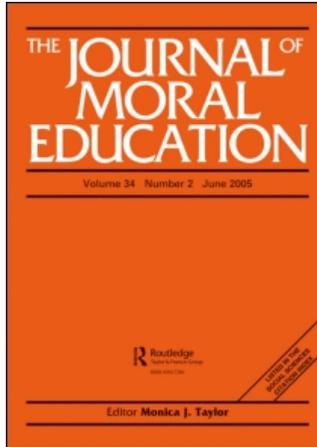


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### Beyond conventional civic participation, beyond the moral-political divide: young people and contemporary debates about citizenship

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# Beyond conventional civic participation, beyond the moral-political divide: young people and contemporary debates about citizenship

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In Western thought, the relationship between the moral and political domains has been dominated by a version of political philosophy which, based on the distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’, argues that the moral is different from the political. In parallel, and related to this, has been a delineation of the ‘political’ as concerned with structural aspects of representative democracy, privileging electoral behaviour in particular. We challenge this distinction on the basis that it is not useful for addressing the motivational dimensions of political behaviour, which are crucial for crafting citizenship education. We explore the ways in which the concept of citizenship has become contested in the realities of the range of contemporary political engagement, and how current debates, for example that between liberals and communitarians, expose the underlying moral perspectives behind their theory and their prescriptions. Emerging from this we present an argument for three different modes of civic engagement; *voting*, *helping* and *making one’s voice heard*, in which the moral and political play out differently. This model is explored through data from a study of British young people’s involvement with civic issues and actions.

## **Introduction: the moral and the political**

Discussions about citizenship and civic education frequently arise from lamentation; there is a ‘problem’ which urgently needs to be addressed if democracy, as we know it, is to survive. The problem may be declining voting among young people; it may be the loss of community ties, as some communitarians suggest. It may be the social exclusion and consequent alienation of particular groups. Such lamentations prod us to find a fix. They also focus our attention on that particular aspect highlighted by

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the ‘problem’. In this paper we argue that we should look beyond the lamentation and consider the assumptions which define the problem.

Conceptualising the relationship between ‘moral’ and ‘political’ domains also rests upon assumptions. On what parameters do we assume *that* these are distinct, and *how* they are distinct? Political science or philosophy may find it feasible to identify distinct moral and political domains. However, from the standpoint of education we must start from where the citizen is, and it is manifestly obvious that lay people do not make such a clear distinction. Discussions of many moral issues (for example social injustice) shade rapidly into demands for legislation and policy. The individual citizen’s motivation to engage politically, or to 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 – or at least to persuade someone else to do so. If we are to understand how to engage young people more effectively in the political process we must understand how such motivations work, and how they relate to the larger questions of democracy’s functioning.

Bernard Crick makes a salient point, in relation to how we approach children’s understanding of citizenship:

Too much of political socialisation research turns out simply to be over-structured investigations of the attitudes of school children to adult political concepts; there is too little on the political language and lore of schoolchildren, there is no political Piaget. More research is needed in this area – if so then we can check our common-sense view of what terms like ‘fair’ and ‘authority’ mean to the children when we start teaching. Half the battle in education at any level is knowing the preconceptions of the pupils (Crick, 1999, p 342–343).

Much the same principle applies to adults. There has been much useful quantitative research on the *structure* of attitudes and ideology, but qualitative work on how people *use* values to make sense of their experience shows that spontaneous accounts and explanations promiscuously interweave moral and political discourse (e.g. Billig, 1992; Antaki, 1994; Lister, 2003). A recent study of 1200 US undergraduates found that, in addition to issues more obviously ‘moral’ (in the USA political arena) – such as gay marriage, stem cell research and abortion – over half also saw the US government response to Hurricane Katrina, and 40% saw both education policy and the Iraq War as ‘moral’ issues. More than one-third of Democrat voters also saw the environment, affirmative action and the minimum wage as moral issues (The Institute of Politics, Harvard University, 2006).

### **Contested citizenship: what is ‘political’ participation?**

As several writers have noted, ‘citizenship’ is a contested concept and a concept in transition (Lister *et al.*, 2003). From the point of view of education, we need to address two distinct but overlapping issues. First, definitions of citizenship, and debates about its constitution and boundaries, reflect implicit as well as explicit goals to which the education of the young person is to be directed. Second, different political models reflect different emphases on how the young person functions psychologically and therefore, what educational practices should be implemented. For example, the goals and the model of human development within a liberal and a communitarian perspective are both different.

Third, crucial for understanding civic action is motivation. To what extent are different possible forms of civic action seen as likely to be effective in attaining desired outcomes?

The widespread disillusion with 'politics', described by many commentators, largely applies to activity within the conventionally defined political domain – especially voting. Those actively concerned with the practicalities of politics often privilege voting as the primary political act. From a political science perspective, voting is central because it is the cornerstone of representative democracy. Elections reflect the will of the people and also ensure checks and balances on abuses of power primarily through the threat of eviction from office. An apathetic society is – in terms of democracy – 'unhealthy' because it fails to provide such checks and balances. Therefore, a primary goal of citizenship education must be to motivate citizens to vote (Pattie, Seyd & Whiteley, 2004).

