Does Citizenship Education Make Young People Better–Engaged Citizens?

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Citizenship education has been a compulsory feature of the curriculum in secondary schools in England since 2002. However, its future may be uncertain amid inter-party disputes over the utility of such teaching. Moreover, there are substantial concerns over the breadth, aims and reach of the Citizenship curriculum. There is a lack of clarity over whether good citizenship can be taught and dispute over whether it can or should go beyond bolstering civil engagement (volunteering) and improving civic (political) activity. This article assesses the motivations for the introduction of Citizenship and the extent to which it has become a politicised panacea to a range of emerging policy challenges. Then, using survey data gathered for the Youth Citizenship Commission, established under the previous government to encourage community and democratic participation by young people, the article tests whether citizenship education is making a difference to the engagement of young people in the civil and political spheres. It assesses which categories of young people have been most influenced by – and which remain impervious to – citizenship education.

Keywords: citizenship; education; engagement; political literacy

Citizenship has emerged as a central theme in British political discourse in response to concerns about civic disengagement, political apathy and pessimistic projections of the levels of active citizenship of future generations. Citizenship education is seen by advocates as a necessary part of a programme of civic regeneration and was introduced as a statutory subject into the secondary school curriculum in England in 2002. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the delivery and title of citizenship classes vary according to nation (see Andrews and Mycock, 2007). However, despite its apparent potential for delivering civil and civic renewal, the aims and purposes of citizenship education remain contested. Moreover, insufficient evidence has been provided as to the efficacy or otherwise of citizenship education on shaping the actions and attitudes of young people towards politics and democratic participation.

This article explores the changing politics of citizenship education since 1997, assessing its development as a key policy initiative to address an array of complex problems facing British society in general and young people in particular. The article examines the shifting motivations provided by the Labour government to justify the introduction of Citizenship as a compulsory feature of schooling. It also considers issues of efficacy, drawing on research undertaken for the Youth Citizenship Commission (2009)[1] to analyse whether those young people who have undertaken citizenship education are more likely to participate in their communities or in basic political activities such as voting. Ongoing debates about the role of citizenship education within the curriculum in England are indicative of uncertainty about its effectiveness as a solution to the challenges posed by civic renewal.

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Theorising the Introduction of Citizenship Education: Direction and Inadequacies

Until this century, history education, rather than citizenship classes, was viewed as the principal agent to imbue essential political knowledge in England. The promotion of 'multicultural education' linked to individual welfare rights was a persistent theme of Labour education policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Labour Party, 1989). However, formal acknowledgement of the potential of citizenship education only emerged as part of a broader programme of civic modernisation (Labour Party, 1994), linked to New Labour's reinterpretation of the relationship between the citizen, society and the state. With this noted, citizenship education lacked profile in education debates and there was no mention of plans to introduce it within Labour's 1997 general election manifesto (Labour Party, 1997).

As such, the pledge to strengthen the teaching of democracy via citizenship education, outlined in the Labour government's 1997 White Paper on education policy, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997), surprised many including the chair of the hastily convened Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC), Bernard Crick.[2] The AGC's final 'Crick Report' recommended that Citizenship should be introduced as a separate statutory foundation subject curriculum requirement in English secondary schools from September 2002, with three separate, interrelated strands: social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy (QCA, 1998).

The policy was not without its critics. Although there was all-party political representation on the AGC, Lord Kenneth Baker's participation was not formally endorsed by the Conservative party, which remained hostile to a subject described by then shadow Education Secretary, Damien Green, as 'mumbo jumbo' that was 'irrelevant at best, harmful at worst' (Ashley, 2002, p. 15). Citizenship education thus became strongly associated with those within the Labour government proselytising the idea, notably the Education Secretary, David Blunkett.[3]

Interpretations of the precise motivations for the adoption of statutory citizenship education provision in England are varied even among strong adherents of the idea. Crick (2000, p. 11) was unclear over the reasons for Labour's haste in introducing Citizenship and doubted whether it was linked to broader programmes of reform, such as constitutional change. Dina Kiwan (2006, p. 133) suggests that those involved with the AGC identified three potential models that drove policy. The first indicates that Citizenship was introduced as a product of a complex interaction or 'cocktail' of personal and societal influences which accompanied Labour's landslide election victory in 1997, including the appointment of David Blunkett as Education Secretary amid intense debate about political engagement and constitutional reform. The second model suggests it was introduced after the 'trigger' of a number of key incidents, such as the murders of Jamie Bulger and headmaster Phillip Lawrence. The third model highlights the coincidence or 'fluke' in the confluence of contributing factors that were unplanned. This amalgam of motivations was reflected in a multiplicity of ideas and ambitions accompanying the introduction of the subject.

The introduction of Citizenship derived from a mix of political philosophies. These provided moorings for British political parties seeking panaceas to a range of political, social

and economic challenges and offered conceptual and normative justifications for policy reform. Efforts to chart a discrete path between post-war labourism and the New Right amalgam of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism saw communitarian (or post-liberal) themes, such as responsibility, duty and work, prove increasingly central in the development of new frameworks of public policy. Citizens could not be 'individuals in isolation', as they were 'members of a community and society' who owed 'obligations to one another' (Blair, 1996, p. 17). The pursuit of reciprocity between social responsibilities and individual rights was reflected in a belief in the pursuit of 'Third Way' politics, whereby the maxim of 'no rights without responsibilities' shifted emphasis from the citizen as a recipient of rights to that of a bearer of duties (Giddens, 1998, p. 65).

The cross-pollination and conflation of competing conceptions of citizenship, reflecting its philosophical contestation and hybridity (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994), was evident in the introduction of Citizenship. Blunkett (2002a) was clearly influenced by communitarian thinking, emphasising the link between rights and duties in encouraging socially acceptable behaviour and active citizenship among young people. As such, the responsibilities of citizenship were deemed essential to the moral development of citizens within their communities (Blunkett, 1999a). By emphasising the duties and morality of 'good' citizenship, also evident in other areas of social policy (see Goes, 2004), citizenship education was seen as likely to encourage not only community activism but also democratic participation.

However, even before its introduction into the curriculum in September 2002, the potential of Citizenship proved increasingly expansive across a range of policy areas. Blunkett claimed that Citizenship would facilitate social mobility for deprived communities (Blunkett, 1999b) and, in the wake of the Macpherson report on the murder of Stephen Lawrence, he also suggested it could promote social justice and address institutional racism to 'help children learn how to grow up in a society that cares and to have real equality of opportunity for all' (DfEE, 1999). Yet Blunkett's departure as Education Secretary in June 2001 had already heralded a shift in the profile of citizenship education. Subsequent ministers did not replicate his enthusiasm for the subject or engage in debates about its purpose and contribution to the development of a citizenship culture.

David Landrum (2002, p. 228) asserts that communitarianism was the dominant discourse in the Crick Report, an argument endorsed in Ben Kisby's (2007, p. 82; 2009, p. 57) contentions that theories of social capital were the 'crucial motivating factor' which 'decisively shaped' the introduction of citizenship education in England. Kisby (2006) argues that perceived declining levels of social capital, that is, social trust, norms of reciprocity and community networks, were the key concern of the policy network responsible for the introduction of Citizenship. Social capital had been invoked by Tony Blair (1996) as early as 1996, when he traced his ideas about the stakeholder economy back to the influential thesis presented by Robert Putnam (1993). By 1999 he suggested it was 'the magic ingredient that makes all the difference' (Blair, 1999). Eva Gamarnikow and Anthony Green (1999) assert that social capital theory allowed Labour to construct a universal normative framework of citizenship to promote cohesive communities through the development of a vibrant and participative civil society which enhanced social inclusion (see also King and Wickham-Jones, 1999).

