



Why Has Civic Education Failed to Increase Young People's Political Participation?

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a revival of civic education. Advocates of this policy have cited the alleged declining normative political participation of young people as a primary reason for its need. This paper builds on the findings of a recent systematic review that examined the effect of civic education on young people's level of normative political engagement. The review found little evidence for civic education having a clear effect on voting/registering to vote, but did identify modest positive effects on forms of political expression (e.g. signing petitions). Hence, it seems civic education has broadly 'failed' in its specified aim. We argue here that this 'failure' reflects a mechanistic approach to policy and a naive notion that 'knowledge will result in action', neglecting insights from sociological literature that shows structural barriers to young people's political participation and the displacement of electoral politics by new hybrid and creative forms of participation.

Keywords: *Citizenship, Civic Education, Political Exclusion, Political Participation, Young People*

Introduction

1.1 Young people are frequently described as disconnected from politics and civic life. This is a popular view particularly in nationally sponsored inquiries where the focus is on a range of 'normative' political behaviours, for example, voting and voter registration/enrolment, signing a petition or contacting an elected official. In Australia, for example, as far back as 1994, young people were described as having a particular knowledge-based 'civic deficit' (Civics Expert Group 1994: 45). This finding was replicated in the 2007 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry; and indeed functioned as a rationale for the inquiry (Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters 2007). A similar concern inspired the well-known 'Crick Report' in the United Kingdom (QCA Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 1998). There is a body of research that supports this claim of young people's normative political disengagement (EUYOUPART 2005; Russell et al. 2002; Park 2004; Print et al. 2004; Wattenberg 2011).

1.2 Declining levels of civic and political participation have been noted across many established democracies (Dalton 2004). Young people have become a particular focus for concern over alleged political disengagement, with research from many countries finding young people to lack knowledge and interest in politics and have low levels of political participation. Young people's decreasing normative participation, especially low turnout at elections, has caused particular alarm (EUYOUPART 2005; Milner 2010; Park 2004; Print et al. 2004; Wattenberg 2011; Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995). Some have even suggested that the low turnout of young people 'may be a reflection of a deepening crisis of democracy.' (Russell et al 2002: 7) This research has informed public and policy debates about a democratic deficit amongst young people.

1.3 In response to these concerns, civic education has been posited as a means of positively influencing the kinds of normative behaviours described above, thereby bridging this perceived democratic deficit. The implicit assumption here is that increasing young people's 'civic knowledge' and encouraging participation in normative behaviours will result in a youth population more inclined to participate in these desired ways. In the last decade or so, civic education has undergone a revival, featuring high on the agendas of governments and educational agencies and returning to the school curriculum with vigour

(Dudley and Gitelson 2002; Galston 2007). For example, in England, compulsory 'citizenship' education was implemented in September 2002 (Keating et al. 2010), largely following from the afore-mentioned Crick Report. In Australia, the 'Discovering Democracy Curriculum' was implemented in 1998, albeit in a non-compulsory form. Ruget (2006) has reported on the renewal of civic education in America and France, while Llewellyn et al (2007) detail the emphasis on active citizenship in Canada, and Levinson (2003) describes the hopes and challenges of new civic education in Mexico. Indeed, a recent international survey of civic and citizenship education covering 38 countries (Schulz et al 2010) found that the majority provided a specific civic education course that was compulsory in general education.

1.4 The notion that young people suffer from a democratic deficit has been criticised particularly from within the sociology of youth. A large part of this literature explores two key themes: socio-economic barriers which exclude and curtail young people's participation and the opening out of politics which renders normative participation one political practice among many. As researchers who have contributed to these literatures, we were keen to explore this issue from a different perspective and ask: has civic education produced the effects desired by governments and policy makers? To this end, we recently performed a systematic review of the literature pertaining to civic education (Manning and Edwards 2014)), the results of which we outline in the first part of this paper. The second half locates the findings of the systematic review within the broader sociological literature on young people's political participation. Our argument is that policy-makers need to learn from the sociological literature, to replace a naïve, mechanistic approach to civic education that equates knowledge with action, for a more nuanced, evidence-based approach which recognises the range of barriers as well as young people's role in creating politics and new forms of participation.