However, this can distort the process of trying to understand political motivation. At least in established democracies, voting is a low-key, infrequent event for most people. It is primarily a civic *duty*; a 'good citizen' turns out on the day. A focus on voting behaviour, therefore, is unlikely to capture the citizen's main political or moral preoccupations; at most, party support may suggest that the individual perceives some link between issues that concern them and their chosen party's stated goals. One purpose of this paper is to show that 'citizenship' comprises considerably more than voting, and that understanding motivation to engage with the civic domain is only partly addressed if voting is taken as the primary behaviour.

Recent events and developments impact on the question, 'what does it mean to become a citizen in a democratic society?' and on the status of the Right–Left spectrum. A further challenge to many assumptions comes from the liberal–communitarian debate. First, recent global events have challenged assumptions about the universal nature of democracy. As argued elsewhere (Haste, 2004), the end of the Soviet empire and the emergence (or more accurately, re-emergence) of democratic states showed us that the quest for a model of democracy is firmly embedded in a nation's cultural practices and draws upon that nation's identity and history. This has led to a diversity of models and brings into question assumptions made routinely about democracy in western societies.

For example, much of what is written about 'democracy' has been rooted in stable societies, in which the individual citizen has the right to speak and vote but, in practice, experiences little political power. In societies in transition, there is much fluidity and there is often an intoxicating sense of being part of making history, although the actual extent of power that pressure groups have in such times is largely illusory. Euphoria may be followed by disillusion but such civic experience is important for those involved; the sense of engagement can be highly motivating (Abrahams, 1995; Van Hoorn *et al.*, 2000).

### **The demise of the Right–Left spectrum and the intersection of the personal and the political**

Two writers who have particularly shifted assumptions about the Right–Left spectrum are Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. Giddens argues that 'emancipatory'

social movements have increasingly dominated the political scene in recent decades, and that these cut across the Right–Left spectrum; their ideological boundaries do not follow conventional party lines (Giddens, 1991, 1994, 1998). First, such social movements – feminism and ecology for example – are heavily imbued with *moral* rhetoric about liberation and responsibility (Haste, 1992, 1994, 2001; Harré, Brockmeier & Mühlhäusler, 1999; Kahn, 1999; Bull, Diamond & Marsh, 2001; Eatwell, 2003).

Second, these developments reflect a *change in how democracy functions*. When emancipatory movements exert effective pressure on mainstream politics this shifts the balance of power from the representative legislative body to something closer to grassroots democracy. A successful social movement goes beyond lobbying; it changes the culture that is being governed. ‘Protest’ movements, once seen as manifestations of ‘unconventional’ political activity (and by implication a possible threat to social order) have become cornerstones of democracy. Political psychologists treated unconventional activities as peripheral, and possibly even pathological, until the late 1960s, when both their political *and their moral* status was recognised (Haan, Smith & Block, 1968; Sigel & Hoskins, 1981; Kaase, 1999; McAdam, 2003).

Beck (1992) addresses a specific socio-political issue which highlights the role of grassroots democracy – the way people respond to risk. Risk evaluation and citizens’ reaction to threats have, in Beck’s view, become important political mobilising factors. His starting point is that a society which uncritically accepts the march of technological progress is in effect surrendering its political will. If the populace buys into this model, they may come to accept evidence of ‘progress’ without questioning whether this progress does in fact reflect the common will, or is politically or morally desirable.

Beck argues, however, that people do not uncritically accept a ‘progressivist’ palliative to perceived risk. They actively evaluate the personal consequences of risk and do not necessarily attribute the source of risk to *uncontrollable* external forces. Research on risk perception has largely supported Beck’s picture of the differentiated nature of public response to risk (e.g. Poortinga & Pidgeon, 2003). Beck’s broader message parallels that of Giddens, arguing that the rise in social movements reflects something more than an ‘add-on’ to voting. Disenchantment with ‘politics’ – in the sense of conventional procedures of voting and representation – has paradoxically broadened the base of democracy by creating powerful voices which cannot be ignored, nor be persuaded that the elected corps of representatives are ‘dealing with the problem’ through technological progressivism.

The work of both Giddens and Beck has extensive implications for citizenship education, and for the boundaries between the moral and political. First, if social movements – or at least pressure groups on specific issues – are a core part of the democratic process, then equipping young people to be effective in such activities is at least as important as equipping them to vote. Second, it is necessary to establish whether the constellation of motives and values that promote social protest behaviour are the same, or different from, those which promote voting. Third, both

Beck and Giddens show that social movement activity is a response to issues that are perceived as personally relevant and entailing personal responsibility.

The phrase, 'the personal is political' became salient in the train of the emancipatory and liberationist movements that Giddens describes (Yuval-Davis & Werbner, 1999). The very phrase rhetorically undermines the traditional distinction between private and public space which distinguished the world of moral discourse from the world of political discourse. It makes explicit that personal experience of inequality, injustice, altruism and efficacy are highly significant factors in engaging people, and, in particular, that personally-experienced examples of such 'political' situations are a legitimate component of analysing the political situation.

In this context, the work of Martha Nussbaum is highly relevant (Nussbaum, 1999). She starts from a *political* position that the function of a good political system is to meet the needs of its citizens. This is according to Nussbaum a *moral* imperative. Nussbaum identifies a number of what she terms 'functional capabilities', the basic substratum from which 'a good life' can develop. Nussbaum identifies ten such needs, which include bodily, social, emotional domains and practical reason. They form an indivisible set, in that 'a life that lacks any one of these capabilities, no matter what else it has, will fall short of being a good human life' (p.42). Because these human capabilities, in her eyes, exert a *moral claim on the political arena*, they translate into rights of which the political system must take notice.

