

## **Scales of active citizenship: New Zealand teachers' diverse perceptions and practices**

**Bronwyn Elisabeth Wood\***

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

### **Abstract**

The heightened focus on 'active' citizenship in New Zealand's current curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) mirrors a pattern observed in many nation's curricula in the past decade. The scale of active citizenship in this curriculum includes an expectation that students will participate in local and national communities but also extends to participation in 'global communities'. Recognising that citizenship is a hotly contested concept, how do teaching departments, as collective curriculum 'gatekeepers', understand, interpret and enact such curriculum requirements? This paper describes the perceptions and practices toward active citizenship of New Zealand social studies teachers (n=27) from four differing geographic and socio-economic secondary school communities. This study reveals significant differences in the scale of teachers' citizenship orientations with lower socio-economic school communities prioritising locally-focused citizenship and higher socio-economic communities favouring national and global orientations. Applying a Bourdieusian analysis, the author posits that these diverse perceptions and practices are socially and culturally constituted and reinforced by the shared doxa within school communities. Understanding these differing perceptions of 'active' citizenship is essential to gain more nuanced perspectives on how citizenship education is enacted and practised in classrooms.

**Keywords:** Active citizenship, curriculum, citizenship education, Bourdieu, doxa, scales of citizenship

\*Bronwyn Wood is a lecturer in social sciences and citizenship education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. She researches in the areas of geographies of education and citizenship participation.

## Introduction

The explosion of sociological, political, and legal literature on citizenship in the past ten years or so has been paralleled by a growth in educational policies that seek to promote citizenship in schools (Brooks & Holford, 2009; Mutch, 2005b). Within such citizenship curricula, a further trend toward a more 'active' conception of citizenship has been observed (Kennedy, 2007; Kerr, 1999; Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Ross, 2008). While the reasons to explain this trend are multiple (see Brooks & Holford, 2009), Nelson and Kerr (2006) suggest that the impact of the relentless pace of change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is compelling officials and educators to pose serious questions about the nature of participation of citizens in civic and civil society and, in particular, how citizens participate in society. As a result, citizenship is increasingly defined "not just in relation to *status* (historically status in relation to the nation-state), but crucially in relation to *citizenship as an active practice*" (Nelson & Kerr, 2006, p. 7 their emphasis).

Moreover, in recent times, many argue that the scale of this 'active' citizenship has been challenged by an increasingly globalised world. In particular, the changing nature of information technology, efficient international travel, global marketing and financial systems, multinational corporations and global employment opportunities has broken down traditional national barriers (Barr, 2005). Such shifts have led to the "erosion of distinct boundaries dividing markets, states, civilizations, cultures, and not least of all the lifeworlds of different peoples" (Beck, 2007, p. 1). These changes present a number of key social, economic and environmental challenges related to the pace of movements of people, money, information and goods around the world. As a result, some suggest that contemporary scales of citizenship responsibility need to be broadened beyond the boundaries of the nation-state to more explicitly recognise diversity and the responsibilities of being part of a globalized world (Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2005). Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that viewing citizenship as a function of nationality is no longer adequate. Instead, they propose a vision of cosmopolitan citizens who, as well as local and national citizens, view themselves as citizens of a world community based on common human values and a sense of solidarity with others (p. 93).

The heightened focus on 'active' citizenship in New Zealand's current curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) mirrors a pattern observed in many nation's curricula in the past decade. Notions of active citizenship have been raised across the whole New Zealand Curriculum and are seen in the 'vision' of this document which aims to create young people who are "actively involved" and "participants in a range of life contexts" (p. 8). The most explicit call for active citizenship can be seen in the social sciences curriculum which states that students will "explore how societies work and how they themselves can participate and *take action* as critical, informed, and responsible citizens" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 17, my emphasis). The scale of active citizenship conveyed in this curriculum includes not only local and national communities, where students will be "connected . . . members of communities" and "contributors to the well-being of New Zealand" (p. 8), but also extends to a role of active participation as "international citizens" (p. 8) who are "part of a global community" (p. 39). These multiple scales of citizenship are perhaps summarised most concisely in the social sciences learning area which states that through the social sciences, "students develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to: better understand, participate in, and contribute to the local, national, and global communities in which they live and work" (p. 30). This curriculum therefore promotes a view of active citizenship that requires operation on a variety of scales.

Whilst the goals of active citizenship in this curriculum are explicit, just how do teachers understand, interpret and enact the nature and scale of this active citizenship? This is a particularly thorny question as it is well established that citizenship is an essentially

contested concept (Faulks, 2000; Kennedy, 2008; Lister, 2003), and that the ‘vocabularies of citizenship’ differ according to historical, social, political and cultural contexts (Kennedy, 2007; Lister, Smith, Middleton, & Cox, 2003). The concept of citizenship can reflect various and competing and conflicting philosophical political models (Frazer, 2008). In fact, the elusive nature of a citizenship definition is perhaps part of its almost “universal appeal” (Faulks, 2000, p. 1). As a concept, it can provide a degree of general agreement, as well as a cover for the more ambiguous aspects, as it has the potential to serve the aims of both the right and the left (Brooks & Holford, 2009; Faulks, 2000). Citizenship curricula therefore are socio-political constructs and cannot be divorced from the context in which they are developed and the ideology that drives them:

Such a curriculum is never value-free or neutral: it will always reflect current conceptions of the ‘good citizens’ as the ends toward which the curriculum is directed. (Kennedy, 2008, p. 486)

For this reason, it is very important to focus specifically on the “tangled contexts of the classroom” (Sim, 2010, p. 221) in order to gain further insights into how teachers interpret and operationalise this concept. Audrey Osler (2011) states that, “neither education policy, nor education practices can be understood merely through document analysis, since teachers are constantly interpreting official policies and adjusting them to their own professional practices in the classroom (p. 8). Thus, she argues, “teachers are engaged in a process of policy formation” (p. 8). In particular, and addressing Faulks’ (2000) criticism that much citizenship research fails to pay enough attention to the question of context, it is important to investigate how teachers’ perceptions and practices of active citizenship are developed within specific social, cultural and educational contexts such as a school community.