Evaluating the effectiveness of civic education

2.1 To investigate the evidence for civic education increasing young people's normative political participation the authors recently conducted a systematic review (Manning and Edwards 2014). Not commonly used in sociological research, systematic reviews are widely used in health care and some of the social sciences (criminology, international development, education, psychology, social work) to inform policy and practice and guide future primary research (for example see, Tfofi and Farrington 2011; Berg and Denison 2012; Zief et al. 2006; Pettigre and Tropp 2006; Reichow et al. 2012). Systematic reviews are designed to bring the same level of transparency and rigour used in conducting primary research, to the task of collecting, appraising and synthesising existing research evidence. The methodology requires: a defined review question; updatable and reproducible search strategies which aim to identify all relevant published and unpublished literature; and explicit criteria for selecting, appraising and combining or analysing studies. The aim here is to ensure that all possible existing research is found, collated and evaluated in order to address the review question. We decided that a systematic review would be a useful way of understanding any behavioural effects of civic education because it allowed us to rigorously engage with all previous research addressing our question. The breadth of research covered would not have been possible using primary research and the rigour and transparency of the methodology is far superior to a traditional literature review. Below is a brief summary of the review process and its findings (Manning and Edwards 2014).

2.2 The question that guided the systematic review was 'Does civic education^[1] for young people increase the normative political participation^[2] of young adults?' The authors undertook extensive electronic database searching that resulted in a total of 7,226 titles and abstracts. Working independently, each author screened these titles and abstracts against predefined inclusion criteria^[3] designed to select for studies that investigated the effect of any form of civic education on the political participation of young adults. From the total, both authors agreed that 117 full paper versions of potentially relevant studies should be retrieved for further examination. Of these, only nine were found to meet all inclusion criteria. Most of these studies (71) were excluded from the review as they failed to measure the effect of civic education on the kinds of normative political participation providing the rationale for civic education (e.g. voting, signing a petition, contacting an MP or council member). All but one of the included studies was conducted in the United States (US). Six of the included studies investigated a specific civic education programme and three studies examined routine high school civic education. The findings of the review are outlined below (Manning and Edwards 2014).

2.3 Firstly, it is important to note that evaluation programmes have not kept pace with the resurgence of civic education policy. Furthermore, too few studies measure standard indicators of normative political participation. This has led to a thin evidential base to evaluate the performance of civic education in terms of its own aims. With respect to voting, a major impetus for civic education programmes, three studies (Bers and Chau 2010; McDevitt and Kiousis 2006; Pasek et al. 2008) failed to show significant effects for a specific civic education programme on voting. Bachner (2010) used large nationally representative data sets from the US and found civic education to have a statistically significant effect on voting, but only for half the six time points assessed, and when positive results were found effect sizes were modest (4.5%-5.5%). Larger, significant effects were identified among students whose parents were not highly politicised. The Center for Civic Education (CCE 2005) found a higher proportion of participants completing its civic programme voted in the 2000 US Presidential election than a national probability sample. However, the civic programme group was likely a biased sample (having been drawn from an alumni network).

2.4 The results for voter registration were also unconvincing. Callahan et al. (2010) examined large nationally representative data sets from the US and found that the number of social studies classes taken was not correlated with registering to vote, while higher grades for social studies did predict registration and voting. The effects were stronger for children of immigrants, where the number of social studies classes and higher grades for social studies were significantly correlated with voter registration and

voting. Gershtenson et al. (2010) found the civic education programme they investigated had no effect on voter registration.

