‘Testing the Liberal Subject: Examination, Responsibility and (In)Security in the UK Citizenship Test.’

Joe Turner, Department of Politics, University of Sheffield

Abstract

‘Citizenship Tests’ have been viewed as part of the wider patterns of governing migration in recent years. It has been suggested that the institutional testing of would-be-citizens provides an example of border strengthening amidst a discourse of fear over ‘high’ levels of migration, risk to projects of cultural homogeneity and the security climate of the ‘war on terror’. In this sense it is understood as another totem of the ‘death’ of multiculturalism and often presented as an illiberal strategy of cultural assimilation spreading through Europe. I want to propose that whilst the notion of ‘testing’ is built out of a certain set of fears about risk and danger in Western democracies, what the citizenship test actually presents (at least in the UK) is an explicitly liberal strategy of governing. This is presented in a language of ‘inclusion’, cultural ‘tolerance’, and ‘civic’ renewal which must be taken seriously. In suggesting this, I want to illustrate that ‘testing’ is not only a mechanism of disciplinary power but also relies on strategy of empowerment and self betterment. In this sense the test represents a fascinating nexus between (neo) liberal ideas of governing and concerns regarding (in)security. Using the UK as an empirical example, I argue that studying the test in this way offers up vital questions about how community and political membership continues to be shaped in late modernity.

‘The introduction of a Citizenship Ceremony dramatises the importance of someone being welcome and accepted as a fellow citizen into a network of rights and mutual obligations.’

(Runnymede Trust, The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report) \(^1\)

‘(Ritual is) separating those who have undergone it, not from who have yet to undergo it, but from those who will not undergo it in any sense, and thereby institutionalising a lasting difference between those of whom the rite pertains and to themselves it does not pertain.’\(^2\)

(Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power) \(^3\)

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\(^3\) Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 122.
Citizenship as Movement

To think about the juridical shift from ‘non-citizen’ to ‘citizen’ may be one of the most appropriate ways to investigate the character of political membership in a liberal state. The fact that this ‘move’ remains a possibility in western democracies is supposed to highlight the very liberal nature of the institutional structures of a state. In this sense it presents the idea that a subject can pass through the border which describes the edge of a community. This means they can be ‘included’, juridically, within a network of privileged rights and duties - supposedly in the same way that those that ‘belong’ (through birthright) are. The possibility of this higher level of ‘inclusion’ is thus another hallmark of a pluralistic democracy; the liberal nature of greeting the stranger and giving them the opportunity of ‘stepping over the threshold’ into full citizenship. This is replete with the promise of the stranger being treated like ‘us’ but it also works on another expectation - of the stranger being like ‘us’.

In the case of the UK, this arrangement has been referred to as a process of ‘naturalisation’ and, in more recent expressions, as a ‘journey’. In this way it is described as a passage and a movement between one space of experiences, legal arrangements and cultural assumptions and another. And yet, to consider the very possibility of bridging this divide involves a complex construction of boundaries: it relies upon the premise that some subjects are ‘outside’ the particularist political community and that others have always been (and will always be) ‘inside’. So, whilst ‘inclusion’ is vital for the reproduction of liberal democracy and citizenship (the respect of difference, universalism and pluralism) it also reveals necessary ‘exclusion’. Likewise, this movement between ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ raises questions of insecurity – especially as the imagery of this movement has always been accompanied with the language of threats – penetration, infiltration, permeation. In this sense it produces anxieties and concerns around the limits of political community and the exposure to difference; it pushes the boundary of what can be tolerated; it questions the shape and character of what citizenship is supposed to represent.

It is within this liberal tension between inclusion/exclusion where I think we can best locate the arrival of the citizenship test in European states. That is, as a relatively new way of acting on the movement between the migrant and the citizen; a way of managing the negotiation between inclusion and exclusion. I argue that in situating the citizenship test within this specific liberal nexus we can better understand how it functions as technique of government. Utilising some reflection from governmentality literature, this paper looks at how the test acts on subjects through ideas of risky and threatening difference, alongside notions of responsibility, self sufficiency and meritocracy. I argue that this reveals the complicated way in which inclusion/exclusion works. It offers then a reflection of the changing way that the border is managed under advanced liberal government. Furthermore, I want to suggest that the test manifests new ways of thinking about political community which reflects the adoption of various pluralist and civic strategies.
Testing