In this paper I examine how active citizenship is perceived and practised by New Zealand social studies teachers ( $n=27$ ) in four diverse school communities. In particular, I explore how teachers’ collective identities shape the *scale* of their citizenship dispositions by considering the spatiality of their focus (local/global). In light of a growing call for more cosmopolitan notions of active citizenship in a globalising world, it is increasingly important to understand the nature and geographies of citizenship responsibility (Massey, 2004). If, as Massey suggests, responsibility is derived from those relations through which identity is constructed, then it is of paramount importance to examine how teachers’ individual and collective identities inform their citizenship beliefs and practices.

I begin the paper with a review of the research that examines the interface between citizenship curriculum policies and teachers’ perceptions and practices. Data related to my research with New Zealand teachers are then introduced and analysed through a Bourdieusian framework. The paper concludes with a consideration of the implications of these diverse perceptions and practices of active citizenship.

### **Teachers’ multiple, contested conceptions of active citizenship**

In this section I review the limited research previously undertaken that examines how teachers perceive and enact citizenship curricula documents. From this research, it is apparent that teachers conceptualise citizenship in multiple ways both *across* and *within* cultural contexts (Kerr, Cleaver, Ireland, & Blenkinsop, 2003; Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Prior, 1999, 2005; Sim, 2010; Torney-Purta, Richardson, & Barber, 2005). These multiple conceptions held by teachers reflect the conflicting theoretical perspectives upon which citizenship is based, and the political and social context and differences in the conceptual understandings

held by individuals – for example, “individualist vs. collectivist, political rights vs. social rights, local vs. global” (Evans, 2006, p. 413).

At the outset, it is important to recognise that there is considerable ambiguity between what curriculum policies state, and what teachers do (Evans, 2006). Studies indicate that teachers’ perceptions of citizenship are not always consistent with the curricula documents of a nation. For example, Prior (1999, 2005), found that Australian teachers placed high value on tolerance, moral behaviour and social aspects of citizenship in contrast to a national curriculum which placed a strong emphasis on patriotism, national history and civic knowledge. In fact, teachers in his study rated patriotism as the least important characteristic of a good citizen, preferring an image of an inclusive and caring community. Prior (1999) suggests that these perceptions reflect teachers’ attempts to come to terms with growing multiculturalism, and uncertainty about national identity, and therefore expressed an impasse about “who we are and on what occasions and in what form we might express a sense of patriotism” (p.13). Similarly, Osler’s (2011) research with teachers in three contrasting schools in the north of England found that while the national curriculum placed considerable weight on both national identity and national political institutions, teachers preferred to focus on local dimensions of citizenship in their curriculum choices and pedagogies. She found they had a degree of ambivalence about teaching European citizenship and were more convinced of the importance of teaching issues of global citizenship concern.

Second, there is evidence that teacher practices do not always reflect their own conceptions of active citizenship. For example, Evans (2006) suggests that citizenship education teachers in Canada do not necessarily *do* what they *say*, and cites evidence of incongruity between their rhetoric and practice. His research suggests that teachers still revert to practices that favour learning content and facts (transmission), rather than the transformative approaches they may have spoken about. Research on New Zealand teachers’ conceptions of citizenship similarly found that teachers endorsed a rather uncritical notion of ‘citizenship as belonging’, overlooking more contested aspects of how citizenship is experienced (Milligan, Taylor, & Wood, 2011). Milligan et al. argue that such a conception had the effect of glossing over, or silencing tensions related to multiculturalism and conflicting models of citizenship which were apparent in the teachers’ discussions.

Third, research has also shown that teachers interpret the same curriculum documents differently. Jasmine Sim’s (2010) research with social studies teachers in Singapore found that teachers conceptualised and approached citizenship education in a number of different ways, “even in the context of a hegemonic state” (p. 241). Teachers in her study demonstrated four distinct approaches to citizenship education: expository and highly controlled, rationalistic and persuasive, interactive and participative, and constructive and experiential. Her research highlights the creativity and agency of teachers, and the significance of their personal identities and philosophies in interpreting citizenship curricula.

Finally, there is evidence that teachers view the more ‘active’ aspects of citizenship as problematic. For example, research in New Zealand has revealed that the social action is viewed by social studies teachers as one of the ‘hard bits’ of social studies (Keown, 1998; Keown, McGee, & Carstensen, 1997). Keown (1998) suggests that teachers are apprehensive about the contentious nature of values and social action teaching which opens up the potential for accusations of social engineering, indoctrination and community condemnation (see also Harrison, 1998; McGee, 1998). As a result, Taylor (2008) found that teachers’ practices of active citizenship in New Zealand schools remained focused on largely ‘safe’ and widely ‘acceptable’ forms of social action such as fund raising, writing letters to the newspaper, environmental actions such as tree planting, and promoting student leadership in schools.

Together these findings highlight the complex and contestable nature of citizenship education and the importance of finding out more about locally-derived expressions of both citizenship and agency of teachers within and beyond the ‘official knowledge’ (Apple, 1993) of the curriculum. They also alert us to the importance of recognising differences that can emerge as teachers interpret a citizenship curriculum document. Building on this prior scholarship, I was particularly interested in my research to see how teachers’ collective identities, shaped within the context of their school departments and communities, informed their perceptions and practices of ‘active’ citizenship. This approach rested upon a critical social constructionist theoretical framework drawing primarily on Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) theory of practice.