### **Liberals and communitarians**

Our third area of focus is the growing debate between liberal and communitarian perspectives – and the diversity within communitarian perspectives, which highlights particular elements of the moral dimensions of the political, and their implications for education.

Both liberal and communitarian perspectives include a moral dimension which implies education for the development of moral reasoning, motivation and action. Where they differ is in the moral attributes and actions implied and how such attributes and actions are seen to be supportive of the desirable goals of the state. For liberals, the goal of civil society should be justice and facilitating the full development of all individuals; this is a *moral* position, as Nussbaum cogently argues. The intersection of the political and the moral lies in the response to injustice; there is a moral obligation on the state, and there is therefore a moral obligation on citizens of that state to ensure that the state does its duty.

Underlying the communitarian position is a principle which serves both as a *goal* and as an *explanatory frame*. The *goal* is to strengthen community ties, and recognise community needs. Behind this is the assumption that meeting the community's needs will also meet the needs of the individual members of that community. This contrasts with the liberal emphasis on the individual, and on individual liberty – which liberals argue may conflict with the community's consensus, especially in a socially conservative context. The main liberal objections to communitarianism are that commitment to the community can lead to partisanship, to conservatism or

even to tyranny, because such commitment may become moral complacency – or complicity.

The liberal perspective not only emphasises autonomy but also a search for universals, transcendent values on which we can – or should – all agree (Kymlicka, 1995; Levinson, 1999). If rights are agreed, their legitimacy comes from arguments of first principles about liberty. They should be universally applicable, and core values sustained even if they clash with local cultural norms. This emphasis on logic predicates educating reasoning skills and the ability to argue from principles rather than partisanship.

The *explanatory frame* behind communitarianism is that human beings are social animals, and that we should work *with* this in formulating political systems and structures. The fundamentally social nature of people is central to Robert Putnam's influential political perspective (Putnam, 1995, 2000). His thesis is that shared community leisure activities – such as bowling groups – are essential social glue that binds people to each other, by affective ties and a sense of mutual obligation. From this small community interaction comes a commitment to active mutuality, the main source of the social capital which holds together the larger polity. If local community ties break down, social capital, and therefore democracy, is threatened. The educational implications are that young people should be encouraged to participate in volunteering or taking responsibility in community organisations. From such activity will ensue commitment to and engagement with the more structural aspects of civic behaviour, like voting.

A different dimension of communitarian thought comes from focusing on the ontological and epistemological implications of the 'social' human, in particular the social construction of meaning and value. This perspective explicitly challenges the notion of 'autonomy' which underpins liberalism. According to Charles Taylor and to Daniel Bell, the problem with identifying autonomy as a developmental 'goal' is that it presupposes an isolated individual reasoning outside a social context (Taylor, 1991; Bell, 1993). This position, they argue, has two fallacies. One is that it attends solely to the role of individual reasoning in decision-making, and does not take into account the socio-historical context in which decisions are made. The second fallacy is that the individual can ever resist the social context and attain 'autonomy' in that sense. Taylor argues that if autonomy is a chimera, we must understand how reasoned decision-making is a *social process* and work *with* that to attain the desired social and political goals in which individual rights and freedoms are protected. The research, and ultimately the educational, implication of Taylor's position is that we should more thoroughly investigate the social and cultural context in which the growing individual makes sense of their world (Haste, 1996, 2004).

### **Contesting citizenship; the questions**

We have presented material that strongly suggests a much fuzzier boundary between the moral and the political than is argued within some theoretical perspectives, and we have indicated how some theorists (for example Nussbaum) explicitly conflate

the two domains by arguing for a moral underpinning of the political. We can also see, from the perspectives of Giddens and Beck, that single issues, associated often with a personally-relevant and frequently a morally-charged agenda, have become powerful elements in day-to-day democratic processes.

Contesting citizenship productively therefore lies in part in deconstructing the boundaries between the moral and the political, and the delimitation of what counts as 'political' itself. In fact, in practice the populace has moved on, even if theorists have not. The Power Enquiry, an independent enquiry into Britain's democracy, presents empirical evidence for a new kind of engagement:

[T]he British public are not apathetic ... very large numbers of citizens are engaged in community and charity work outside politics. There is also clear evidence that involvement in pressure politics – such as signing petitions, supporting consumer boycotts, joining campaign groups – has grown significantly for many years. In addition, ... interest in 'political issues' is high. (The Power Enquiry, 2006, p.17)

Studies of young people's own concepts of 'citizenship' and the 'good citizen' reflect a considerably more eclectic concept than that of merely voting. International data on young people suggest that they anticipate being involved in a wide range of future citizenship activities – including voting. In the major international International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study of young people in 28 nations, over 80% in 17 of the countries (including England) expected to vote (Hahn, 1998; Flanagan *et al.*, 1999; Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2002; Torney-Purta & Richardson, 2004). In 11 countries over 60% expected to collect money for social causes (57% in England). In 14 countries (including England) at least 45% expected to collect signatures for a petition. In nine countries over 45% expected to take part in a peaceful demonstration (the figure in England was 28%).

