

‘Contextualising the Changes in Young People’s Participation in Australia’

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There are long held concerns about the general disengagement of young people from formal politics. Two competing discourses have until recently dominated the body of literature on young people’s engagement. It has become clear that young people are participating and engaging in their communities differently and are not participating in ways traditionally considered political. This however does not equate to a cessation of participation by any means (Beadle 2011: 200). What can be seen instead is that young people are disengaging from participation in traditional party politics while beginning to embody more autonomous and individualised forms of participation not directed at the mechanisms of traditional political participation. The emerging literature on young people’s participation is that it is no longer useful to place young people along a stale binary of either engaged or disengaged (Farthing 2011: 192). Instead it is necessary to look at the changes which have affected the ways young people conceptualise their participation and what motivates them to participate. What will be shown in this review are the ways that young people’s participation and the way they engage are changing.

Participation, Engagement, and Citizenship

When exploring the nature and value of the term participation it is important to acknowledge that ‘youth participation’ has come to mean different things in different contexts. Still unresolved to an extent is what is actually meant by ‘youth participation’ (Sinclair 2004: 109). Traditionally, when looking at measuring participation researchers have set a fairly narrow definition. Such definitions usually include strict political participation such as voting behaviour (or enrolment, in an Australian context), petitioning, joining political parties, or attending protests. What is only recently be-

ing addressed is the fact that such definitions are narrow and fail to pick up on the fundamentally political ways people are engaging at a daily level. It has been shown by Collin (2007: 17) that young people’s community engagement at a daily level constitutes actions which, by a strict definition, would not be considered political. However, it has also been shown that these actions do have political salience and outcomes (Beadle 2011: 199). Such essentially political action is exemplified by the person who acts on an issue such as global warming by boycotting polluting companies through active consumption.

In order to be able to adequately explore participation it is necessary to develop a definition of which encapsulates all the ways in which all groups of people engage constructively in their communities. Harris, Wyn and Younes. (2007: 22) point out that there is a need to “bracket traditional, adult centric views of what engagement means and explore the everyday ways in which young people experience and express their place in society.” By taking this approach it is clear that there are changes in the ways that young people are participating which in many cases are at odds with traditional conceptions of participation. Consequently it is recommended by Harris, Wyn and Younes (2007: 24) that we emphasise that participation is about: “having a say on institutions and relationships that have an immediate impact on one’s wellbeing.” This broad conception is useful in that it highlights what is fundamental about participation for all groups of people; that is that they act on issues that affect them. Thus when moving forward into the literature an adequately inclusive definition of participation is provided by Vromen (2003: 82-83) as “acts that can occur either individually or collectively that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society we want to live in.”

According to Muir et al. (2009: 81) participation

occurs in one of three ways: community participation, electoral activity, and expressing opinions. Although semantically there is a difference between civic and political participation; in the changing context of the young people's participation it is not particularly useful to separate them. In many cases the terms have been used interchangeably without detriment to the analysis of participation (Banaji 2008: 2). When looking at how young people participate at a daily level it is clear that much of this action would qualify civic engagement. The reason for this is that the ways they engage are increasingly centred around community participation rather than participation in what young people conceive to be the political realm (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 23). An example of this is the way that many young people are approaching environmental issues. Increasingly, these issues are acted upon at a daily level through participation practices such as donation to a cause, or recycling. These issues are contextualised more in regards to a moral sensitivity and action around global issues than to political change. What is important here however is that this every-day civic engagement is intrinsically linked with the political (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 24). Thus it can be argued that such action is political engagement, fundamentally. In other words, both political and civic participation are directed towards the perceived betterment of one's community. Thus, when theorising participation in the context of judging whether or not people are engaging with their communities through participation, it is important to realise that a concern with shaping society is the essence of their participation.