### **Theoretical and methodological framework**

My interest in this research was to explore how teachers act as ‘curricular-instructional gatekeepers’ (Thornton, 2005) who control both the content of what is taught and how it is taught in the classroom. This concept of gatekeepers reinforces the multiple ways even a prescribed curriculum can be interpreted and enacted within a classroom (Osler, 2011; Sim, 2010). However, rather than viewing these teachers as autonomous agents, I wanted to examine how their perceptions and practices toward active citizenship were shaped in the context of their school communities. With this in mind, I turned to Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) theory of practice and his concepts of habitus, capital and field as a way to gain deeper understandings of how the practices of individuals and groups can be seen to be beyond the false antinomies of structure and agency. As an alternative, he proposes a social praxeology which sees human practice as a reflection of the interconnecting “conceptual triad of habitus, capital and field” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 25), which he describes in the formula he provides in his book *Distinction*:

[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101)

Through this formula, Bourdieu makes a connection between an individual’s dispositions and actions (i.e. their practice), and the inseparable interplay of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1984).

Applying these ideas to a focus on teachers’ perceptions and practices of active citizenship involved examining their practice within the social context of collective experiences of being part of a curriculum department in a school. Bourdieu’s theory of practice alerts us to consider how the social, cultural and economic *capital* held by teachers, along with their *habitus*, or shared perceptions, appreciations and actions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), shapes their practice. Moreover, Bourdieu states that both capital and habitus are necessarily understood within a specific *field* (in this case the social studies/social sciences department at one school), and that within this field, certain capitals are awarded differing degrees of ‘distinction’. Mutch (2006) suggests that viewing a school or department as a social field on a micro-level reveals insights into how similar processes may be operating in wider social contexts and related fields. Bourdieu’s theories draw attention to how citizenship perceptions and actions reflect socially accumulated ways of operating that derive from shared, unquestioned beliefs or *doxa* (Bourdieu, 2000).

### **Methods, sample and participants**

This study reports on data collected with teachers from social studies/science departments from four purposively selected New Zealand high schools between late 2008 and the end of 2009. Social studies, a compulsory, integrated curriculum area for students in years 1-10 (ages 5-15), has historically been the primary vehicle in New Zealand for delivering citizenship education (Archer & Openshaw, 1992; Barr, 1998; Mutch, 2005a, 2005b;

Openshaw, 2004). My research in this paper focuses on the social studies curriculum and the concept of ‘social action’ (the term most widely used to convey active citizenship in this curriculum) and how social studies teachers perceived and enacted this idea. My unit of analysis was the social sciences department.<sup>1</sup> Findings related to their students’ perceptions and practices are not reported in this paper (see, Wood 2010, 2011). A multiple site approach was used in order to generate comparative data which held the potential to highlight the “contextual sensitivity” (Silverman, 2006, p. 17) of a concept such as active citizenship, recognising that such a concept is likely to have a variety of meanings in different contexts.

The selection of secondary schools was made on the grounds of two criteria: first, that they represented a *diversity of socio-economic and geographic indicators*. To achieve this, I relied on the decile rating system used by the Ministry of Education to provide equitable funding for New Zealand schools. A school’s decile rating indicates the extent to which a school draws its students from a low socio-economic community; a decile 1 represents the lowest 10% of socio-economic communities and a decile 10 the highest 10% of socio-economic communities. Like Marsh, O’Toole, and Jones (2007), I assumed that these school sites were ‘classed’, or in Bourdieu’s (1986) terms, ‘institutional embodiments of fields’, and therefore provided opportunities to explore situated expressions of habitus and social, cultural and economic capital. Second, my purposive selection focused on schools that demonstrated a prior interest in, or familiarity with, ‘social action’ and/or *community engagement* either in their social studies programmes or wider school programmes. This focus was to ensure that teachers in these schools had an interest in active citizenship and some experience in implementing this (Table 1). Pseudonyms have been used to maintain the anonymity of these schools, the participants and their geographic locations.

**Table 1: Summary of selected schools and teacher participants**

| College      | Decile | Nature of high school | Geographic location                        | Social studies teachers |           | Total no. of teachers |
|--------------|--------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
|              |        |                       |  | Male                    | Female    |                       |
| <b>A</b>     | 6      | State co-ed           | South Island city                          | 3                       | 4         | 7                     |
| <b>B</b>     | 1      | State co-ed           | North Island city                          | 3                       | 8         | 11                    |
| <b>C</b>     | 4      | State co-ed           | Suburban<br>South Island                   | 2                       | 1         | 3                     |
| <b>D</b>     | 8      | State Girls’          | Rural town<br>North Island<br>Central city | 0                       | 6         | 6                     |
| <b>Total</b> |        |                       |  | <b>8</b>                | <b>19</b> | <b>27</b>             |

Data collection involved semi-structured focus group interviews with all social studies teachers in the schools. Teachers were invited to opt in to the study and, of the 28 invited, one declined. The focus group discussion followed the completion (in pairs) of a PMI table about what teachers viewed as ‘Positive’, ‘Minus/negative’, and ‘Interesting’ about active citizenship in their school.

<sup>1</sup>In New Zealand high schools, most social studies teachers teach both junior social studies (Years 9 and 10) as well as a senior social science subject such as history, geography or economics (Years 11-13). A smaller number teach senior social studies (Years 11-13). These teachers all belong to the social sciences department/faculty. Departmental involvement includes planning shared classroom programmes, assessments, field trips, competitions, fundraising and general philosophical approaches.

