggests that character is the strategic effect of structured relations of force that circulate throughout the social body.

Having conceived of character as an idealized habitus, I turn now to consider a particularly contentious debate within an early configuration of character discourses at the turn of the twentieth century in order to gain insight into the historical conditions for the emergence of concept of character.

4.3 Historical Character Discourses: Character, Personality and Habit

The nature of the distinction between ‘character’, ‘personality’, and ‘habits’ was a particularly fraught debate within character discourses at the turn of the twentieth century. A brief examination of this debate is useful for examining how character operates as an idealized habitus within this historically specific configuration of character discourses. This will not only give insight into the mechanics of character formation, but it will also prepare the groundwork for an examination of contemporary character discourses in the next section. Given that Alan Hunt and I provide a detailed discussion of the differences between character and personality elsewhere (White and Hunt 2000), I will only offer a brief sketch of their differences here. My principal interest in this section will thus be to examine the more ambiguous question of the relationship between character and habits.⁶⁵

By most accounts, character and personality were largely indistinguishable from each other throughout most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (2000:101). In the twentieth century, personality emerges as a distinctive mode of shaping the self.⁶⁶ It appears in the context of a growing market economy and a rising consumer society. Personality constitutes “the construction of a set of dispositions unique to each individual which has no necessary or fixed content” (2000:104). Thus, where character signifies the external visage of internalized social values, ‘personality’ operates as a distinctive self-narrative that signifies the cultivation of specific traits expressed in terms of projects of

⁶⁵ Alan Hunt and I (2000) argue that under conditions of late-modernity, personality has eclipsed character as a new way of conceptualizing the self. However, these developments are never linear, and involve movements both backwards and forwards. My work in this current project suggests that the revived interest in character reflects an attempt to graft character onto discourses of personality.

⁶⁶ See for instance the useful review of the psychological literature on the subject provided by Gordon W. Allport in *The Psychological Bulletin* (1921).

self-fulfillment and self-expression that constitute the uniqueness of one's individual, indeed one's 'personal' qualities.⁶⁷ Significantly, personality represents a process of self-actualization that is generally pursued through consumptive leisure activities, as opposed to productive labour which is more commonly associated with character.

Where 'personality' emerges as a distinctive concept in its own right, 'habit' and 'character' are closely intertwined. The idea that 'good' habits are indispensable for character formation is particularly significant. Samuel Smiles, the author of the nineteenth century best-seller *Self-Help* (1859), offers a good example of the view that the successful cultivation of good habits prepares the foundations for character, foundations that, in turn, create the conditions for a virtuous life: "[a]nd here it may be observed how greatly the character may be strengthened and supported by the cultivation of good habits. Man, it has been said, is a bundle of habits; and habit is second nature" (1958:365). Indeed, Smiles continues by noting that "...character consists in little acts, well and honourably performed; daily life being the quarry from which we build it up, and rough-hew the habits which form it" (1958:366). These observations suggest the extent to which habits are critical for character formation. Yet, the mere presence of good habits does not necessarily mean that one has character; character was viewed as 'something more' than simply a set of good habits. And thus, the question of what distinguishes habit from character was an important question for many scholars,

⁶⁷ Consider for instance the invitation by Orison Swett Marden in his *Masterful Personality* published in 1921: "A business man of charming personality and fine feeling says, 'I have made the resolve that my life work shall be a masterpiece.' Could any human being make a grander resolution? Why not make this your resolve, your keynote? Determine that you will make your personality felt in your community as never before, not the daub of a cheap, superficial artist, but the masterpiece of a master? Every life ought to be a declaration of individuality, a distinctive, characteristic keynote. There is nothing which gives such an expression of power as a marked individuality" (1921:76). Indeed, this 'invitation' calls to mind Foucault's conception of an ethical subjectivity that makes one's life a 'work of art' and is organized in relation to an 'aesthetics of existence' (1982b:231; 1988a:49).

educators and psychologists well into the twentieth century.

Charles Camic notes that although current consensus suggests that ‘habit’ designates a “more or less self-actuating disposition or tendency to engage in a previously adopted or acquired form of action,” an examination of the concept’s intellectual history reveals a convoluted and involved past in its own right (1986:1044).⁶⁸ He suggests that different senses of the term ‘habit’ might usefully be placed on a continuum. At one end is a conception of habit that refers to the “disposition to perform certain relatively elementary and specific activities skillfully” (1986:1045). This understanding of habit has the most currency within the discipline of psychology where it tends to be associated with an almost automatic sequencing of behaviours.⁶⁹ It also includes rote activities such as writing, speaking, perceiving, evaluating, task execution, and problem solving. In the middle range of the spectrum is a conception of habit that signifies more involved forms of conduct in everyday life such as “habits of interpersonal interaction; habits of economic, political, religious, and domestic behaviour; habits of obedience to rules and to rulers; habits of sacrifice, disinterestedness, and restraint; and so on” (1986:1045). At the end of the continuum one finds an enhanced conception of habit that is the “durable and generalized disposition that suffuses a person’s action

⁶⁸ Camic argues that ‘reflective action’ has replaced a concern with habit in contemporary debate. Reflective action signifies a process “arising from various utilitarian, moral, affectual, or other motives – formed of calculation, belief, attitude, and sentiment – that define ends that an actor then intentionally pursues by choosing from among available alternatives, the means that appear most appropriate when judged by norms of efficiency, duty, familiarity, and so on” (1986:1040). In other words, reflective action is rational, purposive and calculable. Although Camic does not himself suggest it, it would seem that the notion of ‘reflective action’ bears a similarity to the question of ‘reflexive action’ that is at the heart of recent investigations into the rise of reflexive modernity (Giddens 1990; 1996).

⁶⁹ In an article published by *The American Journal of Psychology* B.R. Andrews in 1903 suggested that “[a] habit, from the standpoint of psychology, is a more or less fixed way of thinking, willing, or feeling acquired through previous repetition of a mental experience” (1903:121). A more contemporary view is articulated by Colin Campbell who defines habit “as a learned act which has, through repetition, become automatic and hence easily and effortlessly carried out” (1996:159).

throughout an entire domain of life or, in the extreme instance, throughout all of life – in which case the term comes to mean the whole manner, turn, cast, or mold of the personality” (1986:1046). This understanding of habit comes closest to resembling ‘character’. But what distinguishes habit from character in this instance is the extent to which most habits, irrespective of whether they are good or bad, usually lack any “moral or ethical significance for the actor” (Campbell 1996:161). In this respect, what nominally distinguishes ‘habit’ from character is that habit is ostensibly without normative foundations. Even so, one can cultivate ‘reflexive’ habits that are developed in order to comply with a normative ideal. In other words, these are habits that one cultivates in relation to a perceived good.

In order to determine why habit is not necessarily considered a normative category, one must turn to earlier debates over what constitutes habit. The question of the relation of habit to character emerged initially in the nineteenth century from Victorian attempts to account for a psychological connection between the ‘mind’ and the ‘body’ (Park 1987:9-11).⁷⁰ A focus on the nerves and the nervous system increasingly made the ‘mind’ the object of biological rather than philosophical inquiry, and laid the foundations for investigations into the ‘scientific’ basis of character.⁷¹ A widely held

⁷⁰ This view is characteristic of the ‘physiological’ approach to psychology that included such luminaries as Wilhelm Wundt, Herbert Spencer and Alexander Bain (Jacyna 1981:109). This school of psychological research stated that the mind was the biological product of social relations. Such an approach is similar to the William James’s contention that “the senses were linked to muscular and glandular organs by ‘nerve currents’ flowing along the nervous system’s reflex paths” (Park 1987:12). This made it possible to argue that performing a specific act was made easier by repetition. An unintended consequence of this argument was that American social reformers seized upon the notion that repetition could foster particular socially desirable habits despite the fact that James “never intended that habit be thought of as a substitute for moral autonomy” (Park 1987:12).

⁷¹ Phrenology (the inquiry into size and shape of the cranium as a supposed indication of character) offered an early attempt to establish character as a biological phenomenon. See A. Wallace Mason’s elaborate documentation of different cranial shapes and facial features in an attempt to provide a scientific account for ‘reading’ character by sight: “The best system of reading character at sight is to train the eye to take in

belief contended that the mind held something called the ‘will’ that was a critical factor in character formation. At birth, an individual was considered to be a blank slate that was susceptible to influence, craven or otherwise. Intensive effort was focused on creating the conditions for the cultivation of moral habits that would serve as the foundation for character. Habits were distinct from character in that character necessarily depended upon the exercise of the will. It represented the centre of conscious cognitive activity that served as a contrast to the non-reflexive and automatic activity typically associated with habits. Since both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ habits formed the respective foundations of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ character, what distinguished the exercise of ‘good’ character from simple habit was that it also involved the exercise of deliberate action in the project of conforming as closely as possible to a prevailing character ideal.

Reverend M. S. Gillet’s book *Education for Character* (1914) offers a paradigmatic example of this approach to character formation. Particularly important here is the idea that the will, understood as deliberate, self-conscious, intentional action, was integral to character development. For Gillet, the will was understood to be “the *highest and most perfect* form of human activity, of self-conscious activity, as opposed to instinct, that is unconscious and inevitable activity. Will, in a word then, is the power to act *deliberately*” (1914:2, emphasis in original). The will formed the basis of a ‘scientific’ definition of character as “the totality of moral qualities intelligently grouped around the axis of the will” (1914:5, 142). Will offered the means by which the complex aggregate of attributes said to comprise character would be “disciplined, organized and

at a glance the size and proportions of both the head and the face; when this can be done correctly, the character of every one can be estimated in a few minutes” (1888:3). See also Alexander Bain’s critical examination of the science of Phrenology in *On the Study of Character, Including an Estimate of Phrenology* (1861).

unified” in an effort to match prevailing social ideals (1914:4, 30). These attributes or habits, were cultivated through disciplined repetition in order to “reproduce analogous acts with ease and satisfaction” (1914:122-3). The distinction between habit and character rested on the idea that character was formed by the will, and therefore served to regulate conduct motivated by the passions. The passions – understood as those non-rational, principally emotional, aspects of human behaviour – were considered neither good nor bad in and of themselves. But they could be potentially dangerous if they encouraged one to act in immoral ways. One was said to possess character therefore when “by sheer force of will, he has succeeded in massing together his scattered energies as into a living sheat [*sic*], in disposing them according to the ideal imposed on him as a man, and a Christian” (1914:16-7).⁷² Character symbolized the attentive exercise of one’s cognitive faculties in order to cultivate the self-knowledge and self-domination necessary for moral conduct (1914:30). Will and character in this view were symbiotically connected. Not only did character depend upon the will, but in order for the will to be exercised effectively, it depended on character in order to encourage the growth of ‘healthy’ habits that, in turn, would serve to strengthen the resolve of the will.⁷³ This circularity notwithstanding, moral habits were perceived as an essential means to counteract “the natural weakness of our active faculties” (1914:126). In other words,

⁷² The Catholic worldview that forms the basis of Gillet’s conception of the desired character ideal is certainly evident here. But it is important to note that although many character discourses at the time reflected a Christian orientation, secular discourses were also present.

⁷³ The temporal dimension of character development is worth noting. Character formation is always in process, and is never completed.

moral habits not only produced but also reinforced one's character, and ultimately staved off the temptation to fall prey to one's passions.⁷⁴

Although necessary, good habits were not considered a sufficient basis for character formation on their own. Professor John MacCunn argues, for instance, that an excessive focus on habit formation at the expense of character paved the way for potentially undesirable consequences (1900:47-50).⁷⁵ By itself, habit was viewed to be "a double-edged instrument" that could not resist the temptation of vice. This was because habits were not in themselves inherently moral. As such, excessive attention to habit could either "easily end up producing the rigid and wooden type that is unequal to the demands of life," or produce one that was susceptible to vice. In both instances, because habit bore no direct relation to the will, both the cognitive faculties required for advanced problem-solving and the adaptive qualities necessary for meeting new demands and challenges were considered to be decidedly absent.

Habit, therefore, could never provide a sufficient substitute for character. Moreover, because habits did not offer the means to render judgment, the worry was that too great an emphasis on habits could ultimately stand to "blunt the sensibilities" and "blind the intelligence." MacCunn worried that it was "not enough to give the young good habits; the habits must be co-ordinated in view of the functions which the man has to fulfill in the social economy" (1900:51). In order for habits to provide an effective

⁷⁴ For Gillet, the possibility that temptation might undermine one's character is ever-present: "Beneath every moral action, as beneath every forest leaf, there may be concealed a reptile: that we have escaped its fangs for twenty years is no sure guarantee that we shall do so in the future. So, there is not an instant in our lives, however habit may flourish, when the conscience is not bound to remain on the alert" (1914:129). In order to avoid blandishment, one is encouraged to cultivate a rigorous *moral hygiene* that involves daily spiritual exercise achieved by means of a wholesome diet of moral habits (1914:134-5).

⁷⁵ MacCunn received his LL.D. from Balliol College, Oxford and was at one time Professor of Philosophy in University College, Liverpool.

foundation for character, they must not only adhere to prevailing social values, but they must also be developed in the presence of “sound judgment” so that one might exercise the full strength of one’s character. In the words of William McDougall, “[h]abits should be our servants, not our masters; they are good servants and bad masters. The man who becomes a creature of habit, no matter how good his habits, is a poor creature” (1927:72).⁷⁶ And yet, at the same time, good habits were necessary in order to temper the influence of negative impulses that worked to “enslave the will” and, thereby endanger the formation of character (Sisson 1910:91).

Because character was not considered innate to a person, it was something that needed to be cultivated through attention to good habits over the course of a lifetime. Family and schools were (and indeed continue to be) considered essential for early character formation. Parents, especially the mother, were critical agents in providing the emotional and moral stability necessary for character development.⁷⁷ Home-life offered the necessary immediate foundations for moral development for infants and young children. Here, habits such as ‘obedience, industry, thoughtfulness and truthfulness’ would be cultivated through positive reinforcement and careful training (Sisson 1910:61). Once a child became of school age, formal education provided the cognitive tools necessary to prepare individuals adequately for future moral conduct. Organizations such

⁷⁶ William McDougall was a former Professor of Psychology at Duke University and was a major figure in American social psychology.

⁷⁷ Consider McDougall’s thoughts on the moral significance of breast-feeding for instance: “I do not assert that an infant deprived of this first great gift can never develop any such sentiments or display such qualities; I insist merely that all that side of its character is apt to be starved and poorly developed. I suggest that a nation brought up on the bottle would show a coarsening of manners, a coldness and hardness in all relations, a lack of the refining influence of tender feeling, the successful cult of which has been a chief service of Christianity to the world” (1927:50-1).

as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, debating societies, and school government provided additional vehicles for cultivating the desirable habits necessary for character formation.

The project of building character through good habits required practices and techniques equal to the task. The idea of ‘moral exercise’ became especially important in this context.⁷⁸ It signified a programme of moral calisthenics oriented toward cultivating strong character – viewed in the same way that one might lift weights in order to build muscle mass. Indeed, the significance of physical exercise for the cultivation of morality was not lost on early character proponents. MacCunn argues that attention to physical exercise and bodily hygiene created the necessary conditions for the development of a ‘moral hygiene’ that could withstand the temptations of idleness urged by ‘physical languor and weakness’ (1900:55). The focus on the body offered an opportunity to develop virtues of endurance that could foster the basis for sound practical judgment that were highly gendered.⁷⁹ Moral benefits could be derived from overcoming potential adversity by cultivating a strong and healthy body. And although bodily weakness was often scorned, physical deprivation could lay the foundations for the emergence of fortitude. Yet it must be underscored that it was *deprivation* rather than neglect that was the vehicle for moral growth (1900:59). Moral exercise was not limited to physical

⁷⁸ As Hunt and I argue elsewhere, this concern for ‘moral exercise’ or ‘moral hygiene’ represents a classic instance of ‘governmentality’ (White and Hunt 2000:104). The attention to personal hygiene reflected a the interplay between the self-government of the individual and the government of others through community ideals: “The prevalent discourse was couched in terms of the quest for ‘hygiene; physical and sexual hygiene were the necessary conditions for national hygiene to be the solution to the prevalent preoccupation with anxieties about national decline and ‘degeneration’ ” (2000:103). Character therefore narrated the reciprocal relationship between a personal morality and social morality that was grounded in the perception of an imminent crisis of community, society, or nation. Thus, conceptions of social character and national character coincide with this preoccupation with hygiene.

⁷⁹ For men these involved techniques such as cold-showers, brisk exercise and moderation in eating and drinking. For women, techniques of character-building were less specific but were generally organized in terms of injunctions to protect their chastity and virtue (Hunt 1999a:157).

exercise moreover. It also consisted in cultivating habits of the body through self-discipline that would lay the foundations for virtuous behaviour in all aspects of one's life. William H. Allen offers suggestions for a daily routine oriented toward generating the habits necessary for building good character that "should be as involuntary as the process of digestion". The elaborate rituals suggested by the level of detail are instructive for understanding the complex process of character formation: "1. Throw the bedding over the foot of the bed; 2. Close the window that has been open during the night; 3. Drink a glass of water; 4. Bathe the face, neck, crotch, chest, armpits (finishing if not beginning with cold water), and particularly the eyes, ears, and nose. If time and conveniences permit, bathe all over..." (Allen 1909:212).⁸⁰ Although attention to the body was a crucial feature of moral exercise, William McDougall points out that moral athletics extended to all fields where one might be called upon to thwart temptation through the exercise of one's will. For instance, one might periodically "deny himself certain luxuries, the extra glass of wine, the hot bath, the second cigar, the table-delicacy of which he is particularly fond, the few minutes of delicious repose after being called in the morning" (1927:70). Thus, self-deprivation alongside rigorous self-discipline formed the basis of a programme of moral hygiene devoted to the cultivation of good habits deemed critical for character development. In so doing, regular activity that was "healthy, happy and natural" served to prevent the emergence of bad habits that would undermine the formation of good character (Sisson 1910:91).