2.5 Civic education seemed to have clearer positive effects on normative forms of political expression. Unfortunately, studies did not measure the same outcomes and composite outcomes made it impossible to determine effects on particular behaviours. Bers and Chau (2010) used a composite measure of 'political voice', which included items like writing to a public official or protesting; at one year follow-up they found a significant difference for their civic education sample, but not the control group. Crawford (2010) found that the programme she studied was not significantly correlated with her scale of public voice (included items like contact/visit public official, sign petition, boycott/buycott) while credit for a high school government class was. Saha's (2000) Australian study found that taking a civics class, number of civics classes taken and number of years civics studied were all significantly correlated with his construct of normative political activity (signing a petition, demonstrate, write to PM, MP or media). When multiple regression procedures were performed, no effect was found for having taken a civics class on normative participation. In the CCE study, a higher proportion of the civic education group had volunteered in a political campaign (26%) or made a financial contribution to a political campaign (16%). In contrast, fewer than 4 per cent of national probability comparison sample had taken part in either activity.

2.6 The evidence from the nine included studies indicates that various civic education programmes have little or no clear effect on voting or voter registration, despite the use of large national data sets. Nonetheless, two studies drawing on large samples found that civic education could help ameliorate the effects of a lack of political socialisation at home and it may improve voting and voter registration for children from migrant parents. Several studies suggest that civic education can have modest effects upon political expression, but the use of composite outcomes restricted the ability to identify the specific forms of participation that were affected. While the evidence base is limited, it would seem that civic education, be it general or programme-based, has failed in its goal to increase key forms of normative political participation like voting.

2.7 It could be that the form of the civic education provided in these studies was inadequate or of insufficient quality to effect pro-voting behaviours. However, the review included several specific programmes and more general civics curricula. Moreover, recent work from the UK suggests that students of civic education themselves think it has little impact. Henn and Foard (2012) found that of the students who had taken a GCSE in Citizenship Studies, just over 60 per cent claimed that their knowledge and understanding had increased by *hot very much* or indeed by *not at all.*' (p. 54, emphasis in original)

2.8 The research covered by the systematic review generally pays scant regard to sociological insights about the changing social context of young people's lives and the ways in which various socio-economic factors operate to curtail young people's political engagement. Civic education is typically conceived in naïve, mechanistic terms as a remedy for young people's apparent lack of knowledge and interest in electoral politics. The logic is, 'if they knew more, they would be more interested and would participate more.' However, we should consider the possibility that civic education alone, in any form, may not be a suitable means of increasing young people's normative political participation. If access to knowledge of the political system and its processes does not increase political participation, this suggests that reasons for the decline in youth participation lie beyond an ignorance of politics. It is here that policy-makers have failed to draw upon sociological understandings of 'youth' and the changing relationship between citizens and the polis. Below, we discuss some of this literature, making a case for its consideration in policy-led efforts to increase young people's normative political participation.

Accounting for the 'failure' of civic education

Barriers and constraints to young people's political participation

3.1 When considering young people's relationship with politics it is insightful to consider the dominant conception of young people's ontology. In the modern, western view, young people largely do not inhabit civic or public spheres and hence are unable to tell adults anything valid about the political world. Young people, and children in particular, are associated with the world of family and the personal or private sphere which is sharply differentiated from the public-political sphere (Elias, 1978 [1939]). Wyness et al., among others, have described this as part of the 'privatisation of childhood' (2004, p. 83). Here, family is supposed to act as the 'incubators for citizen potential' (Roche 1992: 94), helping children along a seemingly linear (and chronological) path towards competent, complete citizenship and adulthood. This conceptual and spatial separation/segregation of children and young people (see Vanderbeck 2006) is part of a second obstacle to understanding young people as being of the political world.

3.2 Young people and children are routinely understood as being on a developmental path and hence, incomplete, incompetent and lacking legitimate knowledge of the world. Children and adults are positioned as polar opposites, with the aforementioned social apprenticeship model used to usher children into adulthood. Following this view, adults are of the political world by virtue of their adult status and their participation is dictated by 'adult' concerns: choice, circumstance, inclination. In contrast, children are denied political inclusion as they are entrenched in the private sphere 'and at best viewed as political animals in potentia' (Wyness et al. 2004: 86). This polarised understanding of children and adults creates the intermediary group of 'youth' who are subject to concern and anxiety over their political participation as they are caught betwixt and between - no longer children, but perhaps not fully adult and of the political world. While there has been concern about the declining participation of citizens *writ large* (Holmes and Manning 2013, Dalton 2004, Civics Expert Group 1994), the focus of concern remains fixed on the allegedly vulnerable group, 'youth', who may not have formed an attachment to the polis. These

factors help frame the anxiety and public concern that has been generated over young people's political participation (or perceived lack thereof).