In saying that there is a need for broader scope when looking at participation it should also be said at this point that what is being referred to is action. While participation and engagement are not synonymous terms, they are intrinsically linked. Participation is action; whereas engagement can be seen as the process of experiencing connection to and concern for the community (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007). Participation is dependent on engagement; however when young people are excluded from participating the quality of their future engagement is likely to reduce. What can be seen in this

relationship between participation and engagement is that participation is an act which comes about through the process of being engaged (Barber 2009: 32). The relationship between the process of engagement and citizenship is articulated by Williamson:

“Citizenship does not materialise at a particular chronological point through a simple rite of passage. Citizenship is the product of a process – one based on a mutual relationship between the individual and community. It is contingent on a fundamental sense of belonging to a community...the reasons some young people fail to engage with their communities is that they feel these communities have rejected them. Feelings are as important as knowledge and skills.”

(Williamson 2005: 13 in Barber 2009: 32).

If young people feel that they cannot participate it is unlikely that they will continue to feel engaged. Being engaged will mean that the individual is inclined to participate if given access to relevant opportunities. Thus when we refer to engagement we are referring to “experiencing a sense of connection, interrelatedness, and naturally commitment towards the greater community” (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 23).

Notions of citizenship are also abstract and contested. Despite this, an adequate definition of citizenship as a concept is instrumental in looking at what mobilises young people to participate. A concept which can also be usefully employed when looking at how young people participate in their communities is the concept of ‘active citizenship’. The reason for this is that it enables researchers to set up the parameters of a state which will necessitate participation at some level (Haste & Hogan 2006: 474). What is being referred to here is the idea that if a person feels they are full members

of their community, they will naturally act on issues which are personally relevant to them. When looking at citizenship in regards to the discussions of participation and engagement it is evident then that active citizenship amounts to engagement and participation whereby the citizen is actively shaping their community. Throughout this review the changing nature of young people's citizenship will be developed.

A traditional definition of citizenship is articulated by the English Sociologist T. H. Marshall as: "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (1964: 84, in Walsh 2011). To be a full citizen in this case is to have the same rights as all other citizens - which begs the question "Where do young people fit in?" Aside from the fact that young people don't have the same legal rights as adults there is evidence that young people's lived experience of belonging in Australian society is significantly less 'full' in regards to their citizenship (Walsh 2011: 28). The value of Marshall's definition is that it draws on the idea of maximal citizenship. Definitions of citizenship can be placed on a continuum from 'minimal' to 'maximal'. Minimal interpretations are narrow in that they are knowledge based, and in many cases elitist in that they exclude much of the population. Maximal definitions are broader and seek to actively include all groups with an emphasis placed on investigation of values rather than knowledge as an indicator of citizenship (Holdsworth et al. 2007: 19).

What has not been drawn on in Marshall's definition but is being integrated into more recent definitions of citizenship are ideas around identity and belonging, and active participation. A reason for this is that participation has been found to occur when people are involved in causes which are relevant to them (Beadle 2011: 209). It is necessary then to have a definition of citizenship which looks at understanding a state of being where a person is involved and feels valued in their community, which will naturally necessitate a commitment towards that community (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 23). In order for this state of full citizenship to

be experienced however are a range of economic and cultural factors which in many cases inhibit young people's full citizenship which will be looked at throughout this review. What is emphasised in Marshall's definition is full membership however it has become clear that the lived experience of societal membership needs to be accounted for. Policy responses to young people's apparent disengagement from formal political participation have thus far failed due to the lack of engagement with what full membership actually looks like and how it is experienced at a daily level (Walsh 2011: 46).

A definition of citizenship which will be worked towards throughout this review is derived from Harris, Wyn and Younes' definition of civic engagement as "experiencing a sense of connection, inter-relatedness, and naturally, commitment towards the greater community" (2007: 23). If young people feel that they are valuable and connected to their communities they will naturally participate in them. The quality of their membership to society will reflect the quality of their contributions to it. What will be shown is that the value of this definition lies in the way it is not prescriptive but instead focuses on the lived reality of citizenship and how it is shaped through processes of participation in the community. The value and use of such a definition will be explained and built on throughout this review.

Before going further into the literature there is a need to acknowledge that there are a range of factors which impact the way young people participate and experience membership. It is beyond the scope of this review to go into them in any detail but what will be seen are a few examples of the issues which remain prominent in shaping young people's experience of citizenship in Australia. The necessity of recognising these ongoing barriers to young people's participation comes from the fact that it is difficult to examine the changes to young people's participation without recognising the broader issues which affect participation and citizenship for young people immediately.