This task-based activity was designed to stimulate reflection, and discussion, and to generate more easily comparable data before teachers participated in a whole group discussion (Punch, 2002). Focus groups were an important way to gain a sense of the collective beliefs – or doxa – that were shared by members of a school social studies department. Focus groups ranged in size from three to eleven teachers, reflecting the varying sizes of the social science departments (for example, College C only had three teachers in the social science department). Through these discussions, I attempted to get a sense of teachers’ ‘cultural story’ (Silverman, 2006), or the way they drew from their social and cultural contexts to develop their understandings of active citizenship. Data collection also included observations of social studies lessons in each school, and analysis of school data (websites, prospectus and curriculum planning documents) related to practices of active citizenship.

### Teacher talk: Scales of ‘active’ citizenship

In this section, I compare the perceptions and practices of social science departments in each of the four schools. All schools provided a range of school-wide opportunities for active citizenship for their students (see Table 2). The examples provided in Table 2 include both traditional conceptions of citizenship (such as the school council) as well as broader conceptions of citizenship that include opportunities for expressions of cultural identity, rights and connections of young people (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2007). These opportunities exemplify the facilitating conditions which Ireland, Kerr, Lopes, Nelson and Cleaver (2006) suggest contribute to more active conceptions of citizenship in the school setting.

*Table 2: Some opportunities for active citizenship provided by schools in 2009*

| Participation opportunities offered by Colleges | A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Active environmental group                      | ■ |   | ■ | ■ |
| School Council with elected students            | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Cultural performance groups                     | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Support for World Vision’s 40 Hour Famine       | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Support group for gay and lesbian youth         | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| Student activism group                          |   |   |   | ■ |
| Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD)           | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| Sporting groups                                 | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Amnesty International group                     | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| Human Rights group                              |   |   | ■ |   |

*Sources of information:* School websites, teachers and field notes.

Yet, while all schools had many similar opportunities for active citizenship, it was apparent to me that there were wide differences between these four schools. One key way these differences could be seen was in the scale of their spatial orientations toward active citizenship (local/global). In the following section, I describe how these differences were articulated by groups of teachers within social studies departments.

### Local and communitarian orientations

Two schools (Colleges B and C) conveyed an orientation toward active citizenship that placed a high value on local and community-focused issues, relationships and actions. There were, however, some significant differences between these two schools which are worth exploring in greater detail.

*College B* is a co-educational high school set in a working class, low socio-economic suburb (decile 1) in a large New Zealand city. Students at this school were predominantly Pacific Nations in origin (69%), Māori (19%) and Asian (7%). This ethnic composition reflects migration to this suburban area from primarily Pacific Nations (such as Samoa, Tokelau, Cook Islands and Niue), along with rural-urban Māori migration and refugee settlements, in the past 40 years.

The teachers at *College B* conceptualised active citizenship primarily as a way of encouraging participation and strengthening relationships with the local community. For example, they described the purpose of social action was for “coming together,” “community building” and “creating relationships with others.” Others affirmed that in taking social action, “a sense of positive community needs to be paramount,” to “make students feel part of society” and to be “fully involved.” The Māori language teacher saw social action as “whanaungatanga”<sup>2</sup> which she defined as “building community and then participating in it” (Teacher B2). She described how active citizenship also involved preserving culture, such as *Te Reo* (the Māori language), *te taiao* (the environment) and *tikanga* (cultural traditions).

This school prioritised the celebration and preservation of the cultural traditions of their student population through musical, performative and linguistic opportunities. *College B*’s language acquisition programme (for Pacific languages and *Te Reo*, the Māori language) was awarded a Human Rights award in recognition of the rarity of such a commitment in New Zealand secondary schools and the leadership this school demonstrated (School website, 2009). These commitments had strong community links with local people actively involved in supporting cultural and linguistic initiatives within the school.

Opportunities for active citizenship within the social studies programmes were, however, less common. Teachers referred to a small number of one-off events (such as Human Rights Day) and a couple of units that had employed a social action approach (such as a survey of local businesses). They endorsed the community service approach taken by many Pacific Island churches in their community, yet were also cautious about how social action “could provoke angry responses or greater resistance” as “so it could have the effect of destabilising relationships as opposed to the positive outcomes of strengthening” (Teacher B2). This approach has similarities to Rosaldo’s (1989) conception of ‘cultural citizenship’. Advocates within this tradition promote the incorporation of rights, perspectives and experiences of all cultural groups, and especially those previously marginalised in society.

While teachers from *College C*, rarely referred to cultural citizenship conceptions, they also had a strong community focus to their perceptions and practices of active citizenship. *College C* is a decile 4, co-ed high school based in a small rural town in the South Island. Students at *College C* predominately came from New Zealand European backgrounds and approximately 20% were Māori. A commitment to develop “well rounded citizens making a positive contribution to the community” is espoused in the School Prospectus (2010) and more than 15 service groups are active in the school (School Prospectus, 2010) (see Table 2).

Social studies teachers at *College C* had a strong tradition of social action within their social studies programmes. In fact, as a social studies department a number of years earlier, they had initiated a Community Issues class in response to what they saw as a very passive previous social studies curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997) which focused only on *social decision-making* and not *social action* (Field notes, March, 2009).

---

<sup>2</sup> Whanaungatanga (Māori) conveys a sense of whānau, family relationships gained through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.

Teachers referred to this Community Issues class as “social studies with boots on” as it enabled their students to get “more real” by engaging with community issues and talking to people in the community (Field notes, April, 2009). This Community Issues class now was a compulsory experience for all Year 10 students in the school (age 14-15 years). The focus of this class was on a student-selected community issue and in recent years, students had investigated issues such as 1080 poison,<sup>3</sup> Didymo,<sup>4</sup> the arrival of McDonalds, local government structures, and the closure of the local swimming pool. Students would research this issue, conduct a local survey and then present the findings to the community. Local business and advocacy groups had become involved in the programme and often lobbied the school to undertake their issue of concern. For example, during my research a group representing Transition Towns presented ideas to the Community Issues class to encourage them to focus on issues of local environmental sustainability.

