

**‘For the Future of the Nation’:  
Citizenship, Nation, and Education in South Africa**

In 2009, we spoke with the principal of an elite high school in one of the wealthiest suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. He was proud of the efforts his school had made to diversify its student population. This state-funded institution charged fees of ZAR16,350 (£1,486) per annum, which provides additional teaching staff, maintenance of excellent facilities, and extra-curricular activities. By law, no student may be denied entry to a school due to an inability to pay fees, but the fees are formidable in a context in which the median income for working-age black adults is about ZAR12,000. Furthermore, the school’s location away from the city’s major historical black and coloured<sup>1</sup> group area settlements means that further integration depends upon additional bursaries for travel or massive residential desegregation (cf. Lemon and Battersby-Lennard, 2009).

As we talked, the principal ruminated about the importance of citizenship education and building a sense of unity and nationhood “for the future of the nation” when faced with South Africa’s “particular history” of race relations and of extreme inequality. Exemplifying the principal’s concern were two young men – his son and his gardener – who attempted to get driving licenses. Both failed the driving exam. According to the principal, his son re-sat and passed the exam a few months later, whereas the gardener quickly got his license after bribing officials. The point the principal drew from this story was that large numbers of young people in South Africa were not acting as good citizens; it was important, he argued, to get “these people”<sup>2</sup> to behave as citizens “for the future of the nation.” In this discussion, the racialist history of South Africa was never mentioned, nor was poverty or income inequality. The underlying structural divisions within South Africa seemed irrelevant to one’s ability to act as a citizen in the new nation. This narrative, whereby the past is history and does not constrain young people’s futures, is reinforced daily in schools across South Africa.

Yet this conversation was held in a school where a relatively integrated student body is taught by a predominantly white teaching staff and where the maintenance staff is either black or coloured, suggesting that some legacies of racial division linger. The roles filled by different kinds of people in the school led us to ask what students

implicitly learn about citizenship in the newly constituted nation. How do educational programming and practices mesh with the ‘knowledge in the blood’ (Jansen, 2009) that comes with living in a society where the past is inscribed in the political, economic, and social geographies of the country? What kind of citizenship and what kind of nation are being built?

The formal end of apartheid was marked by attempts to make a new South Africa, transforming its machinery of government, its foundations, and the ways individuals were positioned as citizens within the polity. The radical changes this entailed led to a melange of policies and programmes that represent the priorities of different agents and institutions, and importantly, the compromises between them. One of the compromises was that racial redress would not be pursued, but that there would be opportunities for all, regardless of past discrimination and oppression. Yet while education policies and practices are enrolled in actually creating new citizens, they cannot themselves change the context in which they are implemented. Thus, the attempt to imagine a unified nation for the future is central to the production of the actually-existing nation and public (see also Clarke 2010; Newman 2010).

We begin this paper with a brief discussion of the oft-imagined roles for educational systems in building a nation and a society in which the divisions of the past become irrelevant; we note that this imagination is not limited to South Africa, but instead is a vision that is promoted widely by educational philosophers, curriculum advisors, and the consultants who promote democracy and nation building in post-conflict societies. Based on analysis of policy documents, interviews with educators, and participant observation in classrooms, we then address the specific development of educational programming in South Africa and the ideals of citizenship and nation promoted in classrooms. This analysis highlights the multiple – and to some extent, competing – goals in educating future citizens. We argue that the approach taken is one that does not address underlying divisions directly, but instead, attempts to unify the nation around issues of human rights and the ‘proper’ relationship between citizen and state. In examining the ways that various agents understand citizenship and the issues confronting the development of a shared future, we demonstrate the fragmented efforts of the state to create a pedagogy of citizenship and nation. We demonstrate, as well, that these efforts are frustrated by the actions in schools, communities, families, and by youth themselves whose lives remain constrained by the legacies of apartheid era political

economic relations and geographies. In the context of continued structural violence and quiet conflict, the future of the nation and its citizens thus remain uncertain.

### **Education, the Nation, and Citizenship Formation**

In South Africa the post-1994 period involved a dramatic re-imagining of the country from a racially divided nation to a diverse but united, non-racial nation. As do many countries that attempt to move forward after violence and conflict, South Africa engaged simultaneous processes of consolidating a new government, nation building, and citizenship formation. (Parnell and Mabin, 1995; Barnett, 2004; Gouws, 2005; McEwan, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2007; Manby, 2009). In these efforts, the education system was seen as critical, because youth were seen to represent the future of the nation.

The idea of educating citizens for the future of the nation reflects an ideal that youth can heal social division (Giddens, 2000). It is a compelling ideal premised on the belief that division is not endemic, and underpins efforts to imagine and produce new social possibilities. Yet the effects of these ideals and efforts are not foreordained. Social visions need not be progressive and unanimously agreed, nor are they the only influences on educational policy, practice and its experience. Perhaps reflecting these difficulties, there is little empirical evidence that educational practices are linked to democratization at the national level (Sears and Hughes, 2006; Wells, 2008), and there is evidence that youth do not believe the stories about citizenship they are told because the stories do not match their experiences (Weller, 2003; Maira, 2009). Nevertheless, there seems to be something irresistible about citizenship education, and it is seen as one of the pillars in the response to conflict (Machel, 2001; Paulson and Rappleye, 2007). ‘Success stories’ at the individual level, whereby a young person gains the skills to participate in civic activities and local politics, may provide further justification for continued investment, even if broader successes are hard to discern.

