Young People, Citizenship, Health and Participatory Research: Connections and Disjunctures in Field-Based Research

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Abstract

This paper draws on some contemporary debates about citizenship and participation in relation to young people, and illustrates the contested nature of both concepts. It is argued that the notion of active citizenship, which underpins the UK Labour government's rhetoric and the secondary school curriculum in England, lends itself to a citizenship-based model of participation that differs from the understandings used in the health sector and in participatory research. Differences in the way participation is understood can create problems when research straddles these fields, as the parties involved may not hold the same values and expectations. This paper argues that it is essential to recognise such differences, and to negotiate aims and expectations at an early stage to reduce the likelihood of

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misunderstandings or communication problems. It also argues that, when working with young people, it is important to view them as competent, autonomous individuals and to respect their understandings and preferences; otherwise, 'participative' initiatives may further alienate or exclude the young people they want to reach. Furthermore, it is essential to appreciate the informal and alternative spaces, contexts and forms of participation and citizenship that young people carve out for themselves, and which are currently both under-recognised and under-theorised.

Introduction

Issues relating to young people, citizenship and health have increasingly been placed under the public, media and policy spotlights in recent years. Many of the antisocial behaviour issues targeted in the UK Labour government's 'respect' campaign, such as underage drinking, smoking and drug use, have obvious connections to health. Other issues such as identity and the sense of belonging to a community connect with health in less explicit, but equally important, ways (de Winter *et al.*, 1999; Wharf Higgins, 1999). At the same time, the issue of young people's participation has received increased attention in the public policy, health and academic arenas, but there are significant divides in how 'participation' is conceptualised.

This paper does not aim to give a definitive 'expert' analysis of a single issue within research on citizenship, health or participation. Instead, the paper aims to unpick some of the multiple understandings of citizenship and participation and their implications for participatory research. It does this through reflecting on experiences from doctoral pilot fieldwork, which explored young people's understandings of health and the spaces through which these were shaped and enacted. This paper suggests that dominant understandings of participation differ among the secondary school curriculum, the health sector and participatory research practice, and that this can create problems for those undertaking research that straddles these fields. In the context of my own research, misunderstandings arose due to differing values and expectations of research and problems with language and communication. Furthermore, the research encounters were grounded in particular spaces, contexts and structures, and therefore participation sometimes took alternative forms that have not always been recognized in academic or policy literatures.

I will begin, in the first section of this paper, by discussing understandings of citizenship as they relate to children and young people, the school curriculum and health. This section will include some discussion of academic understandings of citizenship, as well as the UK Labour government's rhetoric. Here, I aim to unpick some of the connections and disjunctures between young people, current

citizenship education and participation. Building on this discussion of young people and citizenship, the second section will focus on some of the ways in which dominant understandings of participation differ between these different spheres. Here, it is suggested that the three main understandings of participation, namely the citizenship-based model, the consultative model and the understanding used in participatory research, have different value-bases, aims and approaches and are best suited to different contexts and processes. However, in research that straddles different contexts (which is frequently the case with participatory research), it is not always possible to maintain rigid boundaries between these contexts, and it is important to recognise that the various parties involved may be drawing on very different understandings of participation. The final section of this paper seeks to provide a more practical illustration of the debates outlined in the previous sections. Drawing on my own fieldwork experiences I discuss some of the challenges encountered in seeking to undertake participatory research in contexts where dominant understandings of participation varied. It is argued that the differing understandings and values held by those involved, and the problems with language and communication that can ensue from such differences, both require careful negotiation. Furthermore, young people's status in particular contexts, and the extent to which they are considered to be competent or autonomous citizens, can have a significant impact on issues relating to both citizenship and participation.

Young People, Citizenship and Health

Understandings of Childhood and Citizenship

In academic contexts, 'childhood' has traditionally been viewed in binary opposition to 'adulthood', with children being seen purely as research subjects. This has traditionally been mirrored in legislation surrounding children and young people which frames children and young people as being incompetent, vulnerable and in need of protection. However, alternative academic theorisations of childhood have viewed children as 'social actors' (Christensen and James, 2000; Christensen and Prout, 2002) and as potentially capable participants and co-researchers (Alderson, 2000; Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000). These alternative theorisations, which are increasingly becoming more orthodox in research with children and young people, see children as social actors with their own experiences and understandings and assert their competence. They form the basis for my work, and my stance thus considers young people to be competent social actors. However, as will be discussed later, this view has not always been held by the people I have worked with. This tension, which follows through from *general* understandings and discourses across theory and policy, into *specific* research encounters and practices, is a key issue which I will explore later in this paper.