⁸⁰ Other activities of note include: "6. Cleanse the teeth, especially the places that are out of sight and hard to reach; 7. Breakfast punctually at a regular hour. Eat lightly and only what agrees with you. If you read a morning paper, be interested in news items that have to do with personal and community vitality. 8. Visit the toilet; if impracticable at home, have a regular time at business; 9. Have several minutes in the open air, preferably by walking;....19. Retire regularly at a fixed hour, making up for irregularity by an earlier hour the next night; 20, 21, 22. Repeat 4, 6, 8; 23. Turn underclothes wrong side out for ventilation; 24. Open windows; 25. Relax mind and body and go to sleep" (Allen 1909:212-3).

What these observations on the nature of character formation reveal is that character has historically carried strong gender, class and race resonances. Indeed character tends to be highly gendered.⁸¹ For instance, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women were valorized as the purveyors of moral virtue, such that moral education projects have been highly feminized (Ginzberg 1990; McClellan 1999; Ryan 1990). The development of masculine or, ‘muscular morality’ in the late nineteenth century was an attempt to balance the gendered quality of moral education, with the consequence that character itself came to be highly masculinized. Here, character was associated with a masculine ethos that celebrated physical and moral health in order to cultivate virtues such as stoicism, fortitude, and endurance (Mangan and Walvin 1987; Pleck and Pleck 1980). Not only is character historically gendered, but it also carries strong class connotations. Organizations such as the Boy Scouts and the YMCA emerged specifically in response to middle-class concerns about the well-being of teenaged boys and reflected middle-class values that upheld principles of industriousness, conscientiousness, and a work-ethic that were firmly grounded within a capitalist ethos (Macleod 1983). Class and gender were intertwined to the extent that women’s character training was oriented toward developing traits of modesty, chastity, meekness, and compassion, whereas men’s character training consisted of preparation for labour and citizenship in the public sphere (McClellan 1999). Lastly, attempts to fashion individual character in order to comply with national character were often associated with projects of assimilation or ‘Americanization’ during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

⁸¹ And highly sexed. The idea that non-heterosexual sexual practices might exist is absent almost entirely from most character discourses. Indeed, the heterosexual two-parent family model is simply assumed in this literature.

centuries. These served to undermine culturally specific practices and beliefs of immigrant and aboriginal populations in an effort to build strong national solidarity.⁸² Often celebrated in terms of 'patriotism' or loyalty to one's country, much of the nationalist rhetoric was highly offensive to immigrants, aboriginals, and newcomers.⁸³

Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* captures the interplay between the non-voluntary aspects of 'habits' and the voluntary dimensions of the 'will' in producing 'character' within the historical discourses of character particularly well. Indeed character can be understood as an idealized habitus that is organized by specific relations of force extant within the field. On the one hand, the dispositions of 'character' comprise the fundamental and pre-reflexive assumptions that guide conduct in the world. And on the other, they signify cognitive structures that condition one's conduct in reflexive and voluntary ways. Habitus is the embodiment of different dispositions that are rendered intelligible through bodily comportment, mode of speaking, and physical movement. The dispositions of character are produced by power relations that give rise to different ways of perceiving and engaging with the social world. These dispositions serve as classificatory mechanisms that enable one to make distinctions on the basis of good character and bad character, and strong character and weak character. With respect to

⁸² The concern that immigrants, aboriginals, and persons of African heritage acted as vectors for disease, pauperism, crime and vice gave rise to attempts to 'Americanize' these Others. See for instance the collection of essays edited by Winthrop Talbot titled *Americanization: Principles of Americanism, Essentials of Americanization, Technic of Race-Assimilation* (1917).

⁸³ In the Canadian context, J.W. Sparling remarks in the forward to J.S. Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates*: "Perhaps the largest and most important problem that the North American continent has before it to-day for solution is to show how the incoming tides of immigrants of various nationalities and different degrees of civilization may be assimilated and made worthy citizens of the great Commonwealth" (1909:3). Sparling continues in this vein rather ominously: "Either we must educate and elevate the incoming multitudes or they will drag us and our children down to a lower level. We must see to it that the civilization and ideals of Southeastern Europe are not transplanted to and perpetuated on our virgin soil" (1909:4).

character, they take such forms as ‘obedience’, ‘industry’, and ‘moral hygiene’ and ‘moral exercise’, organized in relation to a logic of ‘disinterest’. When dispositions are cultivated in terms of ‘disinterest’, they reflect the extent to which individuals displace their personal interests for the good of a ‘well-ordered’ community and the good of the ‘nation’. Dispositions are thus the product of relations of symbolic power. Symbolic power allows individuals to ‘recognize’ dispositions of character in themselves and in others, and also to ‘misrecognize’ the extent to which they are constituted by power at the same time. As an idealized habitus, character *appears* to be beyond the domain of power, even though it is always already constituted by power. Indeed, this explains how character appears as an unproblematic social good within the historical literature, and yet is also the product of intersecting relations of power that are gendered, raced and classed.⁸⁴ Because character emerges in generative relation with the field, it is thus constituted in relation to the particular configuration of power relations in a given context.

4.4 Contemporary Character Discourses: Moral Disintegration and the Family

Although early twentieth century forms of character eventually gave way to alternative forms of thinking about the ethical self such as personality (White and Hunt 2000), character has emerged again in the early twenty-first century. Indeed character discourses have appeared in the context of heightened urbanization, burgeoning globalization, and a recognition of growing ethno-cultural diversity. In addition,

⁸⁴ Economic capital produces dispositions that are classed according to objective positions within a field. Symbolic power operates in conjunction with other forms of capital in order to produce differences based on gender and ‘race’, in addition to class. For a discussion of the ways that habitus is gendered through symbolic power, see Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* (2001). See McNay (1999) for a critique.

character advocates argue that moral deterioration is characteristic of the contemporary age. For many, it is the principal cause of perceived social ills such as teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol dependence and commercialism in American society.⁸⁵ Proponents of character argue that ethical relativism,⁸⁶ media violence,⁸⁷ an excessive focus on the 'individual',⁸⁸ intensified diversity and increased secularism,⁸⁹ and above all, the declining significance of the 'family' are responsible for moral disintegration (Brooks and Goble 1997; Eberly 1995a; Horn 1995; Lickona 1991; Wilson 1991). It is in this context that character is celebrated as a solution to moral disintegration. But because its (re)appearance is relatively recent, contemporary discourses are less worked up than their earlier counterparts. It is also important to note that these discourses draw extensively from this earlier tradition. With this in mind, let me turn to consider only the most salient aspects of the contemporary character discourses.

⁸⁵ Other signs of moral decline include violence and vandalism, stealing, cheating, a disrespect for authority, peer cruelty, bigotry, profane language, sexual promiscuity and sexual abuse, and self-destructive behaviour (Lickona 1991:13).

⁸⁶ Character proponents such as Thomas Lickona argue that the rise of ethical relativism within public schools has been encouraged by logical positivism and values clarification approaches. By introducing a distinction between 'fact' and 'value', Lickona argues that logical positivism had the effect of undermining the legitimacy of moral truths (1991:8). Similarly, values clarification approaches (sometimes called situationist ethics) are viewed to be inadequate because they do not help students to distinguish 'right' from 'wrong' because they make no distinction between what one might *want* to do versus what one *ought* to do (1991:10-11).

⁸⁷ Character proponents uncritically accept the idea that television viewing is a social evil that ushers the viewer into "a world of images and emotions in which fact and fiction are blurred. The viewer becomes passive, his mind largely disengaged, his moral sensibilities are neutralized. Rational forms of discourse and human exchange are traded in for entertaining fantasy" (Eberly 1995a:30). The idea that there is a correlation between media violence and physical violence is hotly contested. See Jenkins (1999) and Gitlin (1994) for a critique.

⁸⁸ The intense valorization of the individual is seen to have contributed to the deterioration of moral life to the extent that it celebrates "the worth, dignity, and autonomy of the individual person, including the subjective self or inner life of the person" and emphasizes "rights more than responsibility, freedom more than commitment" (1991:9). This is said to have the effect of fostering selfishness rather than responsibility toward the community.

⁸⁹ An intensification of pluralism combined with a heightened process of secularization is said to have contributed toward the erosion of common core values, with the effect of valorizing differences rather than shared values (Eberly 1995b:15).

Character offers a solution to the problem of declining morals. It is heralded as a “pre-political” virtue that signals an attempt to “transcend political and ideological boundaries” because it is “neither liberal nor conservative” and “is not primarily about political ideology of competing policy programs” (Eberly 1995b:17). Organizations like ‘Character Counts!’ and the ‘Character Education Partnership’ argue that character provides a common moral language of citizenship that can be used to negotiate differences in social and political life. Such organizations reject the ethnocentric resonances of early character discourses in favour of apparently universal virtues such as trustworthiness, kindness, and compassion that span time, cultures and religions (Eberly 1995b:20). Indeed they recognize that the original purveyors of character virtues were often ‘white European males’ in the Victorian era. But in advocating character, they suggest that they are “drawing from a deeper and more diverse well of antiquity than simply European culture. The virtues not only transcend cultures, they predate the Victorian age and terms like ‘bourgeois’ values by thousands of years” (Eberly 1995b:21). Contemporary character advocates therefore argue that the ‘essential’ values such as trustworthiness, honesty, justice, and benevolence that comprise character can be distinguished from the historical conditions of their deployment because they are ‘universal’ values.

Character offers a response to moral deterioration to the extent that it emphasizes self-discipline and impulse control, in addition to empathy and responsibility toward others (Horn 1995:80; Wilson 1991:5). Character is typically understood as a set of inner dispositions that allows individuals to respond to situations morally and responsibly. It is in this regard that Thomas Lickona argues that good character consists of “knowing the

good, desiring the good, and doing the good—habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action. All three are necessary for leading a moral life; all three make up moral maturity” (1991:51). The good is defined in terms of moral values that have “objective worth” such as respect and responsibility (1995:142). Character thus involves ‘moral knowing’, ‘moral feeling’ and ‘moral action’. Moral knowing requires virtues such as moral awareness, moral values, perspective taking, moral reasoning and decision making. Moral feeling requires conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving the good, self-control and humility. Moral action involves competence, will and habit (1991:53). Self-discipline is essential for “voluntary compliance with just rules and laws, that is a mark of mature character, and that a civilized society expects control of its citizens” (1991:110).

What is significant about contemporary character discourses is that they are positioned in the context of perceived moral decline. Character is viewed as something that has been lost and must be regained. While some character proponents have called upon the kinds of voluntary societies and social reform movements that were common in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to build character (Eberly 1995a:41-42), most focus upon the role of the ‘family’ for building good citizens who are reasonable, law-abiding, contribute to the community and exercise independence from the State. The family is viewed as a crucial institution that has declined as a result of sexual promiscuity,⁹⁰ divorce,⁹¹ the rise of single-parent households,⁹² and growing financial

⁹⁰ William K. Kilpatrick argues that: “[a]t one time modesty, not a condom, was a young woman's protection against any hasty indulgence she might regret. Modesty, in turn, was linked to an understanding that the sexual act is by nature intimate, private, intensely personal, and connected to the deepest level of the soul. At the same time, it was understood that society has an interest in proper sexual conduct. The pleasure principle is not a very good rule for social order. Sooner or later, sexual irresponsibility, adulteries, diseases, neglected children, and abandoned families become everyone's problem” (1992:69).

⁹¹ Wade Horn argues for instance that “[i]f a parent is absent because of divorce or out-of-wedlock childrearing, socialization is likely to go particularly badly. In such cases, boys experience much greater

demands. The alleged consequences of these trends is the inability of children to learn the virtues necessary for self-disciplined, independent, productive and industrious citizens.

It is in the context of calls to rebuild the 'family' that the power relations that underlie contemporary character discourses come to light most clearly. For it is important to note that character proponents do not maintain that just any family structures are capable of producing good citizens. Rather, it is only the intact, two-parent, heterosexual family that is capable of providing the conditions for the development of strong character and good citizens. Although character proponents cite increased divorce rates, growing teen pregnancies and single-parents as a reflection of the decline of the family, these indicators could also be interpreted to suggest that the family is not in decline, but rather that there is a merely a "disintegration of consensus" on what constitutes the 'family' (Cohen 1999:238).

Here again Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* is useful for understanding the way that character is constituted by power relations, and yet appears to be an unproblematic social good. In much the same manner as its historical counterpart, contemporary character proponents argue that character mediates the non-voluntary aspects of 'habits' through

difficulty developing the capacity to self-regulate aggressive impulses. Girls, on the other hand, when reared without fathers because of divorce or abandonment tend toward sexual promiscuity. But if a parent is absent because of death, the long-term outcome is much better" (1995:85). Note the absence to references to studies or statistics to back up such claims.

⁹² Wade Horn maintains that "[i]t is now a well-established empirical fact that children who grow up in single-parent households are at risk for a host of negative outcomes. Such children are, for example, two to three times more likely to experience school failure or to suffer from a serious emotional or behavioural disorder during childhood. It is also clear that children from single-parent households are less likely than children growing up in a home with two parents to be well socialized and to develop good character traits. In particular, boys growing up in single-parent households are more likely to engage in aggressive acting out and girls are more likely to engage in promiscuous sexual activity, compared to boys and girls reared in two-parent families" (1995:84). Again, Horn fails to provide empirical evidence for these claims.

the voluntary dimensions of the will in order to produce ‘moral’ practices that are produced in relation to a field of disinterest. Here disinterest is organized in relation to perceived social goods such as the ‘good of the family’ and the ‘good of the children’. The emphasis on self-discipline and self-control reinforces the extent to which habitus is comprised of particular dispositions that are rendered intelligible to one’s self and to others. For one character proponent, it is for this reason that “[w]e should have no trouble recognizing good character when we see it” (Lickona 1991:51). Here the idea that character is perceived to be a pre-political virtue demonstrates symbolic power at work. Character is ‘recognized’ as something whose value is naturalized, and appears as something that is beyond dispute. Character *appears* to be a set of dispositions that are beyond the domain of power. And yet, as was evidenced by the celebration of the ‘family’, character is advanced in relation to a specific conception of the family, one that is the product of specific power relations at work.

4.5 Character and ‘Good Citizenship’

This section is devoted to a consideration of the ways that character operates as a technology of citizenship within the historical and contemporary literature. The extent to which early citizenship discourses that rely on character are differently situated than contemporary discourses has important consequences for the specific form that good citizenship takes. Even though character discourses are historically contingent, the notion of the good citizen in both cases depends upon the exercise of shared virtues such as independence, trustworthiness, responsibility and cooperation. At the same time, contemporary discourses are distinct from their historical counterparts to the extent that

they explicitly foreground the heightened diversity of urban social life as a problem that ‘character’ seeks to solve. Not only does character emerge as a solution to ‘self-interest’ within these discourses, but it appears as a mechanism that aims to resolve the political differences that citizens encounter in everyday life. Let me consider how character operates as a technology of citizenship within the historical literature before turning to consider how it works within the contemporary literature.

Citizenship discourses at the turn of the twentieth century emphasize the extent to which good strong character is necessary for a vibrant public life, a robust nation-state and a strong family life. They emerge in the context of heightened industrialization and growing population pressures generated by increased immigration levels. They appear as a response to social ills such as poverty and public health concerns. While good citizenship was generally organized by personal virtues, with the advent of the First World War, it increasingly emphasized the cultivation of public goods such as patriotism and the loyalty that came with being an ‘American citizen’ (Best 1960:18-20, 44). By the 1930s, interest in character had all but disappeared and was replaced with new conceptions of the ethical self organized on the basis of personality (White and Hunt 2000). At the same time, projects of building the ethical self are never linear, and can often involve attempts to build the ethical self through hybrid projects that blend character with personality. In this context the persistence of demands for good patriotism often occurs alongside demands for character.

A founding principle of good citizenship is that a citizen must exercise the virtue of ‘unselfishness’ toward his or her family, school, community and nation. Roscoe Ashley offers a good example of this sentiment in his textbook *The New Civics* (1918).

He argues that the “[s]ubordination of personal wishes to the general welfare is necessarily one of the requirements” of good citizenship “for the good of all is more important than that of any individual” (1918:33). The displacement of self-interest for the public good is made possible because citizenship rests upon character: “[I]t is no less true that good citizenship – considering citizens in their proper social, economic and political relations – must rest on a solid foundation, – the personal character of each citizen” (1918:30). That character organizes selflessness into a virtue is apparent: “[u]nselfishness is even more important in general civic life than it is in the family circle and in the school. The loving, unselfish devotion of a father or mother is the mainspring of the home life, but *unselfish citizenship* – honesty in dealing with all men, fairness toward enemy as well as friend, adherence to principle though at personal sacrifice – is a nobler and a rarer thing” (1918:30-1, emphasis in original).

