Abstract: Current debates around citizenship are concerned with rethinking questions of political and social justice. Various citizenships have been proposed and discussed in the academic literature. An assumption in many of these discussions is that citizenship is a condition of and for adults. The current project identifies how young people in Australia describe the type of community or citizenship they want. Through interviews with 76 young people from across Australia a model of an inclusive citizenship emerged. Young people articulate a citizenship which comprises notions of belonging, mutual respect, multiple identities and participation. These findings are discussed in light of current debates concerning citizenship.

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Introduction

Public and political debates concerning young people focus on their apathy about the political process and apparent disenfranchisement from civil society. Numerous programs and documents outline processes by which young people can be educated, groomed and brought on board for participation in political processes. Whilst non-citizenship is commensurate with the legal status of 14 to 18 year old young people it is less assured in terms of other understandings of citizenship which are more concerned with participation and identity. There are many models of citizenship ranging from the political and legal through to social and participatory citizenship. Most describe a citizenship of adults. Keane argues “civil society is established after the image of the civilised (European) male individual” (1988, p.21). Historically citizenship in medieval Europe was about men’s membership of a city, a result of the system of autonomous administrations and courts. With the development of nation states this changed and citizenship became a relationship of adult (usually) men with the state (Weber 1958).

From the beginning inequality and domination were built into the concept of civil society. Any process which defines some people as ‘included’ must also define others as excluded. However it is clear that groups within society who have experienced exclusion from citizenship have fought for and achieved varying measures of inclusion into civil society. Most notable is the suffrage movement which led to women claiming full citizenship status, and the vote for people between the ages of 18 and 21. Such developments provide examples of the way in which citizenship status is neither fixed nor immutable, but contested and dynamic.

Young people as a group within the general populace are seen to have fewer rights than their older counterparts. The right to vote is denied people under the age of 18 as are the civil rights to own property and sign contracts. This paper defines young people as those under the age of 18, those who are often assumed as removed from the public sphere by virtue of their being nested within the family, a private realm (Stroick 2001). This group is often assumed to have their rights decided and met at the level of the family. Their responsibilities are also subsumed within the family as for example in Australia legislation which requires that for certain crimes, parents are to be held responsible for their children’s criminal action. Thus in terms of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship young people are excluded.

Understanding the citizenship of young people under the age of 18 is important because of current discourses which suggest anti-social behaviour, as well as a range of health related issues, can be associated with social exclusion (Beale 2008). In working with young people the issue of their marginalised status repeatedly emerges as a part of their lived experiences.
Consequently a fuller understanding of one avenue of inclusion, citizenship, is worthy of exploration for the light it may shed on options available for acknowledging the place young people occupy in our society. We might even be tempted to turn the concern about young people’s apparent exclusion on its head and ask if young people aren’t in fact contesting citizenship as it has been previously conceived and demonstrating a form of social citizenship which is of greater relevance to them.

From the literature and a survey of 76 young people across Australia it appears that young people do experience a degree of exclusion from mainstream society but this does not fully describe their experience of citizenship. Many young people appear to enjoy a degree of participation and inclusion generally associated with citizenship. For some this activity is in state-related spheres, whilst others experience a citizenship which is not necessarily as citizens of the state but as members of other groupings or associations.

The Research
The results reported here were obtained from interviews with 76 young people participating in a larger national project exploring community attitudes to young people. Young people from across Australia were asked for their experience of the social world. Data was obtained through interviews with young people some of whom were homeless, others unemployed or underemployed as well as some young people still at school. Young people were invited to participate in the research through youth associations, refuges, ‘word of mouth’ or sporting associations from urban sites in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and New South Wales, and from rural locations in Tasmania, the Northern Territory, NSW and the ACT. Young people self-selected for participation and were provided (or had read to them) an information sheet and consent form. The study was passed by the Ethics Committee of the University of Western Sydney. This study provides some insight into young people’s citizenship in Australia in the early stages of the new century.

