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ABSTRACT

This article examines young people's civic participation and the extent to which this is influenced by the family. Although literature on young people's civic participation is abundant, the role of the family in influencing this participation is largely absent. Drawing on survey data collected from 976 young people aged 13–14 in South Wales, we outline the extent and nature of civic participation and how this varies according to relationships with parents and grandparents. Our data show that relationships with mothers and grandparents are particularly important in young people's accounts of their participation, suggesting that family is far more important in developing a propensity for engagement in civil society than is commonly understood.

Introduction

Although literature on young peoples' involvement in civil society is abundant, there is relatively little on the role of the family in influencing youth civic participation. In part this may be because of the complex and conflicting accounts of family's relation to civil society: some argue that the family should be seen as separate from, and perhaps even anti-thetical, to civil society (e.g., Pateman, 1980), whilst others give it a central role (e.g., Carter, 1999; Cohen & Arato, 1994; Eberly, 2000). Similarly, whilst there are significant bodies of work seeking to re-dress the intergenerational transmission of undesirable traits – for example substance abuse, violence, smoking and poor diet (Bellis et al., 2015) – and to undermine the social reproduction of class-based advantage (e.g., Ball, 2003), analysis of how the family could act as a benign source of civil society engagement and activism is presently underdeveloped.

This article examines this issue through research we have been undertaking with almost 1000 young people in South Wales. We begin by providing a brief overview of how the family is conventionally positioned in relation to civil society before going on to present our empirical findings. Firstly, we provide an outline of the degree and nature of young people's civic participation overall. Secondly, we examine the extent to which this participation is associated with close family relationships, and particularly young

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people's relationships with their parents and grandparents. In so doing we hope to contribute to the growing interest in intergenerational transmission more generally and the relationship between the family and civil society in particular.

Locating the Family in Civil Society

While the family plays a central role in social, cultural, (and biological) reproduction, it is notably absent from the majority of contemporary literature on civil society (Ginsborg, 2008; Howell, 2006). When it does feature, it is often in shifting and contradictory ways. The family sits uneasily in relation to binary oppositions between 'public' and 'private'. In American political sociology, the family is seen as an essential component in civil society (Eberly, 2000; Eberly & Streeter, 2002) at risk of 'erosion' from state interference (Carter, 1999, p. 230). These accounts emphasize the associative qualities of family: its 'horizontal ties' and collective responsibility.

European conceptualisations of civil society, however, tend to privilege the public rather than its private attributes - positioning the family firmly outside of civil society (Power, Muddiman, Taylor, & Moles, 2018). In the accounts of Hegel and Habermas, in particular, civil society is regarded as a space for political participation, debate, and view formation in the public sphere. The family, meanwhile, can be seen as a site of self-interest that is inimical to civil society engagement. For example, the Habermasian concept of the 'public sphere' (1989) is one of a discursive space, open and accessible to all (in theory) to debate in pursuit of the common good. Private interests - including, in this conceptualization, the family - must therefore be bracketed out. From this perspective, families might even be seen to be working against the development of a strong civil society. It follows that the pursuit of the public good necessitates the diminution of the family. These conflicting accounts raise questions about whether strong family ties support or work against a healthy civil society.

The Family, and the Reproduction of 'Private Interests'

The family is widely regarded as a socializing agent and parents, in particular, are seen to play a pivotal role in providing their children with a framework for interpreting and navigating the social world. Bourdieu (1986) famously identified three dimensions of capital: economic, social and cultural, that are unequally distributed through society. These capitals, he argued, are accrued and passed down within families, in a process of social reproduction. Social reproduction is considered problematic because families are able to pass down particular class-based resources to their offspring thus perpetuating their advantage over others.