The status of children and young people has important implications for issues of citizenship. It can affect how or to what extent children and young people are viewed as citizens: whether they are treated as full citizens, partial citizens, citizens-to-be, etc. The extent to which young people are viewed as citizens is also influenced by what is meant by 'citizenship' and what the requirements are for being a citizen. Many geographers and other social scientists have drawn upon Marshall's (1950) understanding of citizenship which emphasises the rights of the individual (see Delanty, 2000; Lawson, 2001; Wilson, 1997 for a fuller discussion). Marshall views children as citizens in the making and states that "children, by definition, cannot be citizens" (Marshall, 1950, 25), which conflicts with the understanding of childhood used in participatory research. Furthermore, a number of authors (e.g., Garratt, 2000; Hall *et al.*, 2000; Wilson, 1997) have questioned whether Marshall's stance fits with the UK Labour government's discourses on which the current citizenship curriculum is based.

The late 20th Century saw a shift in the dominant paradigm of citizenship from Marshall's rights-based discourse to an obligations-based one (Lawson, 2001; Lister, 1998). This has been reflected in the UK Labour government's emphasis on 'responsibility' in the late 1990s and their more recent 'respect' campaign, which seeks to tackle anti-social behaviours that are frequently constructed by the government, media and general public as problems created by young people for the rest of society. As Brannan *et al.* (2006) note, the concept of active citizenship has become a key facet in the Labour government's policy agenda, in supposed contrast to Marshall's more passive understanding. In his 2003 'Scarman Lecture', the then UK Home Secretary, David Blunkett, set out his agenda for civil renewal, stating that "at its heart is a vision of strong, active, and empowered communities – increasingly capable of doing things for themselves, defining the problems they face and then tackling them together," and that "it is not just about better outcomes, crucial though they are. It is also about what happens to communities along the way – what they learn about themselves and each other, the way they develop and grow" (Blunkett, 2003, 1). He goes on to suggest that this civil renewal should encompass three key aspects: active citizenship, strengthened communities and partnership in meeting public needs. As will be discussed later, this ties in closely with the citizenship-based model of participation. Yet, as Lawson (2001) notes, there is no universally held definition of citizenship, and understandings of what 'active' citizenship means vary considerably with different groups drawing on different criteria. The concept of active citizenship which the UK Labour government promotes is not always espoused by young people. Yet, it has been a defining feature of their formal engagements with the notion of citizenship via the secondary school curriculum and representative democratic structures such as school or youth councils.

As a number of authors (e.g., Chamberlin, 2003; Condor and Gibson, 2007) note, the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in English secondary schools had two main aims: firstly, to challenge the perceived apathy and cynicism of young people towards politics and, secondly, to challenge the rise in social problems such as drugs, crime and vandalism. These social problems were considered to demonstrate a need for education in social awareness, responsibility and community involvement. The Crick Report, which set out recommendations for the compulsory teaching of citizenship in English secondary schools, states that it aims:

> …at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves. (Crick, 1998, 7-8)

The report goes on to suggest that citizenship education should encompass three strands: social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. As Condor and Gibson (2007) suggest, it seems that an underlying presumption in this approach is that active citizenship will have a trickle-up effect with young people's participation in local voluntary organisations creating greater agency and responsibility towards national and international spheres of citizenship. Yet, as Faulks (2006) notes, its approach to politics and democracy is essentially top-down.

Despite the differences in rhetoric and the shift from a passive understanding of citizenship towards an active one, it is important to consider whether the 'new' approach to citizenship is really that different from Marshall's earlier approach in terms of young people. Brooks (2007) argues that, while there has been little change since Marshall's approach in terms of the framing of young people as developing citizens, they have been put under the spotlight in recent policy initiatives. However, while this might sound positive, many authors (e.g., Aitken, 2001; Valentine, 1996) have pointed out that the stereotypes portrayed are often unhelpful to young people themselves and that they tend to be 'demonised' by state actions, the public and media more generally. Watts (2006) goes further, suggesting that despite its rhetoric of empowerment, the new curriculum does not promote change, because it is primarily an attempt to legitimise government in the eyes of young people and does not heed the participatory concerns of those it should have reached out to.