What do we Mean by Citizenship?
Citizenship can be defined in a variety of ways. Going back to Marshall in the 1950s, citizenship was seen to be 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 state is endowed” (Marshall 1992, p.18). Such a citizenship consisted of the three sets of civic, political and social rights. Over time aspects of these three sets of citizenship rights have been denied to various sectors within the Australian community such as Indigenous Australians and women. These groups experienced a limited citizenship, however with the right to vote, came a change in their status as citizens. Young people under the age of 18 do not have the vote and so experience a limited citizenship.

Delanty (2000) defines citizenship at its essence as about group membership, in particular membership of a political community. Such membership has been conceived as involving a set of relationships between rights, duties, participation (for others such as Stroick 2001), this means access and identity.

Rights and Duties of Citizenship
Citizenship can be seen as concerned with civil society and political rights. Civic rights are concerned with the rights to own property, enter into contracts, and to have equality before the law. These have been seen in terms of negative rights or the right to be free of interference from the state. Social rights can be seen to have a positive status in that they grant access to certain goods and are generally seen to find expression through the welfare state. Political rights in terms of voting have been conceptualised as having an active status as they allow for participatory involvement.
The duties of citizenship according to Marshall include the obligation to pay taxes, attend mandatory schooling, engage in adult military service in times of war, and a general sense of obligation to work in order to promote the welfare of the community (Delanty quoting Marshall 1992, pp.41-46).

This rights and duties model of citizenship identifies a tension between the needs of capitalism, which was about the pursuit of financial self-interest, and the goal of citizenship, which is about equality of social opportunity. This tension can be seen to have been played out in the demise of the welfare state and the re-emergence of the market as the area in which decisions are made. The movement from citizen to consumer, the increasing privatisation of and political ambivalence in the modern state, is linked to a more passive citizenship concerned with rights rather than participation (Erickson and Weigard 2000, p. 31).

Delanty argues (2000, p.21) that the rights and duties perspective describes a generally passive, individualistic relationship with the state which has little to do with agency or participation. It reduces citizenship to a formalistic relationship to the state as one of rights and duties. This sort of social citizenship replaces the citizen with the consumer as an extension of social citizenship into the world of consumption. Such citizenship “loses its equalising function and becomes a highly privatised matter requiring often only regulating bodies to secure its effectiveness” (2000, p.22).

**Participation**

A citizenship based on participation is seen to answer some of the weaknesses identified in the rights and duties approach. Communitarian theories of citizenship focus on locating civil society in the community and emphasise participation. There are several approaches to communitarianism. Liberal communitarianism began the process of focussing on participation in community as a central aspect of citizenship and in doing this began to make way for different voices. It remained concerned with particular communities. It challenged notions of universalism but replaced it with notions of the common good defined by a self-declared majority. This approach struggles with multiple and competing claims for what is seen as ‘the common good’.

Conservative communitarianism tends to emphasise a culture of consensus and community is seen as a moral voice associated with the creation of moral communities (Etzioni 1995). This form of communitarianism focuses on involvement and participation in the family, school, religion and the local community. Its conservatism springs from its lack of attention to political action and a clear role for the state. It sees civic participation as civic responsibility and identity largely as allied with the notion of the nation.

Civic republicanism is a third type of communitarianism. The distinguishing feature of this approach is the primacy of a commitment to public life and the centrality of the public interest. This approach is explicitly political, with the ideal of a self-governing political community. Civic republicanism strives to preserve as much of the autonomy of the political field as it can to prevent politics from becoming privatistic or statist. Hence emphasis is placed on the associational character of citizenship. Putnam’s (1993) work on social capital aligns with this approach where social responsibility falls to the civil society rather than the state and values of trust, commitment and solidarity are encouraged. Putnam argues that a strong civil society produces a better state. Delanty (2000) notes that missing from this approach is the role of conflict and the potential uses of conflict. Communitarian approaches tend to replace democracy with citizenship and to seek the purpose of citizenship as the mobilisation of public commitment.
Structural Change
A focus on structural change rather than on participation per se is the purview of those who argue for a radical democracy. They attempt to deepen the political nature of citizenship and seek to bring about far-reaching structural changes. This type of citizenship is concerned with the ‘meso’ realm of social movements which seek to mobilise society against the state. The city, and not the state, becomes the site of radical grassroots politics. It is based on notions of collective identity around a common goal. The environmental movement is one example of a social movement in the radical democracy vein, and so too are the mass mobilisations which were anti-statist and occurring in some of the Eastern European countries fighting totalitarian regimes, e.g Solidarity. More recent examples are concerned with the G7 protests which are usually coordinated from many sites and organised electronically. Such movements tend to be around specific issues or battles and tend not to last beyond the life of that struggle. Squires (2000, p.46) in describing feminist notions of citizenship talks of the multi layered citizenships which Nira Yuval-Davis describes. Such citizenship is based on membership of a community and this community can be distinguished from the state. Such communities can be “local, ethnic, national, state, cross or trans-state and supra-state” (Yuval Davis 1999, p.122), but what they offer is multiple sites for inclusion and the practice of citizenship rather than a single state sanctioned citizenship.