Character is the principal vehicle through which citizens displace their personal self-interests. And yet, it is often difficult to distinguish the constitutive features of the good person on the one hand, and the good citizen on the other. Character is so thoroughly organized by the fields of the family, the school and the nation in the service of disinterest, that the good person and the good citizen become almost indistinguishable from each other. The dispositions that emerge in relation to the family, the school and the nation reinforce and support one another. This view is expressed clearly in *Citizenship and Conduct* (1929) by Edwin Broome and Edwin Adams. Here, the good citizen is intertwined so firmly with character that: “[t]he good son or daughter, mother or father, makes the good scholar, the good sportsman, the good worker, the good citizen. Anything that strikes at the home life of a nation strikes at the nation itself. The

home and the family must be regarded as sacred if the safety of the state and the nation is to be secure" (1929:393, emphasis in original). Character becomes the foundation of a potentially infinite number of subject positions, all of which are mutually reinforcing. Here character helps to constitute good citizenship by organizing social relations so that all social relations effectively become citizenship relations. In this respect, the logic of disinterestedness is intended to pervade all aspects of social life.⁹³ Ashley offers a good example of this when he remarks that: "*[c]ivic duty is not necessarily something outside of our everyday affairs, nor does it involve for most of us any but common virtues. Ordinarily it does not consist in public display or in prominence among men. It is chiefly a matter of well-learned lessons, of honest work, of careful expenditure, and of upright living*" (1918:32, emphasis in original).⁹⁴

It is in this context that 'independence' becomes a particularly important attribute of good citizenship. The virtue of independence valorizes conduct that does not make excessive demands on the state, the school, the community or one's family for financial or social support. Independence is tied to the valorization of a strong work ethic. Here the symbolic value attached to 'work' is organized by a logic of disinterest where gainful employment benefits society by means of taxation, independence from financial support,

⁹³ In this regard, one can see the direct relationship between the notion of disinterestedness and citizenship in the following entreaty by Broome and Adams: "[s]elfishness and good citizenship do not belong together. The selfish person does not respect the rights of others. He is 'centred all in self'. He insists upon what he claims to be his personal rights even when the enjoyment of them conflicts with the rights and privileges of others. It is not liberty under the law that he desires, but license – freedom to do as he pleases, regardless of the effect of his conduct on others. Such conduct is not that of a good citizen" (1929:18). This is a conception of the good citizen that does not extend the ethic of 'disinterestedness' to the economic realm, for good citizens are also intended to be 'good' capitalist subjects.

⁹⁴ Ashley has strong words for those who fail in their civic duties. He argues that they "fail in a sacred trust: they are social criminals. They have taken from loving parents, from earnest friends, and from a beneficent country all that each could offer. In return they have been selfish wasters, gaining profit by others' loss, and injuring all who stood in their paths. Their fault and their failure may have been, in the beginning, the result of ignorance, but their failure is really explained by their unwillingness to live up to their obligations" (1918:18-19).

and self-discipline. Strong character is crucial for ensuring a strong work-ethic, thereby ensuring that citizens do not make excessive demands on the state. In this regard, the citizen who is gainfully employed maintains his or her own financial affairs. The state benefits in turn because employment helps to fuel a strong economy and, thus, the state is able to maintain a competitive edge over other nation-states. This view is expressed well by John Wayland who argues: “[t]he good citizen will be employed; and he will be well employed”(1924:133).⁹⁵ Indeed the idea that citizens are largely responsible for their own economic well-being is found in this tacit acceptance of the legitimacy of capitalist economic relations. Ultimately, good citizenship means that one must not become ‘unnecessarily’ dependent on others. To become dependent, or to lose one’s independence, reflects a diminishing of one’s character, and by implication the weakening of one’s potency as a citizen.

The virtue of ‘patriotism’ is also worthy of mention. Ashley defines patriotism as “devotion to the best interests of one’s country” (1918:33). Although patriotism is usually exercised through military service and the celebration of national holidays, here it extends far beyond public virtues. For Ashley patriotism “is a thing of peace rather than of war. It is a manner of everyday obligations, of honour, and of uprightness...rather than of crises and of military strategy” (1918:33). Indeed, it is exercised according to the logic of disinterest to the extent that “the subordination of personal wishes to the general welfare is necessarily one of the requirements, for the good of all is more important than that of any individual” (1918:33). Thus, if citizenship is exercised in all aspects of

⁹⁵ The class resonances of the work ethic are further apparent in his comment that “[t]he more intelligent and purposeful labour is, the greater its value.” Nonetheless, work that is performed ‘however ignorantly’ is “better than rank idleness” (Wayland 1924:133).

everyday life, one may become a 'good American' because selfless acts of patriotism ultimately contribute to the strength of the nation. As a result, the citizen "must not think of patriotism as noise and fireworks or of his country as a mere red spot on the map. He must enter into a fellowship with the great souls of his people" (Wayland 1924:1).

As a technology of good citizenship, character organizes the practices of citizenship in ways that allow citizens to cede their personal interests to the public good by means of virtues such as independence and patriotism. This contributes to the production of a knowledge culture in which citizens produce particular truth claims about the nature of the good. Here character produces the 'independent' and 'patriotic' citizen which contributes to a 'strong America', conceived in nation-statist terms. The vitality of the American state is seen to be a product of the moral choices of individuals, implying that the state is a moral community, an expression of moral truths about the self writ large, rather than a configuration of expedient institutional arrangements.

Like their historical antecedents, contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses emphasize the importance of character as a technology of good citizenship, but they do so under conditions of intensified globalization, growing urbanization, and a recognition of the importance of 'difference' and 'plurality' within social and political life. In the contemporary context, character emerges as a mechanism that is intended to balance the demands of difference, and yet also reflects general virtues that can support different ways of life. For civic republicans, character is what facilitates the capacity for deliberation and judgment (Sandel 2000:272). Civil society theorists maintain that character offers a way of negotiating difference because it implies tolerance and respect for others. For liberals, character promotes generalized virtues that different groups can

ideally support and, in so doing, responds to the problem of self-interest in order to reinforce what would otherwise be inadequate motivations of the powerful to make sacrifices for the less powerful (Galston 1992:14; Macedo 1990:267).

As with the historical discourses, character emerges as a way of responding to the problem of self-interest by instilling virtues of self-discipline and independence within the citizen, alongside other virtues such as trustworthiness, honesty, and kindness. Character is the mechanism through which individuals become capable of ceding their personal interests for the good of the whole. Here the good citizen exercises the capacity for self-government that enables personal autonomy and independence. For civic republicans like Michael Sandel, deliberating about the common good is a key attribute of character that “requires a knowledge of public affairs and a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake” (2000:271). For liberals such as Stephen Macedo, autonomy and independence are the key liberal virtues that are facilitated by character (1990:269). The absence of such virtues reflects a weak character and results in dissatisfaction and disappointment within liberal democratic society (1990:280). For others, such as William Galston, character is also the foundation for virtues of a liberal economy that upholds generic virtues, such as a work-ethic, drive, initiative and determination alongside reliability, punctuality and commitment (1991:360). Character also enables one to distinguish between candidates vying for political office and provides one with the ability to resist the temptation to make excessive demands upon the state (1991:224-226).

Contemporary citizenship theorists maintain that character offers a mechanism that allows citizens to negotiate the demands of difference in public life. To this end,

civic republicans argue that character designates certain excellences “of judgment and a concern with the whole” that helps to facilitate deliberation (Sandel 2000:272). Liberals argue that character balances the demands of difference with the good of the whole because it allows to flourish a diverse range of conceptions of the good that are themselves not “wholly unconstrained” (Galston 1991:10). Indeed, character generates political virtues that ensure that individual citizens are committed to resolving disputes through open conversation and by stating public reasons for their beliefs (Galston 1991:226; Macedo 1990:46).

For contemporary Anglo-American citizenship theorists, as for their historical precursors, the family plays a key role in developing character. Here too, the family is presumed to be the intact, two-parent, heterosexual family. Civil society theorists like Mary Ann Glendon maintain that the family is a critical institution for building character within the associations of civil society (1995:1, 8). Galston similarly maintains that strong families encourage civic character and civic competence in young people, in addition to connecting youth to the broader community (2000:369).

As a technology of good citizenship, therefore, character produces good citizens who exist in relation to a knowledge culture that demands that citizens exercise discipline and self-control such that they are encouraged to place their personal interests aside for the good of the community. In order to deal with the demands of difference, citizens either deliberate or debate by means of public reasons that express certain truth-claims about the nature of their differences. Character also requires that citizens balance their independence and autonomy with a commitment to the public good through work, political commitment and other virtues. And again, character establishes a particular

domain of truth-telling that links truths about the good of individual 'souls' with truths about the vitality of political institutions—albeit in a more complex and nuanced way than earlier formulations.

4.6 Conclusion

For Anglo-American citizenship theorists past and present who base their conception of good citizenship on character, the idea that character is an idealized habitus raises some difficult questions. In the first place, I have tried to show that character cannot be conceived as a pre-political good that transcends power; rather, the extent to which it is a habitus means that it is always already embedded within relations of power, and is indeed produced by power relations. As we have seen, character is comprised of a range of dispositions, organized by symbolic power, and is situated within a field of disinterest. Character comes to signify the different ways that virtues such as deliberation, independence, work-ethic and public reason allow citizens to cede their personal interests for the good of the whole. But significantly, this conception of character requires that citizens misrecognize the operation of power. Indeed, this is what allows character to appear as something beyond contestation. My analysis suggests that character is not the unambiguous apolitical social good that it purports to be. One need only look to early character discourses to see the extent to which relations of power constituted along gender, race and class lines underscore the practice of character. But early discourses are not exceptional in this regard: calls to rebuild the two-parent family model within contemporary character discourses also reveal the presence of power relations.

For contemporary Anglo-American citizenship theorists who ground their conception of good citizenship on the concept of character, there is some tension between the idea that character expresses shared universal values and the ability of character to respond to the demands of difference. Thinking about character as an idealized habitus reveals the extent to which the dispositions of character are always historically specific and are the product of contingent conditions. These dispositions are inherently classificatory and, as a result, are only capable of being recognized by those who share a similar habitus. The classificatory dimensions of the habitus poses difficulties for character's ability to deal with difference. In other words, a tension appears between the homogeneity associated with the specific character ideal in question, and the multiplicity and diversity of social life. While terms such as 'honesty', 'tolerance', and 'trustworthiness' may designate virtues that are by definition desirable, the question of what content to assign to these terms is a manifestly political one. Character is celebrated as a pre-political good, but its content necessarily reflects local and particular world-views and ways of engaging with social life. Attempts to suggest that character reflects abstract virtues without suggesting what the content of the dispositions might be are therefore no more than exercises in vacuity. They are attempts to situate character outside the realm of politics, and indeed outside the realm of power, in order to entrench as incontrovertible what are necessarily contingent goods. And while some character proponents may argue that character does not support any particular content, it is difficult to see what meaning character has unless it is positioned in the context of political arguments (e.g. the return of the 'family'). For those who infuse character with specific content, the problem is that character always reflects culturally specific ways of enacting

dispositions that may make it difficult to 'recognize' that character is being exercised when one encounters difference.

Other kinds of implications can be drawn from these initial conclusions. As the foundation for good citizenship, character mediates the private self and the public self. In other words, character encompasses all aspects of everyday life and includes, but also extends beyond, citizenship relations. One implication of this is that character serves to 'responsibilize' individuals for their own welfare and therefore to shift the terrain of debate away from structural forms of inequality such as poverty, unemployment, and healthcare. It moves instead to finding ways of making citizens responsible for their own government through virtues of independence and work such that they do not make excessive demands on the state. Indeed, poverty or homelessness could potentially be legitimated by claims that they 'build character'.

Another implication of thinking about character as idealized habitus is that all practices are potentially citizenship practices. Thus the question of which practices are citizenship practices (and by implication contribute to the good of the whole) and which practices are personal practices that are part of an individual's private encumbered self needs to be addressed. 'Character' contains within itself an uneasy tension between homology and heterogeneity that makes it difficult to anticipate which differences are compatible with character and which ones are not. The fact that character-formation is grounded in a particular model of the family suggests that sexual difference, for example, is not. Indeed the extent to which different models of intimacy and family are not also valorized by proponents of character produces skepticism about the extent to which character can actually deal with any difference in a productive fashion. And while some

citizenship theorists argue that public reason or civility offers a mechanism to deal with differences, most other theorists do not indicate what it is about character beyond shared values of trust, kindness and compassion that might help citizens to deal with their differences.⁹⁶ When character is articulated on the basis of pre-figured moral ideals, it becomes difficult to see how citizens to negotiate the substantive elements of their citizenship practice. In the next chapter, I take up the question of how citizens negotiate their differences by means of the virtue of civility. There I examine the ways that civility operates as a technology of good citizenship.

⁹⁶ For instance, political theorists such as William Connolly (1995) and Romand Cole (1997) argue for an ethic of generosity that is not grounded in the language of 'character', but seeks to cultivate the ethical conditions for the elaboration and cultivation of difference.

5 Civility as a Technology of Good Citizenship

My goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how civility operates as a technology of ‘good’ citizenship within contemporary Anglo-American citizenship discourses. In chapter three, I argued that these citizenship discourses mobilize the virtue of ‘civility’ as a way for citizens to negotiate their political differences. In this chapter, I will show that ‘civility’ operates as an ambivalent technology that deploys techniques of ‘distinction’ at the same time as it operates as a form of pacification. The effect of my argument is to question whether civility can effectively enable citizens and potential citizens to resolve their differences when deliberation is the goal, not the starting point of political dialogue. When civility is conceived of as an already constituted set of principles, rather than as the outcome of a process of engagement, the danger is that it can potentially limit the possibility for others to ‘join’ in the conversation.

My discussion is prompted by the following questions: First, what is meant by the concept of ‘civility’? What are its constitutive features? Second, what conceptual tools are necessary for an interrogation of ‘civility’ as a technology of citizenship? What do these tools demonstrate about the way that civility operates as a technology? Third, how does civility operate as a technology within contemporary citizenship discourses? What implications does this discussion have for contemporary Anglo-American citizenship theorists who deploy the concept of civility as a way of helping citizens to negotiate their differences?

I begin by arguing that civility is a discursive concept. It designates a set of dividing practices that organize conduct by means of a signifying logic of discrimination and comparison. Civility bears a complex relationship with other citizenship concepts

such as the 'city', 'civil society' and 'character'. When civility operates in concert with character, it represents the successful performance of dispositions of character. In other words, civility can operate according to a 'logic of disinterestedness' that obliges citizens to put their own personal interests and identities aside for the sake of a common good when it is attached to character.

The problematic of civility can be usefully situated in relation to the account Norbert Elias offers of the 'civilizing process'. Elias provides a sociological account of the emergence of civility as the outcome of structural changes in society. Here the concepts of 'figuration', 'distinction' and 'pacification' are helpful in bringing into relief different aspects of the way that civility operates as a technology of citizenship. To this end, I argue that the concept of 'figuration' allows us to see that 'civility' emerges as the product of a balance of force relations, rather than the driving force of processes of social change. Civility is the product of twin processes of 'pacification' and 'distinction'. As a form of 'pacification,' civility appears as the outcome of a long-term process where the means of violence are slowly centralized in a specific state-formation. As a form of 'distinction', civility appears as a mechanism that distinguishes one social group from another.

When Elias's insights are considered from the perspective of civility as a technology of citizenship, it allows us to see that civility is inscribed in power relations, at the same time that it is constituted by them. What counts as 'civil' conduct in any given instance is the product of power relations. Civility is therefore the outcome of specific social conditions. Emphasizing this point has the effect of drawing attention to the processes through which 'civil' forms of conduct emerge. Finally, if the twin

processes of distinction and pacification are understood to be constitutive of civility, then civility can be seen to authorize specific forms of conduct and spaces for political action at the expense of others, at the same time that it works to 'pacify' the strong in order to balance power relations.

It is in this context that I consider how Anglo-American citizenship theorists such as Edward Shils, John Rawls, Mark Kingwell and Benjamin Barber mobilize civility as a technology of citizenship in order to respond to the demands of difference. Although each theorist situates civility in the context of different political projects, they all use the concept with the intention of establishing constraints on processes of political communication and negotiation in order to facilitate peaceful and reasonable dialogue and to discourage violence, incivility and harassment. Yet, because each theorist fails to provide an account of the concrete conditions of the emergence of civility under actually existing democracy, the problem is that civility is proffered as an already constituted set of constraints, one that assumes a legitimacy and degree of commonality which may not always exist and that may have the unintended consequence of entrenching forms of domination.

The extent to which civility produces political possibilities at the same time that it limits them suggests that civility is an ambivalent phenomenon. Indeed civility emerges as an ambivalent technology that fosters an ambivalent politics. On the one hand, civility facilitates a form of politics that creates the possibility for differences to be expressed and communicated at the same time that it constrains them. On the other hand, civility reflects an orientation toward commonality at the same time that it seeks to foster the expression of differences.

My discussion begins with an overview of the conceptual complexities associated with the concept of civility. From there, I turn to consider the contributions of Norbert Elias to thinking about how civility operates as a technology of citizenship. This sets the stage for an examination of the way that Anglo-American citizenship theorists mobilize the concept of civility as a set of constraints on the political process. Let me turn now to consider the conceptual underpinnings of the concept of civility.

5.1 Conceptualizing Civility

In this section, I argue that the concept of ‘civility’ represents a historically contingent configuration of practices that involves the exercise of self-constraint and a concern for others, exhibited through signifiers such as bodily comportment, speech patterns, and general conduct. These signifiers render practices of civility intelligible as practices of tolerance and dialogic self-expression that are associated with the ‘good citizen’, at the same time that they also signify practices of politeness, decorum, courtesy or good manners consistent with the ‘moral person’.⁹⁷ The concept of ‘civility’ is constituted by a tangled web of overlapping and competing discourses that is comprised of philosophical treatises, dictionaries, newspapers, and conduct manuals. Whether it is understood as a personal virtue or a virtue of citizenship, the concept of civility represents the historically and culturally specific accumulation of ideas of what passes as ‘accepted’ or ‘legitimate’ conduct.⁹⁸ Even so, it does not signify a coherent and uncontested set of beliefs. Rather,

⁹⁷ As Mark Kingwell argues, civility is properly distinguished from both manners and etiquette. In this view, civility represents a set of “conversational strategies” that contrasts the “rule-governed aspects of politeness” and the “study and codification of manners” characterized by etiquette (1995:196-197).