Citizenship, Health and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

In many respects the changing approaches to citizenship discussed above have been mirrored by changes in the health sector (Milewa, 2004). Internationally, the World Health Organisation's 'Health for All' strategy has placed a strong emphasis on the idea of community participation. Within the UK National Health Service (NHS), there has been a growing discourse of actively involving and empowering service users and communities in planning health services and policies, through consultation exercises and establishing health panels (Allen, 2006; Brannan *et al*., 2006). As Redden (2002) discusses, there are a number of links between citizenship and health, and health services are an area where citizenship-based inclusions and exclusions such as rights to services or treatment are enacted. Not all citizens possess the means to realise their rights and the benefits of citizenship (Wharf Higgins, 1999) and often those who might be perceived to benefit most from community participation in health are the least likely to engage with initiatives.

Citizenship and health both currently have a high profile in the secondary school curriculum in England. Although separate curricula exist for Citizenship and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) many schools teach the two subjects in the same timetable slot. Both curricula include a focus on developing relationships and respecting differences among people, such as differing lifestyles and cultural or ethnic identities, and place an emphasis on 'participation'. The PSHE curriculum states that "pupils should be taught…through opportunities to…participate (for example, in developing and putting into practice school policies about anti-bullying; in an action research project designed to reduce crime and improve personal safety in their neighbourhood)" (QCA, 2007). The citizenship curriculum has an entire section devoted to "Developing skills of participation and responsible action" which includes the stipulation that "pupils should be taught to…reflect on the process of participating" (QCA, 2007). However, there is little guidance about how this might be done. Furthermore, there has been a tendency to re-brand aspects of PSHE as 'citizenship,' and a lack of specialist subject expertise (Faulks, 2006). Pike (2007) suggests that the relationship between the two subjects is problematic because PSHE focuses on private and individual issues whilst Citizenship focuses on public ones. However, this distinction between public and private is difficult to maintain and both subjects might benefit from an exploration of the nested and intersecting spatial scales through which issues relating to citizenship and health are manifest.

Contesting Citizenship and Childhood

Hall *et al*. (2000, 462-63) suggest that "citizenship may best be understood as signifying a field of struggle; an arena in which relations linking individuals to

their wider community, social and political contexts are continually discussed, reworked and contested." This is, it seems, a long way removed from the citizenship education that is delivered in many schools. Faulks (2006) argues that the Crick Report draws upon an abstract understanding of citizenship which has been removed from its institutional and structural contexts and that the failure to recognise these contexts limits the effective delivery of citizenship education. Furthermore, in a recent paper Crick himself is critical of a rigid approach to citizenship education stating that "citizenship by prescription, order, rote, grid or check-list is not true citizenship at all" (Crick, 2007, 242). I believe that, regardless of how 'participation' is understood, it is essential for both citizenship education and PSHE to consider the spaces, structures and contexts within which young people operate. This needs to include not only formal spaces and structures such as schools and youth councils but also the informal and alternative spaces and contexts which young people carve out for themselves. Moreover, if citizenship education is to help foster a sense of belonging, then it needs to take issues of diversity and identity into consideration (Lawson, 2001; Ross, 2007), otherwise it may fail to connect with many young people's lived experiences and foster alienation and exclusion rather than active citizenship or participation.

The liminality and contested boundaries of youth have been well documented (Aitken, 2001; Sibley, 1995; Valentine, 2003; Valentine *et al.*, 1998) and, superficially at least, increased attention is being given to young people's views within both academia and the policy arena. However, the way in which current debates around citizenship, and sometimes participation, expect children and young people to act as 'responsible' citizens without necessarily allowing them to have the same citizenship status as adults remains problematic. Whilst the PSHE and citizenship curricula focus on creating responsible citizens for the future, many young people are establishing their own spaces of citizenship (Weller, 2003). As the next section will highlight, the status attached to children and young people is particularly pertinent to debates about participation and participatory research. This, in turn, has implications for debates about citizenship.