It is becoming increasingly clear that inequalities based on class, gender, culture, and age are crucial

factors in the way people experience citizenship. Young people are the most culturally and linguistic diverse group in Australia. Today, one in five of all young people in Australia were born overseas. Additionally, Indigenous young people make up 3.6% of the population between 15 and 19 and almost 3% of all young people aged 20 to 24 (Muir et al. 2009: 12). Despite this, young people aged 18 to 24 who were not born in Australia are more than twice as likely to experience intolerance and discrimination ranging from negative comments relating to their background to physically threatening behaviour (Forrest 2009, in Walsh 2009: 32). Although many young Indigenous Australians report less racist incidents, qualitative research indicates that they face more pervasive forms of racism daily (Mansouri et al. 2009, in Walsh 2011: 32). Many young people who are same-sex attracted experience exclusion. Roughly one in ten young people experience same sex attraction in Australia. Despite becoming increasingly accepted over the last three decades it has been found that 61% of non-heterosexual young people experience isolation and bullying at school and 18% reported physical abuse (Hillier et al. 2010: 39). Young people do not experience the same civil rights as adults. Practices which enforce the marginal status of young people can be seen as corrosive to the quality of their citizenship. Such practices are seen in the problematisation of young people's use of public space, and a greatly reduced 'youth wage' where all other groups of the population are protected from wage discrimination (Bessant 2004 in Farthing 2010: 184). What are only touched upon here are a few factors which play a crucial part in the way young people experience citizenship.

In addition to the changes in the way young people are participating outlined in this paper are a range of socio-economic factors which impact on the quality of young people's engagement within the community. When looking at how young people participate it is important to realise that the quality of their membership in a community will be reflected by their participation practices (ref). Thus, the impacts of exclusionary or marginalising processes should not be overlooked when looking at the quality of an individual's citizenship (ref). What

is important is that these issues are not overlooked and that they are constant factors which impact on the ways that young people take action around social causes.

Current approaches to young people's participation

The body of literature on young people and participation has been disseminated by Harris, Wyn, and Younes (2007), Beadle (2011), and Farthing (2010) amongst others. What can be seen is that there are two main discourses which shape how the topic is approached. The first of these approaches has thus far been about addressing what has been labelled a 'civic deficit' in not just young Australians but broadly by young people throughout many developed Western countries (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 2007: 19-20). The traditional view has been that young people are growing increasingly apathetic to and disengaged from politics, which has led to concerns of a looming crisis of democracy. The alternate discourse around young people's participation focuses on the new ways young people are participating that are outside formal politics. This research looks at the way many young people have arguably "transcended the polling booth" (Farthing 2011: 185). What is meant by this is that there has been a shift away from traditional political participation into a range of emergent political practices which have been thus far unrecognised. What will be shown is that although both approaches reveal part of the changing nature of young people's participation neither approach can comprehensively account for the full picture of how young people are participating and the factors which make the matter more complex than seeing young people as either engaged or disengaged (Farthing 2010: 181).

The "Civics Deficit" Approach

The apparent disengagement of young people has been well documented in the literature around young people and participation (Farthing 2010: 182). A study which took representative samples of students from year 9 or the equivalent revealed that young people in Australia were no excep-

tions to these concerns. These Australian students scored significantly low compared to the international mean on 3 out of 4 civic engagement measures which suggested a broad lack of interest or engagement in civic and political life. The engagement measures included the intention to participate in a range of traditional forms of political engagement such as voting, joining a political party, or writing a letter to government. (Torney-Purta et al. 2001, in Beadle 2011: 198).