⁹⁸ The notion of ‘civil disobedience’ is interesting to consider in this context. Although techniques of passive resistance or protest commonly associated with civil disobedience provide citizens with a way of

it is a discursive category that reflects changing and contested conceptions of ‘proper’ conduct that are continually expressed in new ways of seeing and being.⁹⁹

A. Etymology

‘Civility’ shares the same etymologic roots as *civil* and *civilization*, and thus possesses an immensely rich and complex semantic history. Modern English uses of the word derive largely from the French, where the word *civil* first appears in the thirteenth century, and is followed by *civilité* in the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁰ The task of teasing apart the historical vagaries of the term has been made easier by Roger Chartier, who identifies a series of distinctive semantic chains in his examination of seventeenth and eighteenth century conduct manuals (1987:71-72). One chain associates civility with conduct practiced in citizenship spheres such as the ‘city’ and ‘civil society’. Here ‘civility’ was initially deployed as a contrast to notions of despotism and barbarism. The term was subsequently replaced by ‘civilization’ which was perceived to better encompass a range of social advances such as “improvements in comfort, advances in education, politer manners, cultivation of the arts and sciences, growth of commerce and industry, and acquisition of material goods and luxuries” (Starobinski 1993:3).¹⁰¹ The more expansive

registering their discontent, they are perceived to be ‘civil’ insofar as they fall within accepted lines of conduct.

⁹⁹ Consider a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* that recounts the attempt by Chinese officials to discourage men from going shirtless in Beijing in order to improve their international image in light of the looming Beijing Olympic bid. Other behaviours such as “spitting, cursing, jostling, rudeness, and other ‘uncivilized’ behaviour” are other behaviours that are actively discouraged in this context (York 2002:A3).

¹⁰⁰ The etymological roots of ‘civility’ and ‘civilization’ derive from the Latin words *civilis* and *civitas* (rw *civil*) which signify the qualities and attributes of the citizen (L-*civis*) in the city (L-*civitas*) (Brinkmann 1948:525; Williams 1976:57).

¹⁰¹ Samuel Johnson’s biographer Boswell is the first to note the concept of ‘civilization’ in English [Brinkmann 1948:526]. According to Raymond Williams, Boswell, “found him busy, preparing a fourth edition of his folio Dictionary...He would not admit *civilization*, but only *civility*. With great deference to

language of 'civilization' was considered advantageous because it referred to the process of becoming, at the same time as it described a cumulative outcome.

A second chain relates the term *civilité* to a constellation of concepts that designate social virtues such as *honnêteté*, *bienséance* and *politesse*. But where notions of *honnêteté* and *bienséance* were often used interchangeably with *civilité*, its association with the word *politesse* was more fraught.¹⁰² The term *politesse* is derived from the verb 'to polish' and, as Jean Starobinski remarks, it conveys a "literal image of brightness and smoothness" that was associated "with the idea of perfection, the manual act of polishing" and, therefore, established "a figurative equivalence between 'to polish' and 'to civilize'." He continues: "[t]o civilize, whether men or things, is thus to flatten all rough edges and 'crude' unevenness, to eliminate all harshness, to exclude all possible sources of friction, to make sure that all contacts are easy and smooth" (1993:12). Even though *civilité* was often equated with politeness, it was just as frequently used as a mark of distinction or a sign of contempt.¹⁰³ Indeed as Harold Mah remarks, the practice of distinguishing *civilité* "sought to stabilize civility by assigning moral transparency to one

him, I thought *civilization*, from *to civilize*, better in the sense opposed to *barbarity*, than *civility*" (Boswell in Williams 1976:57).

¹⁰² Jean Starobinski notes that 'politeness' derives originally from the Latin verb *poliere* which means 'to polish' (1993:12). The French word *politesse* is phonetically similar to *policer* (discipline) which was also popular in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Where *poli* comes from the Latin *poliere* which means 'to polish', the word *police* is derived from the Greek *polis*. Starobinski indicates that French authors were well aware of the differences between the two terms and often developed word plays on their respective meanings.

¹⁰³ Consider for instance J.-J. Rousseau's critique of politeness: "[i]n our day, now that more subtle study and a more refined taste have reduced the art of pleasing to a system, there prevails in modern manners a servile and deceptive conformity; so that one would think every mind has been cast in the same mould. Politeness requires this thing; decorum that; ceremony has its forms, and fashion its laws, and these we must always follow, never the promptings of our own nature....What a train of vices must attend this uncertainty! Sincere friendship, real esteem, and perfect confidence are banished from among men. Jealousy, suspicion, fear, coldness, reserve, hate, and fraud lie constantly concealed under that uniform and deceitful veil of politeness; that boasted candor and urbanity, for which we are indebted to the enlightened spirit of this age" (1973:6-7).

term and rhetorical dissemblance to the other. But those assigned meanings refused to stay in place; distinctions could contradict each other, and, consequently, no particular distinction could be fixed in convention” (1994:71).

B. Contemporary Usage

The concept’s historical variability notwithstanding, many contemporary Anglo-American citizenship theorists consider civility to be an important attribute of ‘good’ citizenship. Here, civility is associated with a range of normative goods such as tolerance (Goldwin 1992:53; Walzer 1997:11-12), non-discrimination (Kymlicka 2001:298), the willingness to listen to arguments (Bauböck 2000:91; Kingwell 1995:25), as well as general citizenly competence (van Gunsteren 1998:25; Barber 1999:47; Glendon 1995:3-4).¹⁰⁴ Most citizenship theorists maintain that civility is a political virtue that is actualized through tolerance and self-restraint. As Cheshire Calhoun remarks, civility “fits citizens for life in a pluralistic society and is closely connected to tolerance. The civil citizen exercises tolerance in the face of deep disagreement about the good. She respects the rights of others, refrains from violence, intimidation, harassment and coercion, does not show contempt for others’ life plans, and has a healthy respect for others’ privacy” (2000:255-256). What makes civility a virtue of citizenship for many

¹⁰⁴ Most Anglo-American citizenship theorists agree that civility is an important attribute of citizenship. At the same time, there is some dispute over whether or not it can be properly called a virtue. On one side of the debate, Robert Pippin argues that civility “denotes a quality or social form characteristic of a particular kind of human association—civil society. In its idealized form, civility can be said to be the distinctive virtue or excellence of the civil association, in a way that courage is for military associations, or industriousness for enterprise associations” (2000:103). Cheshire Calhoun argues that civility is a virtue that communicates moral ‘attitudes’ such as respect, tolerance and considerateness (2000:255). Another view is offered by Clifford Orwin who argues that civility is properly seen as a characteristic of the bourgeoisie rather than of the citizen (1991:553). See James Schmidt (2000:37) and Alan Wolfe (2000:128) for further critical commentary.

citizenship theorists is that it offers the conditions for participation and expression in democracy. Calhoun summarizes this view well: “citizens must seek accommodation and compromise through reasoned dialogue. As the virtue that fits citizens for life in a participatory democracy, civility thus gets equated with respectful dialogue” (2000:256).

Although it operates as a citizenship concept, ‘civility’ also signifies the polite conduct associated with the ‘moral person’.¹⁰⁵ In this context, civility is most often characterized as a social lubricant that eases the mundane conflicts of everyday life.¹⁰⁶ As a personal virtue, civility depends on self-restraint and a concern for others, but is expressed through attention to bodily hygiene, personal dress, interpersonal interaction, and physical conduct.¹⁰⁷

Civility is one of many similar concepts such as civilization and politeness that operates in conjunction with a series of antonyms. Just as the concept of civilization is often used to oppose barbarism (or some other primordial state) and politeness to contrast rudeness, so does civility often stand in opposition to ‘incivility’.¹⁰⁸ But these contrasts

¹⁰⁵ For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines civility in these terms: “11. Polite or liberal education; training in the ‘humanities’, good breeding; culture, refinement;... 12. Behaviour proper to the intercourse of civilized people; ordinary courtesy of politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behaviour; decent respect, consideration” (1989b:256-257).

¹⁰⁶ Edward Shils contends, for instance, that civility understood as a personal virtue “makes life a bit more pleasant; it is easier to bear than harshness” because “softly spoken, respectful speech is more pleasing to listen to than harsh, contemptuous speech” (1997:339). This is also the conception of civility that lies at the heart of the idea of ‘civil inattention’ developed by Erving Goffman. Here, civil inattention sustains ‘the surface character of public order’ (1971:331-332).

¹⁰⁷ For example, George Washington’s *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation* is promoted as an early comprehensive account of the form of conduct befitting the civil person. Here the civil person typically avoids fidgeting or scratching private parts, falling asleep while others speak, spitting, making strange faces, and disrespecting people of higher social status (Washington 1989).

¹⁰⁸ Such is the complicated list of meanings given to the word ‘civil’ in Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755b). What is interesting to note is that the term is often defined by negative contrasts: “1. Relating to the community; political; relating to the city or government; 2. Relating to any man as a member of a community; 3. Not in anarchy; not wild, not without rule or government; 4. Not foreign; intestine; 5. Not ecclesiastical; as the ecclesiastical courts are controlled by the civil; 6. Not

must not be thought of in terms of simple binary oppositions that designate fixed categorical imperatives; rather, they signify a complex and contingent set of practices that are mutually constitutive of one another. ‘Civility’ appears always already *in relation* to ‘incivility’. The two are relational terms that signify unstable points of attachment that are always already in flux.

C. Dividing Practices

‘Civility’ and ‘incivility’ designate dividing practices that are typically based upon a signifying logic of discrimination and comparison. They support and stabilize the double articulation of dividing practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice in constituting the ‘good citizen’. Where civility involves conduct that is considered legitimate or appropriate in a given context, incivility represents conduct that is considered illegitimate in the circumstances. When civility acts as a citizenship concept, incivility designates conduct that is considered intolerant, which may include violence, hate, and other forms of discriminatory conduct. Indeed, it can also be used to represent the dissolution of public order. When civility signifies personal conduct, incivility refers to a lack of bodily hygiene, unsavory manners and uncouth conduct. Yet, as with the double articulation of dividing practices of virtue-vice and identity-difference, the dividing practices of civility-incivility do not presume fixed points of identification. In other words, ‘incivility’ is not simply a by-product of the ensemble of practices that are constitutive of ‘civility’; rather, it actively *enables* and is *enabled by* the specific constellation of practices that make up

natural; as a person banished or outlawed is said to suffer civil, though not natural death; 7. Not military; as, the civil magistrate’s authority is obstructed by war; 8. Not criminal; as, This is a civil process, not a criminal process; 9. civilized; not barbarous; 10. Complaisant; civilised; gentle; well-bred; elegant of manners; not rude; not brutal; not coarse; 11. Grave; sober; not gay or shewey; 12. Relating to the ancient con [?] or imperial government” (1755b:page numbers unavailable).

‘civility’. Although the dividing practices that they signify appear to construct firm and rigid boundaries of what is considered civil or uncivil in any given moment, they are never fully successful in their deployment. Boundaries appear in an attempt to strengthen the *appearance* of limits, but they can never fully contain the remainders that are produced in the process.

The dividing practices of civility and incivility operate in a complex relationship with other citizenship concepts such as the ‘city’ and ‘civil society’. In the first place, the ‘city’ designates a specific social form that actively constitutes a range of dividing practices. In this regard, as Engin Isin argues, the city operates as a ‘difference machine’ that constitutes and is “constituted by the dialogical encounter of groups formed and generated immanently in the process of taking up positions, orienting themselves for and against each other, inventing and assembling strategies and technologies, mobilizing various forms of capital, and making claims to that space that is objectified as ‘the city’” (2002:49). The city operates as a crucial site for the constitution and development of dividing practices of citizenship and civility. Historically, the concept of citizenship emerges initially in the ancient city-states of Greece and Rome. In Greece, the city-state served as a public arena for rational debate and decision-making that confined the status of citizenship to Athenian-born men over the age of twenty, and thus prohibited slaves, women, foreigners and others from the full ranks of citizenship (Held 1987:23).¹⁰⁹ From this early sense of citizenship, the French term *cityen* emerged. The *cityen* (derived from *L-civitas*) was an ensemble of citizens that practiced a limited range of rights within a

¹⁰⁹ As Engin Isin argues “[s]ome ‘Greeks’ may have defined their identities negatively, but many categories such as citizen-slave, citizen-women, citizen-merchant, and citizen-craftsman were a good deal more complicated than being merely negative oppositions” (2002:54, emphasis in original).

city. In English, early notions of the citizen were interchangeable with the idea of the denizen. Here the citizen designated an inhabitant of the city (Turner 1992:49-50). The city-citizen couplet became central to philosophical notions of freedom and barbarism that subsequently developed in Western philosophical thought. In turn, these ideas were closely related to evolving conceptions of civilization and civility (Pagden 1988:33). As Bryan Turner remarks: “[t]o leave the countryside in order to enter the city was typically connected with the process of civilization; to become urban was to ‘citizenize’ the person” (1992:49). However, the specific value assigned to the city varied according to different socio-cultural contexts. In France, for instance, the city was valorized as part of a conception of republican citizenship that aimed to undermine the social hierarchies implicit within the artificial nobility of country life. In Germany, in contrast, an image of the city based on an idealized Greek city state emerged as an alternative to the heightened industrialism of urban centres. This was accompanied by a nostalgia for country life and rural practices.

Second, the concept of ‘civil society’ developed principally in the German socio-political context.¹¹⁰ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, German citizenship was connected to the notion of the *bürger* (a precursor to the *bourgeois*); civil society signified the arena where burgers enjoyed certain rights and responsibilities (Turner 1992:50). Until the eighteenth century, civil society was generally synonymous with either the ‘State’ or ‘political society’ (Kumar 1993:377). Historically, the concept of civil society worked in conjunction with civility to the extent that it marked a sharp

¹¹⁰ Civil society is often associated with (and confused with) the notion of the *public sphere*. For my purposes, the public sphere has been variously termed the ‘public sphere of civil society’ (Habermas 1989) or the ‘democratic public space between state and civil society’ (Keane 1984). See my discussion with Alan Hunt (White and Hunt 2000:102).

contrast with the state of nature. Not only was civil society connected to the advance of civilization, it was distinguished from the ‘rudeness’ and ‘savagery’ of so-called ‘uncivilized’ societies. Here, incivility registers as an *external* threat to civil society (Schmidt 1995:901). But as social pressures generated by increased literacy rates, heightened urbanization and the rise of capitalism intensified, a new conception of civil society and of civility emerged in order to capture the variety of newly emerging forms of human interaction that occurred in spaces among family, economy and State. Civil society came to be associated with the complex of human activities that generally extend beyond the family and the formal economy, but are also distinct from the State (Cohen and Arato 1992).¹¹¹ In this view, civil society commonly represented the aggregate of voluntary activities that range from “churches, cultural associations, and academies to independent media, sport and leisure clubs, debating societies, groups of concerned citizens, and grass-roots petitioning drives all the way to occupational associations, political parties, labour unions, and ‘alternative institutions’”(Habermas 1989:453). Here, the dividing practices of civility-incivility “still described those qualities which separated social man from the savage; but they were now far more heavily freighted with the sense of what criteria might be used to distinguish between individuals *within* civil society” (Pagden 1988:33, emphasis in original). It is in this context that John Keane argues that incivility signifies the forms of violence internal to civil society that are

¹¹¹ Contemporary notions of the term draw on three disparate traditions. The first is found in the work of the Scottish Moralists such as Adam Ferguson (1995) who ties the rise of civil society to the rise of a voluntary sphere of individuals involved in various projects of social and economic exchange. The second is found in Hegel (1949) who defines civil society as the matrix of economic activities, legal institutions and material interests. It was on the basis of this definition that Marx (1975) came to equate civil society with rise of the bourgeoisie. Finally, de Tocqueville (1945) added a third sphere called ‘political society’ (oriented to the ‘art of association’) to civil society and the State.

associated with social ills such as murder, rape, cruelty to animals, child abuse and capital punishment (1996:66-67; 1998:138).¹¹²

Civility is also closely tied to another citizenship concept: 'character'. As we saw in the last chapter, character is an idealized habitus that generates specific dispositions which constitute unique ways of 'being' in the world. In this respect, the generative potential of the relation between habitus and field gives rise to 'systematic configurations of existence' that differentiate those who share a specific habitus (e.g. those who have character) from those who do not.¹¹³ Only those who are endowed with the capacity to perceive particular attributes are able to identify, interpret and evaluate the significance of relevant dispositions (Bourdieu 1984:170). When civility operates in tandem with character, it represents the successful performance of character.¹¹⁴ In other words, civil conduct conforms to the expectations associated with a given set of dispositions.

Civility therefore involves the recognized capacity to conduct oneself in accordance with prevailing structures of recognition. In other words, it entails the 'correct' deployment of specific dispositions of character. Conducting oneself with civility depends on one's capacity to recognize prevailing structures of recognition and to respond accordingly within the delimited field of possibilities (Bourdieu 1991:80; Thompson 1991:20). This capacity presupposes "an implicit mastery, and therefore

¹¹² Keane elaborates on his conception of violence: "[v]iolence is better understood as the unwanted physical interference by groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others, which are consequently made to suffer a series of effects ranging from shock, bruises, scratches, swelling or headaches to broken bones, heart attacks, loss of limbs or even death" (1996:66-67; 1998:138).