Participation, Participatory Research and Citizenship

In their discussion of youth councils, Matthews and Limb state that "everyone appears to be consulting and listening to children" (Matthews and Limb, 2003, 173). Yet, as they go on to acknowledge, existing processes and structures often fall short of engaging, inspiring and empowering young people's participation. A central stumbling block is the often unrecognised variation in the way that participation is understood, and the actions and activities that are valued as participatory. Sinclair (2004) suggests that despite the numerous different groups involved in participation, such as researchers, practitioners and policy-makers, and the distinct contribution each group makes, there is much common

ground among them. Whilst I agree with Sinclair's overall argument, and the suggestions made for improving clarity, there are still significant disjunctures between the different understandings of participation which can create problems for those involved in interdisciplinary work or research that straddles different contexts.

This section will discuss three different conceptualisations of participation that are common in the UK context, and the key issues where they diverge. These areas of divergence are, firstly, questions relating to *why* children and young people are or should be participating, secondly, *how* they might or should participate and, thirdly, *what* they are participating in. The distinctions among the three understandings of participation which I am presenting here are not always clear-cut. Nevertheless, this categorisation is useful for unpicking some of the areas where misunderstandings and communication problems can occur.

Approaches to Participation

The first understanding of participation I wish to discuss is what I will refer to as the *citizenship model* of participation. Literature surrounding children's participation (e.g., Grover, 2004; Jans, 2004; Kjorholt, 2002) is often based on an assumption that 'participation' equals citizenship and political participation. In the citizenship model of participation, children and young people's views are sought through their involvement in structures such as youth councils or parliaments and school councils, which mimic the political models used by adults. Such structures are generally based on idealistic representative democratic principles with children and young people being nominated or elected to positions. As Tidsall and Davis (2004) note, these often fail to be representative of local populations and are rarely fully democratic. Furthermore, the structures used are open to adult manipulation, generally fail to attract those who are less confident or articulate, and unquestioningly adopt certain adult models of politics and democracy (Hill *et al*., 2004). The agencies involved, and models used, seek to promote children's and young people's rights. Yet, these rights frequently remain adult-defined. This inadvertently devalues the competency and agency of children and young people, and the contributions their experiences, understandings and perspectives can make. The emphasis on 'participation' within the school citizenship curriculum means that for many schools and young people the citizenship model of participation is the dominant understanding.

A second approach to participation aims to consider the views of particular groups, for example young people with diabetes, through consultative participation exercises as part of the development or evaluation of policies or services. This *consultative model* of participation, which some authors (such as Callaghan and Wistow, 2006; Thompson, 2007) refer to as the consumerist approach, is dominant

in the health and medical sectors and in research in these fields. While there is a longer tradition of collective community involvement in health and poverty reduction initiatives in developing countries (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Kesby, 2000; Mohan, 2001), it is unusual in the UK context for structures organised by health services to go beyond consultation.

In general, *participatory research approaches* and techniques utilise an alternative conception of participation.   Both the citizenship model and participatory research, and to some extent the consultative model, emphasise children's rights, but they put this idea into practice in contrasting ways.   In participatory research, the focus is usually on allowing children and young people to participate or express opinions in a manner that takes account of their interests and preferences rather than through wholly predefined structures. As Pain and Francis (2003) discuss, research described as 'participatory' does not necessarily take a participatory approach, and the use of participatory techniques such as diagramming does not in itself make research 'participatory' because it can be merely consultative. Participation and consultation are often related but they are not synonymous and whilst "consultation may be a means of enabling children to participate…it can also be a substitute for participation in that decisions are made without the direct involvement of children" (Hill *et al.*, 2004, 83). This is a major weakness in many projects using citizenship based models of participation, but can easily occur in participatory research as well.

Promoting Participation: Why, How, What?

My research has sought to follow a participatory approach. However, while I had a preferred mode and model of participation, which was underpinned by a distinct set of values and priorities, it is important to recognise that this was not always shared by the other agencies, gatekeepers and individuals I encountered. Furthermore, given that one of the principles underlying participatory approaches to research is to include the values and priorities of those you work with, it can be somewhat contradictory to impose a predefined value-base or research philosophy on others. Again, this tension between the views I hold and those of other people follows through from general understandings and discourses across theory and policy, into specific research encounters and practices.   As such, negotiation becomes very important, not just in terms of the research process, but also in terms of the mode or model of participation which is adopted.