Indeed Blunkett (2001, pp. 22–6) subsequently identified the influence of 'seminal' social capital theorists such as Putnam on the introduction of Citizenship in arguing that 'an absence of social capital deprives democracy of its vitality, health and legitimacy'. Building social capital through citizenship education would encourage active and engaged citizens contributing to civil society to regenerate fragmented communities and 'support people in reaching their full potential'. Blunkett (2002b) argued that citizenship education could empower and skill autonomous citizens, suggesting that young people who volunteer in their communities tend to be more likely to vote.

The Crick Report does allude to this building of social capital, noting that volunteering and community activism are 'necessary conditions of civil society and democracy' (QCA, 1998, p. 10). However, the extent to which social capital theory was the key philosophical determinant in either the Crick Report or the subsequent 'Citizenship Order' which shaped the Citizenship curriculum (QCA, 1999) is questionable. Although Blunkett may have been influenced by Putnam's thesis, there is no explicit mention of this in any reports or curriculum schema relating to the introduction of Citizenship (Kisby, 2009, p. 43). Both Crick and Kerr subsequently noted that social capital was not explicitly discussed by the Advisory Group, nor was it mentioned by Blunkett during proceedings.[4]

This would suggest that other explicitly political concepts were as important. Crick (2000, p. 82) argues that 'there was a philosophy behind the Report ... what scholars call civic republicanism'. The Professional Officer assigned to the Advisory Group, David Kerr (2003, p. 4), suggests that this informed a third way between competing 'liberal-individualist' and communitarian concepts of citizenship. Although there are brief references to social indicators of youth alienation such as 'truancy, vandalism, random violence, premeditated crime and habitual drug-taking', the Crick Report's case for Citizenship was primarily based upon the need to counter the 'inexcusably and damagingly bad' levels of political literacy and participation and create opportunities to develop a 'citizen democracy' (QCA, 1998, p. 8, pp. 14–6).

Citizenship was therefore designed to rectify the growing 'democratic deficit' of young people, identified in the decline in political participation and 'civic cohesion', as well as addressing a perceived rise in levels of juvenile social delinquency (Kerr, 2003, p. 3).[5] Indeed, Crick notes that, after reviewing the Intermediate Report of the Advisory Committee on Citizenship, Blunkett specifically asked for 'more democracy' to be inserted.[6] This, according to John Annette (2003, p. 142), indicates that civic republicanism 'animates the Crick Report on education for citizenship, the new curriculum for citizenship and some aspects of New Labour's strategy for revitalising local communities'.

A decline in political capital – citizens' trust in and respect for the institutions of the political system and activities such as voting, campaign activism and contacting public officials – is seen as a product of weak relationships between young citizens and the state and is distinct from broader concerns over social capital (Booth and Richards, 1998; Whiteley and Seyd, 1997). Vivien Lowndes and David Wilson (2001) contend that although voluntary activity and political activity are interdependent and independent, increased civil participation does not necessarily translate as enhanced democratic engagement or democracy. Building trust within communities and building trust in state institutions are not

therefore synonymous, meaning that high levels of social capital do not necessarily translate into high levels of political participation (Giddens, 1994).

Social capital and political capital were thus persistent but distinctive themes within the Crick Report informing an approach to active citizenship that addressed the perceived decline in both. This, according to Kisby (2009, p. 54), indicates that Citizenship in its inception was a 'curious hybrid, containing elements from both republican and communitarian conceptions of citizenship', shaped by the same 'ideological kaleidoscope' identified in other areas of Labour's social policy (Landrum, 2002, p. 223). Such merging of philosophical concepts is key in understanding what Kiwan (2008) argues is the failure in its inception to articulate successfully the expected aims and outcomes of citizenship education.

The Politics of Citizenship Education

The introduction of Citizenship thus proved philosophically expansive, influenced by changing political and social climates. Initial motivations for the introduction of citizenship education focused on the desire to build strong vertical citizen–state relationships through democratic and social renewal and participation. However, concern about the political engagement of young people and the continual stress on the need to 'socialise' them (Blunkett, 2001; 2003a) gave way to emphasis on the need to define a British identity and sense of belonging. Such shifts were in response to concerns stimulated by community unrest, such as riots in Oldham and Bradford in 2001, community cohesion and 'home-grown' terrorism, exemplified by the attacks in London in July 2005.

Blunkett's rationale for Citizenship shifted again during his period as Home Secretary and it was now seen as a central component of a 'civil renewal' programme for lifelong active citizenship (Blunkett, 2003b). Now seeking to promote 'bridging' capital rather than the 'bonding' capital articulated in the Crick Report, he suggested that Citizenship provided a 'civil spark' in 'renewing communities' for young people (Blunkett, 2002a). Blunkett also argued that Citizenship would provide a response to the far right, suggesting that it had potential to shape attitudes towards racism and an increasingly complex multicultural British society. Thus the 'citizenship curriculum I introduced as Education secretary' would generate 'a more civic, more tolerant, but in some respects more demanding, sense of what being British entails' (Blunkett, 2005, p. 4).

Citizenship was therefore increasingly reframed within the emerging 'politics of Britishness' to address issues of multiculturalism, immigration and identity (Andrews and Mycock, 2008). This ensured a higher profile among Labour's leading figures, keen to suggest they were 'taking citizenship seriously' (Brown, 2006). For example, the then prime minister, Tony Blair, argued that 'we should not be shy to teach' the rights, duties and values of citizenship to ensure that all communities met their 'duty to integrate' (Blair, 2006). Blair's eventual successor, Gordon Brown (2004), had already contended: 'I believe strongly in the case for citizenship lessons in our schools but for citizenship to matter more ... about our Britishness and what it means'. Labour, according to former ministers Ruth Kelly and Liam Byrne (2007, p. 35), then argued they introduced citizenship education 'because it is a vital part of helping people understand and enjoy to the full their proper role in society, and to be proud about the place where they live'.

Increasingly, the focus of such rhetoric drew attention to the potential for Citizenship to identify and inculcate a range of British values and develop a sense of civic community and belonging. Although the Crick Report had suggested that common values were 'essential elements to be reached by the end of compulsory schooling' (QCA, 1998, p. 44), these were not identified. Leading Labour figures now argued that Citizenship had the potential to promote an 'inclusive British story' which explored issues that shaped British identities and values (Straw, 2007). This led to a reappraisal of its place in the English National Curriculum, particularly its interaction with History, as part of a strategy to enhance Britishness.

Two major reviews, the 'Ajegbo Report' and a House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (HCESC) report, reassessed citizenship education provision in England and how it addressed diversity and Britishness (see DfES, 2007; HCESC, 2007). Both reports encouraged schools to teach 'core British values' such as free speech, the rule of law, mutual tolerance and respect for equal rights. Sir Keith Ajegbo's report recommended the introduction of a fourth strand, entitled 'Diversity and Identity: Living Together in the UK', to the Citizenship curriculum, to promote critical thinking about ethnicity, religion and race through an explicit link to political issues and values. Former Education Secretary Alan Johnson suggested that reforms to the Citizenship curriculum would allow teenagers to learn British history in new-style classes which put understanding core British values at the heart of citizenship (DfCFS, 2007b).

Ajegbo's (DfES, 2007, p. 27) report also made explicit reference to the 'fears and tensions' linked to immigration and growing concerns about 'home-grown' (Islamic) terrorism in some communities in the wake of the 7 July 2005 attacks in London. This indicated a further shift in the justification for and utility of Citizenship. Former Education minister, Andrew Adonis (2007), argued that 'introducing learning about the make-up of British society and British values into the curriculum will help promote greater understanding and tolerance'. Citizenship now also provided 'opportunities for schools to promote community cohesion' (DfCFS, 2007a, p. 1). Schools were encouraged to host citizenship ceremonies for new citizens to 'help to make the subject come to life' and provide opportunities to discuss 'with new citizens the reasons why they have chosen to become British' (Ministry of Justice, 2008, p. 12). Citizenship education was also to be extended to Islamic madrasas to provide a 'deeper understanding of citizenship and the inter-relationship between their faith and the communities in which they live' (DfCLG, 2007, p. 5). Such lessons would 'demonstrate to young British Muslims that their faith is compatible with wider shared values and that being a good Muslim is also compatible with being a good British citizen' (DfCLG, 2008, p. 41).