A variety of agents and institutions – including governments, schools, international NGOs, and grassroots organisations – are involved in an international effort to build educational systems intended to move countries beyond conflict (Paulson and Rappleye, 2007; Valverde, 2004). Directly addressing the history of conflict is often seen as impossible or inadvisable in education programming, in contrast to adult-focussed Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (Oglesby, 2007; Davies and Talbot, 2008). Rather than building a sense of nation through a shared *history*, then, there are

efforts to imagine a shared *future*. Dezalay and Garth (2002) identify “two universals” since the 1990s in internationally supported programmes of nation-building and consolidation: commitments to human rights and neoliberalism (see also Wedel, 2001). To the extent these really are universal, the curriculum and educational programming in South Africa can be expected to be very similar to those of other countries. Yet the ‘particular history’ of South Africa means that the resultant curricula and educational practices will be implemented and experienced in ways that will shape the future of the South African nation in both anticipated and unanticipated ways. The challenge South Africa has set itself is to create equal opportunity without redistribution of economic resources (Marais, 2011).

### *Identities as Citizens*

One of the most pressing issues in consolidating a nation and a sense of belonging after a period of conflict is the development of a collective identity that unites the citizenry (Davies and Talbot, 2008). Philosophers and democracy theorists often expect it will be possible and desirable to encourage protagonists to recognise the validity of identities and grievances on all sides of a conflict, so as to set the groundwork for a new polity, a new ‘we’ that can be the basis for a shared identity as citizens of the nation. When these theories are acted upon, there is often an assumption of community as the basis for a ‘we’ that by necessity underplays the visceral and ferocious distrust and fear of the ‘other’ (see Christodoulidis, 2000). Theorists imagine citizenship as intertwined with identity, legal status and a feeling of belonging and as a powerful tool in consolidating the polity and state through social practice and routine (see Osler and Starkey, 2005; Staeheli and Hammett, 2010). One might hope that these interactions construct a space or a culture of conviviality (see Gilroy, 2004) or a space in which an ‘ethical story of peoplehood’ (Smith, 2003) can be constructed.

Youth are seen as particularly amenable to these new stories and their associated identities because they may have no direct recollection of conflict or the previous regime and thus may be more open to a collective, equitable citizenship. A post-conflict pedagogy, it is hoped, can instil a positive sense of identity and give youth the tools to challenge marginalisation within the polity (Jarusch and Geyer, 2003; Jansen, 2009). Importantly, such pedagogy would create the values and identities to which the state and nation aspire for its citizens through the active participation of youth themselves. In this way, educational systems are not so much a tool for social reproduction, in which

previous divisions and inequalities might be continued, but instead are imagined as a tool for social *production*, by which a new society and polity can be built.

Citizenship education programmes are a critical element of such a production (Weller, 2003; Pykett, 2007). These programmes are multi-faceted and diverse, but generally involve lessons in civics, government, and history, through which an understanding of citizenship as legal status, as a feeling of belonging and as a set of practices can be shaped (Osler and Starkey 2005). While the broad outlines of what might enhance citizenship identities have been articulated, it nevertheless remains difficult to create these identities in practice. In particular, governments often want to instil a sense of a national identity, but need to do so in ways that do not invoke or reproduce conflict (Staeheli and Hammett, 2010). One approach is to downplay the aspects of national history that gave rise to conflict and to eschew the very mention of conflict in history lessons (e.g., Strandling, 2003). Yet in countries such as South Africa, where racialised oppression seeps into all aspects of its history and into contemporary political, economic, and social relationships, deciding the content of curriculum is not straightforward (Jansen, 2009; Hues, 2011).

One means of addressing such difficulties is to invoke a sense of identity that is simultaneously national and of the world – a sort of national cosmopolitanism. Such an identity would share the same commitments to human rights as the putative ‘postnational citizenship’ described by Soysal (1994) and others (e.g. Post, 2006; Appiah 2007; Mitchell, 2007), but is nevertheless firmly linked to and supported by a territorially-defined nation. South Africa’s cosmopolitanism is narrated through its ‘united in diversity’ motto. based on commitments to human rights and as helping to position the country in the broader international system (Bloch, 2009). This positioning, proponents argue, will help the country overcome problems of poverty through economic development, rendering the country’s ‘particular history’ as part of the historical record but not part of the nation’s collective identity.

These endeavours often involve the implementation of curricula that attempt to depoliticise the past in ways that complement broader reconciliation efforts. Brown (2006) argues that depoliticisation occurs when a political phenomenon – in this case, the construction of citizenship – is discursively removed from its historical emergence and when the powers that produce particular forms of citizenship are hidden. By not talking about the power relationships that created some people as citizens and others as non-

citizens, for instance, the responsibility for not being or acting as a citizen becomes individual, rather than a reflection of politics and power. Yet schools and teachers are often wary of teaching about politics and power due to ethical concerns related to the teaching politics in countries where teachers were directly affected by or involved in political struggle, and in which it is not clear how students – and their parents – will react (Frazer, 2007). Despite these concerns, fostering a neutral identity is one strategy that is often attempted by governments in their efforts to forge the basis of a collective identity that overlooks the politics of the past. In so doing, identity is treated much like an object's brand, identifying the product but not the means by which it is produced. This sort of brand identity for a nation may provide the basis for collective recognition, but critics argue it does not provide the basis of solidarity for activist citizens who make claims on the government (Frazer, 2007). In this way, these identities are consistent with a second aspect of democratisation and citizenship formation that addresses the relationships between citizens and the state.