The citizenship test has been offered as a way of governing the complicated journey into citizenship, made more problematic (so the narrative goes) by extensive immigration, problems of ‘inclusion’ and failed attempts at multiculturalism. In the UK such ‘problems’, often attributed to globalisation, have been viewed as polarising and dismantling ‘community cohesion’ which the test actively seeks to correct. In many European states the discourse of citizenship has been heightened by the visibility of certain groups who are seen as lingering at the periphery or margins of society – in proximity but ‘different’. We find images of migrant groups who speak different languages, retain ‘traditional’ customs, those who do not ‘integrate’. In the UK this visibility has been intensified under the dual discourse of civil disorder and ‘the war on terror’. This has arguably lifted certain cultural and racial traits, already viewed as problematic, to the status of ‘risky’ and ‘threatening’. Events such as civil disturbances (sometimes called ‘race riots’) in northern cities in 2000 and the suicide bombing in 2006 were run together as problems of citizenship – the lack of ‘a common glue’ that held community together.\textsuperscript{4} Under this discursive register the strategy of ‘testing’ provides a means to regulate and act upon these differences. It means asking new things of the would-be-citizen which were not previously quantifiable: specific language requirements, knowledge of institutions, cultural understanding.

The practices and content of testing ‘regimes’ may be varied but they often converge around a shared set of prescriptions/ideas:

- The ‘foreign’ subject must be tested (successfully) before they receive full citizen rights (and even some more limited rights such as indefinite habitation or ‘leave to remain’) from a state. In the UK this is for all applicants of citizenship, in other European states this is more closely defined (e.g. the Dutch state provides exceptions on the basis of educational achievement).\textsuperscript{5}

- The subject must possess a quantified level of language (in the UK this is \textit{ESOL level 3} in English/Gaelic/Welsh – defined as possessing enough English to ‘fulfil the duties of citizenship’).

- The subject must also pass a ‘knowledge’ based test which is supposed to reflect cultural, political and historical events (in the UK this is called the ‘Life in the UK’ test. Those


\textsuperscript{5} Those possessing ‘All forms of secondary education, vocational education, professional education, and university, provided that teaching is provided in the Dutch language’ are exempt from the civic integration test. See the \textit{Immigration and Naturalisation Service} for more details: \url{http://english.ind.nl/}.
without a specified level of English have to take a combined language and citizenship course; those above a certain standard must pass a single multiple choice test).\(^6\)

In the discourse surrounding the test in the UK, raising the expectations on the would-be-citizens by testing them was offered as a way of regulating and monitoring the ambiguities and anxieties around which ‘inclusion’ took place. In the words of ex-Home Secretary David Blunkett, the test rests on a concern that ‘British citizens should play an active role, both economic and political, in our society, and a have a sense of belonging to a wider community.’\(^7\) It provides a way of making the act of ‘inclusion’ more visible, it celebrates citizenship unashamedly, it talks of civic virtues, ‘support’, ‘integration’. Similarly, it is based on the fear that those ‘strangers’ who have taken up citizenship have not been nearly like ‘us’ enough:

**Critics**

This fear, and its grounding in various images of national community, homogeneity, cultural unity, have meant that critics of citizenship tests have been quick to label them ‘illiberal’, strategies of border ‘strengthening’ and as part of a wider ‘death of multiculturalism’ in Europe.\(^8\) The problem for those approaching the test has been that it doesn’t fit into liberal conceptions of ‘inclusion’; that it rests too much on assimilation over tolerance; that it offers a one dimensional framing of citizenship.\(^9\) The central question posed by Robert Schuman Centre in Florence on a multi authored project was just this; ‘How Liberal are Citizenship Tests?’ it asked.

The field of analysis surrounding the test has thus often been limited by such assumptions. The implication being that if ‘testing’ would-be-citizens can be justified under principles of liberal thought then it can be considered acceptable, even ‘just’.\(^10\) If multiculturalism is dead then this is perhaps the victory of liberalism in its republican and communitarian form (‘all the better for it’ they say – everyone is now treated the same!).\(^11\) The other side of this field of analysis is that if the citizenship test is seen as failing the liberal ‘litmus’ test then it

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\(^6\) As set out in the *Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002*, 7-8.


becomes disagreeable; it is too exclusory, it is not fit for purpose. This is a view espoused by many prominent thinkers – Joseph Carens, Christian Joppke.\textsuperscript{12} It must be rejected on the grounds of liberalism then – liberal government does not tolerate practices of exclusion, so the narrative goes.

What I argue is contrary to this field of analysis, both in the assumptions surrounding multiculturalism, exclusion and its reading of liberal government. I argue that to fully appreciate the character and capacities of the test in European states (using the UK as an example) we are better off comprehending citizenship tests in terms of the existing techniques of liberal government. This is not just a device of border strengthening, or as an ‘illiberal’ mechanism. This means viewing the citizenship test \textit{as liberal but also exclusory} practice. It is then a site of competing and multiple dynamics which are normalising, disciplining as well as productive.