From 1997 – 2004 the ‘Discovering Democracy’ program was a federally-funded, school-based program designed to address the apparent political disengagement of Australian students (Walsh 2011: 30). ‘Discovering Democracy’ stemmed from the findings of the Civics Expert Group (CEG) report in 1994 (Manning & Ryan 2004, in Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 20). What the study addressed was a long held view that Australian young people showed a low level of interest in politics and were labelled as suffering from a “civics deficit” (Land 2003, in Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 20). The findings of such research show that a relatively small number of Australian High School students express a high level of interest in party politics. What is missing from the CEG report however is an attempt to actually understand how the young people concerned define participation and politics. In response to the assertions of a civics deficit from the findings such as that of the CEG, Manning and Ryan argue that: “researchers who have concluded a “civics deficit” may be conflating a lack of interest in party politics with a lack of political participation” (2004: 21, in Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007). These findings reflect that the larger body of literature which suggests the overwhelming disengagement of Australian young people imposes a strict definition of participation without sufficient insight into how the young people themselves define participation (Beadle 2011: 199). Such an approach naturally produces a distorted depiction of young people’s participation.

What can be seen in such discourses of young people’s participation is that although young people are uninterested in party politics it cannot be assumed that they are altogether disengaged from

politics broadly. This sentiment is echoed by Busch who comments that young people: “seem tired of politicians, but not of political ideas” (2002, in Beadle 2011: 198). What is being indicated here is that there is a movement away from the structures of traditional political participation rather than a rejection of political engagement. The following section will examine the body of thought which has emerged in response to claims of young people’s apparent disengagement. What will be shown is that although such an approach should not be ignored it does not comprehensively account for the changes to the nature of young people’s participation which are occurring.

The ‘Alternatively Engaged’ Approach

In response to the dominant discourse of young people as disengaged another body of literature has emerged which looks at the ways young people are participating. Proponents of this approach often utilise a similarly broad definition of participation as outlined in this review. It is argued that it is not accurate to portray young people as disengaged; rather they argue that young people’s participation has shifted into emergent forms of participation (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 21). This approach suggests that young people are creating and reshaping new forms of political participation which have not yet been recognised. Thus it is argued that the sharp decline in traditional political participation is being matched elsewhere by the emergence of a plethora of new political forms (Farthing 2010: 185). A classic exemplar of this approach is seen in much of the literature exploring the nature of online political participation. Such participation is typified by the emergence of online participation such as boycotting of unethical businesses through joining Facebook groups or email forwards regarding the ethics of rainforest depletion (Farthing 2010: 186). More sub-cultural exemplars of emergent participation are seen in the attention some theorists have given to attention to music cultures as sites for emerging forms of political engagement and participation. Brabazon sees rave culture and the act of dancing as an act of young people’s political engagement because it

brings young people together as an embodied collective (Brabazon 2002: 19, in Harris, Wyn & Younes 2007: 21). What is emphasised by proponents of this view is that there are a diverse range of actions which demonstrate young people's political engagement and the emergence of a range of new practices of participation which are yet to be fully recognised.

The main critique of the alternatively engaged approach is that there is little to suggest that such action will adequately counter the movement away from traditional political participation. Buckingham rhetorically asks whether hours of pop music on SYN FM or hundreds of Facebook boycott groups can really revive democracy (Buckingham 2002, in Farthing 2010: 187). The obvious answer is no, however what is important is that these new forms of engagement reveal that Buckingham's critique of them relies on the evaluation of the current democratic capacity of emergent forms of participation. If they are simply ignored then there is a serious risk of overlooking an entire political sphere simply because there is no methodology with which to examine it (Stolle et al. 2005, in Farthing 2010: 187).

Although the alternatively engaged approach has brought attention to the plethora of new political forms which are emerging there are still key aspects which are missing from the discourse. Such a perspective does not recognise that the turning away from traditional political participation is not passive. Farthing argues that "young people are turning away from [traditional] politics; they are not just participating in new forms" (2010: 188). What is meant by this is that young people's participation is increasingly directed away from the state-based traditional conceptualisations of politics. Instead political agendas are increasingly conceptualised in a global context and played out through the everyday manifestations of young people's internalisation of such issues (Beadle 2011: 207). Thus, the capacity of young people to create new forms of political participation should not be ignored (O'Toole et al. 2003: 335). However while these emergent form of participation should not be ignored it is important to look at the chang-

es that are occurring to the ways young people participate at an everyday level.