Three considerations are of central importance when negotiating participation. The first of these is *why* participation is being considered. This requires reflection upon the values, assumptions and expectations underlying the work and what the different parties involved are seeking to achieve through participation. The second consideration is *how* participation will be achieved: what

methods, structures, contexts and spaces are appropriate. Participation is likely to be most successful and empowering if all parties are involved from an early stage; this is not always possible and in some instances may not fit with the purposes of the participation. Thirdly, it is necessary to consider *what* is being participated in. For example, participation in systems of decision-making based on notions of representative democracy (such as school or youth councils) can be very different from participation in knowledge creation via research and these do not necessarily lend themselves to the same approach. At the same time, the boundaries between these different contexts of participation are not rigid, and there is no reason why a group such as a youth council, which might stereotypically fit with a citizenship-based model of participation, cannot also be involved in another form of participation such as participatory research. When negotiating approaches to participation it is necessary to consider what is being promoted through the participation. Participation which is aimed at promoting citizenship (as it is understood in the current secondary school curriculum) is likely to follow a different route to participation which is aimed at promoting the consideration of views, or participation which is aimed at promoting autonomy.

All three of the approaches to participation discussed here can have something to offer young people. Some young people enjoy participating in representative democratic structures such as youth councils and gain a lot from this experience; others may feel uncomfortable with, or alienated by, this context. Similarly, whilst many young people connect well with participatory research projects, it is important to recognise that participatory research does not necessarily suit all young people. If the approach to participation being adopted does not fit with the contexts or people involved then it may end up marginalising or excluding many young people instead of engaging them. Alternatively, it may engage and inspire young people but alienate other parties involved. Given that the dominant understandings of participation differ between the secondary school curriculum, the health sector and participatory research, work that straddles these fields can easily encounter conflicting beliefs and priorities, and what constitutes 'participation' for one party may not suit others. The final section of this paper will exemplify some of the challenges that may be encountered when one understanding of participation is used in a context where another dominates. It will also offer a brief discussion of 'alternative' forms of participation that emerged, and the interplay between participation and citizenship.

Putting 'Participation' into Practice

The pilot fieldwork on which this paper is based involved small groups of young people aged 13 to 15 in two schools ('Highview' and 'Blakely') and a youth

project ('Netherton') and combined participatory diagramming techniques with group discussions.[2] One of my mains aims in this pilot was to 'test out' some basic methods which I was considering using for my main PhD research and explore how some of the aims of participation translated into practice. As a 'new' researcher undertaking a participatory project for the first time I did not have the skills, experience or confidence required to successfully negotiate the myriad of pitfalls involved in participatory work. My work did not end up being as 'participatory' as I would have liked and this section will examine some of the spaces, contexts and channels through which participation floundered.

Values, Expectations and Communication: The Importance of Language and Clarity

It has been argued that "what is seen as successful participation will depend on the expectations of the parties involved" (Strobl and Bruce, 2000, 216). As Cree *et al*. (2002) discuss, it is not only the researcher's views about children's status which are important; gatekeepers' perceptions of children's competency and understanding can also affect access. Furthermore, young people are not a homogenous group and the status attached to different groups may vary (Curtis *et al*., 2004). Hill *et al*. (2004) suggest children's rights approaches create tensions by blurring distinctions between adulthood and childhood, and conflict with adults' perceptions of children's capacities and the maintenance of their position over children. Such problems may restrict a researcher's ability to promote the autonomy of participants due to the need to negotiate access through adult gatekeepers (Munford and Sanders, 2004) who may wield significant power and control over the research process (see Barker and Weller, 2003, for a fuller discussion). In the context of health and participation inadequate communication between practitioners on the ground and theoreticians in universities is a common problem (Campbell and Jovchelovitch, 2000), and my experience suggests that the same applies in other contexts. Often the same terms can be used by different parties but hold very different meanings. For example, the "participatory techniques" mentioned in Milewa *et al.'s* (1999) discussion of community participation and health include tick-box questionnaires and facilitated citizens' juries. This understanding of participatory techniques is very different to the way the term is used in participatory research.

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[2] The pseudonyms used in this paper, both for organisations and participants, are not intended to reflect any other persons or places known to the author or have any intrinsic meaning.