There were extensive criticisms of the explicit linking of citizenship education to deliberations about Britishness. Crick and Kerr argued that such concerns were already embedded within the original Citizenship curriculum guidelines.[7] The then Conservative Shadow Education Secretary, Michael Gove, suggested that the emphasis on Britishness within the citizenship curriculum 'would mean more of flabby, woolly, "theme-based" teaching' (Paton, 2007). Many teachers questioned the government's move to encourage patriotism in the classroom (Hand and Pearce, 2008), such sentiment being shared by some trainees (Clemitshaw and Jerome, 2009). Survey evidence suggests that one in four teachers believe it is not their role to promote British values in schools (YouGov/Teachers TV,

2008). Moreover, as Audrey Osler (2008) notes, nationalising of political values is difficult and potentially compromises a cosmopolitan approach to citizenship, thus raising the potential for the imposition of a monocultural view of citizenship and Britishness on a multicultural society.

Others questioned the ability of citizenship education to build and sustain community cohesion, particularly given that preventing violent extremism through the promotion of a range of integration strategies focused heavily upon Muslim communities. Derek McGhee (2009, p. 63) argued that such approaches exhibit racism, culturalism and 'inferiorization', imposing 'British' values as part of a communitarian narrative which prioritises duty above rights. John Preston (2009, p. 196) suggested that citizenship education now possessed 'a surveillance function through identifying those who might hold extremist or negative values' while the focus on developing a common sense of Britishness was founded on community cohesion *and* issues of security that emphasised the centrality of race and whiteness.

Rhys Andrews and Andrew Mycock (2008) note that although the 'Ajegbo Report' acknowledged how devolution has reshaped the constitutional structures of the UK, it was infused with an Anglo-British conception of citizenship. Therefore dissonance in political, social and economic policy, and its implications for understanding community, identity and citizenship, was largely overlooked. The plurality in how citizenship and Britishness are understood has elicited differing responses in constructing citizenship education pro-grammes across the UK which highlight tensions between assumptions of universality by Westminster-based politicians and policy makers and those across the devolved nations.

This continued shift in emphasis concerning the motivations and purpose of Citizenship in the curriculum reflects the inherently contentious nature of the subject. Numerous reports have highlighted the pedagogic, resource and assessment difficulties experienced in its introduction and development in the curriculum (see, for example, CSV, 2003; Ofsted, 2010; QCA, 2005). While the architects of Citizenship in England viewed its statutory introduction as a 'universal entitlement' (Crick, 2003, p. 18), little consideration was given to how inequities in the quality and quantity of education could influence its teaching in schools. The impact of school choice and diversity in England has a range of effects and the provision of education remains highly conditioned by socio-economic and ethnic back-ground (Burgess *et al.*, 2005; 2007; Faulks, 2006a). Some argue that participative and progressive citizenship, and the values and morals that motivate its development, are best served by an egalitarian ethos which promotes social inclusion and social justice in education and the broader society (Faulks, 2006b; Pattie *et al.*, 2004). Even strong propo-nents of the maxim 'no rights without responsibilities' note that education for citizenship may be ineffectual if it lacks morality through the active pursuit of educational equality and social justice (Giddens, 2000, p. 24).

Such criticisms have focused on the strands identified within the Crick Report and subsequent curriculum as promoting social and moral responsibility and encouraging community involvement. However, questions about the efficacy of Citizenship to develop the political literacy required for young people to become active citizens within a 'critical democracy' have also been widespread (see Ofsted, 2006). Some suggest that Citizenship seeks to create subservient rather than empowered citizens who are expected merely to

adhere to and replicate the norms of British political citizenship (Faulks, 2006a). According to Chris Gifford (2004, p. 151), this indicates that the civic republicanism of the Crick Report has been undermined by ambivalence over the development of political literacy among young people.

The *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, published by the Labour government in July 2007, acknowledged such concerns, noting that, although citizenship education enjoyed 'significant achievements' in increasing citizen engagement, there was still a 'lack of appreciation of the importance of the democratic process' (Ministry of Justice, 2007, p. 55). A further review was announced to consider how government could forge a new relationship between government and citizen, meaning that citizenship education provision would be examined again as part of broader deliberations about 'what it means to be a British citizen, how to prepare young people for adulthood, and whether reducing the voting age might increase democratic participation' (Ministry of Justice, 2007, p. 55). As part of this review of citizenship, Lord Goldsmith's (2008) report suggested the extension of citizenship education to primary schools to encourage 'engagement and participation from a younger age' (Ministry of Justice, 2008, p. 92).

A Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) was also established to examine what citizenship means to young people, how to increase participation in politics and active citizenship, and whether the voting age should be lowered to sixteen (see Tonge and Mycock, 2010). Although the YCC's final reports acknowledged some of the problems of the status and delivery of Citizenship in schools, and supported Goldsmith's proposal for its introduction at primary level, it argued that the curriculum had been reviewed extensively and that government should instead focus on consistency of delivery and should consider how to assess efficacy of provision in encouraging political literacy and civic activism. It proposed a greater role for young people to participate in representative councils within schools, which needed to be extended to communities and local and national government. The YCC (2009) also proposed that government should promote active citizenship in schools and across local communities which emphasised the distinct but interrelated nature of civic and civil participation, thus recognising the importance of building political and social capital.

The YCC (2009) noted that 65 per cent of 11 to 13-year-olds and 45 per cent of 14 to 15-year-olds involved in their research stated that they were not aware they had received statutory citizenship education in school. Although evidence suggests that the quality of citizenship education is continually improving (NFER, 2009; Ofsted, 2010), questions remain over its effect upon students' dispositions towards political literacy and participation. Ofsted (2006, p. 2) noted that 'the intentions for citizenship education remain contested ... in many schools there is insufficient reference to local, national and international questions of the day and how politicians deal with them'. A National Foundation for Educational Research report (NFER, 2009) suggested that young people are aware of the influence of politics in society and indicate that they intend to participate politically, probably by voting, and contribute to informal civic and civil society, but that the majority show little inclination to join a political party, contact politicians or engage in local politics. Most positively, Michael Keating *et al.*'s (2010, pp. 10–1) longitudinal study of citizenship education suggests positive impacts on personal efficacy in terms of ability to influence the

government where pupils are subject to consistently high levels of 'received citizenship', delivered regularly via proper curriculum timetabling and where examinations are set.

Indeed, evaluation of civic education programmes in other countries, such as in the United States, suggests that political participation is directly related to what is inculcated at school (Andolina *et al.*, 2003). Suzanne Mellor *et al.*'s (2002) Australian study indicated that civic knowledge received at schools was a good indicator of such participation and suggested that the delivery of citizenship classes needed to be more prominent and politically oriented to bolster engagement further. A study of civic education programmes across 28 countries suggests that the acquisition of civic knowledge, the efficacy of participation at school and the extent of political tuition are all positively correlated to propensity to vote upon reaching eligibility (Torney-Purta and Amadeo, 2003, p. 271). Carole Hahn's (1999, p. 246) comparative study of six countries, including England, concludes in favour of political education, arguing that, notwithstanding the considerable importance of cross-national cultural differences, 'when educational policies and practices give students the opportunity to investigate, discuss and express views on public policy issues, they are more likely to develop attitudes that are supportive of political participation'.