A different approach to notions of radical democracy concerns discursive democracy and is associated with the work of Habermas (1996). This relies on the ability to generate communication at both the level of the state and of society. Discursive democracy is rooted in communication and its style is argumentative rather than consensual. It is a democracy based on informed public debate and is responsive to the demands of an active citizenry. An example of this is the establishment of the Green Parties which started out as movements but gained voice and moved into parliamentary positions. With the increase in the numbers of interest groups, society must become discursive rather than self-organising. It must be compatible with the reality of societal complexity and cultural pluralism (Delanty 2000, p.42). “One of the implications of this for sovereignty is that discursive democracy dissolves national sovereignty” (Delanty 2000, p.41)

Political Engagement and Feminism
Feminist theories of citizenship set out to politicise the private sphere which lies outside the shared political culture of the public domain. Feminist democracy is not premised on a shared cultural perspective but on a multiplicity of standpoints. Equality is no longer sought as the preeminent value in a society; it is supplanted by the right to remain different. Solidarity is seen as important for building support links between different groups for the realisation of their different objectives. Solidarity and difference are complemented by a third dimension, a commitment to dialogue. The discursive nature of this approach takes heed of the situation in which many find themselves, lacking access to the avenues of communication necessary to participate in society. Squires brings together the works of many feminists and notes the tendency toward democratic participation in an expressly political sphere (Squires 2000, p.42). A relationship is political only if it takes place in a public arena and becomes increasingly associated with formal institutions of the state (Squires 2000, p.43). With the rise of privatisation many of the institutions which affect our lives are no longer purely of the state, and therefore the need to contest decisions or challenge situations cannot be limited to only those issues associated with the state. Political debates which occur in the public sphere must surely be concerned with all situations in which one group has more power than another, whether that be the state or industry. It is the exercise of power which makes an issue political.
Identity
One other aspect of a citizenship which fits with postmodern understandings concerns the issue of identity. Identity is conceived of as fluid, contested and constantly open to definition. At any one time there may be many identities which people hold and over time these identities will change. Tully argues that the actual forms of acknowledgement or recognition of identities is something that must be worked out by means of democratic discussions, agreements and periodic reviews (2000, p.212). It is the discursive, fluid and public nature of citizenship which defines a much more responsive and inclusive notion of citizenship.

Global Citizenship
Global citizenship addresses the increase in local impacts of international law; residency as the criterion for citizenship; and the cosmopolitan matrix of communication, as changing the meaning of citizenship. Citizenship defined only as a relationship with the nation state is limited given the vast and continuing relationships which cross national boundaries brought about by the information age and increased migration.

Thus far we have seen that understandings of citizenship have moved from passive citizenship to active notions of citizenship with the former privileging homogenous groups and the latter involving the engagement of heterogeneous groups in civil society. The point is the active model is more effective in dealing with diversity. Therefore it is not about citizenship as a prescribed entity, but as a lived experience. The role of the state or civil society as the site of citizenship activity has been challenged and citizenship has been constructed as a discursive practice. Assumptions about shared values and goals and beliefs in a knowable common good have been contested by interpretations of citizenship which argue for the centrality of difference and a focus on the process of identifying priorities. A sense of multiple identities has replaced a focus on European men as citizens and argued for a plurality of voices in a politics of communication and dialogue. Models of citizenship have emerged which offer a clear direction for a globalising world as it enters the new millennium.