Teachers saw social action as an empowering way to connect their students with the immediate community:

Well, for me, it is making the learners more connected to the community that they're in and that's not something that just happens in the four walls within which you study. So if other people come into your classroom or you go out and deliver your thoughts to other people, you know, when that happens, it's quite empowering for them to feel that they've been listened to. (Teacher C1)

They described the strength of the Community Issues class was how it allowed students to interact with the community and pose questions about local issues. Similar to Zipin and Reid's (2008) idea of ‘making community curricular’, these teachers advocated for the community to form the centre of citizenship curriculum approaches, although Teacher C1 teacher felt that these “little pieces [of social action] that we've been trying to infuse into our programmes” could still be taken “to the next layer”.

### **Global and cosmopolitan orientations toward active citizenship**

*College A* is a decile 6, co-educational state high school established in a suburban area of a regional city in the South Island. Students were predominantly from New Zealand European backgrounds (83%), with a smaller number of Māori (14%) and Asian (3%) students. The school has an active philosophy of student leadership and, in 2009, there was a student-led Environmental Committee, lobby groups such as Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD) and Amnesty International, as well as student-led groups that raised funds for the World Vision 40 Hour Famine and child cancer (CanTeen) (see Table 2).

The teachers' conceptions of social action centred on “doing something” in response to their social studies learning, that created ways to “connect with the outside world”. They described how they worked to make social action relevant, authentic and engaging to students. In response, they had put in place a number of approaches to develop active, global, cosmopolitan citizens. For example, in social studies they had units focusing on global citizenship, child labour, war and terrorism. Within these units, the social studies teachers provided a number of opportunities for their students to “take action”. This included, for example, selling friendship bracelets to raise money for Voluntary Services Abroad (VSA), collecting food for local food banks, holding an End Poverty conscious-raising school assembly, and writing submissions to the Council on local issues.

---

<sup>3</sup> 1080 is a controversial poison used extensively in New Zealand to control pests such as possums and stoats.

<sup>4</sup> Didymo, a fresh water alga, is an introduced water-borne species that causes extensive destruction of waterways.

Teacher A1, the Head of Department, had also initiated a field trip to a developing country for social studies students to gain international exposure and take social action by contributing to humanitarian work in this country. Further international trips were being organised for social studies students in future years which were strongly supported by students and their parents. Teacher A1 was a passionate advocate for global issues and encouraged social responsibility from her students. I heard her say to her classes on a number of occasions:

Your grades in social studies are important, and I will do everything I can to help you get the best grades possible. But what counts to me more than anything else is that you will contact me in years to come and tell me what you have done for others. (Field notes, October, 2008, March 2009)

Having trialled a number of 'social action' approaches in their social studies programme, this department was consolidating their approaches and reflected that "if we do [social action] regularly it becomes the norm and therefore we are more comfortable" (Teacher A3).

The final school, *College D* also had a strong global focus, but also explored opportunities for local and national active citizenship. College D is a decile 8, state, single-sex girls' school located in a central North Island city. Students with a diverse range of cultural backgrounds attended the school and only 48% of students were of New Zealand European origins. The school was an Enviroschool and had an active student council. In 2009 there was a student activist group, a student-led environmental group, and a student-led 40 Hour Famine Committee (Table 2).

Social studies teachers at College D described a number of ways in which they provided opportunities for social action in their programmes and practices. For example, teachers described how students were active in writing submissions to the Council. This was one way to ensure students knew they had a real audience:

And even if they're not particularly able in the skill of structuring an essay, it's still empowering for them to think, well they can still be heard. Cos some of them will never be particularly strong writers, but they still could be hounding the Council for years... (Teacher D1)

Teachers described how exposing their students to social action could enable them to "go out on their own" later in life, as "isn't the whole idea of [the social action process] that we're making more active, you know, future citizens, that will be greater participants in our society?" (Teacher D3)

Teachers at College D, reflecting on the scale of their social action, discussed how they "do try and cover a range of different places in the world at the moment" as the focus of their learning. For example, they taught a number of global social issues in their social studies programme including human rights, child labour, and environmental sustainability. Teachers referred to the cultural diversity of their students as another reason for incorporating global perspectives in their social studies programmes:

D3: Well, I teach a student in Year 9 whose father was killed by the Taliban. And she's come here from Afghanistan. So it's closer than you think.

D4: There's another [student] in year 11.

D1: Well she's only recently done a speech about that so I think that students are probably more aware of global issues than you might think.

At Year 11, the social studies programme involved a specific focus on water conservation at global, national and local levels as well as auditing water flows in their school. This also involved a field trip to a local stream where students examined the impact of humans and collected rubbish. The unit culminated in student-led social action to fundraise for more water tanks for their school to conserve water. Teacher D3 described how this active citizenship programme had connected students to their communities, and “also increases their awareness that they’re part of the community and they can effect change”. Teacher D2 went on to question “but do we need to make sure we cover a range of scales in terms of our social action? That’s something we need to think about. Cos we have been looking locally and nationally but do we need to look at globally?”