Both the 'civics deficit' and 'alternatively engaged' approaches stand at opposite ends of a binary which presents young people as either engaged (good) or disengaged (bad) (Farthing 2010: 188). What needs to be acknowledged is that although there are many emergent forms of participation there is a more complex picture of participation which neither of the approaches fully accounts for. Harris, Wyn and Younes suggest is that: "citizenship for young people today...[is] more than participation in formal political activity, but less than a wholesale shift to new autonomous participatory practices" (2007: 26). Further, they suggest that:

"Young people are disenchanting with traditional politics that is unresponsive to their needs and interests, but they remain interested in social and political issues and continue to seek recognition from the political system" (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2010: 10).

Harris, Wyn and Younes point to the idea that while both the dominant approaches to young people's participation articulate part of what is changing in young people's participation there are changes that are occurring to 'ordinary' young Australians' participation which sit outside both approaches to the issue. Beyond the 'civics deficit' and 'alternatively engaged' approaches it will be shown that at this everyday level there are changes to the way young people are conceptualising their participation. The following sections will outline the more complex issues which are brought to attention when looking at the nature of young people's participation and citizenship which cannot be placed in a stale binary of simply engaged or disengaged.

Redefining Engagement

The 'civics deficit' and 'alternatively engaged' discourses reveal that while young people are moving away from traditional forms of political participation there are also a range participatory forms that are emerging. What will be looked at in the following section are three interrelated changes

to the ways young people think about their own participation which sits outside both traditional approaches to young people's participation. It is argued by Collin that young people's actions are increasingly cause-oriented and directed towards specific issues rather than towards the state (2007: 13). What is meant by this is that young people are internalising global issues at a daily level and responding to global issues through micro-political action exemplified perhaps by recycling or boycotting a company. Additionally young people are increasingly aware of the ways their lives are affected by issues that need to be addressed at a global scale (Beadle 2011: 205). Another factor in the changing nature of young people's participation is the way that they are responding to what are perceived to be primarily moral issues rather than political issues (Haste & Hogan 2006: 474). The following section will address how these three changes to the nature of young people's citizenship effect how they participate and engage. These emergent changes are obviously not exclusive to young people's approach to participation however it is their emerging nature means that they are exemplified by young people more than older citizens.

Cause Oriented Citizenship

A development which does not easily fit into the spectrum of engagement outlined above is the way that the actions of the majority of 'ordinary' young people who sit in between classifications of engaged or disengaged are changing. While many young people are disengaging from traditional political participation they are integrating their political action into a range of 'life style' politics where taste, consumption, and leisure are increasingly political (Harris, Wyn & Younes 2010: 13). The changes in participation being demonstrated have been referred to as 'project-oriented identities.' The term refers to the way reflections of citizenship have become increasingly self-reflexive, personal, and about choice when taking action around a cause (Rabinow 1994 in Collin 2007: 13). It is argued by Bennett that young people: "find greater satisfaction in defining their own political paths, including: local volunteerism, consumer activism,

support for issues and causes, [and] participation in various transnational protest activities (2003: 3 in Harris, Wyn & Younes 2010: 13). The most obvious recent example of such changes can be seen in the widespread participation in causes such as 'Occupy' which has typified the changes being discussed. What is being seen is that people are mobilised to participate in causes directly rather than pursuing such issues through state operated forums of political participation (Collin 2007: 13).

Global Citizenship

Closely linked to the individualisation of participation seen in cause-oriented citizenships are the effects of globalisation on the nature of young people's participation. Globalisation is changing the way politics and participation is contextualised (Beck 2000 in Ritzer 2008: 577). A product of this shift is that the issues which young people see as requiring attention are increasingly seen as problems which require a global response (Beadle 2011: 207). The concept of global citizenship is becoming more prominent in gauging how participation is directed and what it reflects (Lagos 2003: 7). Although not legally definable it is useful to look at global citizenship as a state of awareness in that participatory practices are increasingly demonstrating that young people's actions are being contextualised globally and that their action can be seen as a citizenship which transcends nation-state citizenship (Beadle 2011: 205).