Let us now turn to what we know about young people’s citizenship.

Young People’s Citizenship.
As can be seen from the above, models of citizenship are not generally concerned with young people. Indeed, many citizenships are very clearly premised on notions of adulthood, whether this is in terms of political rights as in the vote, or social rights which flow from meeting one’s obligation to pay taxes. Young people are not easily accommodated in a citizenship which functions around notions of fully formed individuals able to identify their interests in the public domain.

Indeed in reviewing the literature on young people’s citizenship, much emphasis is placed on education for citizenship, specifically on educating young people on the ways of government and on what is required of them including the virtues of good citizens. There is a general focus on preparing young people for the day when they will assume the mantle of citizenship rather than on exploring how their current experiences are understood in citizenship terms. This is very much in line with a definition of citizenship in the liberal traditions. Citizenship is seen as relations between adults and the state in civic, political and social arenas and as participation in the agendas and issues usually identified by others, most often the political elites. However the following review of a series of government reports and interviews with young Australians, exploring the issue of young people’s political engagement, reveals a different picture of young people’s citizenship.
Rights and Duties
In reviewing citizenship in terms of social rights we see young people under 18 years of age as subsumed into the private sphere of the family. For example in Australia a parental means test is used to assess a young person’s eligibility for the common youth allowance. Stroick (2001) talks about the nesting which occurs in society and which places children within the family, who are placed within the community of workplaces and neighbourhoods, within geographical and political locations, which in turn are nested within public institutions such as schools which then sit within spheres of government. Thus a citizenship based around notions of social rights has little meaning for young people who are invisible when placed within the private sphere of the family, rather than a force within the public sphere.

Similarly a citizenship premised on one’s duty does not easily accommodate young people who are, to a large extent, excluded from the adult labour market through the payment of youth wages. Between 1966 and 1998 the number of 15-19 year olds in Australia who held full-time positions declined from 39% to 16%. The pressure to remain in education for as long as possible and consequent absence from the labour market curtails many of the citizenship attributes considered under a liberal tradition, i.e. the ability to pay taxes and earn the right to the resources provided by the state. Criminal responsibility is, to some extent, being brought back to the level of the family’s responsibility in Australia, with parents being held responsible for some criminal acts committed by their sons and daughters.

The lack of fit between young people and a citizenship based on rights and obligations is reflected in the work of Pirie and Worcester (2000). In reviewing surveys concerned with political participation in the UK, they report that young people do not have any sense of their responsibilities as citizens and even less about their rights. Such a citizenship is not young people’s citizenship. In their work the following themes emerged around young people’s citizenship.

Political Involvement
If there is one consistent finding from the literature on young people’s citizenship it is their lack of trust and involvement with formal nation-state parliamentary processes, referred to from here on as ‘politics’. It is clear that young people do not, on the whole, engage in national government political processes, until the compulsory voting age of 18. This lack of involvement has been explained by some in terms of a lack of understanding by young people of the formal mechanisms of government (e.g., Frazer 2000). Programs are devised by which young people can be taught about government and, by default, educated for citizenship. However a review of the responses of young people to questions concerned with national politics, indicates a much more active resistance by young people to overt political engagement than can be explained by ignorance of parliamentary processes.

A series of surveys undertaken in Britain with young people between the ages of 16 and 25, reported by Pirie and Worcester (2000), reveal that young people do not trust politicians and very few young people expressed any interest in a career in politics. Frazer (2000) reports research with trainee teachers which revealed that those under 26 expressed cynical and negative attitudes to ‘politics’ itself; as “not affecting me” and as a “joke” (2000, p.96).

The research I conducted with 76 young people from across Australia indicated that they were highly critical and disparaging of politicians at the state and federal level. Young people spoke very cynically of politicians as only chasing votes, rarely consulting young people and when they did of ignoring the findings. Promises made by politicians are seen as not being kept and young people commented that important social programs were used for political purposes. They made comments such as “education is a political football”.