### Discussion

Active citizenship does not happen in a social vacuum. The patterns of active citizenship discussed in this paper reveal that while teachers held multiple and varying conceptions and practices of social action *between* the four school sites, they also held surprisingly high levels of agreement *within* school sites. These differences between school sites were manifested in the nature of active citizenship perceptions and practices and, in particular, in the scale of teachers’ spatial orientation toward active citizenship. In this discussion, I will review these findings, and, through Bourdieu’s (1977/1990) concepts of capital, habitus and field, propose that the doxa, or sets of unquestioned shared beliefs held by a school department, can be seen to be socially and culturally constituted within school communities. This may provide insights into how similar processes may be operating in wider social contexts and related fields (Mutch, 2006).

An analysis of the *spatial orientation* of social action across the four schools reveals that teachers from Colleges A and D had more of a ‘global’ focus to their conceptions and practices of social action, and teachers from Colleges B and C had more of a ‘local’ or community focus. Teachers from College A had particularly global and cosmopolitan participatory dispositions with a sense of citizenship that was not limited to that of the nation (Osler & Starkey, 2005). This included an educational focus on many global citizenship issues as well as providing opportunities for students to raise money for international organisations, and, for some students to participate in social action in a developing country. College D had a similar focus on global issues such as human rights/child labour. Their unit on water conservation was examined at global, national and local levels, highlighting the importance they placed on understanding the geographies of active citizenship responsibility between these scales.

In contrast, College C’s Community Issues class had a strong local issues focus that aimed to build links between the school and groups and individuals in the community. For College B, a cultural and community focus of active citizenship centred on belonging to, and participating in, the local community (conveyed by the Māori concept *whanaungatanga*). Employing what could be described as a cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1989) approach, their perceptions and practices emphasised the flexible social membership, the limitations of citizenship merely as rights, and issues of identity and difference— aspects which Isin and Turner (2007) describe of as characteristic of an expanded and deepened notion of citizenship in recent times.

Teachers across all four schools used the same curriculum documents, yet arrived at a set of agreed perceptions and practices that were, at times, markedly different. The local-global spatial orientation I have noted between the schools also reflects the relative socio-economic position of schools, with the lower decile schools (B and C) exhibiting a prevailing local/community focus, and higher decile schools (A and D) more of a global awareness. How can we explain how these groups of teachers within social studies departments

developed shared understandings that in many ways reflected the social field of their school communities?

Bourdieu's concept of *doxa* is a useful analytical or 'thinking tool' to help explain this. Bourdieu (2000) refers to *doxa* as "a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma" (p. 16). Deer (2008) explains that these are "pre-reflexive, shared but unquestioned opinions and perceptions mediated by relatively autonomous social microcosms (fields) that determine 'natural' practice and attitudes *via* the internalised 'sense of limits' and habitus of the social agents in the field" (p. 120). Teachers in each of these schools shared an unquestioned or doxic way of thinking about active citizenship.

Bourdieu's (2000) theorising of *doxa* also illuminates how the nature of such shared beliefs can emerge within specific social fields. He proposes that *doxa* are articulated around the legitimation and accumulation of social, cultural, economic and symbolic capitals. These field-specific sets of beliefs inform the shared habitus of those operating in the field (Deer, 2008), thus reinforcing and reproducing the habitus and capital of a social field (Bourdieu, 2000). In this study, the more globally-oriented schools (A and D) also represented communities that had access to greater levels of wealth (seen in their decile rankings – 6 and 8 respectively). Students at these schools were therefore more likely to have access to economic capital that would enable them, for example, to attend an international exposure trip such as the one held at College A. Higher levels of social and cultural capital in these two communities also were likely to contribute to a greater awareness of global issues, facilitated through exposure to wide social networks, global cultural capital, and information (Buckingham, 2000).

Massey (2004) proposes that political commitments and responsibilities are derived from relations through which identity is constructed. For the teachers in this study, their individual and collective identities were likely to be shaped by their own cultural, social and economic capital, but also their relationships with the schooling community. For example, teachers at College B were conscious of their conservative local community and were anxious to not let social action destabilise community relationships. This appeared to shape the nature of the cultural citizenship which the school practised that was strongly supported by community members. Similarly, the presence of refugee students at College D reinforced the teachers' attention to global issues in their social studies programmes as they believed students were "more aware of global issues than you think". In both these examples, relationships between teachers and members of their school community were shaping the scale of citizenship action that they enacted.

### **Concluding remarks and further considerations**

The findings discussed here highlight the significance that teachers' shared identities within school departments and communities have on the way a malleable concept such as active citizenship is conceptualised and taught. I have suggested that Bourdieu's (2000) concept of *doxa* helps to explain the unstated, collective, taken-for-granted agreement shared by the teachers in each school (see also Osler, 2011 for similar findings). Moreover, viewing *doxa* as a reflection of the social, cultural and economic capital and habitus shared by members of a social field (in this case, a school department), provides a useful thinking tool to account for the diverse actions and practices of these social groups.

This Bourdieusian analysis does raise further questions, especially when we consider the *symbolic capital* associated with differing forms of active citizenship. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that schools are artefacts of the dominant social and cultural faction which award certain forms of capital with greater status or distinction than others – he refers to these forms

of capitals as holding *symbolic capital*. Could it be that the global, cosmopolitan perceptions and practices of teachers from the wealthier school communities also held greater levels of symbolic capital associated with active citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than lower socio-economic communities?

Given the prevailing neoliberal frameworks in which this curriculum is embedded (see Wood, 2009), and the nature of global economic capital which young people are intended to access through such a curriculum (Codd, 2005), it is likely that teaching strategies that contribute to higher levels of ‘global’ knowledge and ‘global’ participation (especially economic and employability) are valued highly. For this reason, it is possible to speculate that social, cultural and economic capital that favours global orientations of active citizenship is likely to hold greater symbolic capital within an educational field than local orientations. Osler’s (2011) research in this area is sobering. She found that teachers of lower-attaining students chose to focus exclusively on local citizenship issues and topics, whereas, higher-attaining students were offered a more ‘cosmopolitan’ approach to their citizenship education. She concludes that enabling only higher-attaining students to extend their horizons “may result in an approach where cosmopolitanism is seen as the preserve of elites” (p. 15).