The role of less conventionally 'political' activity in citizenship is demonstrated in how young people define the characteristics of 'the good citizen'. Obeying the law is rated most important in most studies, but being involved in the community, helping people, and being concerned about the environment tend to be rated as equally, or more, important than voting, and considerably more important than belonging to a political party (Flanagan *et al.*, 1999; Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001; Lister *et al.*, 2002; Roker & Eden, 2002; Lister *et al.*, 2003; Pattie, Seyd & Whiteley, 2004).

There is abundant evidence that young people's participation in community organisations predicts longer term involvement in civic life as well as leading more immediately to greater self-confidence and team-working skills (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1999; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Harris, Roach & Thiara, 2002; Roker & Eden, 2002). Volunteering may also expose the young person to aspects of deprivation or inequality of which they were unaware, and can enlarge their political (and moral) perspectives (Yates, 1999; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003).

### Three areas of civic action

We would argue that the foregoing theoretical and empirical material suggests three different domains of civic action, which also have somewhat different connotations

for different theoretical perspectives. These domains are, first, *voting behaviour*, which is primarily directed to acting conventionally within the framework of representative democracy. Second, *helping in the community*, which includes activities related to direct help to individuals, and to being involved in community organisations. The third domain is *making one's voice heard*; this domain comprises actions which are aimed at influencing the legislature, through individual or, more usually, collective action. These three domains have a different *political* purpose, a different niche in the conceptualisation of the political domain, and important from the point of view of education, they are likely to be motivated differently.

Forefronting *voting behaviour* is consistent with a political model in which, ideally, an active citizenry ensures an elected representative government. But why do people vote? For some, maintaining representative democracy is enough. Many believe that their vote counts; the society they would wish to live in will be achieved by the party for which they vote, or their representative will serve local interests in the national assembly. Others may vote because this is what the 'good citizen' does.

As we noted, the communitarian perspective argues that *helping in the community* is the basis of political life. In the eyes of some critics, local community action may deflect young people from perceiving broader and more problematic political issues because it makes them feel valuable members of a group which is in effect perpetuating the *status quo*. Volunteering activity, for example, is performed by people from all political perspectives and in no way challenges traditional practices. However, the experience of volunteering can be a force for raising political awareness. Miranda Yates observed young black adolescents working in a shelter for the homeless. In addition to giving the young people confidence and skills, their experience changed how they saw those whom they were helping – not as to be pitied, nor as morally feckless, but as unfortunate – and some at least came to perceive a larger context in which homelessness was not being adequately addressed by the government (Yates, 1999; Haste, 2004).

The third domain of action is *making one's voice heard*. This involves individual pro-action; to make one's voice heard, even as part of a collective, means stepping outside one's routine and making an effort, recognising that one's voice may be in dissent from the *status quo*. It can be seen as consistent with the liberal perspective insofar as it reflects a moral commitment to social justice, however, citizens may make their voices heard for causes which are far from 'liberal'. While this is in accord with the model of individual autonomy which underlies the liberal worldview, making one's voice heard is not in any way incompatible with commitment to the community.

### **The research questions**

The foregoing analysis and deconstruction of the contested concept of citizenship raises practical and theoretical questions for education, and also reveals areas in which further research is needed. A first question concerns the extent to which patterns of actual or normative activity do constitute different constellations of civic

action; does the proposed tripartite model correspond to actual patterns of engagement? A second question would provide an elaboration of the arguments proposed by Giddens, Beck and others; to what extent and in what ways are single issues a primary source of civic engagement? How is the issue constructed by those involved, and how is this motivating to action? A third question concerns civic motivation in general; what are the antecedent variables and conditions which foster (or inhibit) active involvement? Particularly, given the salience of a likely moral dimension associated with experiences around single issues, attention needs to be paid to the effects of specific relevant experiences, as well as the more usual range of family, community and school variables.

These research questions cannot all be addressed within the scope of this paper. However, we will draw on a recent national British study of over one thousand young people to explore some key issues. The research questions we will address are:

1. The extent and range of recent civic action; how active are young people in Britain?
2. The norms of civic action, as manifested by expected future action and concepts of the 'good citizen'; to what extent do patterns of normative action support an argument for the three proposed domains?
3. Salient socio-political values; what issues concern young British people and what can this tell us about the moral dimensions of the political?
4. The motives behind civic action; what predicts involvement?

### **The study**

The study was conducted during the period March-May 2005 with 1136 young people between the ages of 11 and 21 from England, Wales and Scotland (Haste, 2005). The data were collected by the market and social research agency Market and Opinion Research International (MORI), through questionnaire interviews in schools and on-line and postal questionnaires. Some 74% of the sample were in full-time education. Of the sample 51% were male and 49% female.

The questionnaire was constructed using material from a range of sources. A number of items were drawn from the IEA study. Some items were drawn from MORI studies on related topics.<sup>2</sup> Some items were exploratory. The items relevant to the present paper fell into the following categories:

- recent civic actions<sup>3</sup>
- items reflecting normative action, including own expected future actions, and concepts of the 'good citizen'<sup>4</sup>
- value items relating to social and political issues about which young people would like to influence the government<sup>5</sup>
- items relating to motivation, including sensitivity to events in the news.