3.3 In recent decades, the 'transition' from youth to adulthood has become more complex, prolonged and increasingly non-linear. Various markers of adulthood, for example, completion of education, leaving home, full-time employment, home ownership, marriage/cohabitation, and childbirth are occurring at later ages (or not at all) and these social changes undermine established notions of citizenship and young people's full incorporation into civic and political life (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Coupled with the prolongation of youth is the displacement and weakening of powerful forces and structures which previously marshalled political participation (Webb et al. 2002). Membership of trade unions and political parties has declined substantially in recent decades, undermining the grassroots basis of electoral politics and key mechanisms of political socialisation and participation. The nexus between social class and voting has also been undermined (Achterberg 2006). Taken together, these broad social changes disrupt and undermine young people's integration into the polity (see also Kimberlee 2002).

3.4 A number of scholars have described various other ways in which young people's political participation is denied or curtailed - young people's perceived exclusion from politics and decision-making, gender, ethnic and class inequalities, and the tokenism of attempts at including young people. We explore this literature below.

3.5 Young people are typically under represented at all levels of government, which works to further the perception of politics as separate from the daily lives of young people. Research from numerous countries over many years highlights a palpable disconnect between young people and electoral politics. In work comparing data collected in 2002 (the year the UK introduced compulsory citizenship education) with 2011, Henn and Foard (2012) found young people continue to feel marginalised and unfairly treated by governments and think they have little say in its decisions. They also found sustained high levels of distrust for politicians and feelings of political powerlessness, suggesting that 10 years of compulsory citizenship education has done little to ameliorate young people's cynicism and sense of exclusion from electoral politics. Feelings of alienation from electoral politics have also been identified amongst young people who think the political system is exclusionary, holds little meaning for them and prioritises the interests of older voters at the expense of younger ones (Fahmy 2003; Harris et al. 2010; Henn et al 2002; Kimberlee 2002; White et al. 2000). Several influential reports from the UK have found young people feel isolated or excluded from a self-interested political system (Power 2006; Russell et al. 2002; Electoral Commission 2002; YCC 2009). Political parties appear indifferent, complacent or uninterested in issues influencing young people and often overlook how young people are affected by policy proposals or legislation (YCC 2009). In addition, research consistently finds young people to lack trust in politicians and regard politics with a good deal of cynicism (Fahmy 2003; Mellor et al. 2002; Print et al. 2004; White et al. 2000).

3.6 Despite these strong feelings of alienation, exclusion and cynicism, young people continue to show interest in politics and political issues. Henn and Foard's (2012) work, comparing data collected from nationally representative youth samples in 2002 and 2011, found in contrast to the democratic deficit discourse that a majority of young people in both samples showed an interest in politics with the 2011 group showing increased interest and almost two-thirds saying they were interested in the UK General Election of May 2010, compared with just under half for the 2002 sample. The 2011 cohort articulated a clear youth oriented agenda of concerns, focused around higher education and employment. Similar levels of interest are reported by Furlong and Cartmel (2012) in their analysis of the British Election Survey. Young people report lower levels of attention to politics, but the difference between younger and older generations was only about one point on an 11 point scale. A majority of young people also indicated that they were 'very or somewhat' interested in the May 2010 general election, with only six percentage points separating the oldest and the youngest generation. Earlier work by Henn et al. (2002) showed that over 70 per cent of young people surveyed had some or more interest in politics. Beresford and Phillips (1997) have reported similar levels of political interest amongst Australian young people.

3.7 This body of research helps to map the contours of the disjuncture between young people and politics and suggests that a lack of participation cannot be explained by the claim that young people are apathetic. Rather, young people feel politics is not responsive to their needs, is unlikely to deliver change and holds little relevance for their everyday lives. These views may not be an accurate reflection of what electoral politics offers young people, but it does help explain their lower levels of participation.