Early on in my pilot work it became apparent that my understanding of participation and what should be valued in the research process often differed from that of people I was working with. For example, I quickly discovered that many of the principles underlying participatory research conflicted directly with schools' expectations. At Blakely, where I had successfully negotiated access through the Deputy Head and run one session, I was unable to arrange further visits because negotiations failed with a second teacher. It was apparent during our conversation that the more participatory and emergent nature of my work did not fit with her expectations of good research. From the questions I was asked and the teacher's reaction to my responses it appeared that the fact I could not predict exactly what topics and issues the research would cover was a major stumbling block. The breakdown in the research at Blakely was related to problems with communication in addition to differing expectations of research. In this instance, I did not communicate what I was seeking to do and why in a manner that was understood by the teacher concerned.

At Netherton, the project manager had a good grasp of what I wanted and was accommodating of this, but some individual staff members had rather different expectations. For example, one youth worker decided that I was not doing enough towards teaching the participants what they should do in relation to health behaviours and took this task into her own hands. Here, as with other groups, I had deliberately taken a non-judgemental stance towards the views articulated by participants and had tried to get participants to explain why they took certain views rather then suggesting what they should think. This clearly conflicted with her perception of what a good health researcher or educator should do with young people, and it would have been helpful for me to ensure beforehand that we were drawing on the same language and aims.

Furthermore, my aims and ideals were not always espoused by the young people themselves. Some showed little interest in having a say in what was done and whether they wanted to be involved. For example, at Highview many of the young people involved refused to read or discuss the consent forms stating that their parents had said it was okay for them to be involved and that they therefore did not need to sign. This went against my assumption that the young people should be given as much autonomy as possible over their involvement and that giving their own formal consent was an important part of this. Initially I viewed this incident rather negatively, considering it to be a failure on my part to help promote the young people's rights and autonomy. However, on reflection, I came to realise that this subversion of the formal research process could also be seen as a means by which young people asserted autonomy and control over the process. In many respects, this incident was not dissimilar to the experiences recently discussed by Jupp (2007), who questions her own assumptions and concludes that

young people's rejection of aspects of the research processes should be viewed as a valid intervention rather than as a failure of participation.

Spaces, Contexts and Engagements: Recognising Alternative Forms of Participation

In her review of community participation and health Morgan (2001, 225) notes that "idiosyncratic local contexts are the sites where programmes succeed or founder." The potential impact of the setting on the conduct of focus groups has been documented (Longhurst, 2003; Macnaghten and Myers, 2004), and the same applies to participatory research (Jupp, 2007; Kesby, 2005, 2007). As I have discussed elsewhere (Alexander *et al.*, 2007), it is important to recognise that all research encounters are embedded in the physical, organisational and social spaces used and that this can have a profound impact on participation. For example, Blakely School appeared to be very authoritarian in its administrative style, and this, combined with the use of the school library, pushed me into a more authoritarian role than I would have liked, in a similar manner to that discussed by Holt (2004).

I started with an assumption that in good research all participants would engage equally with what was going on (i.e., they would all talk roughly the same amount and do similar amounts of diagramming). This was based on literature about focus group facilitation which discusses how to draw out quieter group members and curb dominant ones (such as Conradson, 2005; Krueger and Casey, 2000). However, as my fieldwork progressed I realised this conception of engagement was problematic. It was clear that a number of participants who did not engage with the sessions in a text-book-like manner were still engaging in their own way. For example, doodling, which is often interpreted as a sign of boredom or disengagement, was for some participants an important way in which they engaged with what was going on. This fits with Morgan *et al.'s* (2002) observation that allowing participants to fidget promoted more active participation.

Another example of ways engagement varied between participants was the extent to which they contributed to different aspects of the sessions. For example, Tina said very little and I was concerned whether she was engaging with the session 'properly'. However, when I looked more closely at the diagram produced by her group it was obvious that although she did not talk much Tina had actually done more diagramming than the others. Furthermore, Tina played a key role in coaxing Jemma along during the final part of the session, showing considerable persuasion and negotiation skills in the process.