Some of the items required 'yes/no' answers. Others used Likert scales of agreement, importance or likelihood. The data to be reported here were derived from exploratory factor analysis, analysis of variance and multiple regression.

## Findings

### *How active are young people in Britain?*

Table 1 shows that about one-quarter of young people are wholly inactive in the civic domain, as defined by this study. But at least one-quarter have been involved in charity or community action, and more than one-third have signed a petition. Boycotting products is perhaps the most explicitly ‘moral’ activity on the list, and nearly one-quarter have done this. About one in fourteen have taken part in a protest demonstration – it is perhaps important to note that the period covered included the run-up to the Iraq War. These data are quite similar to the adult data in the recent UK Electoral Commission report *An Audit of political engagement* (The Electoral Commission & Hansard Society, 2006).

### *Normative civic action*

Two measures incorporate normative action. The first is expectation of one’s own likely future activity, which is seen not as a prediction but as reflecting those areas of perceived adult civic engagement with which one would wish to identify. The second taps the behavioural attributes seen as important for being a ‘good citizen’. Table 2 shows that voting for national and local representation were seen as the most likely future civic actions; joining a political party was the least likely, along with disruptive protest activity. Table 3 shows that ‘Obeying the law’ was virtually universally endorsed as the attribute of the good citizen, but helpfulness and community involvement, and protecting the environment, emerged as more or less equivalent in importance to voting. This echoes the findings of Hahn and also the IEA study, that young people consider the most important mark of a good citizen is helping other people, even though voting is perceived as a widely practised adult civic action (Hahn, 1999; Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001). Party participation was rated low.

Table 1. Recent participation activities

<i>Which, if any, of the following have you done in the past two years?</i>	<i>%</i>
Taken part in a sponsored event	46
Signed a petition	35
Given your unpaid time to help people in need in the community	30
Helped to organise an event or activity for charity	27
Refused to buy products because you object to the conditions under which they are produced and/or what they are made from	23
Put yourself forward for election for office in your school, college club or other organisation	22
Been regularly active in a neighbourhood, community or ethnic organisation	10
Written to a newspaper/magazine or taken part in a phone-in programme to express your views on a topical issue	9
Taken part in a protest march or rally	6
None of these	24

N=1136

Table 2. Normative action: expected future activities

<i>To what extent do you think you will be likely or unlikely to do each of the following in the future?</i>	<i>'Very likely+fairly likely'</i> %
Vote in a general election	72
Vote in a local election	69
Sign a petition	58
Vote in a European election	48
Work with an organisation or charity to help people in need	47
Take part in peaceful protest activities	30
Contact your Member of Parliament about issues that concern you	30
Work actively for a community, neighbourhood or ethnic organisation	27
Take part in a phone-in programme on an issue that concerns you	22
Work actively for a political party	16
Join a political party	14
Take part in demonstrations that block traffic, or occupy buildings	14
N=1136	

Table 3. Normative action: the attributes of the 'good citizen'

<i>How important is each of the following in being a good citizen?</i>	<i>'Very important+fairly important'</i> %
Obedying the law	90
Participating in activities to benefit people in the community	73
Taking part in activities to protect the environment	69
Voting in elections	68
Taking part in activities promoting human rights	59
Talking with your family and friends about political issues	55
Following political issues in the newspaper or radio and television	55
Participating in a peaceful protest against a law you believe unjust	48
Knowing about the country's history	45
Joining a political party	21
N=1136	

### *Patterns and profiles: factor analysis of action*

To investigate the relationship between different areas of action, and to find out whether there were constellations that might reflect different orientations to the citizenship role, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis<sup>6</sup> of the normative 'action' items, comprising the attributes of the good citizen, and likely future actions.

Five factors with eigenvalues well in excess of 1.0 emerged, accounting in total for 60% of the variance.

- The first action factor reflects the importance of *Active monitoring* of social and political issues, as well as participation in activities relating to human rights and the environment. However, these only related to attributes of the good citizen, not to expected future actions.
- The second factor reflects *Conventional participation* and included all the normative items relating to voting, and also signing a petition.
- The third factor reflects *Making one's voice heard*; both personal expectations and positive evaluation of the good citizen, such as taking part in both peaceful and disruptive protest and in phone-in programmes, signing a petition and contacting one's Member of Parliament.
- The fourth factor is about *Joining organisations*, including community organisations, and political parties.
- The fifth factor is primarily about *Helping the community and the environment*.

These findings provide some support for the hypothesised distinction between the three domains of action. The factor scores derived from these factors were also run (as dependent variables) in one way ANOVAs against items relating to recent actions, socio-political values and personal identity. These findings elaborate the emergent picture.<sup>7</sup>

ANOVAs of scores on the first Action factor, *Active monitoring*, did not relate significantly to any recent actions. They were associated with seeing oneself as a person who questions things and does not take them for granted ( $F=23.26$ ), and, to a lesser extent, with being respected, helpful and responsible. There was also a significant relationship between high scores on this factor and socio-political concerns, as shown by the fact that of the sixteen issues on which they might want to influence the government, eleven had an F ratio in excess of 10.00. These findings suggest a general valuing of being *aware* of social and political issues, of being an *informed* and *concerned*, rather than an *active* citizen.