Citizenship education may therefore have the potential to improve civil and civic engagement, but it is still a work in progress in England. Nonetheless, there remain those who oppose the presence of Citizenship within the curriculum. Critics have raised a number of persistent concerns regarding the potential for (and actuality of) political indoctrination (Conway, 2005) or even social engineering (Furedi, 2008; Phillips, 2006). Moreover the position of citizenship education within the English National Curriculum continues to lack surety. In opposition, the Conservatives pledged to revise significantly or even disband citizenship education provision. The then shadow Education Secretary, Michael Gove, promised to strip down the 'politically motivated' curriculum, questioning 'why is it that we imagine a particular subject put on the National Curriculum can address these deep and long standing challenges?' (Paton, 2009)

Testing the Impact of Citizenship Education: Data and Method

We have noted above the different ambitions for citizenship education and the potential barriers to universality of impact. Disputes over the rationale for its deployment are rarely, if ever, evidentially informed. The question of whether citizenship really does make a positive difference to the lives of young people therefore needs empirical testing. A number of variables may influence the impact of citizenship education in schools (see Whiteley, 2005). We wish to test whether citizenship education impacts in the civil (community engagement, responsibility to community and volunteering) and civic (propensity to vote) spheres, while recognising that the civil–civic distinction is not absolute and cognisant that other measures of engagement can be used. We argue, however, that volunteering and voting are important measurements. We also test the other aspect of the civic dimension of citizenship: improved political literacy. Do recipients of citizenship education command a greater understanding of how local and national decisions are made?

To test these questions, we use a representative survey of 1,102 11 to 25-year-olds, conducted for the YCC in 2009.[8] The data were designed to test whether citizenship education has impacted upon recipients and promoted a higher level of political knowl-

edge, interest and engagement, controlling for the demographic variables of age, gender, social class and ethnicity. The Commission's survey data covered a range of questions on whether respondents had received citizenship education; the extent to which young people believed it was their responsibility to improve their local area; whether they were clear about how decisions are made about local and national issues; whether they believe politicians take notice of what they think; whether they participated in volunteering (altruistic engagement, not necessarily political); whether they would participate in local and political issues if there was some form of payback (instrumental engagement) or would get more involved in political issues if they knew more about how to take part (knowledge-based engagement). The survey also explored what deterred some young people from involvement in political issues and asked of their likelihood of voting in an election.

We have selected a number of demographic, attitudinal and behavioural variables that consistently figure as predicators for key outcomes (including in the six binary logistic regression models). These include standard control variables such as gender and age − divided into five categories (11–13 years, 14–15 years, 16–18 years, 19–21 years and 22–25 years).[9] We also include social class on the basis that the mean plots we describe below suggest that there is a strong relationship between class and political engagement, civil engagement and levels of cynicism. Here we use a truncated form of the Registrar General's social class schema whereby classes A and B, plus D and E, are grouped together producing a four-category variable (A/B, C1, C2, D/E). Ethnicity is also included as a standard structural variable and the various groups are collapsed into a dichotomous variable (white, non-white).

Lacking a single indicator of working status, we have constructed a new variable, based on responses to a number of mutually exclusive questions that captured whether or not an individual is a pupil in any of the various stages of compulsory education, a student in further or higher education, in some form of youth training or whether employed part or full time. The new variable has a dichotomous response whereby all those in some form of employment are coded 0 and all those in some form of education are coded 1.

In addition to working status, we have also included a number of further behavioural and attitudinal items, such as whether an individual feels they have the prospect of a 'decent job' when older, whether they have given their time to volunteer, whether they regularly watch news or current affairs programming and, crucially, whether or not they are aware that they have received citizenship education at school (all dichotomous variables). In terms of recollection of participation in citizenship education, as might be expected, the likelihood diminishes slightly with increased age, as those aged 25 would have been in the latter stages of (or even completed) their education by the time such classes were introduced as a statutory element of the English curriculum ($p < 0.01$).[10] Those in employment were similarly less likely ($p < 0.01$). However, social class was also significant, with fewer social class D and E members claiming to have taken citizenship classes.

Social class and age are the items that frequently register as significant in respect of political knowledge and propensity to participate (and this was not the case for many other structural variables such as gender, ethnicity and working status). In the following section we explore their impact upon various attitudinal and behavioural variables. In particular, political understanding increases with age and decreases with a lowering of social class,

while cynicism also increases with age and is strongest among the working class, categories D and E. In terms of the likelihood of voting, this increases with age beyond the point where eligibility is reached, but decreases among lower social classes and according to whether the respondent is a student as opposed to a full-time worker. None of the other structural variables reach significance on the instrumental propensity to participate in activities, that is, if there was some form of payback. The key trends are shown in the figures below, beginning with Figure 1 which deals with the issue of responsibility. The sense of responsibility diminishes amid lower social classes, with young people in classes D and E tending towards disagreement that improvements to their local area are their responsibility ($p < 0.01$). No other variable reaches significance.
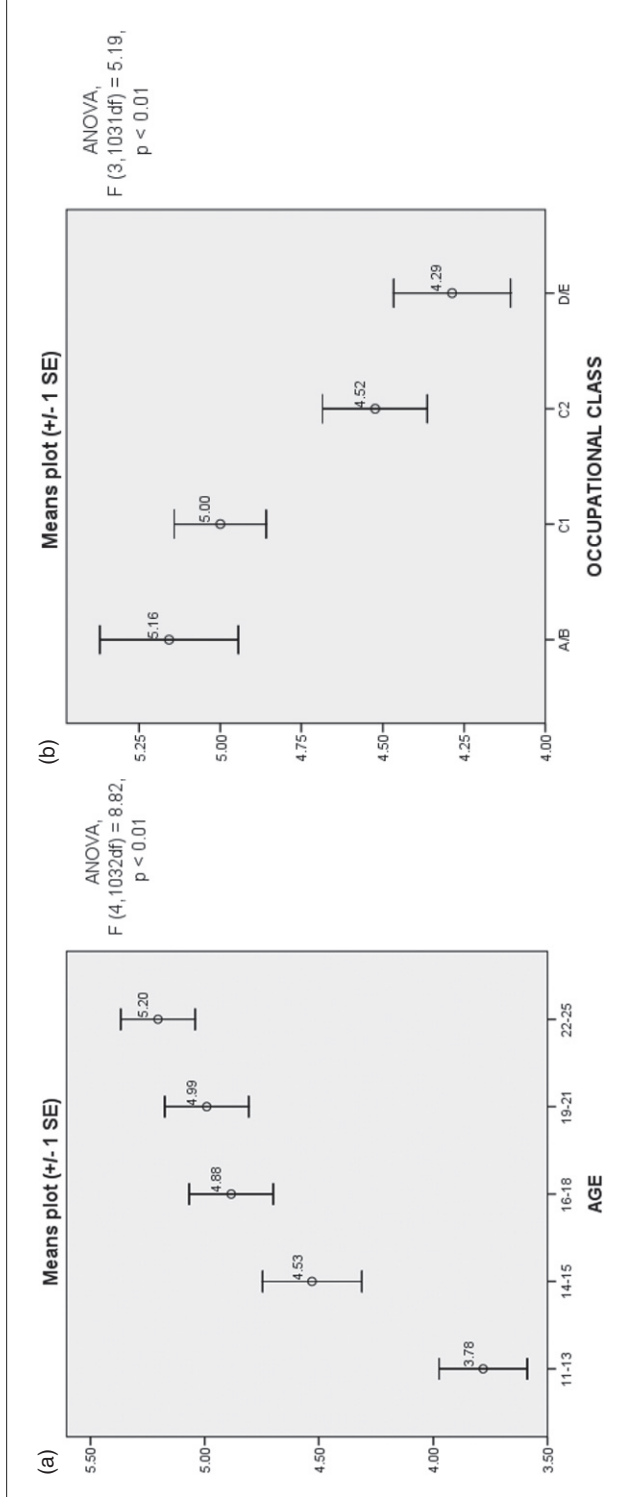
Figure 2 demonstrates modest levels of knowledge about how decisions are made about national issues. Ethnicity or status – working or student, fail to reach significance. However, as one might expect, age does matter; as students get older they gain knowledge, the major