In this sense I agree with many critics of the test such as Adrian Blackledge, Oded Lowenheim and Orit Gazit who argue that we can see a disciplinary strategy within the citizenship test. They are devices that exclude and create further barriers for ‘foreign’ subjects to gain citizenship. Again, I infer through the history of the test that this is born out of a strong will to protect a certain vision of political community which is seen as being at threat (dangerous levels of difference which corrupt a harmonious space). We see this in the way that the citizenship test was proposed in direct response to fears over ‘community cohesion’ in the UK – that somehow it could both foster and protect against further disorder brought about by excessive difference.

On the other hand I argue that the way this exclusion is framed and performed within the practices of the test is precisely through the liberal tension of inclusive-exclusion. Importantly, the test fetishes certain traits which are seen as central to the underpinnings of liberal (plural) citizenship – responsibility, civic sacrifice, exchange. In asking the would-be-citizen to perform certain functions (to pay, learn, and provide evidence of achievements) before rights are distributed I argue that the subject is acted upon as a threat but one that can be modified and made safer through certain techniques of ‘inclusion’ (self improvement, education, dialogue). The very liberal nature of this technique, which Foucault keenly identified, is that it asks the migrant-subject to participate in the decision over their own fate – they are imbricated, involved and decisive (to an extent) in acts of government.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, the power of the test is its productive as well as restrictive properties. This interlinks a language


of ‘barriers’, ‘borders’ and ‘exclusions’ with a language of ‘support’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘self betterment’.

The success of this analytical framework, I argue, is that it allows us to better understand the intricate working of practices of government under certain historic conditions. Informed by the extensive literature on governmentality, it takes into account the way certain power-knowledge relations are stratified through certain micro-processes. It allows us to see how competing discourse circulate and inform government action with multiple consequences. Likewise, it allows us to fully comprehend the changing conditions under which contemporary liberal citizenship is performed. Such an analysis teaches us that we should take seriously the way that the discourse of modern government have taken on certain ideas from multiculturalism – respect, tolerance, embracing diversity. Likewise, the manner in which a re-emphasis on the civic aspects of citizenship has emerged. In this way it is not good enough to see the test in a competing vision of nationalism versus multiculturalism, or a return to past models of assimilation. Instead, there are new dynamics at play which produce new forms of anxieties and problematic subjects – new forms of ‘inclusive-exclusion’. The language of pluralism and civic virtue that we find in the test is not then just a smoke screen for old racial tropes but in fact also central to the way political community is imagined and governed in the UK (and, perhaps, in other liberal European states).

From this analysis of the test we can see perhaps see two important implications which have wider application. Firstly, that we may see at the heart of the citizenship test a new subject of governmental practice of the border – the ‘active-migrant-subject’. In this sense a morally stratified agent, with extended responsibilities and expectations. This is reflected in other border strategies such as the meritocracy of the new immigrations points system, new higher salary barriers for migrant workers and the ‘efficiency’ and drive for ‘speed’ under the Schengen Agreement. Secondly, tied to this vision of the subject we may see other ways in which political community is described and understood. It may be better to describe the space of the nation, which the citizenship test imagines, as more in line with a ‘moral community’ – a homogenous space inscribed by ideas of behaviour, conduct and culture. This does not mean that the space of the nation is no longer sketched out through divisive strategies of ‘us’ and ‘them’ but that the character of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ is contingent. We do not see the end of a racially informed logic of community here but instead racial and cultural notions are recoded through a moral prism – questioned as to the imagined unity

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that is expressed in ideas of the tolerant, the civic, and the self sufficient subject. We are presented with a series of morally located behaviours which mark out the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’ migrant-citizen.

I do not see this as ‘progressive’ but instead as a changing and historically informed space and field of government which makes new subjects problematic, raises new concerns and produces new visible threats to the ‘community’. It should be analysed as such.

**Structure**

I will briefly sketch out a history of the citizenship in the UK which I argue is central to understandings its various capacities. I will then look at the dual ways it acts on subjects through disciplinary strategy and likewise through *responsibilisation*. This means looking at what the test asks of the migrant-subject through its internal practices. For the purpose of this paper I will avoid discussing the content of the test.

