

What are the main features of marshall's theory of citizenship essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



T. H. Marshall's theory of citizenship is the most recent theoretical model developed in the 1950s. He elaborated his ideas around the three rights elements, civil, political and social rights. He argued for equality of status rather than that due to the labour market. Along with all theories Marshall did not go without criticism, I will conclude with some of these criticisms and focus on the contemporary problems of citizenship.

Prior to explaining Marshall's definition of citizenship, more general explanations can be offered. Citizenship refers to the position of being a citizen, and the collection of rights and duties of this position. These rights define the socio-political membership with the consequence of allocation of collective benefits to the social groups, households and individuals. Citizenship therefore comprises the individuals as fully- fledged members of a socio- political community, whether it is an inhabitant of a city or as a native.

This provides the individual with access to limited resources, supplying social or legal protection from unexpected uncertainties of the market place and related life-cycle disadvantages. Within the modern society citizenship creates new types of social solidarity in term of public relations of the exchanging of possessions with others for mutual benefit; this establishes new intergenerational bonds of loyalty and obligation outside the family. Hence citizenship reflects the values of a society, and a prospective model of living, which represents higher aspirations.

Marshall's theory is that of a liberal- pluralist perspective, seeing the development of the concept of citizenship as the history of formal

equalisation of the mainstream of society. Lister (1998) suggested that Marshall's account of citizenship is one with a 'happy ending'. He stated that increased formal equality would reduce the misery of capitalism's 'free market'. Citizenship would subside the conflict caused by the class struggle and progress towards 'enlightened' times. Marshall took the nation-state as certain in his analysis. Ireland and Scotland is strangely absent in his England centred account, and he saw the progress of citizenship over class conflicts as a process with its own internal dynamic.

Marshall identified three theoretically and historically distinct elements in what he based as citizenship due to three sets of socio-economic factors. Marshall argued there was a decrease in income inequality between the occupations; that there has been the 'great extension' of common culture and social solidarity rooted in the increasing common experience between individual and society as a whole. Finally the search for equality would 'enrich the universal status of citizenship'. This enrichment would be the gaining of 'rights' by the individuals.

The first right is civil citizenship. This includes the fundamental liberal rights such as the right to own property, to enter contracts, and to have the right to access the courts in the event that compensation was required. Above all it is the right to the 'freedom of speech and thought'. Another term for this element would be that of 'legal' citizenship.

The Second stage is political citizenship. This element includes the right to vote, and to participate representatively in political life. It is a basics and

formal acknowledgement of an individual's right to be treated equally in the political system and of the mutual obligations that this entails. Although this element incorporates the concepts of suffrage and the right to participate, it is much broader than that. Political citizenship also encompasses all the supplementary rights and benefits which make meaningful participation possible for example the freedom of political speech, the right to move freely through public space, free choice of occupation, equality of opportunity, equal access to income wealth and so forth.

The third element is that of social citizenship. Marshall identifies this final element as being the individual's independent access to the basic social goods provided by the community to its members. Therefore the access to welfare benefits, the range of welfare services from education to medical treatment form part of this third element.

Marshall gave a celebratory lecture in 1949 to the establishment of the British welfare state. A state he declares ' gives concrete application to these social rights'. He believed the modern state now cared for the individual, representing them. The social rights ensured equality of opportunity to education, the medical and welfare services. Marshall thought the procession of all three of these elements of rights a guarantee of formal equality, a formal equality that puts an end to the inequalities of class and status formed by the capitalist society.

Marshall argues that in English legal and political life these three stages formed by a gradual sequential development. The development of civil rights

marked the distinction between a feudal society to one of independent, leading to equal persons. Once this was attained, the next move was towards universal suffrage and political participation by all, including the ability to fully exercise those political rights and obligations. This structure then sets the path towards his third stage, social citizenship, and a welfare state where all citizens are able to enjoy the protections of the society in which they live.

Marshall claimed his account to be universal and that his model applied to every society, at any given time. There would be vast benefits from such a model; comparisons between quality and quantity of each society could be drawn. However dilemmas may occur, assumptions of the model would hide differences of culture and identity of other groups within societies.

Marshall believed if these rights were to flow efficiently the individual had certain responsibilities to carry out. These compulsory duties were that of paying tax and national insurance, if the state were to supply benefits the initial capital would have to come from somewhere. Compulsory education must be accepted, how were people ever to improve if they were not willing to learn? The participation in military service, if and when required. Great emphasis was placed upon the importance to 'put one's heart into one's job'. There was a general obligation to live an all round good life. The question is, are the individuals willing to perform these tasks, only time would tell. These three rights were assumed to create equality of status. Establishing equalisation between the population, rather than just class. This

status was more important than the individuals' class; if the individual were poor their status would be maintained by the welfare state.

The theoretical criticisms of Marshall's model vary. Michael Mann (1987) is perhaps the most critical, he sees Marshall's explanation as Anglophile and evolutionary. Adopting Marshall's often precise normative position of support for reformist liberalism he argues for attention to the geopolitics in relation to citizenship's response to class struggle. He considers 'the British strategy of citizenship' as only one of many ways to conquer class conflict, others more liberal. This is not necessarily a better way of containing the rise of the bourgeoisie, he argues, but these regimes were not as successful at winning world wars. They did not die of natural causes, he argues, they were assassinated. Therefore the evolution implied in Marshall's plan is, as Mann believes an illusion; 'Sociologists are prone to forget that "evolution" is often geopolitically assisted'.

Ralph Dahrendorf deals with Marshall's central theme of the significance of class in a stage where citizenship has conferred one universal equality of status on all citizens. He combines Marxian notions of class conflict with Marshall's theory, seeing the relationship between citizenship and social class in terms of a broader 'struggle for life chances.' Using Marshall's account of the progression of national citizenship to join the normative debate on the uses of nationalism, he argues that:

"Historically at least, the nation-state was as much a necessary condition of progress as it unfortunately turned out to be a source of regression and

inhumanity. The alliance of nationalism and liberalism was a force for emancipation" (Bulmer and Rees, 1996, p. 29).

Nationality and citizenship were are entangled for Dahrendorf as the only advantage of the nation state he saw was that it made generalisations of the ancient idea of citizenship.

The problem of Marshall's work is noticeably the vagueness to the status of the theoretical idea. The three stage model of civil, political and social rights could be questioned for concentrating too heavily on the rights and not the responsibilities.

Marshall's work, whilst being informative for the modern phase in English national history it is no longer transforming for the current globalising, fragmenting world. Marshall's theory vague even in his time is now even harder to maintain.