Figure 1: It's My Responsibility to Make My Local Area a Better Place to Live
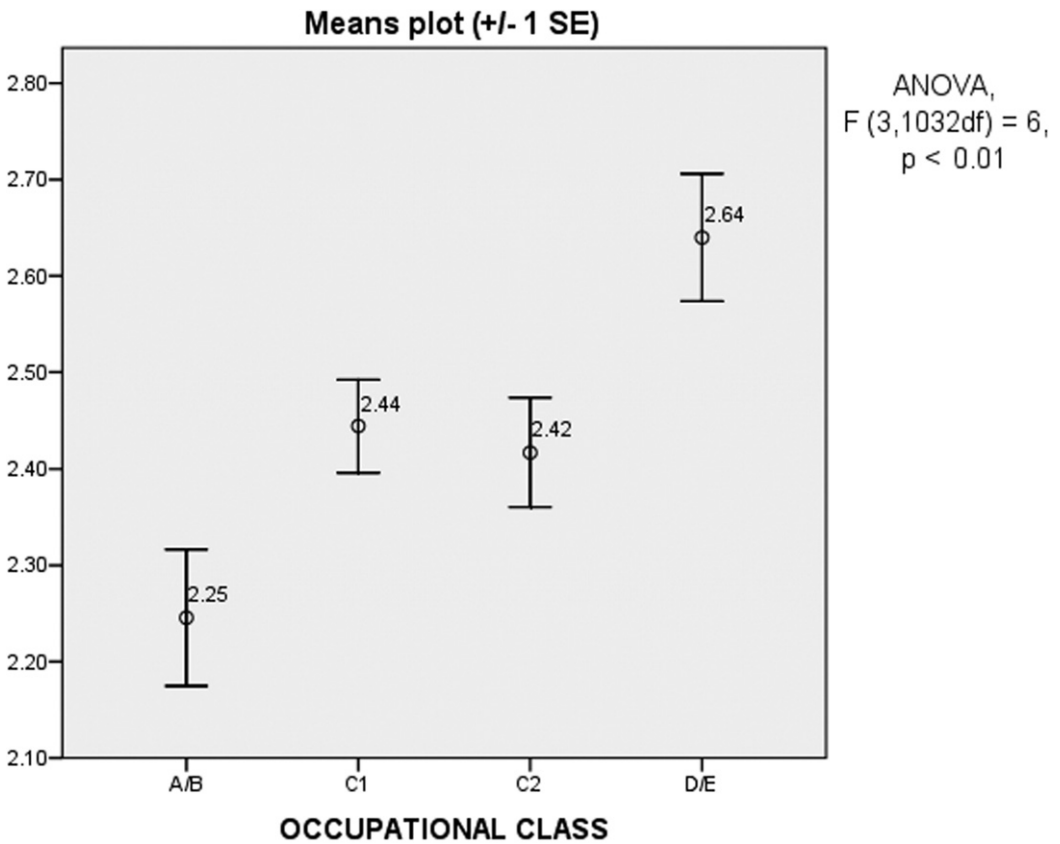
Scale: 1 'Agree a lot' to 4 'Disagree a lot'.

Figure 2: (a) I am Clear about How Decisions are Made about National Issues (variable: age). (b) I am Clear about How Decisions are Made about National Issues (variable: occupational class)

(a)

Means plot (+/- 1 SE)

ANOVA,
F (4,1032df) = 8.82,
p < 0.01

AGE

(b)

Means plot (+/- 1 SE)

ANOVA,
F (3,1031df) = 5.19,
p < 0.01

OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Scale: 1 'Strongly disagree' to 10 'Strongly agree'.

leaps occurring in the early teens, in the 11–13 and 14–15 age groups ($p < 0.01$). Understanding decreases monotonically with social class ($p < 0.01$) with classes D and E claiming substantially lower average knowledge scores on a 1–10 scale.

Figure 3 provides a guide to the levels of cynicism towards political elites. The YCC found high levels of disregard for elected representatives (albeit diminished in cases where young people had met politicians) and disconnection between young people and decision makers. Connections tended to remain in the domestic (family) or social (friends) spheres. Age ($p < 0.10$) and social class ($p < 0.01$) are significant, cynicism increasing with age (disturbingly) although not between the ages of fourteen and eighteen and being far more evident among the working class.

In terms of the 'flagship' public element of political participation, voting, those newly in receipt of the franchise appear the keenest to vote among young people, with this enthusiasm waning slightly by the age of 25 (Figure 4) although likelihood fluctuates during early adulthood.[11]

Social class yields an effect ($p < 0.01$) with the lower class less likely to hold an intention to vote (Figure 5). Those working are more likely to vote than students.

Finally, working-class youngsters declare themselves slightly less likely ($p < 0.05$) to volunteer their time for a good cause (Figure 6), although the effect is small and this proposition can be questioned, in that natural helpfulness and community participation may occur without the somewhat formal dimension of volunteering inferred in the question. Age, ethnicity and working status do not reach significance.

Having established the basic positions in terms of receipt of citizenship education and levels of political knowledge and engagement, we now run multivariate models, using the same structural variables, to explore the significance of citizenship classes in influencing the likelihood of volunteering and political participation.

The dependent variables utilised are receipt of citizenship lessons, understanding of local decision making, understanding of national decision making (both 10-point scales reduced to dichotomous variables) and likelihood of voting in the next twelve months (simplified from a 3-point scale to a dichotomous variable: very or fairly likely, not likely).

In the first three models we aim to test the demographic and attitudinal bases that relate to the likelihood of having received citizenship education and to political understanding at both national and local level. In the final analysis we aim at a more nuanced understanding of how demographics and attitudes bear upon propensity to vote and to achieve this we have constructed a series of three nested multivariate models.

Analysis

We need to start at first base by establishing whether acknowledged receipt of citizenship education is influenced by socio-demographics or other variables. This may seem strange, given the incremental growth over the last decade of the subject, including the compulsory secondary school status of citizenship education in England, the offering of a GCSE qualification, the introduction of an A level in the subject and the arrival of teachers trained in the subject. However, it is possible that the oldest segment of those still classified as young missed out on most of these developments. More interestingly and contentiously perhaps, we might hypothesise that citizenship education is concentrated in depth in schools with