The experience they had of state and federal politics and politicians did not encourage them to want to participate in the forums and processes set up at these levels because they
were seen as cynical vote-buying opportunities and even as manipulative. The young people gave examples such as one respondent who was part of a national children’s youth summit and bemoaned the fact that only two politicians turned up. Others made comments such as “[the politicians want you to] do training courses so that pollies can say [young people are] not unemployed” and “politicians do not really understand what is going on it is all about grandstanding”.

The young respondents were critical of the behaviour and morality of parliamentarians. One person commented, “I was watching it [television parliament] saying, “this is like school children. Not even school children are like that”. They remarked on politicians getting away with dishonest acts such as travel rorts, and private use of public monies whilst their own young friends were gaol ed and harshly dealt with over petty theft matters.

They see that their own attempts at political action are belittled or framed in terms of young people being manipulated by adults, eg. A school ‘walk out’ in protest at comments made by a very right wing politician was reported in the press as being set up by teachers who organised the young people. The young people who felt strongly about the issue were not allowed a voice even when they took action in an attempt to be heard. There was a feeling that young people were not taken seriously at the level of national or state politics and that, even worse, young people were not seen as important enough to even have to try to win them over. The comment was made that until young people have the vote, they have no power.

Eden and Roker (in press) conducted a purposeful study in the UK of young people involved in social action groups which had the specific intention of bringing about social change. Despite this being the common experience of all the young people they interviewed, the majority of young people did not see the activity they were involved in as ‘political’. “Politics was very much the world of the MPs and political parties, of which there was a generally negative view” (in press, p.30). It appears that even when young people do engage in political activity they do not identify it in those terms.

**Vote**

The importance of the vote for young people is a bit confusing. In the research I conducted the vote was seen by people under the age of 18 as an important indicator. If they had the vote young people would have the power and would need to be courted. They saw the lack of the vote until 18 years of age as a signal to politicians that young people could be ignored. Despite the apparent value of the vote, Australian electoral information suggests however that young people do not register to vote when they turn 18 and major campaigns are undertaken to encourage young people to enrol to vote. Voting once enrolled is compulsory in Australia. It appears that young people felt they should have the vote, but were antagonistic towards national politics. This finding is mirrored in the work of Eden and Roker in the U.K. (in press). Similarly Pirie and Worcester (2000) found 55% of 18-24 year olds in the UK had registered to vote. They commented that “young people do not vote because ‘it does not meet their concerns or address their needs’” (2000, p.12). A similar number were found to be less likely than their elders to be involved in the political process.

**Identity**

The relevance of identity is an important part of current debates around citizenship. Chisholm (2001) in talking about citizenship argues that it presupposes empowerment, “the capacity and will to take up distinctive position, to claim cultural identity and to enter into the life of the polity … on equal terms with those who share the same patch of the playing field” (2001, p.129). In exploring how to make empowerment a reality for young people who are on the margins of citizenship, Chisolm identifies negative expressions of empowerment when young people take to the streets and employ classic group public pressure to assert their identity, as
in skinheads. She identifies the darker side of empowerment as the oppression and suppression of other people’s individual and collective human and social rights. She argues that what we need is to educate for constructive empowerment and to learn about active citizenship.

The young people I interviewed in Australia presented a slightly different view of identity. The issue was not wishing to occupy a special identity within society but to be accepted into mainstream society. The issue of belonging loomed large for many of the young people interviewed. They spoke of wanting to be acknowledged on the street, to be valued by adults, to have their contribution and opinion valued. They spoke of wanting to be involved in decision-making and to have input into the way “things were designed”. The young people were not seeking a special identity. They wanted to belong to the world which they saw inhabited by adults, but they wanted to belong as young adults who may have different issues, would look different, and possibly talk differently, but would nonetheless be seen as having a legitimate role to play in decisions affecting society. The identity issue seems to be more about inclusion and acceptance of who they are, and not assumptions about who they are, determined by age.