3.8 Some young people are more alienated from politics than others, and the evidence clearly shows that this alienation follows predictable patterns of gender, ethnicity and class. Gender inequality and barriers to participation persist and continue to undermine and curtail the political involvement of young women. Women are seriously under-represented in parliaments across the world, which bolsters the view that politics is peripheral to the everyday lives of young women. Furthermore, feminist work has drawn attention to the masculine bias of public discourse (Pateman 1990) and the gendered nature of the public spaces in which debate and deliberation takes place (Fraser 1992). In contrast, citizenship curricula rarely address the gendered dimensions of citizenship (Arnot 2009).

3.9 The availability of time for civic/political participation is gendered and distributed unequally (Lister 1997). Pursuing this line of inquiry in Australia, Vromen (2003) found private sphere commitments are indeed gendered and have a profound effect on mothers' perceived time constraints for participation. Amongst non-parents, men and women's perceived time constraints were roughly equivalent. In contrast, 'Nearly all female parents (98 per cent) see their family commitments as a constraint on participation, but only 77 per cent of male parents do.' (Vromen 2003: 289) Hence, public policy may have gone some way to remove the barriers to young women's participation, but the sustained undemocratic sharing of responsibilities in the private sphere, particularly when young people become parents, continues to

hamper women's participation. Gordon's ethnography of teenage social movement participation (Gordon 2008) highlights similar gendered dynamics. She found gendered patterns of activism arise from boys' greater relative freedom from parental control and their greater mobility to attend meetings, events and protests, while girls were constrained by greater parental concern and family commitments and the desire to maintain family harmony.

3.10 Other work highlights the way discourses of neoliberalism shape the civic/political participation of young women. Levac (2012) argues that the discourses of 'meritocratic neoliberalism' and crisis and power work to marginalise young women from politics and mask the effects of gender inequality on participation. Meritocratic neoliberalism works to deny gender and on-going gender inequalities by positing individuals as free, rational actors, thereby couching women's constrained participation as part of individual choice and preference (see also Harris 2004; McRobbie 2007). And the twin discourse of crisis/power either cast young women as vulnerable, particularly to sexual violence, or highlight young women's academic and professional success. These polarising discourses position women as 'undesirable and/or incapable civic participants, or able but disinterested in participating.' (Levac 2012: 3; see also Edwards 2009)

3.11 There is a dearth of data regarding the political engagement of ethnic minority young people because analyses rarely disaggregate by both age and ethnicity. Instead, policy debates and studies of black and minority ethnic young people tend to be couched within a context of crisis about issues like ethnic masculinity and identity, delinquency or social integration (see Back 2002; Bhattacharyya and Gabriel 2004). Nonetheless, several qualitative studies of ethnic minority young people have found participants feel frustrated in their efforts to engage politically and think political institutions are unrepresentative, exclusory, unresponsive and that the issues of interest to them are denied a public forum (Gillespie and O'Loughlin 2012; Marsh et al. 2007; Mythen 2012). Other work has noted how the language of citizenship curricula exclude ethnic minority youth (Battiste and Semaganis 2002; Joshee 2004).

3.12 Edwards (2009) details a range of ways in which Australian electoral legislation works to disenfranchise marginalised young people. She argues that electoral participation has social welfare and social policy predicates, and that many young people face barriers such as lack of access to housing and a stable address from which to enrol. For others, simple survival is a priority. Further, in a neoliberal policy environment, the welfare concerns of marginalised young people are problematized and young people are chastised for not participating in a system that marginalises their concerns and which, to some degree, holds them responsible for their own disadvantage.