Figure 3: (a) Politicians Take Notice of What People like Me Think (variable: age). (b) Politicians Take Notice of What People like Me Think (variable: occupational class)
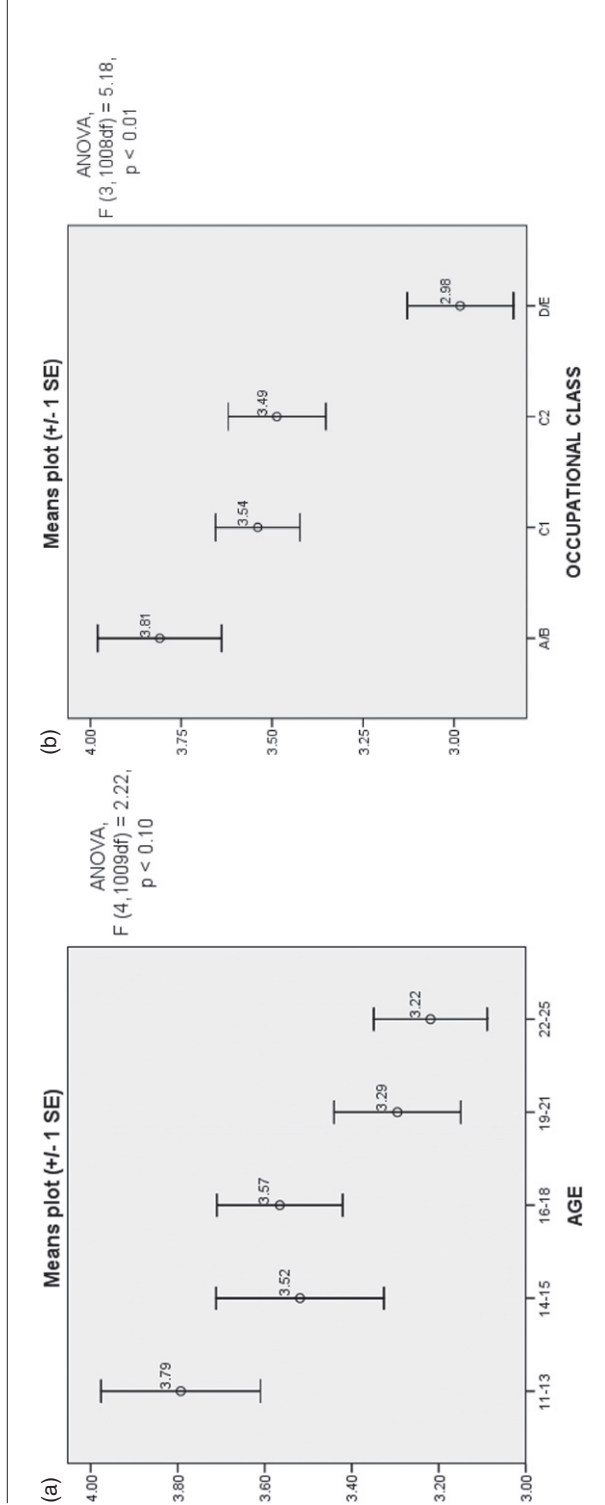
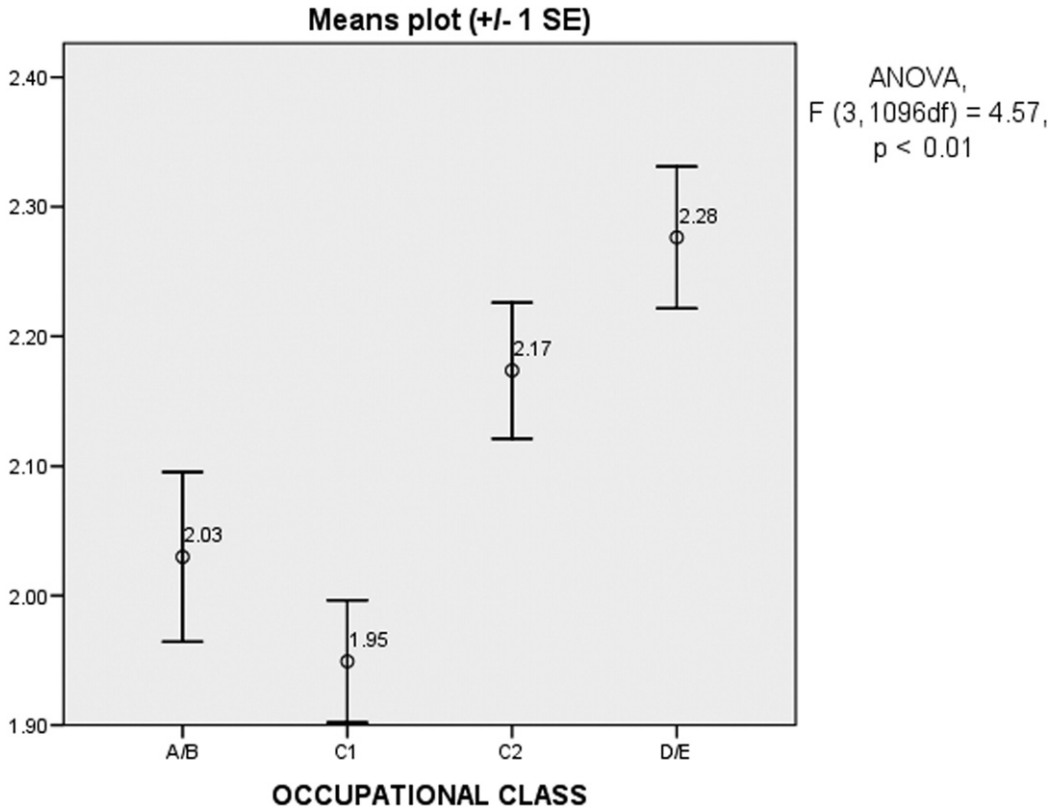Scale: 1 'Strongly disagree' to 10 'Strongly agree'.

Figure 4: Likelihood of Voting in an Election in the Next Twelve Months
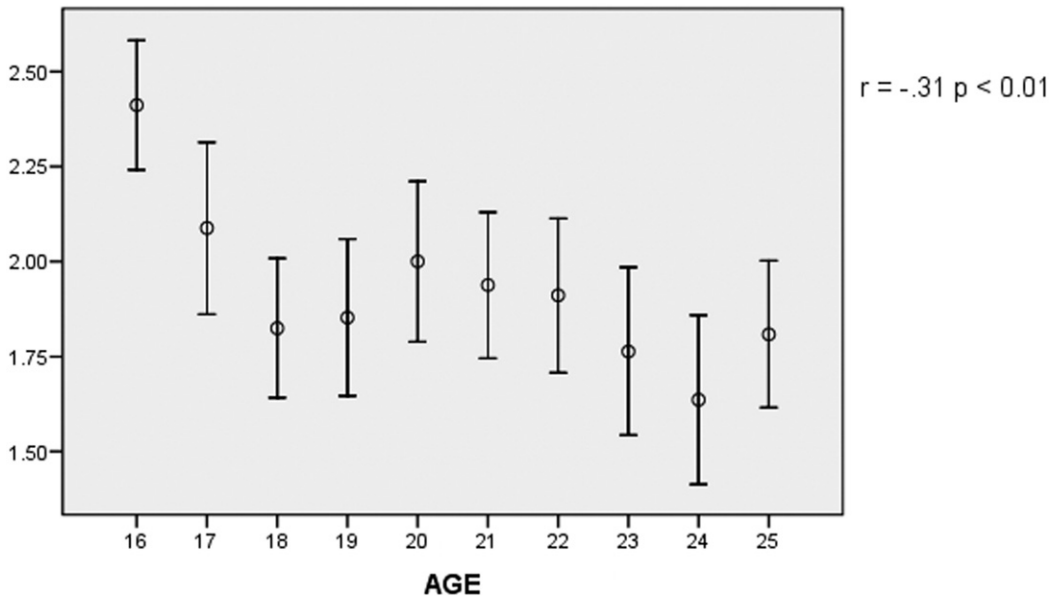
Scale: 1 'Very likely' to 3 'Not likely'.

middle-class intakes, where the values such classes promote chime with the active citizenship roles already inculcated by those establishments. Table 1 tests the strength of effect and significance of social class and other variables.

As can be seen, there is a marked effect first for working status, with those in employment (as compared to the in-education reference group) more likely not to recall having participated in citizenship classes, perhaps because many may have left school at the minimum leaving age and thus been subject to citizenship lessons for a briefer period. Age is also significant, with the 14–15 and 16–18 categories being more likely to have had the lessons. This makes sense, given that citizenship has become more embedded in the curriculum and that this is the age group most likely to have been exposed to such classes for a prolonged period of time. What is also noteworthy, however, is that regardless of age and whether working or not, social class is significant as an indicator of receipt of citizenship classes. Those in the higher echelons of society are most likely to say they have participated in citizenship education (as compared to the reference group, social classes D/E). This ought to concern promoters of citizenship education, as it is evident that its penetration is least where it needs to be greatest: among the lowest social classes where lack of political knowledge, political disengagement and cynicism are most acute.

Having established structural variations in the extent to which citizenship education is acknowledged as received, we now establish whether such education makes a difference in terms of political understanding and engagement. Table 2 again uses a binary logistic

Figure 5: How Likely are You to Vote in an Election in the Next Twelve Months?