**A Brief History**

While it is important to consider that the institutionalisation of the test in the UK did not arise in isolation but, as Amitai Etzioni has remarked, rose out of a testing discourse across liberal states (mainly in Europe, North America, Australia) I think there are some specific historical conditions which made the policy possible.\(^\text{17}\) We can see the issue of citizenship gaining government attention in the late 1990’s, specifically after the New Labour government came to power in 1997. Under both Home Secretaries Jack Straw and then David Blunkett ‘citizenship’ became part of New Labour plan to resurrect the assumed balance of communitarian rights and responsibilities which were seen as lost under Thatcherism.\(^\text{18}\) This led to the adoption of citizenship lessons for all school children through changes to the national curriculum.\(^\text{19}\) The discourse also played a part in the reform of welfare rights - namely the New Deal, which renegotiated the role of the welfare claimant and the authorities. These various strategies were voiced in a language of ‘communities’ and ‘empowerment’.

At first this new assertion of citizenship was couched in universal terms but it soon became apparent that the target of such tactics was certain problematic groups and individuals. The visibility of certain ‘problem’ groups was highlighted in the first report by the *Citizenship Advisory Team* which took youth malaise, sub-cultural loyalty, alongside patterns of migration, as factors which might lead to a democratically disenfranchised generation (‘an entire generation has opted out of party politics’).\(^\text{20}\) After the civil disturbances in Bradford,


Oldham and Burnley in 2000, the object of these concerns became increasingly visible and linked to a more immanent presence of violence and a discourse of migration/diversity.

In the period directly after the civil disturbance the Institute for Community Cohesion (known commonly as the Cantle Report) produced a report which specifically tied together the causes of this violence to both fears over civic degradation and the visibility of linguistic, cultural and racial differences. The framing of such clashes, which predominantly involved outbreaks of sporadic violence between ‘Asian’ and ‘White’ men and the police, can be considered as an important act of historical problematisation which the citizenship test became one of the many solutions for.

What this report, and others, revealed was a ‘vivid picture of fractured and divided communities’ that brought with it the imminent and evident possibility of violence. In line with this, the report promoted a common identity, a re-evaluation of values that could be shared across and within such ‘diverse cultural communities’; UK society had become too polarised around ‘community differences, this produced disorder itself. For the protection of true community (order, harmony, homogeny) this needed amending. So a lack of ‘community cohesion’ suggested that both communities (‘Asian’ and ‘White’) living ‘separate’ lives in these urban spaces had to conform around principles of commonality and sameness linked to an understanding of national community. As the report suggested:

A meaningful concept of citizenship needs establishing - and championing – which recognises (in education programmes in particular) the contribution of all culture’s to this Nation’s development throughout its history, but establishes a clear primary loyalty to this Nation.

It is this ‘meaningful concept of citizenship’ that was taken up by policy makers working on migration and border strategies in early 2001. It provided an important example of the ‘necessity’ of such actions on a national scale. While the violence in Northern towns may have concerned ‘settled’ communities, ‘Asian’ communities were perceived as possessing traits which linked them to the ‘outside’, to the transgression of both the territorial border and citizenship. As Blunkett was to suggest: ‘the first challenge migration poses is to our concept of national identity and citizenship’. ‘Fractured communities’, which produced such

22 The report defines ‘Community Cohesion’ as : ‘There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.’ Institute of Community Cohesion, Review of Community Cohesion in Oldham Final Report, 15.
24 The ‘disturbances’ are pointed to directly as part of the context of reform in Home Office, Secure Border and Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain (London: HMSO, 2002), 10.
disorder, were the product of migration because of the persistence of certain traits (racial, cultural, linguistic) which migrant-citizens held. The solution to such a dangerous lack of ‘community cohesion’ meant fostering ‘civic identity and shared values’ but specifically through the provisions offered by the entrance into citizenship (the movement from outside to inside).

In the Government White Paper Secure Border and Safe Havens 2001, which Blunkett headed, this link was made concrete by offering up a citizenship test as the very means through which ‘cohesion’ could be regulated and managed. As it suggests:

> The acquisition of British Nationality is a bureaucratic exercise, with almost no effort made to engage new members of the community with the fundamentals of our democracy and society... In an increasingly diverse world it is vital that we strengthen both our sense of community belonging and civic and political dimensions of British citizenship. In particular, we intend to offer language training and light touch education for citizenship for those making a home in the UK – with a view to simple examination for citizenship applicants similar to that which exists in other countries. This will strengthen the ability of new citizens to participate actively in our democracy. This will help people understand both their rights and obligations as citizens in the UK, and strengthen the bonds of mutual understanding between people of diverse backgrounds. It will also help promote individuals’ economic and social integration.  