Alternative forms of participation may also be used to subvert the process and structures that are being utilised by participative initiatives. As Watts (2006)

discusses, young people are increasingly participating in grass-root organisations focusing on single-issue politics rather than the formal democratic structures and active citizenship promoted by the citizenship curriculum. Some of the spaces and contexts in which young people engage in participatory research are also used as means of subverting dominant ideologies about citizenship and politics through radical or grass-root politics or organisations. In relation to health, these can also form an important channel through which groups create their own communities of belonging around specific conditions or problems and promote their viewpoints which may, as was seen with the disability rights movement, challenge dominant ideologies.

Implications for Practice

My experiences to date suggest that it is essential to recognise the different ways in which participation and citizenship are framed by differing groups and individuals. This is particularly pertinent when research or projects cross traditional disciplinary boundaries, involve collaboration between academic researchers and people outside academia, or involve a range of different partners or agencies. One of the principles of participatory approaches to research is that participants and any stakeholders should be involved as early in the research process as possible, ideally in its design. However, this is not always possible due to problems with time or organisational constraints and will only work if the parties involved actually desire this level of involvement. In contexts where citizenship-based or consultative understandings of participation are dominant, this level of collaboration or the open negotiation of values and expectations may not be seen as a priority. However, such negotiation is essential if misunderstandings and communication problems are to be reduced, and is also an important way of promoting inclusion and engagement.

In addition, researchers and practitioners need to have a broader understanding of the different forms participation might take. In work with young people this needs to include recognition of the alternative spaces, channels and contexts of their participation and citizenship, which are currently both under-recognised and under-theorised. However, this would require a shift away from the dominant view of young people as 'citizens in the making' – as reflected in Marshall's understanding of citizenship, the UK Labour government's rhetoric and the current citizenship curriculum – towards one which recognises them as competent individuals whose views should be valued and respected.

Conclusion: Moving Towards an Inclusive Citizenship

Citizenship and participation are each contested concepts that can be understood in a number of different ways. The status that is attached to children

and young people has implications for citizenship. In England, the citizenship curriculum has been seen as a key strategy for reducing young people's perceived apathy towards politics and creating responsible citizens for the future. However, it seems that many young people had not rejected politics; rather they were carving out their own understandings, contexts and spaces of citizenship, politics and participation. The current compulsory citizenship education thus runs the risk of further alienating and excluding many of the young people it wanted to reach.

The idea of active citizenship, as promoted in the school curriculum, has formed the bedrock for one specific model of participation. However, this is not the only way in which participation can be understood. I have argued that, in the current English context, approaches to and understandings of participation fall into three broad categories which often have different aims and purposes. The citizenship-based model of participation is dominant in the UK Labour government's rhetoric and the secondary school curriculum, whilst a consultative model is dominant in the health and medical sector. As discussed, each of these differs from the understanding of participation used in participatory research. Differences in the way participation is understood can create problems when research straddles these fields, as the parties involved may not hold the same values and expectations.

There are a number of disjunctures between participatory research and the other understandings of participation discussed in this paper, in addition to differences in what is meant by participation. These create tensions, which follow through from general understandings and discourses across theory and policy into specific research encounters and practices, and require careful negotiation. As discussed, the same language can be used with very different meanings and this can create problems with communication. There can also be significant differences in what is seen to constitute good research. Another key area of divergence is the status given to young people. In participatory research they are seen as competent and autonomous individuals whose views and preferences are of equal importance to those of others. In contrast, both the citizenship-based and consultative models of participation expect young people to fit into pre-existing, and usually adult-defined, structures of participation. Despite the Crick Report's stated interest in young people finding new forms of involvement for themselves, current citizenship debates have tended to focus on established formal political channels with which many young people do not connect, rather than recognising the alternative forms and spaces of participation and citizenship with which many young people engage.

Young people have been receiving increased attention in participatory research, the health sector and the UK Labour government's rhetoric surrounding participation, and this is a positive step. However, it is important to involve young people more in the planning and design of initiatives, such as the citizenship

curriculum or health promotion projects. A more collaborative approach, which respects young people's perspectives, is less likely to create further alienation or exclusion. It seems that what is needed is a theory of citizenship and participation that can provide a unifying framework whilst recognising difference, and which allows for young people's own spaces and forms of both citizenship and participation. This is more likely to foster the greater sense of belonging among young people, which the UK Labour government has been trying to achieve.

Acknowledgements

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