Means plot (+/- 1 SE)

ANOVA,
$F_{(3, 1096df)} = 4.57$,
$p < 0.01$

2.40 —

2.30 — 2.28

2.20 — 2.17

2.10 —

2.03

2.00 —

1.95

1.90 —

A/B   C1   C2   D/E

OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Scale: 1 'Very likely' to 3 'Not likely'.

regression to examine the impact of demographic variables and receipt of citizenship education upon whether young people feel that they understand local decisions.

Many items fail to reach significance. Nonetheless there are interesting points. There is an independent effect for gender, with males claiming to be more likely to understand local issues. More predictably, age is highly significant, with the younger tending to understand less. Importantly, citizenship lessons have a relatively strong effect. Those who have received citizenship education are more likely to understand local issues regardless of the other variables included in the model. Of course, with so few of the adult population engaging in local democracy if measured in terms of, for example, voting in local elections or being able to name a local councillor, it may be argued that an understanding of local issues may be too tough a test. Moreover, the focus of citizenship education tends to be upon national issues. For this reason, we run a second binary logistic regression (Table 3) asking the same question of understanding, but this time in respect of national issues. The model produces very similar results to that of Table 2, although this time membership of the highest social

Figure 6: How Likely are You to Volunteer Your Time for a Good Cause?
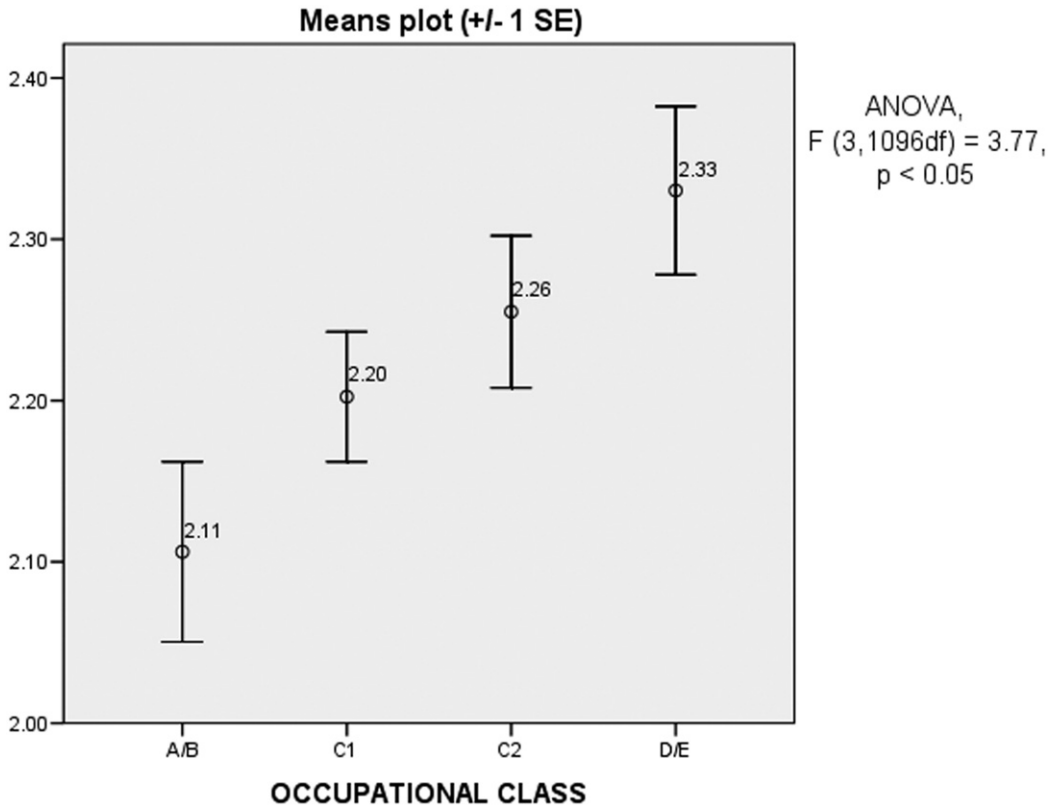
Scale: 1 'Very likely' to 3 'Not likely'.

classes is significant in terms of higher levels of claimed understanding. Again, receipt of citizenship education has a fairly strong and significant effect in terms of understanding, regardless of other variables.

The final test of citizenship education lies in respect of the likelihood of voting. Although voting is merely one measure of democratic participation, it is an important element of engagement, one exercised at minimum cost to the participant. Table 4 details the model fit statistics, and Table 5 provides the model here, which yields the widest range of significant independent effects.[12]

Looking first at the overall model statistics we note that the demographics included in the first nest account for around 10 per cent of the model variance and that this step is significant. In the second model we also include the behavioural and attitudinal items working status, prospect of a decent job and time to volunteer. This step is also significant, explaining 17 per cent of the variance and the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) confirms a parsimonious increase in the explanatory power of the model. Similarly, the third model is significant, explains 18 per cent of the variance and passes the AIC measure.

**Table 1: Binary Logistic Regression for the Likelihood of
Having Participated in Taught Citizenship Classes
(0 'No' 1 'Yes')**

Independent variables

	B	SE
Constant	−0.95	0.32
Male	−0.04	0.15
Working	−1.00***	0.22
Age (22–25)	–	–
11–13	0.02	0.30
14–15	0.89*	0.31
16–18	1.11**	0.27
19–21	0.20	0.27
Social class (D/E)	–	–
A/B	0.52**	0.25
C1	0.40	0.22
C2	0.35	0.22

*$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

$N = 862$; Model $\chi^2 = 108.2$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.16$.

Turning to individual parameter effects, there are clear divergences in their contribution to the models. Gender remains non-significant at all stages. Age has an important and significant effect throughout the models. Those in the 14–15 and 16–18 age groups tend strongly towards not voting (compared to the 22–25 reference group). In terms of social class the effect is not quite as great but still very important, with those in the A/B and C1 groups being more likely to vote than their reference group counterparts (social class D/E). This effect washes out, if only very slightly, with the inclusion of such items as the prospect of a decent job, time to volunteer and citizenship lessons, hinting at a degree of multicollinearity between these items and class (and indeed this is also suggested by much of the preceding analysis). Ethnicity also remains significant throughout, suggesting a strong unmediated effect, and white individuals are less likely to vote than their non–white counterparts (Table 5).

In the second nested model, working status is included as a measure of behaviour, as opposed to the ascribed variables of gender, age, social class (by respondent's parents) and ethnicity, but this variable fails to reach significance throughout. The fact that the only model (predicting participation in citizenship classes) in which this variable did reach significance was also the only model not to include ethnicity suggests a degree of multi–collinearity between these variables. Indeed, a Chi-square test confirms a significant relationship ($p < 0.01$). In the second step of the voting model we also included the items prospect of a decent job and given time to volunteer and while in the context of the model these are more moderate effects, they do remain significant throughout. This is important

Table 2: Binary Logistic Regression for Likelihood of Understanding Local Issues (0 'Less Understanding' 1 'Greater Understanding')

Independent variables

	B	SE
Constant	−0.03	0.42
Male	0.28	0.15
Working	−0.04	0.23
Age (22–25)		
11–13	−1.00***	0.31
14–15	−0.63**	0.32
16–18	−0.58**	0.27
19–21	−0.44*	0.24
Social class (D/E)		
A/B	0.39	0.26
C1	0.26	0.23
C2	−0.02	0.24
Ethnicity (white)	−0.26	0.29
Citizenship (yes)	0.64**	0.17
Watch news/current affairs regularly (no)	−0.33**	0.16

*$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

$N = 795$; Model $\chi^2 = 51.05$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.08$.

as, although these variables have an association with socio-economic class, these are nevertheless independent effects measuring, respectively, a sense of security for the future – 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1991) – and civil participation, or 'social capital' (Putnam, 2001). That these effects emerge independently of key demographics is suggestive of the work required to understand better what other processes give rise to their development.