¹¹³ Bourdieu argues that the relation between habitus and field generates 'lifestyles' that operate as sign systems for classificatory purposes. Here, the phenomenon of 'taste' emerges as an important technique of classification that raises "the differences inscribed in the physical order of bodies to the symbolic order of significant distinctions" (Bourdieu 1984:174-5).

¹¹⁴ Although many Anglo-American citizenship theorists link civility to character, the point of contact between civility and character is temporary and unstable. In other words, character is not a necessary foundation for the deployment of civility to the extent that civility can operate independently of character.

recognition, of a set of oppositions constituting the implicit axiomatics of a given political order” (Bourdieu 1990b:293, fn.4). Civility reflects a series of perceptions based on dividing practices of what might be considered vulgar or appropriate, extravagant or economical, and strident or reasonable in a given socio-political context.¹¹⁵ It operates according to a ‘logic of disinterestedness’ that is defined as “the subordination of the *I* to the *us*, or the sacrificing of individual interest to the general interest” (Bourdieu 1998:142).

D. Distanciation

Civility operates as a *technique of distanciation*. My use of the term ‘distanciation’ is borrowed from Paul Ricoeur who uses the concept to describe the various ways that symbolic and material texts are rendered intelligible through multiple acts of interpretation (Ricoeur 1981:132-133; Thompson 1981a:52-53). Because all texts must be interpreted in order to make them intelligible to others, successful interpretation relies on a series of ‘distancings’ that enable one to ‘read’ a given text.¹¹⁶ Ricoeur identifies four modes of distanciation: i) all meaning extends beyond the text in question; ii) what a text signifies is independent of the intentions of its author; iii) meaning is independent of a specific audience; and iv) any text inspires multiple meanings (Moore 1996:88; Thompson 1981b:12-13). In her use of the concept, Henrietta Moore argues that “[t]o

¹¹⁵ Consider the following example: According to Ward Churchill, between 1492 and 1892 the U.S. Census Bureau concluded that the indigenous peoples of North America were reduced by approximately eighty percent from 125 million to less than 25 million. (1998:1). When presenting this data as evidence of an American Holocaust, Churchill observes that he has been accused of being ‘hyperbolic’, ‘strident’ and ‘shrill’ (1998:4).

¹¹⁶ Another use of the idea of distanciation is found in the work of Anthony Giddens who uses the concept of ‘time-space distanciation’ to refer to way that social systems organize time and space in order to connect presence and absence (1990:14).

read is always to read in relation to other texts, in relation to the codified mode of a culture's production of meaning" (1996:91). In other words, interpretation depends upon particular structures of recognition that inform how one might read the particular text at hand. For my purposes the language of distancing offers a heuristic device for thinking about the various ways that civility designates 'social distance'. It allows us to see that for any practice to be designated as 'civil', it must be 'read' and 'interpreted' as such. In this respect, civility involves two forms of distancing. First, one form of distancing occurs when individual preferences are sublimated for the common good. In other words, one 'distances' one's personal interests for the good of the whole. Second, distancing occurs when civility is used as a kind of social distancing in order to mediate between friendship and enmity. Here, civility involves the appearance of cool restraint and rational self-discipline that belies the implied emotional tumult of one's internal state (Bryant 1995:145; Selznick 1992:391).

Ultimately my discussion has attempted to show that 'civility' is a historically contingent ensemble of discursive practices that involves the exercise of self-constraint and the display of concern for others through visible indicators such as bodily comportment, speech patterns and generalized conduct. Conceptualizing civility in this manner suggests that it is open to a range of interpretations and has many different potential effects. In addition, understanding civility in terms of the operation of dividing practices highlights the extent to which civility is embedded in, and indeed produced by, relations of power. For citizenship theorists who adopt the language of civility as a technology of citizenship in order to negotiate the demands of difference in contemporary social and political life, this has especially important consequences. Before I consider

how contemporary citizenship theorists use civility as a technology of citizenship, I examine how civility is historically constituted as a contingent product of social relations with the help of Norbert Elias.

5.2 Norbert Elias: Figuration, Distinction and Pacification

Norbert Elias offers a particularly useful way of understanding how the Western concept of ‘civility’ appears under specific conditions of emergence. In his sociological account, civility emerges in relation to particular balances of force relations and does not contain any prior content.¹¹⁷ Elias insists that current notions of civil conduct are the product of the historical development of a ‘figural’ process. Figurations are complex social processes composed of patterned but mutable relations of interdependence and reciprocity. The concept of the figuration is intrinsically sociological to the extent that it represents a specific *balance* of force relations. Figurations can be used to represent networks of social relations such as card games, classrooms, neighborhoods, and societies at large. Figurations are constituted by social circumstances that constrain individuals and groups in ways that modify their actions and their affects. They constitute a balance

¹¹⁷ Elias’s theoretical framework shares a number of common points with the practice turn in social theory discussed in Chapter 2. For example, Elias offers a dynamic critique of metaphysics and challenges the idea that a search for origins is possible (1978:16). He advances a relational conception of power that is embedded within social processes (1978:130-131). In a similar manner to Bourdieu, he conceives of subjectivity using the notion of *habitus* that constitutes a ‘I-We’ relationship between individuals and social groups (1991:182). To some extent, he emphasizes struggles over symbolic meaning production (1978:141). Lastly, his work in *The Civilizing Process*, focusing on etiquette manuals that codify explicit rules of conduct, could be taken to suggest that he is committed to a theory of practice (1994:67). Here he focuses on the regulation of the human body through a ‘civilizing process’ of ‘intensifying constraint toward self-constraint’ through which individuals’ impulses and desires are increasingly regulated. While his theoretical framework is consistent with the practice turn in contemporary social theory in many respects, Elias does not foreground ‘practice’ as an analytical concept and indeed ‘rejects the action frame of reference’ (Arnason 1989:50). For this reason, Elias cannot be considered a practice theorist in the manner of Bourdieu and Foucault. And yet, his discussion of the relational dimensions of power and social process specifically as they apply to civility, suggest that his work is useful nonetheless.

of forces between large-scale social structures and individuals. The concept of civility emerges here, not as an essential element of human 'nature', nor as an always already constituted *a priori* social good; rather 'civility' represents one specific moment in a historical process that is continually unfolding. The 'civilizing process' is neither directed nor directionless; rather it is a 'patterned' process that unfolds in relation to a specific social context.

Civility emerges in the context of a broad figurational process through which processes of state formation produce changes in individual social affect. It appears as the ambivalent product of two related processes: 'distinction' and 'pacification'. As a mode of distinction, civility emerges as a mechanism that marks and distinguishes one individual or group with superior social status vis-à-vis another. As a form of pacification, alternatively, civility appears as the outcome of a long-term process where the means of violence are slowly centralized in a specific state formation. The extent to which civility is the ambivalent product of both processes is suggestive for an examination of the possibilities and limitations associated with attempts to mobilize the concept as a technology of citizenship. Let me begin by considering Elias's discussion of civility in *The Civilizing Process* before turning in the next section to examine the implications of his argument for thinking about civility as a technology of good citizenship.¹¹⁸

The general thrust of Elias' argument in *The Civilizing Process* (1994) is that the appearance of a new and more rigid social hierarchy in Europe during the fifteenth and

¹¹⁸ One of the difficulties facing any treatment of *The Civilizing Process* is its enormously complex argument. Given the demands of time and space, I have chosen to render the most salient aspects of his project for my discussion of the way that civility operates as a technology of citizenship within contemporary citizenship discourses.

sixteenth centuries (forming gradually since the twelfth century) is one product of a monopolization of physical violence by an emergent system of nation-states. This general process of 'sociogenesis' corresponds to a process of 'psychogenesis' that involves the internal pacification of individuals and the dissemination of new standards of conduct to the middle- and lower-classes (1994:447).¹¹⁹ Elias argues that this specific configuration of sociogenic and psychogenic processes signals the advent of a 'civilizing process' that can be understood in 'figurational' terms.¹²⁰ As a 'figuration', the civilizing process involves patterned changes in human conduct and sentiment that are generated by shifting webs of interdependent social relations (Elias 1994:443).¹²¹ The concept of figuration captures the complex way that patterned but mutating relations of interdependence and reciprocity shift and evolve over time (1978:130). As Roger Chartier succinctly notes: "[a] *Figuration* is a social form of extremely variable extent (made up of a group playing cards together, the patrons of a café, a school class, a village, a city, a nation) in which the individuals involved are linked by a specific mode of reciprocal dependence and the reproduction of which supposes a mobile balance of

¹¹⁹ Jonathan Fletcher notes that the original title of Elias' manuscript in German can be translated into English as "On the Civilizing Process: Sociogenic and Psychogenic Investigation" (1997:185-186, fn. 2).

¹²⁰ Elias argues that the civilizing process has no pre-determined end, and is therefore not unidirectional, but rather moves along in a patterned sequence of 'spurts and counter-spurts' (1994:460). It is necessarily conceived of as a dynamic process. While Elias does not explicitly develop the notion of what a 'counter-spurt' might look like, others have argued that this language suggests that 'decivilizing processes' may also be at work (Fletcher 1997; Mennell 1990). Jonathan Fletcher, for instance, offers a provisional model of decivilizing processes that signify what happens when civilizing processes go into reverse (1997:83-4). He suggests that their main features include: i) a shift in the balance between external constraints and self constraints; ii) the emergence of new social behaviours that are reflected in decreases in self-restraint; iii) reduced levels of mutual identification between groups and individuals. He argues that such societies would be characterised by i) rising levels of fear, insecurity, and irrationality; ii) increased inequality and a shifting balance of power; iii) a decrease in the expectations of conduct for adults and children; iv) heightened impulsiveness; and v) increased levels of fantasy-based thinking.

¹²¹ Elias insists that the civilizing process is not a rational process that is produced through deliberation or intention (1994:444).

tensions” (1988:78, emphasis in original).¹²² In any given figuration, power involves relations of equilibrium and balance that are continually negotiated and renegotiated.

The aim of *The Civilizing Process* is to show how “standards of behaviour and psychological make-up have changed in European society since the Middle Ages, and then to explain why this has happened” (Mennell 1989:30). It is in this context that Elias observes that the more or less “sudden emergence of words within a language nearly always points to changes in the lives of people themselves” (1994:43). He argues that tracing “the transformation of the concepts by which different societies have tried to express themselves” enables one to track the civilizing process (1994:47). He suggests that the word ‘civilization’ is particularly significant in this context because it is itself an outcome of changing linguistic patterns that are suggestive of underlying social forces (Kuzmics 1988:151).¹²³ Indeed, the varying semantic histories of German and French uses of the term indicate significant differences in social and institutional arrangements (Elias 1994:25). Elias argues that in eighteenth century Germany, for instance, the bourgeoisie had little political and economic power. As a result, Germans developed a notion of ‘culture’ (*Kultur*) that was opposed to civilization in order to highlight the perceived vulgarity, insincerity and superficiality of courtly life.¹²⁴ During the same

¹²² As Roger Chartier argues the concept of the ‘figuration’ offers a way of characterizing the dynamism and reciprocity of social relations, and in so doing, avoids “simplistic, one-dimensional, or static representations of social domination or cultural diffusions” (1988:90).

¹²³ Elias argues that the difficulty with the language of ‘civilization’ is that it suggests a series of contrasts between the civilized and the uncivilized. He argues that this terminology is always inadequate because it grasps the “change too statically and coarsely” (1994:47).

¹²⁴ Elias’s work in *The Germans* (1996) extends the analysis offered in *The Civilizing Process* to the extent that he gestures toward many of the ways that characteristic elements of the German habitus, personality and social structure combine to produce the Nazi holocaust. These structures stem from aspects of Germany’s historical development that range from the devastation wrought by the thirty years war in the seventeenth century to Germany’s relatively late unification with countries such as Britain and France. As Dunning and Mennell point out in their introduction: “Elias’s point is not that the rise of Hitler and the

period in France, however, the bourgeoisie was a significant political force and, as a result, the French managed to incorporate courtly elements into their understanding of 'civilization.' Where the German meaning of the term emphasized internal virtues and vices, the French conception of civilization referred to external qualities of appearance and ability.

The effect of unpacking these different understandings of 'civilization' leads Elias to consider the "social modeling of affects in everyday life" (Kuzmics 1988:150-51). He focuses on the process of refinement by the aristocratic upper classes between the ninth and the eighteenth centuries.¹²⁵ He observes a telling shift in terminology from an early emphasis on *courtoisie* to a later focus on *civilité*, and subsequently *civilization* that is indicative of broader social changes at work in France. Elias argues that this transition from *courtoisie* to *civilité* to *civilization* marks three stages in the process of social development (1994:84).¹²⁶ Roughly speaking, the concept of *courtoisie* is associated with

Nazi genocide grew inevitably out of such structural sources but rather that these internationally stigmatizing events occurred as a result of decisions made in the context of national crisis by ruling groups that enjoyed widespread popular, especially middle-class, support and which were acting in terms of what were -- and to some extent still are -- deeply sedimented aspects of German habitus, personality, social structure and behaviour" (Dunning and Mennell 1996:ix). In this work, Elias is preoccupied with the relative level of formality and informality in a society. He calls this the 'formality-informality span' of a society. He argues that "this relates to the operation of both formal and informal behaviour-regulation in a society at the same time" (Elias 1996:28-9). He notes that "if one wanted to try to reduce the key problem of any civilizing process to its simplest formula, then it could be said to be problem of how people can manage to satisfy their elementary animalic needs in their life together, without reciprocally destroying, frustrating, demeaning or in other ways harming each other time and time again in their search for this satisfaction"(Elias 1996:31).

¹²⁵ *The Civilizing Process* challenges the prevailing assumption that the bourgeoisie was the instigator of the social changes associated with the process of 'modernization'. Elias stresses that *no* class can be seen as the sole originator of rationalization: "Changes of this kind, however, do not 'originate' with one class or another, but arise in conjunction with the tensions *between* different functional groups in a social field and *between* the competing people within them" (Elias 1994:490, emphasis in the original). Bogner argues that Elias focused on the role of the aristocracy for 'polemical purposes'. The *Civilizing Process* was aimed as a corrective to the "mainstream of social theory which has too exclusively looked upon the bourgeoisie as the creator of the modern world" (Bogner 1986:402).

¹²⁶ Jorge Arditti extends this analysis by looking at the emergence of the concept of etiquette which he argues emerges "as part of the shift from a highly centralized system of power-practices that supported the

absolutist regimes, *civilité* corresponds to aristocratic regimes, and *civilization* to democratic forms of government. How do these changes come about? The notion of *courtoisie* represented the standards of conduct appropriate to the court society, especially the absolutist regimes in France prior to the Revolution of 1789.¹²⁷ With the dismantling of the court society, the concept of *civilité* emerged. It was first introduced by the aristocracy as a mark of distinction in order to signify its 'refined' manners and 'cultivated' tastes. Here the conduct designated 'civil' was used to distinguish the aristocracy from other lower classes. At the same time, Elias argues that increased literacy rates, a growth in printed material and the strength of the bourgeoisie helped to disseminate the standards of conduct associated with civility to the wider population. Over time civility ceased to be a mark of distinction between social groups, and was eventually replaced by the notion of civilization to signify the nature of the dynamic *process* associated with structural transformations in society.

Elias argues that conduct manuals offer a useful indication of the nature of social transformation in society. They offer insight into the kinds of "habits and behaviour to which society at a given point in time sought to accustom the individual" (1994:67).¹²⁸ It is in this regard that Elias claims that the publication in 1530 of *De civilitate morum puerilium libellus* ("On Civility in Children") by Erasmus of Rotterdam marks a

absolutist tendencies of the English monarchy to a system that affirmed the aristocracy as a group. These practices and the new term associated with them served as one of the mechanisms by which the aristocracy constructed and affirmed its power" (1998:3).

¹²⁷ Space does not permit an engagement with Elias' analysis of *The Court Society* which examines the absolutist regime. Here, he argues that the rise of the court society is connected to the advancing centralization of state power to the monopolization of taxation and military capacity (Elias 1983:2).

¹²⁸ Jacques Revel suggests that the evidence Elias uses for his argument is ambiguous to the extent that it raises the question of the extent to which the guidelines prescribed by conduct manuals was actually followed (1989:189).

watershed point in the civilizing process in Europe.¹²⁹ *De civilitate* was an enormously successful publication that generated hundreds of translations, adaptations and reworkings.¹³⁰ Erasmus' treatise is less significant as an individual work than as an "embodiment of social processes" (1994:44).¹³¹ It represents a shift in modes of 'seeing', and in so doing reveals the extent to which human conduct was increasingly conditioned by external constraints (1994:56-57).¹³² *Civilité* was no longer the sole purview of the aristocracy, but became increasingly dispersed throughout the general population. The emergence of *civilité* thus involves a sharpening of the senses such that clothing, conduct and speech signify means of deducing the attitude of the soul for the middle and lower classes (1994:62-3). In other words, because people are forced to live with one another

¹²⁹ The publication of *De civilitate* was originally cast in the form of questions and answers in 1530 and later presented as a series of abstracts in 1551. It was translated into German in 1531, into English in 1532, into Czech in 1537 and into Dutch in 1546.

¹³⁰ The publication of *De Civilitate* did not offer the definitive word on civility; rather it spawned a host of publications devoted to interpreting and clarifying the concept. It generated a host of texts devoted to comportment that include: *Galateo* by Giovanni della Casa, 1558; *Civilité* by Calviac, 1560; *Nouveau traité de civilité* by Antoine de Courtin, 1672; *De la science du monde et des connoissances utiles à la conduite de la vie* by François de Callières, 1717; and *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* by La Salle, 1729.