#### *Neoliberalism, citizenship and the state*

Neoliberalism is often defined in terms of a set of political and economic ideas characterised by the belief that most activities are best managed without government interference or subsidy. More than just a set of socio-political-economic principles, Dezalay and Garth (2002) have argued that it is the second universal in the wave of democratisation that began in the late 1980s. In this view, neoliberalism is supported by a set of ideas regarding the optimal relationship between citizens and the state, whereby citizens take responsibility for themselves and each other through actions in civil society. It also justifies the rejection of state responsibility for providing the social rights of citizenship and the 'responsibilization' of communities and citizens for their own well-being (Jessop, 2002; Ilcan and Bazok, 2004). The depoliticised identities that are often fostered in post-conflict situations may serve to reinforce lessons about responsibility, such that responsible citizens would make relatively few demands upon the state. These trends, however, can evacuate citizenship of its meaning and significance if youth do not see and experience its transformative, political potential (Sears and Hughes 2006).

Nevertheless, the production of responsible citizens who are active in their communities remains a goal of most education systems, and considerable effort is directed toward teaching the skills necessary for engagement. Citizenship skills might include the obvious, such as knowing the rules for participation or communication and

critical thinking skills for problem solving and political debate, but also skills that may seem less obviously relevant, such as job skills so that citizens will be competitive in a globalised economy and thereby become self-reliant. In combination, these skills enable the *practice* of citizenship (see Pykett, 2009). School-based curricula are supplemented by the actions of non-governmental organisations that promote civil society as the ‘location’ in which citizens engage with each other to solve problems and to provide mutual support. A growing sector of professionals devoted to promoting democracy and citizenship for youth participate in workshops and conferences in countries around the world, offering opportunities for training and networking so as to spread best practices in citizenship education and civic engagement for youth.

As Clarke (2010) notes, ordinary people rarely do exactly what the government wants and the government is not monolithic, so it is not surprising that the efforts to develop a self-reliant citizenry are partial and often unsuccessful. Teaching youth the skills of organising in civil society does not necessarily mean that those skills will be used only in that arena, however, as those skills can also be used to make demands contrary to the expectations of neoliberal governance. This may be particularly true of young people, who often appear to be apathetic, but who may be forming political opinions and mobilising in ways that are often not legible through the lens of mainstream politics (cf. Storrie, 1997; Weller, 2003; Maira, 2009).

Furthermore, commitments to neoliberalism may not be as universal as Dezalay and Garth (2002) imply. Instead, some state agents – including policy makers, principals and teachers – may believe that teaching youth how to make claims on the state is an important marker of their inclusion in the citizenry and a way to mark a break from oppressive citizenship practices of the past. The projects of citizenship formation, state consolidation, and nation-building are, therefore, often in tension. As we will demonstrate, this has been the case as South Africans have attempted to build new educational systems that provide human rights and equality without introducing policies of racial redress. The imposition of ‘universal principals’ of human rights and neoliberalism on a student body and citizenry that remains economically, politically, and socially divided may perhaps provide a unified identity in the long term. It may also, however, lead to the reproduction of inequality and violence (Harber and Mncube, 2011). In the next section of the paper, we describe the methods we employed in building this argument. The remainder of the paper analyses the transitions away from the education

system under apartheid and the implications of the new system for the future of citizenship and the nation in South Africa.

## **Methods**

To explore the contexts and changes in education and citizenship formation for youth in South Africa, we engaged a multi-pronged research strategy. We first reviewed policy documents outlining the new South African curriculum and the structure of educational provision. We also examined the textbooks and materials that were specifically written to address the new curriculum, so as to understand how policy was animated in the resources used by teachers and students. Policy, of course, means little until it is implemented, so we also interviewed a range of people involved in delivering the new curriculum to students. These involved government officials, representatives of several NGOs involved in education, and talked with 64 principals and teachers in 12 different schools during 2009. The schools were located in three cities that tap different settlement and racial histories in the country: Cape Town, in the Western Cape, King William's Town in the Eastern Cape and Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal. They also were located in a range of settlements, ranging from affluent neighbourhoods to former townships and informal settlements.

Eleven of the schools were state schools, and one was an independent Islamic school. All but one of the schools charged fees, ranging from ZAR500 (£45) to ZAR21,000 (£1,910) per annum. The conditions and educational offerings at the schools varied considerably, with some schools being in well-maintained buildings and grounds, offering a full range of courses and career counselling and others with broken windows and exposed wiring and sewage, or with limited educational offerings. While some schools had up-to-date technology centres and libraries, other schools had limited access to such resources; one school had a single computer and one telephone, and in another school, one of us was repeatedly asked to teach classes in order to mitigate staff shortages. We interviewed teachers and administrators in these schools in an effort to understand how they delivered the History and 'Life Orientation' curricula in which education for citizenship was presented. Life Orientation reflects the belief that citizenship is more than a legal status, but instead encompasses all aspects of life. We supplemented these interviews with observations in classrooms and school activities.

In the analysis that follows, we explore the ways that the ideals of citizenship are reframed in curricular and teaching practices, and the gap between the ways that citizenship is imagined and experienced by young people. We pay particular attention to the ways that appeals to cosmopolitanism and human rights are framed in ways that seem to erase – or at least overlook – the pervasive inequalities of South African society. At the same time, other aspects of the curriculum emphasise the importance of participation in the economy and community, thereby minimising the role of the state in addressing inequality. The effect, we argue, is to shift the responsibility for supporting citizenship on individuals, families and communities, rather than the state. In this move, the future of the nation is, perhaps, shared, but the ability to enact the kind of citizenship envisioned in policy and curriculum is uneven and leaves some portions of the society marked as irresponsible or as not fulfilling their obligations. Our discussion is not differentiated by region as similar concerns and practises were pervasive across the study areas. Where notable differences in engagement were apparent between schools located in and serving communities of different socio-economic standing, these are noted within the discussion, but again, many of the overarching trends were common across all of the schools involved.