3.13 When young people do engage in civic/political participation, the forms of engagement available and the very experience of participation itself can promote cynicism and disengagement. Attempts to include young people in the policy making process typically take the form of consultative bodies. Such strategies have sustained heavy criticism on a number of fronts. Vromen and Collins (2010) report the failure to engage with young people's existing forms of participation, instead favouring structured, formal participation mechanisms. Numerous researchers have noted the tokenism of attempts at fostering youth participation (e.g. Fahmy 2003; Hart 1997; Saha et al. 2005). Tokenistic strategies can mean cynicism and disengagement are brought about by *actual* experiences of participation. Bessant (2003) and Marsh et al. (2007) go further and, adopting a governmentality approach, argue that participation agendas are a strategy for controlling and prescribing the ways in which young people should participate.

3.14 This section has highlighted the breadth and depth of factors which curtail young people's political engagement. These constraints underscore the inadequacy of policies claiming to increase normative political participation through civic education. Young people's (dis)engagement with normative politics continues to be shaped by notions of youth, the character and systems of electoral politics, gender, ethnicity, and class. As such, young people are not the disembedded individuals of much contemporary individualization theory (e.g. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1991), but rather, embedded social actors navigating the intersections of youth, gender, ethnicity, and class in their (dis)engagement with politics. Notwithstanding the impact of social structure, young people must be understood as having the agency to creatively engage with and create politics. The following section describes the changing nature of politics and the new and creative ways in which it is practiced.

The changing nature of politics

3.15 Since the 1970s democratic politics has undergone a series of profound changes. One of the key shifts has been the displacement of class and nation as *the* means of organising politics (Wagner 1994). The increasingly important role of identity politics and the emergence of new social movements has reopened questions of what counts as politics and seen a raft of 'private' or once peripheral issues become politicised (see Seidman 2008) - even though they continue to be subordinated within electoral politics. In his writing on these changes, Beck (1992) sees the unintended consequences and risks produced by industrial societies as creating a realm of sub-politics which operates beyond the bounds of democratic politics. In a similar way, Giddens (1991) has argued that 'emancipatory' politics is increasingly outstripped by 'life politics': a mode of political expression which is more individualised, tends to blur public and private, and makes politics a feature of self actualisation. Inglehart's (1997) research has also argued for a shift from traditional social cleavage voting towards a 'value cleavage', reflecting the move from a politics based on material needs to a new politics characterised by post-materialism. Recent research has challenged the polarisation of 'emancipatory' and 'life politics' (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2013), but an augmented political repertoire continues.

3.16 In the US, Dalton (2008) has shown that young people are more likely to engage in non-electoral

forms of participation (such as signing a petition, protesting or boycotting) and less likely to participate in electoral politics. Martin (2012) has recently found these results to hold when applied to Australian data. These findings suggest that young people's preference for non-electoral engagement reflects generational change rather than lifecycle effects.

3.17 As part of the opening up of politics, youth researchers have argued that apathy and cynicism should not be conflated. In contrast to apathy, cynicism requires a level of political analysis and critique, and hence *engagement* with politics (Bhavnani 1991). As such, non-participation can be arrived at through deliberation and engagement with politics, and unlike apathy, cynicism may be the spur *for* political engagement. This view problematizes the status of disengagement and credits young people with the ability to deliberate about their relationship with politics and make judgements about the value of engagement under particular circumstances which, as described above, are often viewed as exclusionary and irrelevant to daily life.

3.18 The 1990s saw the emergence of DIY (do it yourself) culture which had a significant impact on young people's political practice. This counter-culture was youth and led and based on direct action which included radical environmental groups and others like Reclaim the Streets, and an ethic of pleasure expressed in new music and partying. Harris found that the production of 'zines' - print newsletters/magazines or websites - were a means for young women to discuss feminist politics (1999) and challenge dominant narratives about youth citizenship (2001: 183). Harris (2004a) has also explored the practice of 'adusting' or 'culture jamming' which creatively subverts the meaning of products or advertisements, confounding commercial space and creating the potential for political space.