The Pirie and Worcester (2000) surveys identified something very similar to the Australian findings above. Young people saw citizenship as about respecting others, obeying the law and looking after the environment. Setting a good citizenship example to others also emerged as important. They saw citizenship as being about responsible behaviour.

Interestingly in terms of identity the UK research found 32% of young people agreed that “I feel more a citizen of the world that a citizen of my country” (Pirie and Worcester 2000, 19) and that in general young people were fairly individualistic. In the Australian research the young people resisted the notion of one identity to describe young people. They saw themselves as diverse and different as any other group in Australia and wanted an acknowledgement of that heterogeneity.

Corporate Responsibility

Pirie and Worcester (2000) found that 78% of young people surveyed in the UK thought companies had a responsibility to improve the community. In terms of the sorts of things that might previously have been seen as a responsibility of the state, corporations emerged as substantial players. This seemed consistent with the changing roles of government and business which resulted from privatisation. It may be that the expectations of young people around corporate responsibility and about their own contribution to this is worth further study. It may be in line with ideas of globalisation and the changing status of the nation state. Maybe young people are showing us a citizenship of the future, i.e. the two levels of the personal and the corporate. The state is there as a safety net and to provide health, employment, education and other basic services, but the corporations provide the conduit for individuals to have a say or to put some pressure on government. Big business has power, individuals through government processes do not have power.

If we combine this with the expectation that young people have that the state will provide them with an education which will equip them to get good jobs, it may be that the relationship between business and the state becomes more complicated, and the duties expected of good citizens are discharged through activities of the corporate citizen.

Participation

Eden and Roker’s (in press) national study of young people’s involvement in social action groups identified several hundred groups in the UK. The groups were linked by the common theme of trying to get things done. The groups ranged from environmentalism, health, crime, sexual equality, disability, facilities and provision for young people, third world
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development, and community safety. They were local, national and international in focus. It is possible that youth participation is linked to programs which actively encourage youth involvement. The study showed a diversity of young people involved in terms of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicity. More females than males were involved in social action groups.

The young people reported that, as a result of participating in these groups, they could try to bring about changes. They also reported feeling more attached to their communities.

Young people spoke very clearly about wanting to be involved in setting the agenda. They wanted to be asked their concerns and not told what their problems were. They want young people to be treated in the same way as other people, acknowledged on the street, not avoided or treated as if they were criminals or up to no good. One of the most important things for young people was to be listened to.

In the Australian study reported here, young people spoke of wanting to participate but of needing to feel welcomed and confident that they would not be humiliated for getting it wrong. They wanted mentors who could sit with them and explain political processes and practices. They wanted mayors, judges and lawyers who would listen to them and understand their story. The young people identified others who had succeeded in getting their voice heard and summed it up with “he knows how to talk to people”. Young people wanted opportunities to show adults what they were capable of, whether it be art, skateboarding, music or reflections on current social arrangements.

The young people spoke of knowing what was really going on in the streets because they spent a lot of their time there, but they were rarely asked. They advised and guided other young people on the street. Young people were participating at the local level and spoke of getting rewards from participating in a range of local civic activities, such as sports clubs, art shows, local youth centres and the occasional foray into local government. They would like greater involvement in the formal decision making processes, particularly at local council level, but felt unwelcome and devalued. They spoke of such access really only being available to young people who were well presented, wore a suit, rather than young people who may have piercings and coloured hair. The young people in this survey were very disillusioned with formal political processes, but felt there was more opportunity at the local level for involvement and would like to see this increased.

Spannring, Wallace and Haerpfer (2001) reviewed data from the World Values Survey which was carried out in three waves in most European countries. They concentrated on the last two waves in 1993 and 1997-8 because of their inclusion of central European countries. Their findings reveal that between 1993 and 1997 there was an increase in membership of a range of civic activities. Membership of church or other religious organisations was at 50% for north-western European countries and seen to have increased ten-fold in south-western Europe. In Eastern Europe it declined and was at around 1%. Membership of sports or recreational organisations ranged generally between 20-50% of young people surveyed. Membership in art, music or educational organisations tended to sit between 10 to 25%. Membership of professional organisations was generally under 10%.