### **Citizenship and Education in South Africa**

The period surrounding the 1994 elections in South Africa saw a remarkable and rapid dismantling of the formal aspects of apartheid and of building a new government. An important component of this activity involved overhauling the education system to provide a means by which a unified and equal society could be built while reassuring white South Africans that educational standards would be maintained. One of the core challenges, then, was to develop a new sense of citizenship reflecting, in equal measure, lofty values and immediate needs. This intention was made explicit in the preface to the Revised National Curriculum Statement: “Our education system and its curriculum express our idea of ourselves as a society and our vision as to how we see the new form of society being realised through our children and learners” (Asmal, 2003, p. 1).

These goals represent a dramatic change from the education system that previously operated in South Africa. During both the colonial and the apartheid periods, citizenship was imagined as applying only to the white populations, while non-whites were political subjects. The colonial education system sought to ‘civilise’ non-white populations, while privileging whites as South African citizens (Keto 1990). *De jure* racial

segregation of the schools was introduced in the early twentieth century, with differential expenditures and separate curricula ‘appropriate’ to racialised groups. The rationale for such differences was that education was ‘for one’s position in society’ (Verwoerd, 1954). In the second half of the century, these differences took on a class dimension, as a liberal education was provided to white students who would be the citizens and economic leaders of the nation, while non-white students received vocational skills (Chisholm, 1987). As it became clear in the 1980s that the apartheid system would be dismantled, education policy moved toward more equitable and putatively non-racist educational provision. With the advent of the post-apartheid government, the system promoted the new status of all South Africans as equal citizens. Education policy provided the pedagogical blueprint for this new citizenship, grounded as it was to be in the values of social justice, equality, and human rights inscribed in the new constitution (Soudien, 2007).

Post-apartheid, the education system has been seen as a key site in which a new, unified nation could be built from a formerly divided society (Asmal, 2003). In the documents describing curriculum goals and outlining the structure of education it is possible to identify some of the ways that citizenship and the polity were imagined. “Imagined” may seem a rather naïve term, since designing the system involved hard political negotiations. Nevertheless, the importance of youth for the future of the country was emphasised in the policy documents and textbooks. One book, for instance, implored the students to be mindful of their actions in daily life and for the future, tightly linking the two: “As the youth, you not only represent the future, but also the present. Things that you do today will determine what others will be able to do in the future” (Carstens, et al., 2008, p. 31).

In 1996, the system of separate schools divided by race was eliminated, and all schools came under a common Department of Education. A baseline government allocation is now distributed to all schools, with an additional amount given to schools with a high percentage of ‘previously disadvantaged’ students. In theory, this policy equalises opportunities to education and eliminates access barriers based on race and income, leading to desegregation in the school system. In practice, access to elite schools has been expanded for black, coloured and Indian students, and some elite schools have now switched from being all white to having a predominance of black and coloured students (cf. Lemon and Battersby-Lennard, 2009).

The system as a whole remains segregated, however, as admissions policies cannot overcome the *de facto* geography of educational offerings. Many elite schools are far removed from the places where low-income and non-white students live, and transportation costs (in both time and money) prove prohibitive. The poor quality of schooling in many primary schools in informal settlements and former townships means that most students cannot realistically compete for entry into secondary schools with high academic standards. And while non-white students are increasingly seen in the former ‘white’ schools, there are very few – if any – white students attending schools in townships and informal settlements. As such, the continuing social and spatial segregation of South African cities and society – if not schools themselves – make interaction between groups nearly impossible (Fataar, 2007).

The challenges facing South African schools and educators may seem almost insurmountable. While policy changes may have set an equal playing field in terms of state support, there is a woeful lack of resources relative to the vast need (Hammett and Staeheli, 2011). Politicians, academics, and teachers themselves complain about the lack of discipline amongst both educators and learners (Bush, et al., 2010). National language policies compound the difficulties just raised. South Africa has 11 official languages, and the policy is that children are to be instructed in their ‘mother’ language until grade 3 as part of the celebration of the country’s diversity. In secondary schools, the parents select the schools’ language of instruction by vote, and many vote for English. In many schools that are ostensibly English-medium, however, we often found that neither learners nor teachers are fluent in English. A consultant at an internationally-funded NGO explained the problem:

“Just translating is a problem because you get an expert on Xhosa who lives in Pretoria and that person gets a document translated by a Xhosa expert living in Johannesburg they will differ because both of those are very different to the Xhosa spoken in the rural hinterland of the Transkei. In the townships, these are evolving rapidly into different dialects and they’re being mixed with other languages. The mother’s got a different home language to the father anyway, and you get all of this in a melting pot of a primary township school, there is no home language. I sometimes think and, this is very politically incorrect, why don’t we go

the Singapore route, because that's what the parents want anyway"  
(Richard, 3 March 2009).

In his view and the view of other consultants, language policy poses several difficulties: many settlements are ethnically diverse and learners in a given school may speak different languages; the cost of translating textbooks is prohibitive and the quality may be generously described as being 'uneven' since there is no government oversight of textbooks; and learners are often not proficient in the language of instruction. These issues are of particular concern for citizenship education, since most textbooks and national curriculum documents (e.g., Department of Education, 2002) promote a dialogic view of citizenship and polity formation organised around participation and active citizenship; in this context, meaningful dialogue across diverse languages may be difficult (see Bickford, 1996). The cost of overcoming these difficulties led some respondents from NGOs to comment that the country could not yet 'afford' citizenship education in the curriculum.

Finally, some commentators argue there is an unwillingness and lack of tools to really confront the past (Jansen, 2009). This issue is of considerable importance, as educators may themselves be deeply scarred and shaped by violence – structural and physical – and must deal with their own histories, even as they are expected to deal with the broader experience of the past and the hopes for the future. All of these issues create challenging political and spatialised contexts in which youth are to be shaped into a new kind of citizen, and in which they represent 'the future of the nation.'