3.19 Hartley's work (1999) describes 'DIY citizenship' and media (p 179), which involves consumers co-creating media content and interpreting media products in various unintended and public ways. Hartley highlights the shift from DIY culture to Do-It-With-Others (DIWO) and the sharing, contributory and communitarian ethic facilitated by new technologies. Examples of this kind of 'consumer productivity' and 'silly citizenship' can be seen in the homemade spoofs and parody of election materials found on internet sites like YouTube which have been extremely popular and featured in recent elections in a number of countries (see Hartley 2010: p. 241). These activities operate in addition to the way the internet and social media has been used in electoral campaigns to engage young people - Barak Obama's 2008 presidential campaign being a high profile example (e.g. Kushin and Yamamoto 2010).

3.20 These examples suggest the increasing importance of new information technology as a means of engaging in politics and activism and performing local and global citizenship which may or may not engage with local or national politics (Loader 2007). Van Zoonen et al's (2010) work on the YouTube response to the anti-Islam film *Fitna* - made by a Dutch member of parliament - shows the multiple forms of citizenship the film provoked. The film associated Islam with violence and terrorism and used images and statistics to suggest the Islamification of the Netherlands and Europe. There was an energetic and creative critique of the film via the internet. Young people engaged in collective and individual media production which articulated their religious and political identities, performing an 'unlocated citizenship' which helped constitute and address a 'placeless public' about issues of transnational relevance.

3.21 New communications technology is also used in conjunction with older and 'offline' techniques for mobilisation and organising. In 2010 thousands of students across the UK were involved in peaceful protests against proposed government cuts to higher education and a dramatic increase in tuition fees, which involved over 35 universities. Theocharis (2012) has shown how the student occupations that took place in universities used a variety of online tools to organize and mobilise young people. Moreover, he found older technologies were used in conjunction with newer interactive forms; and in at least one instance new technology was created to aid effective mobilisation and protest. Significantly, e-tactics were used alongside extensive offline political activity.

3.22 The recent global response to the Occupy movement underscores the view that young people are not simply apathetic or disinterested in politics (Gitlin 2012). Indeed, the Occupy movement showed that in contrast to Giddens' and Inglehart's emphasis on post-materialist politics, young people can still be mobilised around an agenda of material needs and inequality. The uprisings that formed the 'Arab Spring' were also youth led and have brought real and significant change to several countries.

3.23 Research on the intersection of ethnicity and young people's political participation is limited, but O'Loughlin and Gillespie's (2012) recent research with young British Muslims, found them responding to the context of increased securitization amidst the 'war on terror' by critically engaging with mainstream politics and the media, rather than disengaging. The authors describe the participants' response to the frustrations of a stigmatising media and politics as 'dissenting citizenship'; innovative participation which implies a belief in the system, but is oriented to future improvements. The exclusion and lack of trust young people in general feel for politics, identified above, can be contrasted with this belief in the system.

3.24 Increasingly, various socio-political causes and movements have harnessed the market as a tool for political activism, taking advantage of a permeable public/private divide and melding consumer/citizen identities. This has taken a range of forms including boycotts or 'buycotts' of particular products (Stolle et al. 2005), the anti-sweatshop movement (Young 2003), and calls for ethical trade, investment and finance (Smith and Barrientos 2005; Carter and Huby 2005). Significantly, recent scholarship has argued for the need to move beyond conceptions of fair-trade as involving consumers individually invoking their ethical/political considerations, instead viewing it as operating within diverse social networks which frequently involve collective forms of activism as well as more individualised activity (Clarke et al. 2007).

3.25 All of this is not to suggest that new forms of participation have neatly replaced older forms in a

direct exchange. Our view is that the political has been cracked open and young people now face myriad ways of being political. Recent research has highlighted the everyday dimensions of young people's political engagement and citizenship. Manning (2013) has highlighted the way some young people live out their political views through everyday practices like vegetarianism and energy and water conservation. Similarly, Harris et al. (2010) point to young people's involvement in mundane, uncontroversial and individualised forms of everyday participation like recycling, donating money to a cause, signing a petition or discussing social/political issues. It was forms of political expression like these which the systematic review suggested might be increased by civic education. Given the breadth and depth of barriers young people encounter when trying to participate politically, it is not surprising that more individualised and everyday forms of political engagement are sought. In contrast to voting or other involvement with electoral politics, these forms of participation are immediate, routinely accessible, sometimes even aimed at young people, and frequently are not overtly associated with 'adulthood' and electoral politics. These behaviours may not have been the key target of the push for civic education, but they are important elements of political engagement and citizenship. Young people's clear preference for more 'direct' and everyday forms of political participation should be nurtured by civic educators while public policy should be crafted to address the raft of barriers to young people's political participation.