With low numbers differences are not all that great and as a general impression one could observe that environmental involvement along with membership in charitable organisations had increased but was still generally less than 10%. The general level of involvement in other voluntary organisations had also increased and was a little over 10%.

Membership in labour organisations had diminished over the period of review and was generally at less than 10% for all but eastern (Russia) and north-western countries (Finland, Sweden, and Norway). Membership of political parties had increased but was still under 10%.
However when we allow for young people to identify those issue which are of concern to them, that is, when they set the agenda for participation and active engagement a different picture emerges. Foster, Naidoo and Akuhata-Brown (1999) reviewed a range of venues in which young people were participating. They argued that in developing countries, “youth organisations range from formal structures such as national youth councils and to village religious youth groups and sports associations that tough the lives of nearly all young people” (1999, p.70). The range of organisations constitutes a vibrant, well-organised youth civil society. The opportunities for participating in majority world countries previously referred to as ‘developing nations’, are vastly different from the dominant Western nations and highlight a different way in which young people may ‘be’ if given the chance.

In highlighting the ways in which youth participation can be enhanced, they identify a broad spectrum of ways in which young people are currently engaged. These include current consultations with young people around policy making and the development of national programs, usually concerned with youth issues. They also identified a range of youth leadership programs in which young people participate through guide and scouting movements.

In these majority world countries it would seem as if young people are participating in civic life, and in various political processes, but not at the level of state and federal government. The young indicated a willingness for, and some experience of, participation at the local level and what emerges is a sense that when they have some faith in their contribution being heard and are afforded the opportunity, young people do become involved.

Local Level
Eden and Roker (in press) found that young people in the UK were most committed to collective and local action to achieve change. It appears that it is at this level that young people see participation as possible. Spanning et al (2001) suggest that young people are involved in a range of activities that might support the idea that their civic participation is high. Nordic countries were seen as having consistently high levels of participation but other Western countries were catching up. Central western European countries were also traditionally high and tending to increase and south western European participation has increased. Eastern Europe has shown a decrease in civic participation in the post-communist north and south east.

The overall pattern seems to be involvement in local activities, such as sport, religion and art and music, but considerably less involvement in things at a national or international level with very few of these types of activity attracting more than 10% of respondents. The exception to this is involvement in labour unions which in north-west and eastern Europe, whilst declining since the fall of the wall still had over 30% of the young respondents as members (this may however relate to the previously compulsory membership of such unions).

This presents a picture of young people as being engaged at the level of local activity, but only tenuously connected at the level of national or international involvement. Experience of engagement and things such as “school ethos” appeared to be more important than formal civics instruction (Frazer 2000, p.95).

Foster et al (2000) caution against an over-reliance on formal youth structures, as these have the potential to become gate keepers and elite structures proscribing the type of youth involvement. Local involvement appears to offer more flexibility and applicability to the lives of young people.
The System is Out of Date
The trends we are seeing in young people participating may be about the preparation of the next generation of citizens, that the experience of local participation prepares the way for participation at other levels. But it may also be a sign of an emerging change in the way citizenship is experienced. Habermas (1997) alluded to the role of social movements in taking responsibility for society in light of the massive retreat of the state from this role. In terms of sustainable development and the needs of future generations, responsibility has shifted to civil society (1997 p.128). Such social movements can happen locally, as well as nationally and transnationally.

Pirie and Worcester question “whether or not young people might be right to set so little store by a process which was designed to solve the problems of a different era, and which seems increasingly out of phase with their attitude to life, their attitudes to citizenship and community and to their view of the future” (2000, p.13).

What might a citizenship which involves high levels of participation at the local level, in a variety of local activities mean? What might be the altered role of the market and industry in this new order? Baubock (2000) talks of an associational pluralism in which associations mediate between individuals, the market and the state.