¹³¹ It was particularly significant because it was addressed to children aiming to instill a code of conduct that was relevant to all, irrespective of class. It offered an interpretation of changes that had already transpired in human behaviour, in addition to an elaboration of a new ideal (Elias 1994:43). In other words, it unified multiple and competing codes of conduct that were formerly diverse in number into a single comprehensive whole. It canvassed general themes such as hygiene and cleanliness, but also focused on proper dining conduct, as well as the kind of behaviour considered appropriate in church, in the bedroom, and at play. For Elias, the explicit accounting of bodily hygiene and appropriate conduct reflects a level of comfort with bodily functions that is gradually eliminated in the course of the civilizing process. Erasmus advises for instance that "[t]he nostrils should be free from any filthy collection of mucus, as is disgusting...It is boorish to wipe one's nose on one's cap or clothing; to do so on one's sleeve or forearms is for fishmongers, and it is not much better to wipe it with one's hand, if you then smear the discharge on your clothing" (Erasmus 1985:274). Moreover, he maintains that it is important to "[t]urn away when spitting to avoid spitting on or spraying someone. If any disgusting matter is spat onto the ground, it should, as I have said, be ground under foot lest it nauseate someone. If that is impermissible, catch up the spittle with a cloth" (1985:276).

¹³² Jacques Revel suggests that this marks an attempt to identify the conditions necessary for 'social transparency' where one's outward physical gestures reveal something about one's inner spiritual disposition [1989:171-2]. In this view, civility offered the possibility of unifying people across class lines by encouraging people to employ only those 'manners' that were recognized and accepted by others [1989:178].

in new ways, they become more sensitive to the impulses of others. Their codes of conduct become stricter, and the degree of consideration of others became greater (1994:64).

Elias argues that 'civilized' conduct emerges as a result of mutual processes of 'pacification' and 'distinction'. Elias traces the process through which violence, once a routine aspect of everyday life is increasingly removed from the purview of everyday life, and tends to appear only as an extraordinary event. The process of pacification is reflected in the way that rural feudal lords with few constraints on conduct slowly become subordinated to lords who are more powerful than themselves. First, regionally powerful lords, then kings and the nation-state increasingly monopolize the means of violence (1994:448-449). As this takes place, centralizing control of the means of violence is reflected in changes in social affect where individuals become increasingly sensitized to displays of aggressiveness, to the use of knives, and to specific standards of conduct. Meanwhile, the process of distinction is reflected in the way that feudal lords at court learn to constrain their conduct in specific ways out of a concern for how they are perceived by others. Increasingly dependent on the central authority of the state, dominant social groups strive to maintain their dominance by inventing new forms of 'refined' conduct that reflect their 'superior' status.

Elias argues that the process by which social groups develop new standards of conduct is not a one-way process; rather, it is best explained as a series of 'double movements'. He insists that these double movements are neither determined nor accidental, but reflect 'figurative' movements in a certain direction according to patterned lines of development. He maintains that the first double movement consists in the

reciprocal dissemination of aristocratic customs to socially 'inferior' classes. This process represents a 'double movement' to the extent that the bourgeois become 'courtified' at the same time that the aristocracy is 'bourgeoisified' (1994:89). The second double movement involves increasing dependence of the upper classes on the bourgeoisie. Because of this dependence, the level of distinction accorded to the aristocratic customs must be continually upgraded in order for nobles to distance themselves from their social inferiors. As Stephen Mennell remarks, "[t]he overall trend is not simply a trickle down through a static hierarchy, but involves the relative leveling out of power balances between rungs of the hierarchy, accompanied by some measure of trickle *up*. It is important to recognize the extent to which these standards interpenetrated one another" (1989:109, emphasis in original).¹³³

The gradual process of refinement expressed in the 'constraint toward self-constraint' is the result of the internalization of advancing thresholds of embarrassment and shame.¹³⁴ As such, the civilizing process signifies the suppression of desires and preferences that are initially regulated through rigid external social controls, and later exercised through self-constraint. The feelings of displeasure, distaste, disgust, fear and shame that emerge as a product of external constraints are internalized over time as

¹³³ According to Robert van Krieken, "a central characteristic of Elias's portrayal of the Middle Ages is that the 'balance' between external and self-constraint was not only weighted towards the former, but also that whatever constraint there was appeared to have only a limited effect on the containment of affect and impulse so that they would often 'break through'" (1990:357). Thus, it is not accurate to say that medieval society did not exhibit external constraints, but rather that these were "relatively *ineffective* constraints that were not internalized and did not keep the affects in check" (1990:357). Artur Bogner also points out that self-constraints were present in the early phases of the civilizing process. He suggests that "it is more appropriate to describe the direction taken by civilizing processes as a shift in the balance between 'external' and self-constraints and as a transformation in the *pattern* of self-control in a quantitative sense" (1986:396).

¹³⁴ Elias defines shame "as a kind of anxiety which is automatically reproduced in the individual on certain occasions by force of habit" (1994:492). It involves a fear of social degradation that emerges when others withdraw their approval. Embarrassment occurs when one fears that another person will potentially breach the prohibitions of society (1994:495).

mechanisms of self-constraint (1994:104). These changes occur only with transformations in the social organization and structure of social relations. To this end, Elias insists that, “[t]he social control of conduct so imprints itself in one form or other on the human being that it becomes a constituent element of his/her individual self -- it only changes as the structure of society changes” (1994:156).

Elias argues that over time civility ceased to be an important mark of ‘distinction’ for the upper classes because it was so successfully deployed throughout the population.¹³⁵ Thus, by the mid-eighteenth century, civility came to be seen as an impoverished form of politeness. Indeed, these once formerly contested standards of conduct have now become so uniform that their meaning is often taken for granted (1994:115). So too, Elias maintains that the degree of ‘pacification’ in highly differentiated societies has slowed because the presence of a strong central authority in the state manages to distribute power evenly between different social groups (1994:397). Even so, while current levels of civility and pacification in society appear to have stabilized, Elias argues that because they are organized in relation to structural changes in society, they can nonetheless continue to evolve in relation to fluctuations within a given figuration.

¹³⁵ Critics argue that the shift cannot be adequately explained by virtue of its successful dissemination through the social body. Rather, they suggest that the difficulty lies with the contradictory values upon which the project of civility was based (Revel 1989:201-202; Chartier 1987:109; Mah 1994:70-71). The ideal of civility depends on a connection between virtues and manners such that there was a direct correspondence between inner states and external appearances. As Harold Mah argues, civility assumes the “transparency of inner conviction and moral character” such that one could have “direct access to virtue by means of appearance, behaviour and language” (1994:70). In other words, although the historical ideal of civility demanded authenticity and transparency of the soul, the difficulty was that there was no way to guarantee that one’s appearance represented the actual state of one’s interiority. As Mah contends, “[f]rom its inception the discourse of civility thus displayed a conflicted, ambivalent character, affirming...moral and intellectual transparency and asserting instead...dissemblance and narcissism” (1994:70).

Elias' account of the civilizing process is tremendously rich and nuanced, and yet it is not without its difficulties. For instance, he exhibits a tendency to equate the upper classes with 'society', and thus discusses the development of civilization almost exclusively from the perspective of social elites. It becomes difficult to see from his argument how other classes themselves respond to the civilizing process. Another difficulty is that, although Elias argues that the civilizing process reflects one possible outcome of the figurative process, he often presents the specific way in which the 'civilizing process' has developed in the Western context as if it was the only way that such a process could have developed. This problem is also reflected in the extent to which he tends to valorize the civilizing process as it unfolds in Europe at the expense of other cultural contexts which may exhibit other kinds of civilizing processes.

Critics such as Ian Burkitt have noted that, in spite of his best efforts, Elias tends to fall into "the etiological myth of civilization" because he continues to use the highly problematic language of 'civilization' and the 'civilizing process' to refer to processes that are ostensibly without any prior content and that have the potential to unfold in a number of different ways (1996:140). The problem is that although Elias wants to use these terms in a value-neutral fashion, he tends to use the term 'civilization' as an oppositional term in order to bring the 'barbarism' of the lower classes into relief. By deploying civilization as an oppositional term, Elias risks employing a 'logic of exclusion' that stands in tension with the claim that figurative processes operate as a balance of force *relations*.¹³⁶ Burkitt suggests that in order to move beyond this logic of exclusion, it is important to think of 'civilization' as an inherently *ambivalent* process

¹³⁶ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the tensions and difficulties associated with the notion of a logic of exclusion.

that contains “within itself the potential to unleash the forces it would label ‘barbaric’ on an unprecedented scale” (1996:142). At the same time, however, it is possible to see in Elias the traces of an argument that would conceive of the civilizing process as an ambivalent one. As Robert van Krieken points out, Elias does admit that it is possible for civilizing processes to occur alongside projects of violence that may be consistent with de-civilizing processes (1999:301).

But what does it mean to conceive of the ‘civilizing process’ as ambivalent? According to Marc Augé, to qualify something as ‘ambivalent’ is “to postulate that it can bear contrary judgments, that such judgments are equally relevant” (1998:30). In other words, to be ambivalent is to be *at once* both good and bad, true and false.¹³⁷ When something is ambivalent, it is not constituted by a logic of exclusivity; rather, it necessarily consists of two opposing qualities. The claim, therefore, that ‘civilization’ (understood in a non-teleological and non-essential manner) is ambivalent suggests that figurations evolve in complex ways that simultaneously reflect practices of self-constraint at the same time as they may also represent a lack of control of social impulses, desires and passions. The idea that the civilizing process is ambivalent is consistent with Zygmunt Bauman’s argument that modernity contains the *possibility* for the kind of large-scale violence perpetuated by the Nazi Holocaust at the same time as it contains the *potential* for emancipation (1989; 1991).

The question of how Elias’s account of the civilizing process bears on contemporary uses of civility still remains. One difficulty with Elias’s account of civility

¹³⁷ Ambivalence and ambiguity are not one and the same. To this end, Augé remarks that the concept of ambiguity affirms that something is “*neither* good nor bad or, in the field of truth judgments, that a proposition is *neither* true nor false” (1998:31, emphasis in original).

is that he analyzes the concept only in relation to its role in the 'civilizing process'. As a result, it is fair to say that Elias is not particularly interested in civility *per se*; rather, he is principally concerned with the effects that shifting power relations have on the constitution of social affects and social structures in the civilizing process. In other words, Elias is interested in the concept of civility only insofar as it is indicative of the emergence of a specific configuration of social arrangements in the unfolding of the 'civilizing process'. Indeed to this end, its emergence as a particular mode of conduct is one that roughly corresponds to the specific balance of power relations constituted by the aristocracy. But beyond this, Elias does not say much about the role of civility within contemporary social relations, other than to say that the success of its dissemination to the general population undermined its ability to serve as a mechanism of distinction for the upper classes.

With these concerns in mind, I want to suggest that Elias's contribution is nonetheless useful for thinking about contemporary debates over civility in several ways. First, he demonstrates the extent to which civility is deeply embedded within power relations. In this regard, the concept of 'figuration' allows us to see that 'civility' emerges as the outcome of a balance of forces. Here civility is constituted by a series of reciprocal and interdependent relations of power and emerges as the product of twin processes of 'distinction' and 'pacification'. Indeed, civility is both the product of the monopolization of violence within state structures and the result of a process of physical and psychological subjectification.¹³⁸ This suggests that civility cannot be conceived simply as a mechanism that effects an equalization of force relations; rather, it is

¹³⁸ The emphasis Elias places on the psychologization of affect in the rise of thresholds of shame and embarrassment distinguish him from practice theorists such as Bourdieu and Foucault.

necessarily *produced through* a movement toward equality. In other words, although civility feeds into processes of distinction and pacification, it is the *outcome*, not the driving force of these processes. Where Elias is concerned, the driving force behind processes of distinction and pacification are always structural changes in social relations.

Second, even though Elias discusses civility as a way of interrogating the emergence of specific structural configurations in society, only to dispense with the concept in order to examine the way that 'civilization' reveals changes in the balance of force relations, it is important to remember that the everyday use of civil codes of conduct does not disappear. From Elias's point of view, the concept loses its analytical utility for demonstrating shifts in the 'civilizing process'. This being so, the concept of civility nonetheless survives and continues to designate a mode of conduct that emerged as the product of historical processes of pacification and distinction. Indeed, Elias helps us to see how these processes are constitutive of civility. In so doing, he helps us to see that it is still possible, at least in principle, to deploy civility in relation to processes of distinction and/or pacification. How so? On the one hand, the structural orientation toward distinction prescribes conduct that serves to distinguish one group from another. Civility emerges as a mark of status that signifies symbolic differences that are interpreted according to prevailing structures of recognition. While civility no longer bears analytically on the civilizing process as it once did, it continues to designate a set of dividing practices that are typically based on a signifying logic of discrimination and comparison. In other words, civility continues to authorize or legitimate certain forms of conduct that are designated 'civil', at the same time that it designates conduct that is considered 'inappropriate', 'offensive' and/or 'illegitimate'. On the other hand, the

structural movement toward pacification organizes social relations in such a way that the balance of power is increasingly equalized. In this context, civility comes to reflect the extent to which the powerful and strong are 'pacified' in relation to weaker members of society and are therefore compelled to take their interests into account.

What implications does this discussion have for my argument that civility operates as a technology of citizenship? First, civility is inscribed within relations of power, and is indeed constituted by them. As a result, what counts as the 'civil' conduct required of citizens in any given instance is constituted by and through power. Second, civility emerges as the outcome of structural changes in society, as opposed to facilitating or effecting such changes. This means that the capacity for civility to effect social or political change is circumscribed by its specific conditions of existence. This draws our attention to the processes through which 'civil' forms of citizenly conduct emerge. Third, the extent to which processes of distinction and pacification are constitutive of civility means that civility authorizes particular forms of conduct and specific spaces for political action at the expense of others, at the same time as it works to constrain the 'strong' in an effort to balance power relations in political engagement. With these points in mind, let me turn now to consider how civility is mobilized by Anglo-American citizenship discourses as a technology of good citizenship that helps citizens respond to the demands of difference.

5.3 Civility and 'Good Citizenship'

It is often difficult to relate normative theories of civility that present the concept under 'ideal conditions' to sociological accounts of how civility emerges as a product of power

relations. This is because it is not always clear when citizenship theorists are discussing civility under conditions of 'ideal theory' or, when they are discussing it under conditions of actually existing democracies. But, to the extent that their theories can be interpreted as prescribing forms of civil conduct for actually existing democracies, I want to suggest that it is possible to interrogate the form of civility that each prescribes in light of the way that it operates as a technology of citizenship. My goal in this section is thus to demonstrate how Anglo-American citizenship discourses deploy the concept of civility as a response to the demands of difference. I examine how specific citizenship theorists such as Edward Shils, John Rawls, Mark Kingwell and Benjamin Barber each uses the concept of civility as a precondition for political participation, and as a technology of good citizenship.

I rely on Elias's account of civility in order to show how each of the theorists under consideration uses civility as both a mechanism of 'distinction' that authorizes specific forms of conduct and not others, and a mechanism of 'pacification' where civility places constraints on political dialogue as a means to 'pacify' the strong in order to foster the conditions for marginalized members of society to negotiate their differences. But while civility is mobilized as a response to the demands of difference, one of the difficulties is that the citizenship theorists under consideration do not provide an account of the concrete conditions that enable civility to establish the particular constraints it does. The effect is to neglect the extent to which civility is the outcome of force relations. As a result, their accounts neglect to examine certain problems that impede the potential for civility to serve as an effective response to the demands of difference. On the one hand, civility may serve to reinforce existing power relations; on

the other, it may assume a commonality that does not exist, thereby limiting the possibility for a full and fair disclosure of difference.

Let me first consider the specific conceptions of civility advanced by Shils, Rawls, Kingwell and Barber. Shils presents a conservative conception of civility that operates as a pre-political virtue that limits political conflict for the good of all. Rawls, in contrast, offers a version of civility as 'public reasonableness' that is articulated under the conditions of 'ideal theory'. Kingwell, in turn, elaborates a conception of 'civil' discourse ethics that aims to bring citizens to a 'mutual understanding' of their differences. Lastly, Barber argues that civility is necessary to facilitate 'strong democratic talk' that helps citizens negotiate conflict in order to orient them toward a common good. Let me turn now to consider the version of civility presented by Shils before examining each of the other contributions in turn.

A. Edward Shils: Civility as a Civil Society

Edward Shils develops an account of civility that is grounded in what he calls an 'autonomous liberalism', a perspective that has (mistakenly in his opinion) been termed 'conservatism' (1997:124-25).¹³⁹ He argues that conventional liberal political philosophy is 'ideological' because it has caused the welfare state to become so overburdened that it can no longer govern effectively. Indeed, Shils maintains that liberalism has encouraged

¹³⁹ Shils argues that autonomous liberalism contrasts with a 'collectivist liberalism' that is committed to maintaining the welfare state. He argues that his vision of autonomous liberalism is attractive because it places minimal demands on the ability of government to govern effectively, and yet, at the same time, yields to the authority of the state. From his perspective, the difficulty with 'collectivist liberalism' is that it cultivates self-interest by encouraging dependence on the state. As a result, it promotes political contestation between individuals. In so doing, collectivist liberalism produces an environment where people believe that their interests have the potential to be realized. Shils argues that this undermines the legitimacy of government because it "burdens government with unfulfillable tasks and thus brings its authority into discredit" (1997:4-5).

the growth of 'special interest groups' such as feminism, environmentalism and gay rights movements whose demands ostensibly interfere with the 'smooth' functioning of government. Shils fears that without any means to negotiate effectively, social relations may become increasingly fraught.