The report provided for a number of competing and dynamic processes which became etched into the institutionalisation of tests (through the Nationality and Immigration Act 2002). The new migrant citizen was viewed as a threat to cohesion but this was also concerned with empowerment; ‘strengthening the ability of new citizens to participate actively in our democracy.’ In this vision the individual subject was seen as the site of potential change. The logic of the test was to act on the subject but through ‘engagement’/‘light touch’. It was about supporting the individual to reach their potential; ‘economic and social integration’. Likewise, the language of pluralism was ever present ‘civic and political dimensions’, ‘rights and obligations’, so was that of multiculturalism, for example the stress on ‘bonds of mutual understanding between people of diverse backgrounds’. This occurred against a backdrop of implicit nationalistic sentiment (described as ‘our sense of community belonging’) and an image of linguistic unity. In the inception of the test then old tropes blended with new models of civic citizenship, pluralism and that of individual responsibility – this was after all proposed as ‘Integration with Diversity’.

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The *Nationality and Immigrant Act* then enforced such provisions by pushing forward three recommendations found in the white paper:

- Speeding up the process of obtaining citizenship
- Preparing people by promoting language training and education for citizenship
- Celebrating the acquisition of citizenship by introducing citizenship ceremonies

The regime of testing proposed in the *Secure Borders* White Paper was offered as a central technocratic practice through which the various necessary and essential common (however civic) values of citizenship could be performed and structured. This meant that after 2004 all applicants of naturalisation would either need to attend joint English language and citizenship classes or pass a multiple choice ‘Life in the UK’ test.\(^26\) Subsequently, the subject of a citizenship application must possess enough knowledge needed to ‘settle’ and ‘integrate’ into the political community – this involved both linguistic skill and ‘cultural understanding’.\(^27\) The multiple choice (‘Life in the UK’) test then spanned a number of categories – health, economy, education, even history. After successfully completing either of these two routes to citizenship the next step concerned the need to celebrate the acquisition of citizenship in a symbolic setting with the introduction of a citizenship ceremony and the creation of a ‘citizenship pledge’ (see Table 1.1 below). This was part ritualised celebration, part confirmation of the cultural boundaries the new migrant was stepping into.

**‘UK Citizenship Oaths and Pledges’ Table 1.1**\(^28\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oath of allegiance</th>
<th>I (name) swear by Almighty God that on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation of allegiance</td>
<td>I (name) do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(secular alternative to above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pledge</td>
<td>I will give my loyalty to the United Kingdom and respect its rights and freedoms. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfill my duties and obligations as a British citizen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{26}\) The test examined competency in English at the same time.


Discipline/Responsibility – Understanding the Liberal Nexus of the Test

What these practices offer is way of working on the migrant subject through new and varied governmental processes. It contains capacities that are both restrictive and productive. What essentially changes in the citizenship test is the way that difference is worked upon before citizenship is acquired. This is a marked change from older ‘integration’ and ‘assimilatory’ strategies which previously took the new citizen (not the new-would-be-citizen) as their central referent. By creating a test of both language and knowledge we can assume that what the authorities were/are concerned with is acting on certain forms of differences over others. This arguably changed the nature of access into formal citizenship as it became more restrictive for many candidates; the level of restriction being stratified by economic, social and cultural factors. It is no longer an expectation that the migrant citizens may learn English or, likewise, may gain knowledge from spontaneous engagement with wider society (socialisation etc), it becomes something that must be imposed, mandated and ‘supported’. Even if the process is imagined as an extensive ‘journey’ beyond the test, it is still becomes something that must be examined and regimented by state mechanisms. Importantly, while the state sets the parameters for this examination it is the individual subject who must learn, overcome impediments and develop through this process. It appears as a form of individual sacrifice for inclusion into the collective.

We then see different dynamics at play here which converge around a certain vision of modern citizenship. The test thus makes possible new devices of exclusion through the changing way ‘inclusion’ is governed. I will outline these capacities and dynamics before drawing together what implications this might have.

Restrictive Capacity

So, one implication for the movement between migrant and citizen under the regime of testing is that citizenship acquisition becomes more difficult. It is a mechanism of greater restriction, where subjects are disciplined into certain normalised trajectories – they must acquire a language, or provide evidential proof of a language up to a certain level, they must pass an examination which tests knowledge. This has the effect of acting on certain subjects more than others because of the cultural and behavioural processes which it fetishes.

Much has been said of the UK test’s anachronistic content but it is not enough to see restriction tied to the tests specific and sometimes difficult questioning. It also provides another layer of bureaucracy and institutional rules to distance the migrant from the
political community. In doing so it acts as a further symbolic and practical divide. This restriction works on a number of levels and there are economic, social and cultural sides to the application process which can be off putting to the citizenship-seeking subject.

The application to gain UK citizenship is itself expensive but the test now demands the purchase of a fair amount of additional support material - provided through private contracts linked to the Home Office. This shifts a further financial burden onto the applicant. Then there is of course the extended impact of the test - the time and energy it takes to prepare, days off work, loss of leisure time etc.