Harris, Wyn, and Younes (2010: 18) demonstrate that the issues which most concern Australian young people transcend national governance and are symptomatic of what Giddens refers to as a 'runaway world.' What is shown is that the issues which young people saw as most concerning ('War/terrorism', 'Environmental issues' and 'Poverty') were not ones which could be addressed by the state and were, to many of the young people surveyed, overwhelming problems which resonated with Giddens' metaphor of a runaway world. Such a view is epitomised by one participant, Andy, who voiced his concern for the inevitability of War in Iraq: "you're never going to fix that, from an individual like it's just impossible even, you know,

responsibility to act. In many cases this will be the basis of engagement and is important is exploring how politics is now being approached by young people. They argue that the moral and political are intrinsically linked but have been semantically divorced which has become detrimental to both the analysis of young people's political engagement and how those young people conceptualise their own participation (Haste & Hogan 2006: 474). The outcome of this separation is that the motivation to engage politically is missed.

In a recent study of 1200 US undergraduates it was found that over half of the sample saw that issues which could be traditionally labelled as political, (exemplified by the US response to Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq War), were approached as moral rather than political issues. Additionally more 'obviously moral' issues such as gay marriage, stem cell research, and abortion were seen as primarily moral issues (The Institute of Politics, Harvard University 2006, in Haste & Hogan 2006: 474). Haste and Hogan comment that young people's: "...motivation to engage politically or make his or her voice heard to seek change, comes often from a moral sensitivity which carries with it a sense of personal responsibility to act..." (2006: 474). These findings are echoed in part by Harris, Wyn and Younes point out that: "young people are given very little language with which to conceive of their everyday issues as belonging to the same arena as politics" (2010:21). What is demonstrated here is that there is an emerging tendency to conceive of social cause issues primarily as moral issues rather than political issues. Thus there is a need to recognise that this moral sensitivity will form part of the basis of engagement and is important is exploring how politics is now being approached by young people.

Giddens argues that social movement activity is a response to issues that are perceived as personally relevant (Giddens 1999, in Haste and Hogan: 477). Hence they point to the value of the phrase 'the personal is political' in that it breaks down the division of political and moral worlds. What is highlighted then is that personal experience of injustice, inequality are factors in politically engaging

young people. Haste and Hogan demonstrate the division of the moral and political is not a great one in that the moral is a key component of engagement (2006: 474).

Beyond the 'civics deficit' and 'alternatively engaged' approaches it been has shown that there are everyday changes to the way young people are conceptualising their participation. When tying these changes into the 'civics deficit' and 'alternatively engaged' approaches it can be seen that while there are broader shifts away from traditional political participation and emergence of new forms of participation we can see that young people are also engaging with the political differently. Alongside the changes in participation highlighted by the 'alternatively engaged' approach are the changes to the ways young people come to conceptualise their own engagement and participation. Thus what is being seen is not only the development of new forms of participation but also a reconceptualisation of what it means to be engaged.

Personal Relevance

Young people can be seen to mobilise around an issue when the issue is seen as personally relevant to their lives. Thus it is argued by Beadle (2011: 208) that personal relevance is a key factor in motivating young people's participation. She states that: "strong examples of civic engagement occur when young people are engaged in processes and issues that are relevant to them (Beadle 2011: 208). Although this point may seem obvious it is an important factor in the promotion of civic engagement. What has been consistently shown particularly in research around volunteering is that people are likely to involve themselves in causes which are seen as directly relevant (Taylor 2010: 124). Additionally it has been recognised that there is a great deal of diversity among young people in Australia meaning that what is considered relevant from one individual to the next is broad and varied. What is necessary then is a response which provides a 'menu of options' that accounts for the diversity of issues which are relevant young people in Australia (Wynne 2011: 7).

What can be seen from figure 11.1 is the way that participation occurs when the opportunities for young people to participate are made relevant. Thus it is not only about providing opportunities for young people to engage. What needs to be emphasised is that the issues and relationships which are relevant to young people will play a major role in whether young people are motivated to take action around a social cause (Beadle 2011: 209). It is necessary then to consider the common thread of identity and the changes in the way young people conceptualise their participation when exploring instances of young people's participation.