### **Education for the Future of the Nation**

Learning Outcome 2: Citizenship Education. The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the values and rights that underpin the Constitution in order to practice responsible citizenship, and to enhance social justice and environmentally sustainable living. (Department of Education, 2003, p. 25)

The broad goals of post-apartheid education policy in South Africa reflect commitments to the 'two universals' of democratisation in the 1990s: human rights and responsible citizens who do not depend on the state for their individual well-being.

Cosmopolitanism and human rights underlie most of the curriculum, reminding students that their status as citizens is unqualified. Yet the curriculum also attempts to instil feelings of obligation to the nation and fellow citizens and encourages particular practices or enactments of citizenship that reflect economic and social commitments to neoliberalism and self-sufficiency. Through the new curriculum and the activities it encourages, it is hoped that a new citizenry will emerge, united by feelings of belonging to a nation united in its diversity, capable of taking its economic place on the world stage, yet placing few demands on the state itself. This latter element of citizenship in South Africa is particularly important; a critical element of the struggle against apartheid was the insistence that all citizens – black, coloured, Indian and white – had the right to make such claims. The promotion of a united, equitable nation stands in stark contrast to socio-economic realities wherein South Africa's wealthiest 10% accounted for 51% of income, while the poorest 70% a mere 21%, and where the average white family expenditure is more than six times that of a black family (Marais 2011, 203-208). The government, however, is simply not capable of responding to the claims on social rights that citizens might make. Whether intentional or not, the ways that economic citizenship and the responsibilities of citizenship are framed reduces the role of the state with regard to service delivery and social rights.

#### *Educating for Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*

Post-apartheid South Africa is a nation founded on an appeal to human rights. The political claims of the anti-apartheid movement were based on recognition of the human rights of all people, not just those political subjects recognised by the apartheid regime. Those claims were made internally, but significantly, were also outwardly directed. As such, the international, cosmopolitan orientation of the struggle was a precursor for the commitment to human rights in the Constitution, which sets out the importance of human dignity, equality, human rights, non-racism, non-sexism, the supremacy of the rule of law, and universal adult suffrage (Juta's Statute Editors, 2008, p. 3). Values of cosmopolitanism and human rights are continually repeated in government policy regarding education, including the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education, 2001) and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (Department of Education, 2003).

Textbooks reiterate the importance of human rights to South Africans and South African citizenship in ways that suture the South African experience to a broader community of nations. One social studies text, for instance, begins with a discussion of human rights issues in Nazi Germany, then discusses the civil rights movement in the US, and then poses a series of moral questions regarding nuclear deterrence and the Cold War, before turning its attention to apartheid in South Africa, including the role of international organisations in pressing for change. A suggested activity for students is to make an advertising poster for the new South Africa that would celebrate its diversity and commitment to human rights; through this activity, students are intended to become citizens who are situated in the world, not just their country. The text then turns to a discussion of globalisation, truth and reconciliation commissions, conflicts in Rwanda and the Balkans, and how globalisation has affected Africa's economic development. It concludes with chapters about environmental conflict, the sustainable use of resources, and development and technology, each of which situate South Africa as part of a broader, global frame (Barnard, et al., 2006). Other texts remind students of the spirit of *masakhane*, the isiXhosa word for “stand together” and a political slogan “let us build together”, which was important to the struggle against apartheid. For example, one book encourages students to become involved in community projects, to be active citizens in their communities and to act wherever violations of human rights may occur, whether in South Africa or abroad. It points to the Constitution in linking citizenship to local and international events, and emphasises the students' power to make a difference because of the ubiquity of mass media and information technology (Farhangpour, et al., 2007).

These calls to human rights and the attempt to make universal rights the core of South African citizenship are a reflection of the country's history. Textbooks, however, address that history in very matter-of-fact and decidedly apolitical tones and without dwelling on the pain and injustice of the system (even if classroom practice allows for modification of this content (Hues, 2011)). The social studies book noted earlier, for instance, devotes three of its ten chapters to apartheid, but two of those chapters are about its collapse, rather than its effects (Barnard, et al, 2006). The text attributes the collapse of apartheid, in part, to the irrationality of the system. Yet another book discusses the development of laws, explaining that they are often based on an interplay between history and democratic norms, such as those associated with human rights. The text then explains the defiance of the apartheid regime as an example, demonstrating that laws – and governments – can change: “A government can also be wrong, which is

why many South Africans defied the Apartheid laws of the National Party government” (Gumede and Findlay, 2006, p. 198). In making this argument, the text acknowledges the history of apartheid, but refuses to let South Africa be *defined* by it, limiting its significance and acceptance to a particular government that was then rebuked. More strikingly, some texts do not discuss apartheid at all, beginning the discussion of citizenship with the 1996 Constitution, almost as though South Africa was formed *de novo* in that document (Jacoby & Ngcobo, 2005). We observed teachers who were similarly wary of doing anything that might seem to politicise either the country’s past or to draw attention to the injustices of the present system. Some of this undoubtedly reflects the didactic teaching style common across the schools. But the reticence is also understandable in the context of a country that is not fully reconciled either to the past or to current systems that some people argue favour blacks over other racialised groups. The power of these perceptions to compromise the message and understanding of citizenship is notable. As Andrew, a history teacher at a majority coloured school, explained:

“If you expect someone to be a true citizen, then you should allow the complete freedom to be a *complete* member of this community... and if there is any kind of subtle discrimination on the basis of the colour of a person’s skin, I would have a problem with that” (6 February 2009).