The most obvious economic restriction though is perhaps found in the emphasis on language competency. The test essentially divides applicants into those who have a competent level of English and those who don’t. While the Labour government emphasised the availability of free English language training in the lead up to the test’s implementation (in 2004) this has not been followed through. Those applicants who have refugee status have formal access to free English language lessons but this is only after 3 years of habitation in the UK (a long time to be ‘outside’ society, if we are to follow the authorities own discourse). For economic migrants this is even more difficult and expensive to access. The provision of English language courses themselves is also extremely fragmented, often provided by NGOs, small charities or individuals. What this essentially means is that applicants must often pay for courses privately, or teach themselves, adding further economic and social pressures and restrictions. For those on low incomes and busy lives this is often not an easy prospect and may take years, if not decades, to complete.

Such a level of restriction is, in my eyes, less of a simple misstep in government policy but instead an open strategy which relies on personal sacrifice a part of the testing process itself.

What the restrictions to English classes also reveal is a demographic and cultural privileging in the test. The test itself obviously privileges those who already speak English. This in turn tends to mean privileging not only applicants who come from English speaking countries (US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) but also elite applicants (such as highly skilled workers) who will have had more ready access to English and educational opportunities. This issue is

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29 The test itself costs £60. A private organisation (not-for profit) is contracted to run the test in an example of governmental ‘out-sourcing’ Ufi Limited (http://www.uficharitabletrust.org/). The full list of authorised documents and support material can be found at the Home Office sanctioned Stationery Shop- TSO: http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp?FO=1240167&trackid=002353. This includes the Official Citizenship Study Guide (Norwich: TSO, 2008) around £10; Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers (Norwich, TSO, 2009) £6; There are also a number accompanying CD-ROM (£7) and online applications. This has also spawned something of a cottage industry in terms of a number of private companies who provide training courses, for example, http://www.lifeinukthetest.co.uk/?gclid=CLnQkv7e464CFUQhtAod3z1yXg.

30 In fact what limited provision existed have been made more complicated since the 2010 and the UK Governments austerity packages and cuts to public services.

compounded by the nature of the examination itself, as it requires a certain level of computer literacy and educational merit. The practice of actually sitting an examination is something which is normalised within certain cultural and class frameworks and is not a universal condition. It thus restricts by privileging and elevating those learnt behaviours which are seen as morally and culturally superior in the eyes of the authorities.

Interestingly, whilst official figures suggest that the pass rate in the UK may be high (73%), as Kees Groenendijk and Ricky Von Oers point out:

*Whereas the pass rate is almost 100% for applicants holding the nationality of a country where English is the majority language, less than half of all tests taken by immigrants holding the nationality of a country which has produced a large number of refugees (Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan) or applicants for family reunification (Bangladesh, Turkey) are successful.*

This goes to the central logic of the test which was rationalised through the perceived encroachment of dangerous forms of difference. Those possessing moral, cultural and economic differences which mark them further from the citizen ideal are restricted more than others who appear closer to the perceived ideal (English speaking, educated, economically solvent). Whilst offering serious questions about social justice these restrictions form a very precise way in which the order of citizenship is regulated. It leaves those who may be too risky to the margins, or excluded, whilst overtly including those who possess acceptable and welcomed traits.

So, in summary, the ‘restrictive’ capacity of the test suggested above allows authorities to monitor and adapt who is entering UK citizenship by the set of new economic and social demands that it refocuses. The restrictive capacity, although working on *all* in principle, works on some subjects more than others because of its inherent privileges. For rich, English speaking migrants it is a level of bureaucracy - it may be a nuisance but it does not reflect a real impediment. To those worse off subjects it demands more sacrifice and more levels of restriction. Alongside other border strategies such as minimal income requirements for spouse visas and pre-entry language testing this targets poor migrants and those coming from outside the EU specifically.

This, as I will argue, is actually essential to the knowledge and rationalities that the test is built on. This privileging is central to the kind of moral subjectivity which is idealised in the language and practices of (neo) liberalism. This means that certain ideas of sameness are

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33 It is also important to add that this pass rate statistic also only concerns those who have gained access to the test process itself; there is an invisible statistic of people who are restricted from access to this platform itself.
more readily included into the national space than other principles of difference (which are excluded or worked upon). This has connection to race and culture but this connection is not exhaustive, other traits and behaviours are also festished as closer to the citizen ideal. We see this even more as we turn to examine way the subject participates in the test

_Responsibility_

While I understand disciplining strategies to be part of the way liberal government functions I also suggests that the test poses other productive strategies. The test may exclude but there is also a powerful link towards inclusion which rests on ideas of responsibility, self sufficiency and empowerment. So, certain behaviours and attributes are normalised through the test but this involves the subject partaking actively in these strategies. It is an example of a form of ‘self government’ which is crucial to the way contemporary liberalism functions.