Concluding remarks

4.1 The current proliferation of civic education initiatives rest on the simplistic notion that civic education will result in the kinds of normative political behaviours that governments and policy-makers deem desirable. The systematic review of the evidence for civic education increasing normative political participation gave us cause to question this premise. As noted, the evidence shows civic education has a negligible effect on most standard indicators of normative political participation. Given the review found a small number of studies investigating the behavioural effects of civic education, the first conclusion to draw is that further evaluative research is required to substantiate this finding.

4.2 Taking this finding as given, however, we are left with two questions: 'where to' and 'what for' with respect to civic education. We are not suggesting that civic education has no place in schools. Indeed, in respect to normative aims, it has been shown to have an effect on political expression. Beyond this, we contend that civic education has other intrinsic goods, and indeed is a good in itself. But this education should not be taken as a formula for increasing participation in electoral politics.

4.3 We also contend that should governments and policy-makers seek to ameliorate the alleged 'democratic deficit' of young people, they must learn from the sociological literature described here. Some of this literature highlights that policy must take account of the range of ways in which young people are denied meaningful participation and the reasons for their disinclination to participate. Other work argues that politics is 'opening up' and that young people are participating in new and diverse ways in a 'non-normative' and differently defined political arena. This new arena, however, has not replaced the older normative one. There is still value in having a citizenry who votes, enters debates and participates normatively in other ways as established institutions remain very powerful. Thus, we contend that some of the focus should be placed on this arena. Combining our systematic review findings with insights from the sociological literature, we contend that civic education policy has been trying to put the 'square peg' of the young person in the 'round hole' of normative participation, by rounding off the corners with civic education. Contra to this, we argue that the round hole should be subject to examination, to ascertain how well it fits with the emerging participatory behaviours of its younger citizenry. The literature suggests that young people are 'opening-up politics'. Governments need to learn from this, and to change both elements of political practice and the education that supports it.

Notes

¹The authors recognised that 'Civics' and 'Citizenship' education is a diverse enterprise, both in content and also in its description. Thus, in our searching for articles, we cast the net broadly, using all variations of civic(s) and citizen(ship) (see Author reference for further details). We found examples that described conducting 'Civic(s)' and/or 'Citizenship' education, or programmes that had the end of increased civic or citizenship participation, but were not named as such, or where these aspects were embedded in a broader social studies curriculum. On one level, it is recognised that these are very different enterprises in terms of curriculum and learning and behavioural outcomes. Mellor (2003), for example, gives a succinct example of this when she says '[c]ivics relates to civic knowledge and Citizenship is dispositional (attitudes, values, dispositions and skills). Interpretation lies at the heart of Civics and Citizenship Education.' As such, we decided to use the terminology 'civic education' to describe the broad enterprise of teaching about civics and citizenship issues.

²The focus on normative participation was driven by our interest in evaluating civic education on its own terms, as promoted by governments and policy makers as a means of increasing young people's participation in electoral politics. As discussed below, this narrow definition of politics and political participation fails to register a range of ways in which young people currently understand and practice politics.

³We included quantitative studies investigating links between civic education and normative participation. We were interested in general civic education or specific programmes delivered to young people at school or university. Studies could compare different types of civic education or civic education with no civic education. Given the concern over declining normative participation which spurred policies of civic education the outcomes of interest included: (i) voting and behaviours such as registration or turnout and (ii) political voice and expression, such as signing a petition (including online), contacting an MP or

council member, contacting the media about public/political issue, running for public office, volunteering time or money for a political campaign/candidate, membership of: political parties (including youth wings), unions or professional associations. Only papers written in English were eligible.

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