After grounding their discussion of citizenship in human rights, the textbooks and teachers generally proceed to elaborate the rights of citizens in the new South Africa, as though human rights and South African rights are co-constituted. From this base, they focus on the importance of knowing the law, knowing how to protest, and very importantly, to vote. But the message was not simply that students need to *know* the laws; they should also *obey* the laws. One text listed a series of “Citizenship do’s and don’ts” including: “Do obey the rules; obey laws... Don’t bend the rules; don’t break laws; don’t be a citizen in name only” (Ethics and Leadership Institute, 2006, p. 9). Reflecting on the emphasis on obeying the law, teachers commented repeatedly that the disrespect for the rule of law is one of the major problems that permeates South African society; examples ranged from the gardener who resorted to bribes rather than following the rules to a head of government whose corrupt practices seemed to excuse, and even condone, irresponsible behaviour and lawlessness. To some degree, however, both textbooks and teachers note that acceptance of law-breaking is almost a logical outcome

of the anti-apartheid struggle and the appeal to international law. The textbook mentioned previously, for example, argues that it was necessary to break the illegitimate laws of the apartheid regime in order to build a more democratic South Africa based on acceptance of human rights. Some teachers, however, provide a more complicated and ambiguous assessment of the role of law-breaking for contemporary South African society. Abu, a teacher in a formerly Indian school argues:

“The apartheid system defined the majority of the citizens of this country, their basic human rights... The ANC with other political organisations instigated people to resist this. So here you see people are encouraged to become bad citizens. Not really ‘bad’ in a sense; they *had* to protest. Now as we went through history through the ‘70s and ‘80s, this idea comes through that if you find something wrong with the government, you go into the streets and you protest. So people have lived through that and have carried through, so today we find the situation where people are sometimes dissatisfied and they go into the street and they protest and some of them become violent” (5 February, 2009).

On the one hand, Abu argues that processes of socialisation under the apartheid regime led to particular understandings of how one had to behave in order to *gain* status as a citizen. And teachers in poorer schools reminded students that active citizens sometimes need to protest, that they have both the right and the responsibility to demand adequate provision of services. This notion was reiterated in our interview with Banoyolo (20 February 2009), who explained how failures to deliver on basic services and rights left communities feeling let down and their students unable to relate to understandings of equal belonging and citizenship, that the community surrounding the school:

“[We] can’t feel like we are citizens of this country whom the government cares about, when we see that there are certain things the which are not done for us, which is a right to us that we have to claim... I’m being satisfied in those kinds of reactions from people, you know protesting, going to the streets you know, showing their anger towards the government that they are not being cared for they are not being looked after”.

Yet teachers, policymakers, and NGOs also worried that protests may also lead to inappropriate and irresponsible behaviour if such attitudes towards law and order

became more pervasive. The school principal introduced at the start of the article captured this concern in lamenting that

“There are some pervasive ideas about things. For instance – if you are poor it is acceptable to buy stolen goods; corruption, that if you’re very poor it’s completely acceptable to use corrupt means to gain things which are beyond your financial access. Now, you see, as a nation we need to find ways of making that kind of behaviour unacceptable” (Mathew 13 February 2009).

This complaint resonated with many teachers’ observation that the political leadership of the country – which is widely seen as corrupt and as engaging in inappropriate behaviours – reinforces the idea that failure to respect laws and norms can be done with impunity. So while attempting to develop a sense of citizenship based on common humanity and human rights, teachers and students also negotiate a terrain in which the limits of protest and dissent are unclear.

Teachers believe that addressing the boundaries of dissent is necessary for South Africa to progress and to take its rightful place in the international community. In this way, behaving as a good South African citizen is an appeal to a particular form of cosmopolitanism. Yet teachers struggled to make students understand both the obligations that came with those rights and to justify limitations on protest. In some ways, the removal of apartheid laws and the concomitant unwillingness to address its legacy removes the moral basis for protest and dissent. The cosmopolitanism and human rights built into law and the curriculum, thus, serves to remove the moral justification for challenges to the state.

#### *Education for Economic Citizenship*

A second major theme in the curriculum documents has to do with economic citizenship, and more specifically, with the importance of gaining skills for employment. Employment is seen as both the only hope for individuals to move out of poverty and as the best means to minimise the threat of riots and violence; neither represent the purest ideals of citizenship. Business leaders, nevertheless, point to the importance of skilled employees if South Africa is to take its rightful place in a global economy. Trade association newspapers are full of articles promoting the untapped reservoir of human capital in the former townships and informal settlements, and they implore the

government and international organisations to focus on job skills. In this way, economic citizenship is linked to the cosmopolitanism described previously, because it helps South Africa take its place on the world stage. Employment, however, also changes the relationship between citizens and the state, making citizens less likely to make claims on the institutions of government to provide services. In this way, the promotion of economic citizenship is also a manifestation of neoliberal governance, which quickly became dominant in post-apartheid South Africa (Hart, 2002; Tikly, 2011).

Contributing to the economic health of the country is listed as one of the goals of education for citizenship in the curriculum documents, and is prominent in textbooks. Significantly, however, the responsibility for achieving this goal is assigned to individuals, rather than to the business community or to the government. One textbook, for example, explains to its students:

“The world is an ever-changing place, politically, geographically, and technologically. South Africa must make sure that it has an education and training system that provides quality learning... Skills development assists South Africans, young and old, to fight poverty and fight the skills shortage in the country. This will ensure that these young people are able to play a meaningful role in the economy as business owners and future employers, and should ultimately close the skills gap.... South Africa is in need to [sic] skilled people. It is your responsibility to make use of the opportunities to learn and gain the necessary skills and to prepare yourself for the future” (Carstens, et al., 2008, p. 125).

The text neatly links the necessity of building a new nation that is competitive on the world stage to the ability of citizens to take care of themselves, and reminds students of their responsibilities in this regard.