Finally, in the third model we introduce citizenship education and this has a moderate effect. Although the strength of effect is less than age, class and ethnicity, it nonetheless remains an important predictor of the likelihood of voting, independent of all other variables in the model. This suggests that, at this still fairly early stage of its development within England's schools, citizenship education is making an impact in the key area of political engagement.

Conclusion

A good deal has been asked of citizenship classes in their short life within the English National Curriculum, reflecting the variety of intellectual inputs inspiring its introduction. This article contends that distinct but interconnected concerns among politicians, policy makers and educationalists regarding levels of social and political capital among young people informed the decision to introduce citizenship education in England. The develop–

**Table 3: Binary Logistic Regression for Likelihood of
Understanding National Issues (0 'Less Understanding' 1
'Greater Understanding')**

Independent variables

	B	SE
Constant	−0.43	0.41
Male	0.31**	0.15
Working	−0.26	0.22
Age (22–25)		
11–13	−1.50*	0.31
14–15	−1.01*	0.32
16–18	−0.66*	0.26
19–21	−0.31	0.24
Social class (D/E)		
A/B	0.42*	0.26
C1	0.24	0.23
C2	−0.03	0.24
Ethnicity (white)	0.24	0.30
Citizenship (yes)	0.62***	0.16

*$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

$N = 802$; Model $\chi^2 = 59.76$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.10$.

Table 4: Model Fit Statistics for Block Recursive Model

Model	Model χ^2	AIC	Nagelkerke R^2
1	60.19 (8df, $p < 0.01$)	667.35	0.14
2	72.32 (11df, $p < 0.01$)	661.21	0.17
3	76.71 (12df, $p < 0.01$)	658.82	0.18

$N = 557$.

ment of the Citizenship curriculum since its introduction reflects a belief among some politicians that the subject has the potential to be a panacea to a range of emergent policy challenges. The multiplicity of ambitions surrounding the subject reflects various philosophical positions on what constitutes 'good' citizenry, an organic society, identity and political engagement. Tensions between civic republicanism and communitarianism evident within the Crick Report continue to influence debates about the Citizenship curriculum. Although politicians have increasingly sought to develop Citizenship to address a range of primarily social policy challenges, issues of political literacy may be equally problematic.

The policy outworking of sometimes competing positions has meant that Citizenship has been asked to cover a number of bases: civil engagement, encouraging young people to

Table 5: Block Recursive Model Binary Logistic Regression for Likelihood of Voting (0 'Unlikely' 1 'Very or Fairly Likely')

	Model 1: Demographics		Model 2: Behaviour and attitudes		Model 3: Citizenship lessons	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	1.84	0.53	2.66	0.63	2.39	0.64
Male	−0.24	0.19	−0.23	0.20	−0.22	0.20
Age (22–25)						
14–15	−1.91***	0.33	−2.02***	0.41	−2.15***	0.42
16–18	−0.94**	0.24	−1.00***	0.30	−1.13**	0.30
19–21	−0.31	0.27	−0.30	0.28	−0.33	0.28
Social class (D/E)						
A/B	0.64*	0.32	0.63**	0.33	0.59*	0.33
C1	0.75**	0.28	0.67*	0.29	0.65*	0.29
C2	0.21	0.29	0.26	0.30	0.23	0.29
Ethnicity (white)	−0.88*	0.47	−0.94*	0.47	−0.89	0.47
Working (yes)			−0.08	0.26	0.01	0.26
Prospect of a decent job (no)			−0.48*	0.20	−0.46*	0.20
Given your time to volunteer (no)			−0.20	0.26	−0.46*	0.26
Citizenship lessons (yes)					0.48**	0.23

*$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

volunteer for service in their locality; political literacy, in which youngsters develop knowledge of our political system and their rights and responsibilities; civic engagement, by which enhanced literacy encourages acts of political participation, such as voting; and identity – the promotion of a shaping of a shared national identity. While ambition for Citizenship may be laudable, the breadth of what is being attempted may be too vast and lacking in focus for the subject to offer clarity and purpose to some youngsters. Moreover, the lack of consensus over the purpose and utility of Citizenship, alongside more practical issues, such as variations in the title of the subject, means that it remains, for some schools and school pupils, a difficult subject to conceptualise or respect.[13]

The status of Citizenship as a 'political football', uncertainty over its future, variability in the quality of delivery and its lack of penetration within the lower social classes, who appear less aware of its deployment within the education curriculum, have all contributed to the reputation of the subject and its future viability. Despite these negative aspects, citizenship education *has* made a significant impact upon political understanding and engagement. Using our key tests of understanding of local and national issues and likelihood of voting, receipt of citizenship education *is* consistently an important positive factor, regardless of age, social class, ethnicity and gender. Our study demonstrates that young people who have received Citizenship classes are more likely to engage in civic activism, contributing to a healthier polity. The political literacy and 'taught democracy' ambitions for citizenship education espoused particularly by the original Crick–Blunkett axis may be being realised.

Given the short life of citizenship education, the beneficial impact upon civic activism might be seen as impressive. While there is no guarantee of linear progress if citizenship education continues, there is clear evidence of gains within the subject's formative years. As the popularity of Citizenship continues to grow, if measured in terms of qualification take-up, the positive independent contribution of citizenship education to civil and civic engagement may provide food for thought for those policy makers who wish to see young people fully engaged in a democratic polity, yet believe that the subject is of little utility.

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Notes

1 The Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) was established by the Labour government under Gordon Brown and reported to the government in 2009.
2 Crick was influential in the attempts by the Politics Association and Hansard Society in advocating the teaching of political skills and knowledge in secondary schools during the 1970s. He (Crick, 2002) noted that he was 'unexpectedly' sent for by David Blunkett immediately prior to the 1997 election.
3 A former student of Crick during his time at the University of Sheffield, Crick (2002, p. 493) claimed that Blunkett was influenced by what he described as the 'school of Sheffield politics'.
4 Author interviews, Bernard Crick (11 February 2007) and David Kerr (30 January 2007).
5 AGC Patron, former Speaker Betty Boothroyd, asserted that Citizenship would 'enhance understanding of and participation in our democratic, legal and other civic processes' (QCA, 1998, p. 3). Kiwan (2006) notes that members of the AGC interviewed most frequently placed 'political apathy of young people' as a motivating reason for the introduction of Citizenship.
6 Author interview, Bernard Crick (14 July 2004).
7 Author interviews, Bernard Crick (11 February 2007) and David Kerr (30 January 2007).
8 The survey was carried out on behalf of the YCC across England, Scotland and Wales (Northern Ireland was excluded) by Jigsaw Research from December 2008 to March 2009. 1,102 completed personal interviews were carried out among a representative weighted sample of 11 to 25-year-olds. Full details of the survey, the data set and copies of the questionnaire are available from the authors on request.
9 In the final (nested) model this is reduced to four categories (14–15 years, 16–18 years, 19–21 years and 22–25 years) due to the number of missing values in the 11–13 age range.
10 Significance scores are derived from Analysis of Variance and correlation tests whereby attitudinal items are treated as continuous variables and demographics (including age where it has been recoded into an ordinal variable) are treated as categorical.
11 The question should also be acknowledged as somewhat unsatisfactory, as it asked about voting 'in the next 12 months', potentially reducing a vote to local elections, where turnout is universally low.
12 This model also reduces the number of cases included in the analysis to 50.5 per cent of the sample (n = 1,102) as compared to 78–80 per cent for the first three models. Nevertheless, a Missing Values Analysis confirms the absence of any significant bias in the distribution of these values and therefore points to a validation of the given parameters.
13 A YouGov survey of 3,994 14 to 25-year-olds in November 2009, for the Citizenship Foundation, found that only a minority of British students had taken/were taking a subject with 'Citizenship' in the title.

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