If this is the case, then this has significant implications for the local-oriented, lower decile schools (Colleges B and C) in particular. By focusing on community issues and local action, were teachers possibly restricting their students’ access to powerful global capital that is held in the hands of globally-oriented elites? If so, this would render these young people unable to access the symbolic (and associated economic, cultural and social) capital associated with global economies.

Yet, did locally-oriented perceptions and practices of active citizenship necessarily imply less transformative and ‘minimal’ (Kerr, 1999) approaches to active citizenship? Kerr (1999) proposes that minimal interpretations of citizenship are largely content-led and knowledge-based, whereas maximal forms of citizenship aim to develop values, skills and dispositions toward citizenship. While College B and C focussed almost exclusively on local issues and actions, they also demonstrated a commitment to transformative and social-justice-oriented (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) dimensions of active citizenship. The Community Issues class exemplified active citizenship that was locally oriented yet, had a strong level of critique and social transformative potential embedded within its approach (Zipin & Reid, 2008). Similarly, the cultural citizenship approaches of College B also held potential to address issues of representation, identity and engagement of otherwise marginalised citizens within a nation (Rosaldo, 1989). While global citizenship practices and perceptions may favour elite school communities, is it possible that localised foci could offer more chances to be transformative and authentic? A number of researchers argue that political and social issues take on greater meaning for young people when interpreted through local experiences, and that young people have greater levels of insight, critique, and agency over issues which are part of their everyday, lived experiences (Gruenewald, 2003; Harris & Wyn, 2009; Weller, 2007; Zipin & Reid, 2008).

These findings highlight the complexity of the role that teachers hold as gatekeepers to the experience of active citizenship education. While curriculum documents convey a growing expectation for students to be active citizens in local, national and also global communities, teachers are left grappling with just what this means. In particular, there are challenges relating to how to uphold the integrity of globally-focussed ideas whilst remaining committed to authentic relationships with local school communities. If, as this research suggests, we see teachers’ perceptions and practices as consciously or unconsciously mirroring the school community in which they operate, then questions are raised about how teachers develop and imagine allegiances to alternative communities. A further challenge centres on how to ensure that the nature and scale of active citizenship will provide

opportunities for maximal and social justice-oriented citizenship. More attention to these issues is essential if we are to support teachers, as well as young active citizens, with the ability to negotiate the complexity and scale of citizenship commitments within local, national and global arenas.

### References

- Apple, M. (1993). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. London: Routledge.
- Archer, E., & Openshaw, R. (1992). Citizenship and identity as 'official goals' in social studies. In R. Openshaw (Ed.), *New Zealand social studies: Past, present and future* (pp. 19-33). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Barr, H. (1998). The nature of social studies. In P. Benson & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *New horizons for New Zealand social studies*. Palmerston North: ERDC Press.
- Barr, H. (2005). Toward a model of citizenship education. In C. White & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Democracy at the crossroads; International perspectives on critical global citizenship education* (pp. 55-75). Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Beck, U. (2007). A new cosmopolitanism is in the air. *Literaturen*, November.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascallian meditations* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Brooks, R., & Holford, J. A. (2009). Citizenship, learning and education: Themes and issues. *Citizenship Studies*, 13(2), 85-103. doi:10.1080/13621020902749027
- Buckingham, D. (2000). *The making of citizens: Young people, news and politics*. London: Routledge.
- Codd, J. (2005). Education policy and the challenges of globalisation: Commercialisation or citizenship? In J. Codd & K. Sullivan (Eds.), *Policy directions in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 3-16). Southbank Victoria: Thomson Dunmore Press.
- Deer, C. (2008). Doxa. In M. Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts* (pp. 119-130). Durham: Acumen.
- Evans, M. (2006). Educating for citizenship: What teachers say and what teachers do. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29(2), 410-435. doi:10.2307/20054170

- Faulks, K. (2000). *Citizenship*. London: Routledge.
- Frazer, E. (2008). Key perspectives, traditions and disciplines: Overview. In J. Arthur, I. Davies & C. Hahn (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of education for citizenship and democracy* (pp. 81-91). London: Sage.
- Gruenewald, D. (2003). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 3-12. doi:10.3102/0013189X032004003
- Harker, R. (1990). Bourdieu: Education and reproduction. In R. Harker, C. Mahar & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (pp. 86-108). Houndsmills: The Macmillan Press.
- Harris, A., & Wyn, J. (2009). Young people's politics and the micro-territories of the local. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 44(2), 327-344. doi:10.1080/10361140902865308
- Harris, A., Wyn, J., & Younes, S. (2007). Young people and citizenship: An everyday perspective. *Youth Studies Australia*, 26(3), 19-27.
- Harrison, K. (1998). Social studies in the New Zealand curriculum: Dosing for amnesia or enemy of ethnocentrism? In P. Benson & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *New horizons for New Zealand social studies* (pp. 63-82). Palmerston North: ERDC Press.
- Ireland, E., Kerr, D., Lopes, J., Nelson, J., & Cleaver, E. (2006). *Active citizenship and young people: Opportunities, experiences and challenges in and beyond school: Citizenship education longitudinal study: Fourth annual report*. Nottingham: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Isin, E., & Turner, B. (2007). Investigating citizenship: An agenda for citizenship studies. *Citizenship Studies*, 11(1), 5-17. doi:10.1080/13621020601099773
- Kennedy, K. (2007). Student constructions of active citizenship: What does participation mean to students? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55(3), 304-324. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00381.x
- Kennedy, K. (2008). The citizenship curriculum: Ideology, content and organisation. In J. Arthur, I. Davies & C. Hahn (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of education for citizenship and democracy* (pp. 483-491). London: Sage.
- Keown, P. (1998). Values and social action: Doing the hard bits. In P. Benson & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *New horizons for New Zealand social studies* (pp. 137-159). Palmerston North: ERDC Press.
- Keown, P., McGee, C., & Carstensen, M. (1997). *Action research on values education through social studies in two New Zealand schools*. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Kerr, D. (1999). *Citizenship education in the curriculum: An international review*. UK: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Kerr, D., Cleaver, E., Ireland, E., & Blenkinsop, S. (2003). *Citizenship education longitudinal study first cross-sectional survey 2001-2003*. London: DfES.
- Lister, R. (2003). *Citizenship: Feminist perspectives* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan.
- Lister, R., Smith, N., Middleton, S., & Cox, L. (2003). Young people talk about citizenship: Empirical perspectives on theoretical and political debates. *Citizenship Studies*, 7(2), 235-253. doi:10.1080/1362102032000065991