The second Action factor, *Conventional participation*, fits well with the hypothesis of mainstream engagement as civic duty. Factor scores were strongly associated with intention to vote in the then imminent general election<sup>8</sup> ( $F=270.98$ ). There was also a strong relationship with some recent action including signing a petition ( $F=56.51$ ), standing for election in school or college ( $F=20.49$ ) and boycotting a product of which they disapproved ( $F=20.34$ ). There was, however, no relationship between these factor scores and issues on which these young people might have wished to influence the government.

Scores on the third Action factor, *Making one's voice heard*, related strongly to a wide range of recent 'protest' action, most particularly with boycotting a product ( $F=70.58$ ) and taking part in a protest demonstration ( $F=47.12$ ), but also with charity activities. The data show relationships with value items associated with social justice, the environment and the influence of the USA and the European Union (EU) on British politics, suggesting that respondents scoring high on this factor are

Table 4. Factor analysis of normative action (Principal components with varimax rotation)

Q*	Item	Factor **	1**	2**	3**	4**	5**
32	Following political issues in the media		0.73				
32	Joining a political party		0.69				
32	Talking with your family and friends about political and social issues in the news		0.63				
32	Knowing about the country's history		0.62				
28	Vote in a general election			0.88			
28	Vote in a local election			0.85			
28	Vote in a European election			0.72			
32	Voting in elections		0.54	0.51			
28	Take part in peaceful protest activities				0.70		
28	Take part in demonstrations that block traffic or occupy buildings				0.62		
28	Sign a petition			0.41	0.62		
28	Take part in a phone-in programme on an issue that concerns you				0.58		
32	Participating in a peaceful protest against a law you believe unjust		0.51		0.52		
28	Work actively for a political party					0.79	
28	Join a political party					0.69	
32	Participating in activities to benefit people in the community						0.66
32	Obedying the law						0.61
28	Work actively for a community, neighbourhood or ethnic organisation					0.69	0.42
28	Work with an organisation or charity to help people in need					0.56	0.48
28	Contact your Member of Parliament about issues that concern you				0.50	0.42	
32	Taking part in activities promoting human rights		0.50		0.41		0.43
32	Taking part in activities to protect the environment		0.46				0.51

\* Q28 To what extent do you think you will be likely or unlikely to do each of the following in the future?

Q32 How important is each of the following in being a good citizen?

\*\* Factor 1: Active monitoring; Factor 2: Conventional participation; Factor 3: Making one's voice heard; Factor 4: Joining organisations; Factor 5: Helping the community and environment.

motivated to express their views on single issues, many of which have strong moral connotations.

Scores on the fourth Action factor, *Joining organisations*, related primarily to standing for election in one's school or college ( $F=34.84$ ), being recently active in a community organisation ( $F=23.41$ ) and writing to a newspaper or taking part in a phone-in programme ( $F=23.64$ ). This suggests a strong propensity for organisational involvement *per se*, but not specifically value-related.

Scores on the fifth Action factor, *Helping the community and the environment*, were strongly associated with community-oriented behaviour, and with being responsible and helpful; recent charity and neighbourhood activities related strongly to these factor scores, with F ratios of over 48.00. There was also a strong relationship between this factor and values and social concern, with eight of the sixteen options relating with an F ratio higher than 23.00. This Action factor combines strong moral commitment to social values with active involvement in the community.

Overall, the exploratory factor analysis, and the analysis of variance relating the factor scores with other action and value variables, do suggest a fairly robust pattern differentiating the hypothesised three domains of civic action. This also indicates that productive future research could go into greater depth on how these domains are constructed as sites for civic action, and personal identity and commitment with regard to each. However, the emergence of the first factor, *Active monitoring*, does suggest a need to elaborate the model to include a dimension of non-active but attentive response to public events.

*What issues concern British young people and what can this tell us about the moral dimensions of the political?*

The young people in our sample do care quite strongly about a number of social issues. More than three-quarters would like to influence the government in relation to some key 'quality of life' issues – health care, better facilities for young people, controlling crime, drugs and young people, and also a 'social justice' item, racism. Between two-thirds and three-quarters cared about the environment, rising pollution and opportunities for women. Over half wanted to have an influence on animal experimentation, how new immigrants are treated, how scientific developments affect our lives and the influence of both the European parliament and the USA on aspects of British law and politics.

Exploratory factor analysis of the sixteen items, and relating the factor scores to recent action, normative action and personal identity, illuminated the value pattern in helpful ways. The factor analysis yielded three factors, accounting in total for 51.35% of the variance.

- The first factor comprised mainly items about *Quality of life* and social order, such as providing better facilities for young people, health care, drugs and young people, opportunities for women and controlling crime.
- The second factor contained items related to 'threats' to *Sovereignty*, whether national or cultural, such as the influence of the USA and the European parliament on British politics, and immigration control.
- The third factor was about *Green values* – environmental issues and animal experimentation.

As with the Action factors, looking at the relationship between the factor scores and other action and identity items was helpful in enlarging the picture. Scores on the first Value factor, *Quality of life*, were associated with *valuing* community action,

human rights and obedience to the law, helpfulness and maintaining good personal relationships. They were not, however, strongly associated with either recent or expected future *action* apart from taking part in a recent sponsored event ( $F=40.60$ ). This pattern suggests an *ethic* of care, community and responsibility. There was also a relatively high correlation ( $r=0.33$ ) between scores on this factor, and on Action Factor 5, *Helping the community and the environment*.