Multi-Levelled Polity
It is clear that young people participate at the level of civil society, but what does this mean in terms of their citizenship. Citizenship that is narrowly conceived in terms of rights and duties, and political participation is being challenged (see Delanty 2000 for a fuller discussion of this) and clearly fails to accommodate a citizenship of young people. As young people are participating and engaging daily in a range of activities, are they thus creating a citizenship on their own terms? As Delanty notes, the state “no longer dominates the discourses and politics of citizenship, whose components are being taken up by a broad spectrum of social actors” (2000, p.134). Have young people found a way in which those who may be marginalised by dominant notions of citizenship can belong?

Delanty argues that a multi-level polity is emerging in which sub-national, national and transnational forms of governance sit alongside one another other. In such an order, participatory forms of democracy are best suited to sub-national forms of governance. This is consistent with what we see young people doing. They are participating in a variety of forums at the local level. Many other writers note the challenges to national sovereignty which flow from transnational processes associated with globalisation: “the more national states fade in their role, the more cities emerge a driving force in the making of a new … society” (Castells 1994, p. 23). Participation at the local level becomes the expression of citizenship. The role of the local is strengthened as the influence of the national is diminished. The opening up of local forms of governance to more participatory forms recreates an active citizenship.

The mere fact of acting locally does not limit the impact of the action. Participation has evolved from a physical activity to one which can exist in virtual space. Communication becomes the cornerstone of involvement. The public sphere is a complex network which can reach from the local, through national to transnational arenas. These communication societies offer more opportunities for participation and social integration than has previously been possible. In addition, it is the opportunity offered by communication technologies that allow local sites to engage across national borders, linking in to transnational communications. There is little evidence at this stage that this is a particular feature of young people’s participation but it creates potential for an impact beyond the local for young people.

The other dimension of young people’s local participation is the opportunity it offers for the acceptance of difference. Young people are demonstrating that participation is not premised on being an adult with certain attributes. By the very act of participating young...
people are challenging the exclusionary nature of traditional citizenship. Tourraine (2000) argues that to be equal and yet different defines the challenge of cultural citizenship. Identity is contested, fluid and multi-layered. The identity of citizens is changing. This has traditionally been held out as a reason for excluding young people, they are not fully formed and will one day grow up. Young people are showing that all identities are fluid and that identity at any one time is as valid as that at any other. There is an ongoing discursive practice in society in which discursive spaces are opening up and individuals can engage with otherness. Young people are clearly claiming voice in this space and contributing to the activity of society as young people, not as citizens in waiting.

**Young People and Citizenship**

As Foster, Naidoo and Akuhata-Brown (1999) argue, “[t]he more that a citizenry practices democracy at the everyday level in communities, schools and civic associations, the more skilful it becomes” (1999, p.70). However it may be that the mere fact of practicing democracy is democracy, involvement is participation, not preparation for participation. We are seeing young people regularly participating in local or sub-national associations and arenas. Young people are arguing for their right to belong as they are. Young people demand that their differences be accepted, acknowledged and valued for the perspective it allows.

Rather than noting the absence of young people at state and national levels should we pay closer attention to their engagement at the local level? Is their engagement pointing a way for a more inclusive and relevant citizenship? Is this how a citizenship can exist when nation states are less influential than they have been, when there is greater heterogeneity amongst people than homogeneity? Who is not participating and why? Maybe we need to disentangle youth participation and increase the opportunities for those who do experience real exclusion from participation. To borrow a phrase from John Lennon, maybe “citizenship is what happens when you’re busy making other plans”.

**Conclusion**

The Commission on Citizenship (in the UK) argues that “[t]he participation of citizens in their society is both a measure and a source of that society’s success: democracy and involvement are not, and should not be reducible to the narrowly political but concern the very business of life” (HSMO 1990, p.42). Baubock claims “[T]he most important demand of citizenship is to learn to cope with the plurality that is continuously demanded by civil society” (2000, p.115). Young people around the globe are showing us they are contributing at the level which affects us most directly, the local level. Instead of framing concerns about youth behaviour and health in terms of apparent disenfranchisement from civil society as defined within a rigid set of understandings, maybe we should look at what young people are doing and learn from them how a society may remain vibrant and dynamic. There are many voices of young people and we can learn something from each of them. In this way new discursive spaces open up and new solutions to older problems emerge.
References


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