The development of initiatives which account for the diversity of relevant issues for young people is a necessary step in order to avoid attempted engagement into stale and irrelevant adult-centred causes which have been shown to consistently fail (Beadle 2011: 202). What has been missing from much of the research into young people's participation is an attempt to look at what issues young people see as important and relevant. What is notable about figure 11.1 is the exclusion of formal politics. Formal political participation is not seen as relevant to young people; which accounts for its exclusion and what many theorists argue is a 'logical disengagement' from processes which do not serve young people's interests or concerns (Farthing 2011; Harris, Wyn & Younes 2010; Beadle 2011). Thus what can be seen is that young people are most likely to participate in causes which are seen as directly relevant to them if given an opportunity. When looking at what they conceptualise as relevant it has been shown that there are a range of changes to how young people conceptualise what they see as relevant. Therefore when talking about what is directly relevant to young people it should be seen that this does no longer refer only to the local or national context.

Summary

What has been shown in this review is that there are a range of factors which are important in considering the changes to the way young people

are participating. It can be seen that young people experience a range of factors which diminish their experience of full citizenship. Additionally it can be seen that their citizenship is being reflected by the changing nature of their participation and engagement that are only recently being analysed. They approach politics differently and in many cases feel their political will is ignored or should be channelled elsewhere. The changes in their participation reflect a changing membership to society. The nature of their citizenship is thus changing. Such a membership is increasingly based on:

- Cause oriented action rather than government directed action.
- Responses to global issues at a local level.
- Responding to what are seen as moral issues when approaching the political.

What can be seen is a citizenship based on a moral responsibility to act in response to issues that are increasingly contextualised globally and acted upon at a daily and informal level which is moving away from notions of traditional political engagement. This is still a problem if the motivation behind investigations into young people's citizenship is to re-involve them in traditional politics. The problem here is that young people are obviously disengaging from traditional forms of participation. Addressing this problem would require a complete makeover of the political system (Beadle 2011: 208).

A more fruitful way of approaching the changes in young people's engagement is to look firstly at how young people are participating as a starting point rather than their disengagement from politics. If the contexts of these changes are understood then the responses to the changes in participation and engagement can be made relevant. If the goal is to increase young people's participation broadly then we need to define what makes them participate. If they feel full membership to their community they will naturally engage with the issues relevant to that community. If they are actively engaged in their communities then it is rightly assumed that participation will necessitate. Thus there are two factors which need responding to: the first, and more challenging, are the barriers

ers which prevent full membership. The second challenge is to provide an array of relevant options which account for the diversity of issues which young people are engaging with.

Harris, Wyn & Younes' define of civic participation as "experiencing a sense of connection, interrelatedness, and naturally, commitment towards the greater community" (2007: 23). The value of this definition is that it is coherent with the changes in young people's participation that have been discussed throughout this review. Additionally the definition is compatible with broader definitions of participation and allows room for the emergent changes in participatory forms. What needs to be furthered here is that this definition should form the basis of an ideal active citizenship which is the goal when attempting to empower young people to act on issues they see as relevant to their lives.

Recommendations

Traditional politics needs to find a way to adjust in order to record the new ways that young people are politically engaged which have been discussed in this review. Young people's participation is changing and far from being disengaged their citizenship is increasingly based on a moral responsibility to act in response to issues that are increas-

ingly contextualised globally and acted upon at a daily and informal level. It is thus necessary to find a way which allows these changes in participation to impact how young people's policy issues are shaped.

There is also a need to explore the ways in which alternative forms of engagement can feed into current political structures. Politics will require a dramatic reshaping (or at least the opening up of new and important avenues) if the emergent ways young people are participating are to be made part of traditional political participation. As seen in the examination of the alternatively engaged approach there is potentially an entire sphere of political participation which is yet to be discovered. What is evident though is that instead of dismissing them there is a need for a great deal of research which develops a means to evaluate their potential to widen the base of political participation.

This review has contextualised traditional approaches to young people's participation and contextualised some of the current changes to how young people politically engage. What can be seen is that the nature of young people's citizenship is reflected by these changes in participation and engagement. If these changes can be built on then there is the potential for a much more inclusive model of citizenship for young people in Australia.

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