Scores on Values Factor 2, *Sovereignty*, were associated moderately with normative actions relating to conventional political activities, but not with recent action. There was a low but significant correlation between these factor scores and those of Action Factor 2, *Conventional participation* ( $r=0.16$ ), and Action Factor 1, *Active monitoring* ( $r=0.19$ ).

Those scoring positively on Values Factor 3, *Green values* tended to have participated in recent action, particularly a boycott of products ( $F=53.78$ ). In relation to 'good citizenship', there was a strong association with environmental concerns and with making one's voice heard on human rights and social justice. There was a significant correlation between this Value Factor and two of the Action Factors, *Making one's voice heard* ( $r=0.26$ ) and *Helping the community and the environment* ( $r=0.23$ ).

These patterns suggest three different moral orientations. In Value Factor 1, *Quality of life*, the issues concern helping the disadvantaged, both as an individual and as part of social programmes – but very much within the existing social system. For Value Factor 2, *Sovereignty*, the orientation is towards protecting boundaries of the state, and participating in formal institutional and community action. For Value Factor 3, *Green values*, the orientation is to more 'public' single issues, and there is a propensity to social activism that is lacking in the other two factors.

Looking at value constellations inevitably raises the issue of implicit political dimensions, particularly in the light of the contested Right–Left spectrum. A striking finding was a very strong gender effect, particularly for Value Factors 1 and 2 which confounded the effect of party affiliation.<sup>9</sup> Both ANCOVA and multiple regression analysis showed that gender contributed considerably more than party affiliation to the variance in Value Factors 1 and 2, but for Value Factor 3 party affiliation contributed slightly more.

First, these findings do suggest a weak relationship between values and party affiliation amongst these young people that is consistent with deconstructing the relevance of a Right–Left spectrum, and increasing focus on single issues, some of which have a *prima facie* moral base which needs further exploration. Second, the gender finding reinforces this; not only do females express greater concern than males about social issues in general, they also show concerns about different issues. Third, the differentiation of three rather distinct moral domains – and their links in some cases to the action factors – points to the need for exploring further how young people see a connection between their concerns

*What predicts involvement; what are the motives behind civic action?*

We have seen in the previous sections that some value and action-potential clusters are associated with recent action and some are not. This suggests only a tenuous

motivational relationship between values and action. The most powerful predictor of both normative *and* recent action turned out to be the item 'I often get upset by what is happening in the news'. Half agreed or agreed strongly with this item, and 20% disagreed or disagreed strongly. There was a strong gender effect: 60% of females and 40% of males agreed with the item ( $F=52.44$ ).

Looking first at recent action, we see that of the nine actions, all were significantly predicted (using multiple regression) by being upset by events in the news, even when controlling for gender. The strongest effects were for refusing to buy products to which they objected ( $\beta=.23$ ), giving unpaid time to help people in need ( $\beta=.14$ ) and taking part in a sponsored event ( $\beta=.14$ ). All five of the Action factors were also significantly predicted, especially *making one's voice heard* ( $\beta=.20$ ), *helping the community and environment* ( $\beta=.19$ ) and *joining organisations* ( $\beta=.15$ ).

The Action factor analysis comprised the normative action items, however it is useful to look at individual items that contributed to the factors. This revealed strong relationships between being upset by events in the news and expecting to work with an organisation to help people in need ( $\beta=.26$ ), to take part in peaceful protest ( $\beta=.26$ ), to work for a neighbourhood organisation ( $\beta=.25$ ), to contact one's MP about an issue that concerns them ( $\beta=.23$ ) and to sign a petition ( $\beta=.21$ ). With regard to the attributes of the good citizen, those more upset particularly highly rated promoting human rights, protecting the environment and taking part in peaceful protest against unjust laws. Additionally, those who reported being more upset also expressed a stronger desire to do more to help solve problems in their community ( $F=42.95$ ) and school ( $F=64.45$ ).

These data present a clear case at least that feeling upset by events in the news is associated with being motivated to take part in a variety of civic actions. Whether sensitisation to events in the news is a *consequence* of motivation that has been triggered by other factors, or whether the sensitisation *leads to* a sense of responsibility, remains an open question. There are parallels with studies of peace activists of two decades ago, which showed that those who were involved in action sought out information about potential threats, whereas those who were not were inclined to defend against, or filter out, such information (Haste, 1989).

This pattern suggests, but does not prove, a moral dimension to civic motivation. Research on moral engagement does suggest that a sense of distress, particularly if it is accompanied by a sense of personal responsibility, is one factor in predicting moral action (Haste, 1990; Colby & Damon, 1992). Looking at the relationship between values and being upset by events in the news further unpacks the moral dimension. ANOVAs of the individual value items show that out of the sixteen areas of possible concern listed, thirteen were highly significantly associated with being upset by events in the news. These data suggest that wishing to influence the government *per se* is associated with being upset by events in the news, irrespective of the value concerned.

With respect to the relationship between the three Value factors and being upset by events in the news, multiple regression analysis shows that scores of all three factors are

significantly predicted by being upset by events in the news. Because of the powerful effect of gender both on being upset by events in the news, and on the value items themselves, multiple regressions of the factor scores, and ANCOVAs for the individual items that contributed to these factors, included both gender and being upset by events in the news as independent variables. These analyses showed that gender contributed more than being upset by events in the news for Value Factor 1, *Quality of life*, but that being upset contributed more than gender for Value Factor 2, *Sovereignty*.