The test essentially promotes and makes possible a certain form of inclusion by asking the migrant, would-be-citizen, to participate in their own judgement. It understands the application to citizenship to be about proving worth, about providing evidence of sacrifice. The authorities must define what this worth and proof will be (in this case language and knowledge of the ‘Life in the UK’ texts) but the burden of this must be carried by the subject themselves. This reveals an important shift of focus. The authorities’ decision to grant a subject UK citizenship is no longer purely based on an assessment of criteria (length of settlement, background, relationships etc) instead the subject must act as an active agent within the process. They must now act, learn and participate within a certain set of established strategies. The test shifts the burden of proof of worth onto the migrant subject and asks them to take up responsibility for at least part of the process. We can thus see the strategy in line with ideas of _responsibilisation_.

What this shift in responsibility reflects, amongst other things, is an emphasis on the unitary character of the individual. By allowing the individual migrant to take on the responsibility and burden of proof we see the establishment and reiteration of many facets of the citizen ideal; the ideal subject of liberalism. The subject becomes defined by what responsibility they can possess.

One such responsibility the test asks from the subject, is for the candidate to make an economic sacrifice. The most basic of example of this is to pay for the test and the application. Whilst this is a standard logic of capitalist/market exchange which states now function within, there are other dimensions to this sacrifice which I have also mentioned. There is the sacrifice of personal time, of energy and the need to access resources (such as English language classes) which are more nuanced and involve a more complex arrangement of time, money and knowledge. This sacrifice is supposed to show a sustained level of

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34 Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, _Governing the Present_ (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 77.
commitment. It also reminds us of one of the essential logics of the social contract and the citizenship it presupposes – the fundamental need for proof of sacrifice for rights to be distributed.

The other responsibility which the test asks is that of change. It asks that the migrant subject take up new cultural forms and practices so they can be accepted. This is premised on a central assumption of self improvement and processes of learning which has a value-laden position in liberalism. The migrant subject must reveal their capacity for change in their engagement with the test; they must actively seek to learn English (if they don’t already possess the skill) and then learn the facts, figures and normative judgement which are supposed to reflect ‘life in the UK.’ This is the power on which inclusion is premised.

While dwelling on this point, we can perhaps suggest that the very practice of learning is more meaningful than what is learnt in the test (although as I have suggested this is also important). The act of learning (in itself) is then a feature of the ‘worth’ of the would-be-citizen. This learning, and the strong normative link it has to liberal notions of self improvement and self development, reveals how the test asks the subject to at least imitate characteristics that the ideal citizen should possess. It means that they can promise the potential for change; they are malleable, adaptable, or at the very least committed.

In this way the responsibility endemic to citizenship is altered slightly in the testing regime. Firstly, responsibility (to learn, to pay) is demanded of the subject before rights are distributed. Secondly, the would-be-citizen does not just learn about the expectation of responsibility in UK citizenship but, instead, they must actually engage in a strategy of responsibility before they are included. The demand from the authorities to learn and the participation of the subject in the process of learning is thus actually the conduct of citizen responsibility. They must imitate the rules of the game before they are allowed to fully participate. This is what I mean by the practice of learning being perhaps greater than what is learnt. It becomes a powerful totem of the ‘active’ and committed subject who will become a citizen.

So, the feature of learning implicit in the test makes a claim over the would-be-citizen and demands a certain field of action from the subject. The assumption here regarding learning is that it leads to self betterment and self improvement. This is based on a conceptualisation of the subject as an agent with the capacity to better themselves; imagined as a kind of internal process of self management. In the test the subject is asked to partake in this process and ‘improve’ themselves as an individual agent. There is a normalising strategy implicit here in that it asks all subjects of the test to behave in a certain way, it demands that they pick up, take on and show the traits of self development. If we put this back into the context of the security imperative of the test, then we can perhaps suggest that the act of learning and pre-citizenship responsibility offers a way of working upon the migrant subject
which makes them ‘safer’; it increases the possibility of ‘common’ (civic) traits being in possession.

This importance of learning in the test also rests on the language of empowerment that we see infiltrating throughout the initial problems of diversity set out in the cantle report. Just as we saw the idea that speaking English could empower migrant citizen (bringing social inclusion, work and less disenfranchisement), the test is seen as a facilitating mechanism of that form of empowerment.