It is in this context that Shils insists that civility can offer a useful mechanism to keep partisan interests 'in check', and in so doing, reduce the demands on government.¹⁴⁰ For Shils, civility is at once a belief, a virtue and an attitude (1997:4). It is a *belief* that is founded on the possibility of a 'common good'. It is a *virtue* that is expressed on behalf of the good of all. It is an *attitude* that fosters consensus in the midst of conflict. As such, civility operates as a mode of political action that regulates conflict between individuals and governs relations between individuals and the state (1997:322). Civility ostensibly reduces conflict because it encourages citizens to privilege their obligations to the collective good by curbing their personal self-interest (1997:340). To this end, Shils argues that "the civil person, the bearer of civility, sees his fellow-citizens taken all together—not just his kinsmen or his neighbors—as entitled to his obligations" (1997:71-72).¹⁴¹ It is in this fashion that he argues that civility can transform liberal democracies into civil societies (1997:70-71).¹⁴² What distinguishes civil societies from liberal

¹⁴⁰ Shils argues that civility does not encourage intolerance, rather, it respects the dignity of other persons, and accepts their intrinsic moral worth regardless of their individual interests and beliefs (1997:338). And by extension, it requires that one behave civilly towards those who pursue alternative conceptions of the good life (1997:78).

¹⁴¹ To this end, Shils argues that "[t]he attitude and ethos that distinguishes the politics of a civil society is civility, i.e., a solicitude for the interest of the whole society, a concern for the common good. The civil person, when he has to decide and act in a situation in which there is conflict, thinks primarily of the civil society as the object of his obligations, not of the members of his family, or his village, or his party, or his ethnic group, or his social class, or his occupation" (1997:1).

¹⁴² According to Shils, liberal democratic society is distinct from civil society because it is fundamentally concerned with the 'interests of a few' whereas 'civil society' is concerned with the 'interest of society as a whole' (1997:26-28). Understood in these terms, he argues that civil society does not invite the 'moral

societies is that they are regulated by the 'collective conscience' of society as opposed to personal self-interest.

Shils contends, however, that it is unrealistic to ask everyone to cede their personal interests for the collective good all the time (1997:348). Instead, he argues that specific individuals should be selected in a representative capacity who have the ability to exercise the public virtue of civility on behalf of others.¹⁴³ But, because the duty of civility is so important, it must be limited to "upstanding members of the community (the judiciary, senior civil servants, academics, politicians and prominent businessmen) who are less partisan than others because they speak for the good of society" (1997:348).¹⁴⁴ By this means, civility is transmitted to others because it has a "radiative or reinforcing effect. Those who have a larger degree of civility animate the civility of those who have less, and so on downward in a pyramid of civility towards those with least civility and least responsiveness. A spark of civility exists in the breast of most individuals even though it is not strong" (1997:348). Civility is thus unevenly distributed in society: some

separatism' that is associated with liberal democratic societies. Civil society is not therefore associated with the 'ideological politics' of sexuality, gender, nationalism, and marginality. This is because civil society operates on the basis of obligations to the 'whole' of society that are the basis of the 'collective self-conscience'.

¹⁴³ Shils argues that although "some politically active persons act civilly, i.e., for the good of the whole, does not mean that they are entirely lacking in partisanship. It does, however, mean that they are less partisan than some of their fellow partisans and their opponents, and that they speak and act more frequently and more visibly for the good of the larger society. They appeal to the recessive or latent civility of their fellow partisans and opponents and they sometimes succeed in arousing it and thereby strengthening it" (1992:8).

¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, Shils' perspective on who has the capacity for civility is reminiscent of the call by neo-conservative F. A. Hayek for a select group of representatives to govern the 'just' society. Hayek argues the 'body of representatives' governing the just society should be made up of "men and women elected at a relatively mature age for fairly long periods, such as fifteen years so that they would not have to be concerned about being re-elected, after which period, to make them wholly independent of party discipline, they should not be re-eligible nor forced to return to earning a living in the market but be assured of continued public employment in such honorific but neutral positions as lay judges, so that during their tenure as legislators they would be neither dependent on party support nor concerned about their personal futures" (1979:113).

people simply display more civility than others. So-called “ordinary people” tend to exhibit a “deep but not subtle” civility that emerges when they refuse to allow politics to dominate everyday life. By conducting themselves with civility, they prevent the “acridity of the public political scene from becoming too diffuse and entering the collective self-consciousness” (1997:95).

Shils promotes a conception of the good citizen who cedes her personal interests for the good of society by means of civility. Civility operates as a technology of good citizenship to the extent that it helps citizens negotiate their affairs by means of civil constraints that help to keep their private interests in check. It sets constraints on possible forms of conduct; it operates as mechanism of power that serves to ‘pacify’ specific groups in order to generate a particular vision of politics. Notwithstanding the conservative and reactionary tone of his argument, it is possible to see that civility operates as mechanism of ‘pacification’ through which the influence of certain groups (e.g. those who place unrealistic demands on government) is limited.¹⁴⁵ This process of pacification is situated in relation to a logic of disinterest that encourages citizens to sublimate their personal interests for the good of the whole. For Shils, civility also operates as a technique of distinction that delimits certain forms of conduct (e.g. consensus-building), circumscribes specific sites for politics (e.g. civil society), and makes distinctions about who is capable of exercising the ‘virtue’ of civility (e.g.

¹⁴⁵ Elsewhere Shils argues against the incipient rise of ‘political correctness’ in the academic community. He argues against the idea that “[t]he idiom and substance of the teaching of literature nowadays have in many Western universities become uncivilly partisan. Many teachers now assert that ‘oppression’ is inherent in language and in works of literature. The teaching of literature has in many universities become politically partisan and inimical to civility. The hostility of teachers of humanities in the United States toward ‘the canon’ is justified on ideological grounds. The teaching of sociology has been affected. In political science and anthropology, the ‘unmasking of oppression’, ‘demythologization,’ the analysis of the ‘construction of tradition,’ etc., are less intellectual activities than they are political activities. They do not contribute to the order of civil society”(1992:10).

upstanding members of society).¹⁴⁶ But this understanding of civility gives no account of its concrete conditions of emergence. Indeed, it is unclear how civility comes to exhibit the features that Shils says it does.¹⁴⁷ Without a clear understanding of how civility emerges as a product of social relations, the particular conception of civility that Shils espouses appears to be arbitrary, and thus works to reinforce existing power relations under the rubric of a well-ordered society. The difficulty is that this understanding of civility does not acknowledge the extent to which civility emerges as the *outcome* of structural processes, and as a result, imposes arbitrary limits on the political process. In this respect, civility responds to the problem of difference by constraining the possibilities for the expression of difference. The demands of difference are resolved by effectively eliminating them from political contestation.

B. John Rawls: Civility as Public Reasonableness

In contrast to Shils, John Rawls advances a liberal conception of civility that is developed under 'ideal' conditions. These 'ideal' conditions are those of an ideally just society in which citizens accept the duties and obligations associated with the conception of justice advanced by the society in question. Civility emerges here as the principal duty of a just society. It is a foundational virtue to the extent that a refusal by citizens to conduct themselves with civility in such a society would stand to undermine the justice of that society. Citizens are required to act with civility in the just society to the extent that the

¹⁴⁶ Under the conditions that Shils envisages, those endowed with the representative capacity for civility would almost always be straight, white, and male and necessarily maintain a privileged socio-economic class position.

¹⁴⁷ To this end, Schmidt also notes that Shils does not clarify the process by which or the procedures through which civility determines what constitutes the public good (1998:426).

state acts as it should in implementing the demands of justice. It is important to emphasize that Rawls limits the application of his theory to specific thresholds of justice. In other words, because he is talking about how the duty of civility would operate under 'ideal' conditions, he is not talking about how civility works under conditions of actually existing societies.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the duty of civility only applies insofar as it is conditioned by the foundation of a just society.¹⁴⁹

The principles of justice may be discerned under 'ideal conditions' by means of a technical device called a 'veil of ignorance' that is imposed upon individuals in the 'original position'. The veil of ignorance provides a means of ensuring the fairest distribution of primary goods in society by a mechanism of 'impartiality' to the extent that it ensures not only that the choice of principles will not be biased by 'arbitrary contingencies', but also that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged by their social circumstances (1971:141).¹⁵⁰ The veil of ignorance is important because it defines the parameters of the original position so that particular principles of justice, derived from the rational self-interest of individuals, can be extracted fairly (1971:148). The combination of the veil of ignorance and rational self-interest is intended to facilitate the unanimous choice of particular principles of justice (1971:140).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ I want to thank Will Kymlicka for clarifying the distinction between 'ideal theory' and 'partial compliance theory' as it applies to the exercise of the duty of civility within actually existing societies.

¹⁴⁹ Rawls argues that: "[w]ithout some recognition of this duty mutual trust and confidence are liable to break down. Thus in a state of near justice at least, there is normally a duty (and for some also the obligation) to comply with unjust laws provided that they do not exceed certain bounds of injustice" (1971:355).

¹⁵⁰ Kymlicka argues that the 'veil of ignorance' is not an expression of identity but rather acts as an intuitive test of fairness to the extent that the veil simply eliminates the possibility for those who might be tempted to influence the procedure to their benefit are unable to do so (1990:62).

¹⁵¹ As much as Rawls argues that the principles of justice emerge from the original position, it is possible to diminish the importance of the original position and view it as simply a technical requirement for the emergence of his particular principles.

The fact that Rawls is dealing with the emergence of justice and public reason from the perspective of 'ideal theory' provokes the question of whether or not it is possible to examine Rawls' work from the perspective of a sociological interrogation of how civility operates as a technology of citizenship. To the extent that 'ideal' conditions do not exist, it becomes a question of assessing how closely a given society complies with the outline of an ideal society. In this regard, the question of thresholds becomes important in terms of assessing whether or not the duty of civility would apply: It is uncertain how the 'ideal' conditions apply in contexts where particular individuals and groups are treated unjustly in societies that might be considered 'reasonably just' in other respects. It is in this regard that the question becomes significant of what criteria are used to determine the extent to which a society is reasonably just. For under extreme conditions of injustice, the requirement that citizens exercise the duty of civility would likely no longer apply. But to the extent that it is possible to interpret Rawls as talking about the duty of civility under conditions of actually existing 'reasonably just' societies, it then becomes possible to interrogate how civility operates as a technology of citizenship.

As becomes increasingly clear in his later work, Rawls offers an account of civility that depends on 'public reasonableness'. 'Public' reason is distinguished from 'non-public' reason. 'Public' reason is associated with government contexts such as parliamentary debates, judicial practice, in addition to party politics, campaigns and voting (1993:215-216). 'Non-public' reason, alternatively, is associated with non-governmental contexts that include the voluntary organizations and associational

networks within civil society (1993:213).¹⁵² The distinction is significant insofar as the goal of public reason is to develop fundamental political principles to which every person can agree regardless of their personal differences. To this end, Rawls insists that “[t]he point of the idea of public reason is that citizens are to conduct their fundamental discussions within the framework of what each regards as a political conception of justice based on values that the others can reasonably be expected to endorse and each is, in good faith, prepared to defend that conception so understood” (1993:226). Here public reason is restricted to debates over “substantive principles of justice of the basic structure” of society and conceptions of “constitutional essentials” that include debates over the structure of government and the rights and entitlements of citizenship (1993:223-4, 227). Public reason demands that all citizens should be prepared to present and explain the reasons behind their views on debates over fundamental principles; it requires that citizens be able to cast their differences in terms of reasons that others could support at least in principle. But public reasons cannot be advanced in support of a specific set of religious or philosophical beliefs (1993:224-225). To this end, Rawls contends that the notion of public reasonableness is crucial for practicing good citizenship because it establishes the moral ‘duty of civility’ on all participants: “the ideal of citizenship imposes a moral, not legal duty – the duty of civility – to be able to explain to one another on those fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason” (1993:217). As Thomas McCarthy points out, being reasonable in this context means that individuals

¹⁵² It would be a mistake to equate ‘non-public’ reason with forms of private reason. Indeed, the issues and concerns that non-public forms of reason seek to address may indeed overlap with public forms of reason (1993:220).

seek “to show how their position can be supported by political values” as opposed to appealing to the whole truth as they see it, one that is informed by ‘comprehensive doctrines’ such as religion and philosophy (1994:51). But the duty of civility also demands that citizens maintain good faith in institutions, obey the law, make considered judgments about whether civil disobedience is justified, and vote in accordance with the common good (McKinnon 2000:146-151).¹⁵³ In this respect, when one engages in civil disobedience, one “invokes the commonly shared conception of justice that underlies the political order” (Rawls 1971:364-365). Contestation therefore occurs when one declares that certain principles of justice are not being respected in order to encourage the majority to reconsider whether their actions are just. In other words, justified civil disobedience is limited to “instances of substantial and clear injustice, and preferably to those which obstruct the path of removing other injustices” (1971:372).

Assuming that Rawls’ conception of ‘public reason’ can be interpreted to address actually-existing social and political relations where they are reasonably just, Rawls can be understood to mobilize civility as a technology in order to address the demands of difference in public life. Rawls offers an account of how justice is discerned under ‘ideal’ conditions. However it is not a sociological one to the extent that he does not trace the historical emergence of actually existing forms of civility. This raises the question of how the duty of civility is to be implemented under non-ideal conditions, and indeed how it might operate under non-just conditions. As a result it gives rise to the question of ‘who’ controls and adjudicates ‘civility’.

¹⁵³ Rawls elaborates this latter point in his *A Theory of Justice*: “we have a natural duty of civility not to invoke the faults of social arrangements as a too ready excuse for not complying with them, nor to exploit inevitable loopholes in the rules to advance our interests. The duty of civility imposes a due acceptance of the defects of institutions and a certain restraint in taking advantage of them” (1971:355).

With these considerations in mind, it is possible to see how civility operates as a set of constraints on political debate to the extent that Rawls' conception of public reason limits certain topics of conversation to governmental and constitutional essentials. Civility operates as a technique of pacification to the extent that all 'citizens' are constrained by the rules of civility. Civility is intended to equalize differences such that marginalized groups may use public reason in order to make demands on the state, and be heard as such. Civility also operates as a technique of distinction to the extent that it potentially brackets off those differences that are contained under the rubric of 'non-public' reason from entering debate (McCarthy 1994:51). As McCarthy points out, the kinds of disputes, debates and conversations that would normally be constitutive of a healthy public sphere in Rawls' account are not considered part of the realm of 'political' debate associated with public reason. This has the inadvertent consequence of 'avoiding' many "conceptual, psychological, cultural and institutional problems" (1994:52). By limiting what counts as 'civility', Rawls places limits on the potential for civility to respond to the demands of difference. That civility involves bracketing off those differences that stand to be the most contentious suggests that his conception of civility may have the inadvertent consequence of producing differences as opposed to ameliorating them.

Bonnie Honig argues that Rawls' conception of justice depends on 'clarity', 'fixity', and 'stability' in order to operate smoothly. Indeed the smooth functioning of a just society is one that depends on the principles derived from the original position. Yet from the perspective of difference, the extent to which the principles of justice emerge from the original position are 'final' ultimately prevents "the parties from choosing

provisional principles for justice now with the intention of revising them at some later date” (1993:135). Although citizens may enter the original position at some subsequent date to review the principles of justice, the difficulty is that their reentry is intended not to open up alternative possibilities, but rather to demonstrate the extent to which the original position is justly conceived. For Rawls in other words, “[i]f the original position is rightly conceived, each repetition of its operation will produce the selfsame outcome” (Honig1993:135). The difficulty is that the original position is constitutive of a singular perspective on justice, one that does not celebrate the different conceptions of justice. In fact, what emerges is an original position that is not one position among others; rather it is *the* position (1993:136).

This process is particularly evident with respect to Rawls’ understanding of civil disobedience. Given that Rawls’ conception of civil disobedience is limited to those acts that undermine agreed upon principles of justice, it stands to disqualify many acts that could be characterized as ‘civil disobedience’. For example, environmentalists who block logging roads or anti-poverty activists who squat in abandoned buildings may not qualify as participating in ‘civil disobedience’ under Rawls’ schema. Indeed, the majority group in a given society may eat meat and/or uphold the rights of private property. Thus, the opportunities to protest and to challenge perceived injustice are limited in this view. As Kent Greenawalt points out, the difficulty is that ‘pure’ appeals to justice are usually rare, and often acts of civil disobedience involve some element of strategic calculation (1998:367). Thus, the possibility that civil disobedience can be persuasive depends on the extent to which the majority shares the views in question. But if the prevailing sense of justice is dependent upon the original position, the implication

is that they themselves may potentially serve to “privatize, naturalize or dissolve dissonant remainders rather than politicize them” (Honig1993:137). In other words, for those who may seek to contest a perceived injustice, Rawls’ position is one that could potentially serve to contain differences at the expense of facilitating or fostering disagreement.

C. Mark Kingwell: Justice as Civility

Mark Kingwell presents a version of a ‘civil’ discourse ethics that seeks to identify the necessary conditions for a vibrant public debate about the moral principles that should govern a heterogeneous society. He contends that ‘thick’ conceptions of justice based on ‘genuine respect’ for others are too much to expect from people engaged in moral disputes. Rather a conception of justice that takes moral differences seriously, but does not advance *a priori* normative principles is preferable (1995:41). He argues that justice can be achieved by means of ‘civil’ constraints that orient public debate in order to make possible a “genuine exchange of views, genuine emergence of difference, and genuine questioning of power imbalances” (1995:47). Civility emerges here as a *political* virtue that is “positively emancipatory” because it simply requires that citizens treat one another “*as if* they were worthy of respect and understanding” (1995:viii, 247, emphasis in the original). Kingwell argues that any moral conversation conducted with civility fills “the prospect of political compromise with greater confidence and resolve, and with renewed hope for success in finding just accommodation of our differences” (1995:viii). This is because civility does not aim to produce agreements, it simply mediates between

conflicting normative visions in order to foster a degree of ‘mutual understanding’¹⁵⁴ (1995:193, 230). Although civility is similar to the idea of politeness, it does not require participants in a moral conversation to be “quiet, obedient, or even well-mannered” – it merely demands that they be “open and restrained in the interest of pragmatic social goals”(1995:48).