Teachers were equally adamant about the importance of jobs skills; without those skills, graduates would be unable to compete in a competitive job market and would likely resort to criminality to survive. Several teachers mentioned being economically productive, working to support family, and not being a burden on others as primary characteristics of citizens. Yet teachers were also realistic, noting how difficult it would be for some students to get jobs that were secure and that would pay enough for an adequate living. This was a particular concern to teachers who taught in schools in

former townships and informal settlements. Several of these teachers were, themselves, living in the townships and impoverished areas, demonstrating that education and employment were not sufficient to pull oneself and one's family out of poverty or into adequate shelter. Of concern to many teachers in township schools was that very few of their students would find work or be able to overcome financial barriers to further and higher education. Hossam (28 January 2009), an experienced history teacher at a township school serving an impoverished community, outlined how this sense of marginalisation "becomes so dire for most of them, there's just this lack of interest in bettering their lives".

Several students in class discussions made it clear they had little hope for a job after graduating, but once again, it was students in the informal settlements and former townships that were most pessimistic. These schools rarely had career or guidance counsellors, whereas schools in more wealthy areas did. The bleak employment prospect for some students was evident on the halls of the schools themselves. In the former elite and whites-only schools, hallways frequently were decorated with posters announcing job fairs or information about further education; these schools also frequently had pictures or displays that highlighted alumni successes in business. Such posters, pictures, and displays were a rarity in poorer schools, making it seem as though a high school certificate was all these students could aspire to.

It was in this context that several of the schools confronted outbreaks of xenophobic attitudes and violence after riots against Zimbabwean refugees in May 2008 left over 60 people dead. In the minds of some of the students, 'immigrants' were taking jobs that belonged to South African citizens. Seeming to overlook their lessons in the values of cosmopolitanism and human rights, many students blamed immigrants for infringing on students' aspirations for economic citizenship. The violence has now subsided, and several of the schools were proactive in addressing xenophobia. Yet it was clear that suspicion and even hostility remained, adding yet another layer of division on a society that was already deeply divided. Education for economic citizenship seems to have done little to address these wounds. Teachers worried that xenophobia was being learned in homes and communities, and struggled to combat it. For their part, students in impoverished areas were keenly aware that job skills can do little to address the broader structural problems of the South African economy; the exhortations of classroom textbooks to take personal responsibility ring hollow to those students who

read them. Yet in other – and often wealthier – schools, both teachers and students were more optimistic, taking as given their ability to continue their education after high school and to gain employment. The principal who described the two young people getting their driving licenses assigned personal responsibilities to the youth, but he also unwittingly narrated the divergent structures of opportunity and employment and the abilities to act as economic citizens in South Africa. Hoping for a future South Africa that was truly unified and inclusive, he overlooked the continuing inequalities in access to opportunity in the country.

### *The Responsibilities of Citizenship*

The new South African citizen carries a number of responsibilities. As detailed in the *Manifesto on Values, Democracy and Education* (Department of Education, 2001), these include responsibilities to know the law, to obey the law, and to be economically productive, but also to be healthy, to be sexually responsible, to be environmental stewards, to respect the rights and cultures of others, to be active in the community. Perhaps most important to education officials we interviewed, young people, as future citizens, also have a responsibility to show respect to elders, community members, and each other. Meeting these responsibilities is promoted in the curriculum statements as demonstrating the worthiness of citizens or as being the key attributes of citizens. Similarly, teachers and textbooks frequently talked about the responsibilities attendant on citizenship. From a theoretical perspective, the articulation of responsibilities can be seen as a manifestation of neoliberal impulses in governing the new South Africa, as the assignment of responsibilities provides the terrain on which new relationships between citizens, communities and the state are to be enacted. Three issues are most notable in this regard.

First, there was a great deal of attention to encouraging active forms of citizenship in which students would engage in community service activities. These ranged from making sandwiches for AIDS orphans and donating old books to schools without libraries, to more intensive activities, such as participating in a day of action or a flash house-building event. These activities advanced the goal of education for citizenship in several ways: they were intended to instil a sense of other-regardingness; they would bring students in contact with people different to themselves; they would help meet real needs in the community. Indeed, it was striking to hear stories of youth who lived in townships and who had few resources of their own contributing to their

communities or to people in other townships. While educators believed these activities would foster a feeling of belonging that reinforced moral claims to the legal standing of citizenship, there nevertheless was considerable unease amongst educators and parents. One principal in an independent school worried that sending young children from middle class backgrounds into informal settlements to do community work would be both dangerous and traumatic for students (Siddiqa, 26 February, 2009). A teacher in that school confided that she would not allow her teenage daughter to participate in these kinds of activities (Zaara, 25 February, 2009). In poorer schools, teachers lacked the resources to organise such activities and noted that students and their families had little to share with others. Furthermore, some principals felt that monies to support community engagement and active citizenship would be better spent fixing exposed wiring in the schools and hiring more teachers.

Second, these activities, if successful, also have the effect of shifting responsibility for meeting social welfare needs from the state to the community and to individuals. Individually, these activities probably do not significantly reduce either need or the burden on the state; collectively, however, they are part of a longer-term process of social production in which the state is in some way absolved of responsibility in this arena. This shift is a notable feature of neo-liberal governance in many countries. While the state is never completely removed from the scene, the primary responsibility for fulfilling social and some human rights claims is discursively located in communities and with individuals. In the longer term, other questions are thus raised. For instance, rather than reinforcing legal status of citizenship, does the practice of citizenship in this fashion potentially undermine legal standing? This is of considerable importance, as the struggle against apartheid was, in part, a struggle to ensure that all South Africans could make claims upon the government. In teaching about the responsibilities of citizenship, some teachers in poorer schools argued that it was a responsibility to make demands known. In line with this, they taught their students *toyi-toyi*, the dance associated with protest movements, suggesting that the shift in responsibility is contested by teachers, communities, and youth themselves.