To Conclude

I do not suggest here that responsibilising and disciplining strategies in the test necessarily compete or are contradictory; instead I consider these expressions of liberal power to be two sides of the same coin.

Even if the ‘journey’ of the migrant is actively praised in the test (the ceremony, the idea of cultural tolerance) it relies still on the moral economy that they must do more to prove themselves. They must do more than citizens of birth right, essentially because they pose more risk, they bring the potential of disorder through their relationship to difference. Equally this moral economy proposes that this proof must be centrally administered by authorities and actively examined, it cannot be left to an organic processes or implicit socialisation. This further marking of the migrant and the imposition of responsibility is of course central to the logic /strategy analysed here and likewise central to the security imperative through which the test is constructed.

The power to include works on a number of premises which reveal the construction of certain ideals about political community and order in modernity. We see how citizenship is presupposed on a moral hierarchy, on ideas of adaptability and also on the idea of tolerance – of the possibility of accepting forms of ethnic, cultural difference. This kind of moral hierarchy; we see in economic proof of sacrifice and the achievements of learning found in the test reveal changing ways of viewing the citizen ideal. This may complicate older notions of racial/ethnic community but they do not remove the central logic of commonality, unity and sameness which defines the limits of the nation and the order of liberal citizenship. As we see in the test, various differences are seen as risky, they are stratified along an axis of communality which still relies on cultural tropes (English language) but also includes behaviours and values into its description of order (‘fairness’, educational achievement, skills and wealth). Because of the dualism of ‘integration and diversity’ which the security imperative of the test relies on, we find different boundaries and different markers which make exclusion and inclusion possible. It acts a set of governmental practices which adjudicate on which subjects can be included (and be offered rights and protection), whilst others are left in the shadowy margins, questioned as to the risky forms of difference they
possess and cling to. The interesting thing about the test is how it asks the migrant subject themselves to become complicit in this adjudication.

The Distribution of Inclusive Exclusion

So in my reading of the test and the security imperative it was rationalised through, it retains two important capacities as a mode of governing.

The first is that the notion of testing adds a more furtive disciplinary element into the ‘journey’ of UK citizenship. This means that after the analysis of disorder in 2000 (and in the subsequent framing of other incidents, such as the July 7th bombings in London) there has been a refreshed need to provide a set of mechanism that makes it harder for some migrants to become citizens. The test can adjudicate through forms of risk; categorising those who can pass and those that can’t (and those who cannot even apply). It can then also work on certain differences which are too much to be tolerated (cultural knowledge/language). These practices work on certain forms of difference, essentially as a series of normalising strategies which ask the migrant subject to conform to a certain set of behaviours and processes. Through the acquisition of both a language and a cultural knowledge – the reification of a janus-faced ‘tolerant’ but equally unified ‘common identity’ – the migrant is expected to become more like a certain vision of the ideal citizen. In turn this actually constitutes and plays a part in the constructs of such true ‘identity’ that this strategy is supposed to defend. This means mitigating and restricting certain forms of risky differences from UK citizenship; some are normalised, some are entirely denied and others made invisible through the new process.

The second capacity I have suggested is tied to the notion of discipline but relies on the more productive side of the power dynamic that Foucault identified in governmentality. By this I mean to suggest that the test envisages a new migrant subject who must become active in the citizenship application process. In this sense, the emphasis is put on the migrant to prove themselves in the process. This means seeing the individual migrant as being at fault, in possessing radical differences, but it also proposes that these differences can be ‘overcome’ and bettered through the classic liberal faith in self improvement and education. Thus the site of power is not just the mechanism of the test; the legislation, the test centre, the authorised documents but power also constitutes the action of the subject as an individual. They must act as a singular agent to overcome the impediments put in front of them – to learn, to pay, to prove themselves. In this sense the test is perhaps an example of neo-liberal subjectification with its emphasis on responsibility and moral proof (what it asks of the subject).

35 This type of productive power was first introduced in Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (London: Penguin, 1991). It was refined in Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume 1. As outlined in Chapter 3.
What closes the circle of these capacities is the way they act on the migrant through the premise of security concerns which are central to the functions of governmentality. The first discloses and acts on risky difference, the second produces behaviour – moral sacrifice, acts of education, self betterment – the manifestations of order in later modernity. In this powerful mode of inclusive exclusion the new would-be-citizen who wishes to transgress the boundary of citizenship must still act *like us* before they are welcomed over the threshold. There are just many changing ways in which this ‘us’ in late modernity has been (re)imagined. The *problematisation* which made the test possible has provided new and complex ways in which certain differences became an object of security concerns. The test has provided new strategies for acting upon them.