- Marsh, D., O'Toole, T., & Jones, S. (2007). *Young people and politics in the UK: Apathy or alienation?* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Massey, D. (2004). Geographies of responsibility. *Geografiska Annaler*, 86B(1), 5-18. doi:10.1111/j.0435-3684.2004.00150.x
- McGee, J. (1998). Curriculum in conflict: Historical development of citizenship education in social studies. In P. Benson & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *New horizons for New Zealand social studies* (pp. 43-62). Palmerston North: ERDC Press.
- Milligan, A., Taylor, M., & Wood, B. E. (2011). Teachers' conceptions of citizenship in New Zealand social studies education. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 6(2), 287-302. doi:10.1386/ctl.6.3.287\_1
- Ministry of Education (1997). *Social studies in the New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Mutch, C. (2005a). Confident, informed and responsible citizens: By what means? In P. Benson & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Towards effective social studies* (pp. 69-84). Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.
- Mutch, C. (2005b). Developing global citizens: The rhetoric and the reality in the New Zealand curriculum. In C. White & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Democracy at the crossroads: International perspectives on critical global citizenship education* (pp. 187-209). Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Mutch, C. (2006). Adapting Bourdieu's field theory to explain decision-making processes in educational policy. In V. Anfara & N. Mertz (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* (pp. 155-174). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Nelson, J., & Kerr, D. (2006). *Active citizenship in INCA countries: Definitions, policies, practices, and outcomes*. Retrieved August 2007. from [http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Active\\_Citizenship\\_Report.pdf](http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Active_Citizenship_Report.pdf)
- Openshaw, R. (2004). Able to take their part? Social studies and the curriculum framework In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture, knowledge and learning: Policy and content in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (pp. 245-264). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Osler, A. (2011). Teacher interpretations of citizenship education: National identity, cosmopolitan ideals and political realities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(1), 1. doi:10.1080/00220272.2010.503245
- Osler, A., & Starkey, H. (2003). Learning for cosmopolitan citizenship: Theoretical debates and young people's experiences. *Educational Review*, 55(3), 243-254. doi:10.1080/0013191032000118901
- Osler, A., & Starkey, H. (2005). *Changing citizenship: Democracy and inclusion in education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Prior, W. (1999). Concepts of citizenship: Teacher perceptions of civics and citizenship education. *The Social Educator*, September, 5-15.
- Prior, W. (2005). Perceptions of citizenship in Australia. In C. White & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Democracy at the crossroads: International perspectives on critical global citizenship education*. Oxford: Lexington Books.

- Punch, S. (2002). Interviewing strategies with young people: The 'secret box', stimulus material and task-based activities. *Children and Society*, 16(1), 45-56. doi:10.1002/chi.685
- Rosaldo, R. (1989). *Culture and truth: The remaking of social analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ross, A. (2008). Organizing a curriculum for active citizenship education. In J. Arthur, I. Davies & C. Hahn (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of education for citizenship and democracy*. London: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Sim, J. B.-Y. (2010). Simple ideological 'dupes' of national governments'? Teacher agency and citizenship education in Singapore. In K. Kennedy, W. On Lee & D. Grossman (Eds.), *Citizenship pedagogies in Asia and the Pacific* (pp. 221-242). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.
- Taylor, R. (2008). *Teachers' conflicting responses to change: An evaluation of the implementation of senior social studies for the NCEA 2002-2006*. Unpublished Doctor of Education thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North.
- Thornton, S. (2005). *Teaching social studies that matters: Curriculum for active teaching*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Torney-Purta, J., Richardson, W. K., & Barber, C. H. (2005). Teachers' educational experience and confidence in relation to students' civic knowledge across countries. *Citized: International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1(1), 32-57.
- Weller, S. (2007). *Teenagers' citizenship: Experiences and education*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen?: The politics of educating for democracy. *American Research Journal*, 41(2), 237-269.
- Wood, B. E. (2009). Comparing the New Zealand curriculum and youth conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen: Re-examining trust, participation and responsibility. *Youth Studies Ireland*, 4(2), 3-21.
- Wood, B. E. (2010). Youth participation in society: Everyday citizenship perspectives from young people in New Zealand. *New Zealand Sociology*, 25(2), 103-124.
- Wood, B. E. (2011). *Citizenship in our place: Exploring New Zealand young people's everyday, place-based perspectives on participation in society*. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Zipin, L., & Reid, A. (2008). A justice oriented curriculum: Making community curricular. In J. Arthur, I. Davies & C. Hahn (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of education for citizenship and democracy* (pp. 533-544). London: Sage.