Finally, while community and family feature prominently in the curricular materials as sites in which responsible citizens act, they also play other – and not necessarily positive – roles. As the teachers all noted, it is one thing to teach about citizenship or to teach students the skills to act as citizens, but they argued that

responsible citizenship is as likely to be undermined by community and families as to be enhanced by them. The spaces, communities, and families in which students live are imbued with the social, racial and economic legacies of apartheid, and these legacies inflected what students learned, as distinct from what they were taught. One teacher, for instance, observed:

“The children, especially in the lower grades, are products of their families and they speak about stuff that they’ve never thought about for themselves. So they’ll pass comments and you know it’s their parents talking. It’s not them. They’ve never thought through these things, because they’ve never been exposed” (Cheryl, 9 February, 2009).

At another school, a teacher explained:

“The things that’s on paper, it’s very good and nice, but in practice, it’s a whole different story... What we teach is kids in school. They go back to their communities, and that’s a different thing. They can’t live out what you teach them here, because the parents and the grandparents, they’ve got different views, you see. They say: ‘Ag, you say that and must do that. You learn out of the books and so on. They taught you that, but this is real life’” (Ronald, 29 January, 2009).

Another teacher was even more direct: “[citizenship] is completely subjective to the community you’re in” (Hossam, 15 March, 2009). In this context, what students learn at school and what they learn in homes and communities may be radically different.

Andrew (6 February 2009), a history teacher, noted how these influences challenged his efforts at promoting non-racialism and official conceptions of citizenship as his students mobilised discourses of discrimination and ‘second-class citizenship’, “not based on what I told them, but based on their observations, their experiences at home... and therefore they have that sense of not belonging and not being completely in control of their future, which frightens them”. Education seems a perhaps necessary, but nevertheless weak, tool for scripting a new story of citizenship and nation.

## **Conclusions**

Imagining a new kind of citizenship for a new kind of nation and polity is a daunting task. Trying to actually implement such an imagination when wounds are still raw and

division is still evident is even more challenging. Yet that is what South Africa, like many other nations emerging from conflict, has attempted. These attempts reflect both ideals of citizenship – ideals that are themselves multiple and contested – and government practices and imperatives. Building a common narrative of citizenship to unite South Africa in its diversity relies upon strategies that ignore the legacies of the country's 'particular history', including social and spatial segregation and profound inequalities. While consolidating an identity as South African, curricular policies promote practices of citizenship that are cosmopolitan and that encourage economic self-sufficiency in order to meet individual – not state – responsibilities to individuals, families and communities. The government's embrace of these two universals of democratisation seems complete. The effects of apartheid, however, remain embedded in the country's economic, social, and residential landscapes. The lingering and unaddressed effects of apartheid mean that some portions of society are unable to fulfil their obligations as South African citizens and may be marked as irresponsible. The principal's story with which we started this paper stands as one small example. The manipulation of curriculum witnessed between schools, differences in skills and educational environments also reflect enduring inequalities in the conditions under which citizens learn and act.

South Africa may have a particular history, but its determination to leave its history behind and to build a new kind of citizenship and a new nation is not unique. In these efforts, the country has drawn on the ideas and efforts of a wide range of institutions, agents, and even academic theorists. The policies and practices it implemented reflect the broad consensus regarding democratization that developed since the 1980s. In implementing these policies, however, the government made a conscious decision to avoid addressing racial inequalities. Overlaying a set of policies and ideas about citizenship on a social and spatial landscape of inequality seems incapable of creating a country that is truly united in its diversity. The decision to do so – and the academic literature that supports that decision – stands in contrast to a wide ranging literature about path dependency and context that documents the roles of specific national histories and the ways they confound 'best practices' of democratisation (e.g., Bell and Stachel, 2001).

The resulting citizenship and nation promoted through the education system emphasises human rights, cosmopolitanism, wellbeing and self-sufficiency. Citizens of this nation should make few demands on the state, and so should be economically

productive and healthy. As a member of the community, the citizen should be respectful and responsible. The description of this citizen is strikingly similar to the ideal citizen of almost any country. It seems that the history of South Africa may be particular, but the efforts to promote citizenship are not. The refusal to acknowledge that history – as well as South Africa’s current situation – may in fact promote a kind of structural violence that will continue, at least in the near term (Harber and Mncube, 2011).

Yet just as education systems cannot be separated from the social, economic, and political contexts in which they operate, they cannot fully determine the way young people will act. Young people may not conform to the ideals of citizenship advanced through their education and become the sort of respectful and responsible citizens who do not make claims on the state; their politics may not be fully tamed or constrained. It is important not to mistake an apparent apathy or signs of disengagement for a lack of political ideas, goals, or strategies. Some students do protest, and challenges to the government percolate in the townships and informal settlements. The education system that has been developed since the end of apartheid perhaps helps to heal some feelings of division, but in no small measure by ignoring them. If this is the case, the outcomes of its post-conflict pedagogy for ‘the future of the nation’ remain uncertain.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The use of racial categories here is consistent with their use by the post-apartheid state. While we are reluctant to use these terms, and recognise that many people view it as perpetuating a system of discrimination and oppression, we do so in recognition of the continued salience of such identifiers in South Africa’s attempt at nation building and citizenship formation (cf Hammett, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> “These people” is shorthand in South Africa for talking about poor and undeserving people. To be one of “us” is not necessarily to be white, but to accept and adhere to white, middle class norms and behaviours.