

Close reading exercise:

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, “Rethinking Membership and Participation in an Inclusive Democracy : Cognitive Disability, Children, Animals”

“This revised conception of citizenship has multiple benefits compared to the traditional conception tied to linguistic agency. If we say that to qualify as a citizen, it is not enough to participate in social life and be responsive to **social norms**, but one must also be able to rationally reflect on, evaluate and articulate propositions regarding these norms, then we quickly slide into a very exclusionary conception of citizenship. Not everyone has this capacity, and no one has it for all of their lives. Defining citizenship in this way would give all of us, at best, a fragile and conditional citizenship status.

It’s not simply exclusionary, but misses the point of citizenship, which is to recognize and uphold membership in a shared society. Citizenship is a way of acknowledging who belongs here, who is a member of the people in whose name the state governs, and whose subjective good must be considered in determining the public interest and in shaping the social norms that structure our cooperative relations.

Viewed this way, the fundamental basis of democratic citizenship is not linguistic agency, but rather **the capacity for norm responsiveness in intersubjective relationships** – the ability to moderate behaviour in accord with internalized norms when relating to other selves. Recent disability theorists argue that capacities for **agency** and citizenship are embedded in ongoing **social relations among responsive, reflexive and interdependent selves**, not located in a threshold individual capacity for rational reflection and public deliberation. CD does not disqualify individuals from participating in, and contributing to, **norm-governed and morally valuable practices**.

This approach challenges not just traditional ideas about the alleged *capacities* required for citizenship, but also about **the locations and practices that define citizenship**. Implementing citizenship rights and responsibilities in relation to non-linguistic agents requires developing new ways of engaging the subjectivity of these co-citizens, focusing less on the ability to articulate or understand propositions, and more on attending to their ‘varied modes of doing, saying and being.’ We need to create new mechanisms for the enactment of citizenship, bringing citizenship to the places and spaces where membership, participation and decision-making are meaningful to the individuals involved.” [170-171]

1. Read the passage again, carefully.
2. Focus on the bolded words and phrases, and explain what they mean.
3. Thinking about the rest of the article, find three examples of “new mechanisms for the enactment of citizenship” that fit the model outlined.
4. Think of an example of a political controversy raised by the article—something that Donaldson and Kymlicka would grant to people with CD, children, or DAs that you think could be difficult for some existing citizens of democracies to accept.