Kingwell argues that justice as civility requires that two specific dialogic constraints be placed on moral debate. In contrast to Rawls, the goal is to circumscribe the kind of arguments that might be presented in defence of an issue rather than to limit the airing of particular substantive issues (1995:4, 45, 194, 230).¹⁵⁵ The first constraint is termed *context dependence*. It involves the exercise of self-restraint in “not-saying” all of the “morally excellent” things that one might say in a public debate (1995:25, 42). Context-dependence requires that we hide “our deep disagreements about certain issues” on occasion, but that we always remain committed to keep talking (1995:238). It demands what Kingwell terms a *sincere insincerity*. This allows one to honour a commitment to the conversation, but to reserve the option of not fully elaborating the extent of his or her disagreement as the occasion requires (1995:239). Second, *interpretive tact* involves a kind of sensitivity that encourages one to “rise above one’s own likes and dislikes and consider those of others” (1995:218). This kind of tact is

¹⁵⁴ Kingwell argues that civility engenders just dialogue because it relies on the existence of ‘relevance criteria’ that gives each of the participants to a moral conversation the ability to determine which statements are appropriate to a public dialogue and which must be left in the private realm of ‘deeper moral commitments’ (1995:221).

¹⁵⁵ Kingwell worries that even minimal constraints such as these carry the risk of limiting the ability of some to participate, at the same time as they have the potential to mask extant power relations (1995:45). However, he eschews these concerns as incidental given the ‘emancipatory promise’ that civility inspires.

displayed when one recognizes the legitimacy of another's claims.¹⁵⁶ To be insensitive in this context means that one presents "language or arguments demonstrably inappropriate or irrelevant to the given language game in question" (1995:229). Although power is mediated through any form of talk, Kingwell argues "power relations are not allowed to lie *beneath* conversation" (1995:239, emphasis in original). Rather, he suggests that civility is a neutral category that ensures that participants are able to "criticize norms, rules of distribution, and patterns of interpersonal relation" (1995:239). Ultimately, civility represents a kind of "insincerity about deep commitments known in advance to be controversial" (1995:237). In other words, it allows people to suspend momentarily their disagreements in a principled effort to keep on talking.

Kingwell offers a conception of civility that imposes the requirement of 'context-dependence' and 'interpretive tact' as a set of constraints on moral conversation. These constraints operate as a mechanism of pacification that is intended to equalize the balance of power in social relations. And yet, civility also operates as a technique of distinction to the extent that Kingwell insists that certain kinds of arguments and justifications must be placed off limits in order for public debate to flourish. The difficulty is that Kingwell does not provide an account of the specific conditions of emergence of the constraints signaled by civility. He does not discuss the means by which these constraints come into being, and while they serve to delimit forms of communication, Kingwell implies that they are 'neutral' categories that are neither produced by nor productive of power relations. Kingwell does not address how civility is implemented, who controls or

¹⁵⁶ Kingwell borrows the idea of interpretive tact from Gadamer, for whom tact is "a particular sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which we cannot find any knowledge from general principles" (1975:12).

adjudicates it, and how people come to accept the constraints that civility imposes on them. Thus, he assumes the preexistence of a basic level of agreement between participants on the binding principles of civility that may not actually be present; certainly, he neglects to account for how people agree on what constitutes the content of civility. As a result, his conception of the content of civility, i.e. of the standards that set bounds on political contestation, appears as either arbitrary or as something that itself needs to be determined through political contestation. Civility emerges as a mechanism that it is intended to respond to the demands of difference, but, in effect, stands potentially to reinforce and to produce differences in the process.

D. Benjamin Barber: Civility as Strong Democratic Talk

Benjamin Barber develops an account of civility that is premised on a civic republican conception of participatory democracy. But central to his conception of civility is the idea that conflict contributes to a 'strong democracy'. This conception of democracy is one that "is consonant with – indeed it depends upon – the politics of conflict, the sociology of pluralisms and the separation of private and public realms of action" (1984:117). Barber's democracy, therefore, depends upon the "activity, involvement, commitment, obligation, and service" of its citizens, and, while grounded in conflict is oriented toward the cultivation of civic attitudes that can eventually generate a common good (1984:133, 117).

Barber argues that for strong democracy to work effectively, it requires 'strong democratic talk'. Democratic talk includes the expression of interests, bargaining, persuasion and agenda setting, as well as the expression of affiliation, affection and self-

expression (1999:39). This conception of democracy demands that citizens deliberate publicly about the consequences of particular decisions, actions and policies. Because public deliberation involves conflict, talk must be regulated by “listening no less than speaking” (1984:174; 1999:39). Listening means that “I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I will strain to hear what makes us alike, I will listen for a common rhetoric evocative of a common purpose or a common good” (1984:175).¹⁵⁷ The combination of listening and speaking encourages citizens to deal with conflict, and to develop an awareness of the sorts of power relations that stand in the way of deliberation. In fact, democratic politics is made possible, indeed necessitated “by conditions that impose *a necessity for public action, and thus for reasonable public choice, in the presence of conflict and in the absence of private or independent grounds for judgment.*” (1984:120, emphasis in original).

Civility emerges as an important feature of strong democracy to the extent that it is a civic virtue that promotes “reciprocal empathy and mutual respect” through democratic talk (1984:223).¹⁵⁸ As a civic virtue, it demands that citizens exercise skills such as commonality, deliberation, inclusiveness, provisionality, listening, learning, lateral communication, imagination and empowerment in order to be considered competent citizens (1999:42-45, 47). In this view, civility is the centerpiece of strong democratic talk because it helps citizens ‘confront brute force with reason’ in order to transform personal self-interest into a set of common orientations that allows one to move

¹⁵⁷ Seyla Benhabib makes a similar point to the extent that she argues that “we exercise reversibility of perspectives either by actually listening to all involved or by representing to ourselves imaginatively the many perspectives of those involved” (1992:54).

¹⁵⁸ What is peculiar about Barber’s notion of civility is that it draws on Michael Oakeshott’s account of civility in *On Human Conduct* (1975). Barber does not address the possibility that Oakeshott’s conservative vision of society potentially stands in tension with Barber’s emphasis on conflict in participatory democracy (1984:223).

beyond 'I' to 'We' (1984:190; 1999:46). To this end, democratic talk not only demands civility, Barber maintains that it also produces civility. Indeed it emerges as a form of *tolerance* that helps citizens to confront "the political conflict that is essential to democracy" (1999:40).

Civility emerges as a technology of citizenship that mediates conflict in democratic societies through specific skills such as 'deliberation', 'inclusiveness', 'commonality' and so forth. When these skills are put into practice, they operate as constraints on democratic talk, and indeed reflect and reproduce the exercise of power. Civility operates as a technique of pacification that orients all citizens in society toward cultivating a common good through the messy and conflictual process of political negotiation. It also operates as a technique of distinction to the extent that citizens are expected to exercise practices that distinguish between civil forms of conduct (inclusivity, listening, commonality etc.) and other possible forms of conduct (exclusion, silencing, self-interest etc.). Although Barber accepts the extent to which conflict is part of a democratic process, he advances civility as a mechanism that works to resolve conflict. The difficulty is that Barber does not provide an account of how civility comes to take the specific form it does under conditions of strong democracy. As such, the questions of how civility comes to be implemented and how it operates as a mechanism to mediate conflict are left unanswered. Instead, Barber seems to authorize a specific conception of civility that could have the effect of bracketing off differences that are potentially contentious. For example, Barber maintains that civility helps to produce consensus. The difficulty is that it remains unclear what he means by consensus. Indeed, the procedural and substantive orientations of his conception of civility appear to stand in

tension with each other (Bickford 1996:13-14). At times, Barber presents a procedural model of consensus building that is oriented toward devising procedures help citizens learn how to disagree (1984:128-129). And yet, at other times, Barber articulates a more substantive understanding of consensus that is intended to generate a common vision of the future (1984:151, 224). To this end, Barber repeatedly uses the imagery associated with neighborliness, community, and a common consciousness in order to advance a model of consensus-building (1996:13-14, see Barber 1984:209, 224).¹⁵⁹ The difficulty is that without an accounting of the conditions for its emergence, Barber advances a conception of civility that arbitrarily places constraints on democratic process, and thus authorizes some spaces for politics at the expense of others.

5.4 Conclusion

In general terms, Anglo-American citizenship theorists who deploy the language of civility do so in order to prescribe constraints on processes of political communication and negotiation in order to facilitate peaceful and reasonable dialogue that stands in contrast to violence, intimidation, harassment and coercion. In this regard, civility specifies a form of conduct that serves as a precondition for participating in political dialogue devoted to negotiating access to specific resources.¹⁶⁰ These theorists accept the extent to which civility is a form of power that places limits on politics. Indeed they argue that civility is a necessary requirement for effective, fair and reasonable

¹⁵⁹ For example, Barber argues that “[p]articular interests can be counted and aggregated, but a will that is general entails a seeing that is common”(1984:202).

¹⁶⁰ A recent article by Etienne Balibar provides a good example of the use of civility as technology that organizes access to citizenship relations. Here, civility engenders a form of politics that offers citizens the means to resist global forms of mass violence (2001:28)

communication. At the same time, what tends to be missing from these attempts to mobilize civility as a technology of good citizenship (with the possible exception of Rawls), is a clear account of the concrete conditions of emergence for their respective conceptions of civility.

It is in this regard that Elias' account of civility becomes particularly useful. Elias helps us to see how the processes of distinction and pacification, operating under concrete social conditions, give rise to civility. Here civility emerges as the outcome of ongoing structural transformations in society. The idea that civility develops in relation to processes of 'distinction' makes it possible to explain how the concept authorizes specific modes of conduct and not others. When viewed in the context of citizenship, this account allows us to see that civility organizes specific spaces where political contestation happens through dialogue, and sometimes through forms of civil disobedience. But civility also emerges as a product of 'pacification' whereby practices such as 'public reason', 'interpretive tact' and 'listening' serve to pacify the more powerful members of society. Here civility places constraints on political dialogue in order to create spaces for those who do not practice full and equal citizenship, spaces in which they will have the opportunity to provide reasons and to expect that their arguments will be heard by the more powerful members in society.

Although it is possible to see the processes of distinction and pacification at work in contemporary deployments of civility, the contemporary Anglo-American citizenship theorists that I consider here tend to mobilize civility as an already constituted set of authorized constraints that are intended to create the conditions to generate social change. From an Eliasian perspective, this move is problematic to the extent that, for Elias at

least, civility is seen as an effect rather than the cause of structural changes in social relations. Without an account of the specific conditions of emergence of a particular understanding of civility, the difficulty is that the limits placed on conduct may have the unintended consequence of retrenching forms of domination by assuming a legitimacy and a degree of commonality that may not exist. As a result, the constraints imposed by civility may place illegitimate limits on a full and effective disclosure of different points of view. Even though the constraints in question may be perceived as 'thin' by Anglo-American citizenship theorists, without a full accounting of the concrete conditions of the concept's emergence, one possible effect is to presume a level of agreement that civility is ostensibly supposed to create. In other words, if the idea behind mobilizing civility is to resolve differences and rearticulate them in a reasoned, fair, equitable fashion, it is easy to make the slip between actively constructing commonality through specific conditions of emergence, and presuming commonality where it does not exist. My concern is that if commonality is presumed to exist without the conditions of its emergence being accounted for, then it becomes difficult to see how civility can effectively offer the means to respond to the demands of difference. To the extent that Anglo-American citizenship theorists assume commonality, the forms of civility that they prescribe may actually hinder the expression of difference and inhibit the negotiation of political conflict.

Thinking about civility as a technology of citizenship helps us to think about the ways that civility creates certain possibilities for politics, and at the same time as it constrains them. That this is so suggests that civility is an ambivalent technology that fosters an ambivalent politics. On the one hand, civility facilitates a form of politics that

creates the possibility for differences to be expressed and communicated at the same time that it constrains them. On the other hand, civility reflects an orientation toward commonality at the same time that it seeks to foster the expression of differences. The effect of my argument is to question whether civility can effectively enable citizens and potential citizens to resolve their differences when deliberation is the goal, not the starting point of political dialogue.

6 Conclusion: The Politics of Virtue

My aim in this dissertation has been to develop a critical account of the practical means by which normative Anglo-American citizenship discourses produce an image of the good citizen as one who exhibits strength of character through civil conduct. I have argued that these citizenship discourses constitute the good citizens through a process of civic regulation that depends on the dividing practices of 'identity-difference' and 'virtue-vice'. The extent to which these practices are doubly *articulated* reveals the good citizen as the product of perpetually evolving social relations. Indeed, the double articulation of dividing practices enables Anglo-American citizenship theorists to mobilize character and civility as technologies that seek to contain self-interest and to accommodate difference.

In my discussion of 'character' as a technology of good citizenship, I maintain that character operates as an idealized *habitus* that is organized by a logic of 'disinterest'. I argue that viewing character in this manner helps us to see how it works to contain self-interest by encouraging citizens to suspend their personal interests for the good of the whole. Indeed, this helps us to see how character can operate as a pre-political good that seeks to suspend political contestation over its moral grounds in order to create a foundation of shared values. In so doing, it seeks to ameliorate the challenges posed by difference in everyday life. My approach to conceptualizing the 'good' citizen as a set of dividing practices is revealing for character: it demonstrates the extent to which character is constituted by local and particular world-views that work to contain politics and limit difference.

In my discussion of ‘civility’ as a technology of good citizenship, I contend that civility is the outcome of a *figurational* process that emphasizes the dynamic unfolding of ‘pacification’ and ‘distinction’. This approach helps us to see that Anglo-American citizenship theorists deploy civility as a mechanism for establishing constraints on the process of political negotiation in order to foster ‘reasonable’ dialogue by limiting violence, incivility and harassment. Yet, as we have just seen, the tendency for Anglo-American citizenship theorists to lose sight of the specific conditions that give rise to civility produces a conception of civility that operates as an already constituted set of constraints that assumes a degree of commonality in social and political life that may not exist.

Throughout this dissertation I have demonstrated that one of the effects of reading normative debates on citizenship from the perspective of civic regulation is that the ‘good’ citizen is no longer conceptualized as an always-already constituted set of ideals; it is rather a complex of practices that is constituted through power relations. This richer conception of citizenship reveals the subject of the ‘good’ citizen to be one that is constructed through the double articulation of dividing practices. Viewing citizenship in this fashion helps to clarify the potential dangers that stem from uncritically adopting normative ideals of good citizenship. My approach encourages ‘us’ to think carefully about what kinds of citizens we want to construct, and indeed what kinds of virtues we employ in our dividing practices.

My contribution consists in elaborating an account of good citizenship that adopts the language of ‘practices’ as a starting point for thinking about citizenship relations. This approach enables ‘us’ to see the ways that the good citizen is the product of specific

technologies that produce certain practical effects. My discussion has sought to demonstrate that the task at hand is to think critically about the ways that normative discourses of good citizenship are always already embedded within relations of power.

And yet, it does not follow from my account, however, that normative discourses must *always* have an account of their unfolding. My account simply seeks to underscore the benefits that stem from conceptualizing citizenship as an ensemble of practices in order to analyze the practical means by which the good citizen is constructed within normative Anglo-American citizenship discourses. Indeed, my aim has been to interrogate the ways that these normative accounts have sought to configure politics through ‘virtue’. My discussion reinforces the extent to which attempts to cultivate norms of good citizenship are contingent social practices that seek to generate ‘truths’ about the social world. But, rather than generate a singular truth about the nature of citizenship practices, my analysis highlights the extent to which the constitution of the good citizen reflects a continual unfolding of processes of articulation (the cultivation of particular virtues of citizenship) and processes of disarticulation (the destabilization of a particular configuration of citizenship virtues). Where normative approaches to citizenship engage in a process of articulating specific practices of identity-difference and virtue-vice, my dissertation has engaged with these approaches in order to disarticulate the particular constellation of practices that make up the good citizen. The effect of this approach has been to ‘problematize’ the good citizen, and in so doing, to offer new ways of interrogating its practices.

One of the consequences of my analysis for future research is that when citizenship is conceived as an ensemble of practices that emerge in relation to different

fields, it suggests the possibility that multiple forms of citizenship emerge through different articulations of the dividing practices of 'identity-difference' and 'virtue-vice'. This suggests that the presence of multiple forms of citizenship may indeed point to a further *disarticulation* of the dividing practices associated with the Anglo-American citizenship discourses that I consider here. Indeed the particular constellation of dividing practices in Anglo-American citizenship discourses is only one of many different possibilities. The idea that dividing practices may produce different configurations of identity-difference and virtue-vice suggests that it is possible to conceive of different forms of ethical selfhood (of which character is only one) and of ethical conduct (of which civility is only one). This possibility reinforces the extent to which the current structures of recognition associated with Anglo-American citizenship discourses are open to contestation, and therefore to the possibility that new forms of citizenship politics can emerge. The pursuit of these questions here would however take me beyond the scope of the present analysis.

In conclusion, my analysis has demonstrates the necessary incompleteness associated with any attempt to conceptualize citizenship relations, and in so doing, it highlights the importance of processes of articulation and disarticulation in conceptualizing good citizenship as a perpetually unfolding set of practices and of the politics that virtue seeks to generate.

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