Further insight into the motivational force of being upset by events in the news comes from looking at the subjective effect of taking part in recent action. In response to the questions, 'How much did taking part in these actions change your beliefs', and 'How much did taking part in these actions make you want to do more of the same kind of thing', those who reported being more upset also reported that the experience of signing a petition, boycotting a product, taking part in a protest march, giving unpaid time to help others and helping to organise a charity event both changed their beliefs and made them want to do more of the same kind of thing. This suggests that both being able to have been helpful and to have made their voices heard is empowering for those who are upset by events in the news.

## Discussion

The purpose of this paper has been to explore the contested nature of citizenship and to present some agendas for enlarging the concept in ways that are useful for thinking about education. Throughout, we have explored the theme of the intersection of the moral and the political and how it plays out in different theoretical models, as well as how it might provide a lens for better understanding political motivation.

The contested nature of citizenship has been explored in the context of how the deconstruction of the Right-Left spectrum, and the debates between liberals and communitarians, make explicit and challenge the assumptions which underpin much traditional work – work which has implicitly influenced educational agendas.

From this discussion emerged the proposed three domains which would allow us to recognise the diversity of civic action and also to make explicit their relationship to the debates we have explored. Potentially, the three domains would allow us to construct a civic education programme which recognised different dimensions of civic action that might meet different educational needs, as well as filling different political niches – and also enabled more systematic evaluation of programmes.

The empirical material reflected an exploration of some of these ideas within a recent dataset. First, the data gave a picture of the extent of current civic activity amongst British young people. The alienation of 25% of the sample (as indicated by their lack of recent action) must be contrasted with the range and extent of activities of the other 75% relating to volunteering and helping, making their voices heard and engaging in more conventional actions. The picture does not look as bleak as that presented by those who only consider voting behaviour.

The exploratory factor analysis of 'normative' action – expected future action plus the attributes of the good citizen – does yield a tripartite picture which maps on to

the three domains that we hypothesised, though in addition it may be necessary to add a further strand, non-active but attentive awareness of current affairs. More work needs to be done to understand more fully the processes by which young people construct the constellations of action potential revealed by this analysis, but the basis is established by these data.

The exploratory factor analysis of the value items – those issues on which these young people would like to influence the government – and the correlates of the factor scores, enabled us to see different patterns of moral concern, though this needs further investigation. Further, this analysis demonstrated, both in the structure of the factors themselves and in their correlates, that the Right–Left spectrum was only very weakly applicable to the pattern of values. However, the strength of commitment to those values indicates a high level of interest in the issues, suggesting at least some evidence for potential ‘single issue’ politics, as predicted by Giddens and others. The very strong effect of gender in these analyses of values indicates a substantial interest amongst young women in political and social issues, as others have noted, which contrasts with a few decades ago (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001). The reasons behind these patterns need further investigation; why are young women more interested in Quality of life and Green issues, and young men in Sovereignty issues? At first glance this looks like an expected, stereotypical response, but to use it productively for educational development needs more insights into the underlying constructions.

The data on motivation reveal a surprisingly strong effect for being upset by events in the news, which cuts across values, recent action and normative action. This intriguing finding has some parallels with peace activism research but otherwise seems under-investigated, and needs further research. Is such sensitisation a consequence of pre-existing socio-political or moral values and action patterns, or does sensitisation arise from some personal experience that engages the individual and then extends the domain of concerns? These questions need to be addressed both empirically and theoretically before the finding can usefully be incorporated in civic education, but it is most certainly a highly salient finding.

Our conclusion must be that we have uncovered dimensions of the moral-political interface which were not very apparent in previous discussions of this area. It would appear that research has not yet asked quite the right questions, in part because of a tendency to apply ‘top-down’ models of the distinction between moral and political, and of the structure of political values. As Crick argued, and as Giddens and others showed through their work with grassroots political action, we will not be able to understand what motivates young people to civic action – and therefore, how we can use this effectively for civic education – until we ask them, systematically.

## Notes

1. The study reported here was funded as part of the Nestlé Social Research Programme, an independent research activity of the Nestlé Trust. The first author is Research Director of the NSRP.
2. [www.mori.com](http://www.mori.com)

3. See Table 1 for list of actions.
4. See Table 2 and 3 for list of normative actions.
5. To identify what social and political issues concerned young people, a question asked 'Here are some issues that some young people are concerned about and would like to have the opportunity for their voice to be heard by the government. To what extent, if at all, would you like to have the chance to influence government decisions about each of the following issues?' The list included items relating to health and social services, to social justice and inequality, to sovereignty and to the environment and to scientific developments.
6. Principle components with varimax rotation.
7. All results quoted reflect a level of significance with  $p < .001$ .
8. Q 33 If you are old enough to vote please answer the question in terms of your intention to vote. If you are not old enough to report please indicate what your answer would be if you were old enough to vote. How likely would you be to vote in the next general election?' (At the time of the study, the General Election was known to be imminent; it took place on 5 May 2005.)
9. The party options offered were Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, British National Party and Green. Some 57% of the sample expressed a preference for a party.

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