The framing of the family as a 'private' and self-interested entity chimes with the traditional libertarian idea of 'the family as the protector of private property, of the bourgeois ethic of accumulation, as well as the guarantor of a barrier against the encroachments of the state' (Donzelot, 1979, p. 5). It also resonates with more contemporary neoliberal mobilisations of 'family values' and 'pro-family policies' by conservative political regimes as 'essential for the maintenance of capitalism' (Abbott & Wallace, 1992, p. 16). In both instances, the family is seen to operate as a self-interested rather than an altruistic entity, suggesting that generosity and mutual support within the family unit does not extend beyond it.

Social and cultural capital have predominantly been discussed in terms of the reproduction of social inequalities – as the middle classes seek to maintain advantage over other social

groups (e.g., Ball, 2003). However, when considering the social reproduction of various capitals, it is worth recognizing that these values and aptitudes may be more or less aligned to participation in civil society. If, for example, parents are actively involved with volunteering or campaigning, it seems reasonable to suggest that these activities, or indeed the values that underpin them, might be transmitted to their children during primary socialization in the home. From a Bourdieusian (1977) perspective, then, it might therefore be argued that the development of the primary habitus – as a frame for understanding and interpreting the social world – goes on to shape young people's engagement with civil society (notwithstanding the fact that access to, and participation in civil society is stratified, and that particular forms of engagement may also serve self-interested purposes). This means that the moral character inculcated in children by their parents may cross over from the private to public sphere.

The (Unrecognized) Importance of Women and the Domestic Sphere

The division between the public and the private has also been heavily critiqued for failing to recognize the important contributions made by women to civil society and undermining the political nature of the personal (Fraser, 1997; Landes, 1988). Feminist scholars highlight the gendered assumptions associated with this binary, and draw attention to the historically exclusionary nature of the public sphere: 'civil society is often presented in terms that make it seem like a place where women are not' (Phillips, 2002, p. 72). The relegation of 'private' interests into the domestic domain also masks the political nature of the gendered division of labour and unequal family and household relations. Indeed, as Fraser (1997) argues, private interests cannot be ignored because the public sphere has been constituted by these very interests.

Whilst feminist perspectives advocate greater recognition of women in civil society, this does not necessarily include the family (Power et al., 2018). For example, Fraser argues that male-headed families can also be problematic due to their normatively rather than communicatively achieved action contexts:

> […] contexts where actions are (sometimes) mediated by consensus and shared values but where such consensus is suspect because it is prereflective or because it is achieved through dialogue vitiated by unfairness, coercion or inequality (Fraser, 1989, p. 120)

However, it is important to recognize that family compositions and internal dynamics have changed over time and the male-headed nuclear family is no longer the default familial structure. Indeed, Barber argues that some kinds of contemporary family configurations – 'those which … assure equality among the various roles within them … and which eventually produce autonomous adults' might legitimately be regarded as part of civil society (Barber, 1998, p. 54). When considering the relationship between family and civil society we might well consider 'the cultural specificities of the scope and the social, economic and political significance of the family and household' (Howell, 2006, p. 46). Ongoing debates about the role of women in civil society suggest there may be some important gender implications for how we position families, civil society and the public sphere.

Making Space for the Family in Civil Society

We draw on Young's (2000) concept of civil society and the three associative activities that she identifies (private, civic and political), focussing here on civic associations and civic

participation. Eto (2012) adapts Young's (2000) associative activities to map out the ways in which the family – as an important part of citizens' everyday lives – connects to the public sphere, arguing that the family is an 'important gateway to civil society activities' (Eto, 2012, p. 114): She argues for:

> … an expanded conception of civil society which is not isolated from everyday experience or from the influence of state political institutions and attempts to explain how the consciousness, expectations, and demands emerging from citizens' everyday life are transformed into political associations, specific social movements and citizen's interest groups, and how their activities then interact with state political

Eto argues that the family plays an important role by 'providing individuals with the basis for developing their social awareness' and, by doing so, nurtures active citizens (2012, p. 114). Eto locates the family on the margins of civil society but 'shows that the family is intimately linked to a range of private and civic associations'.

It is clear that the paradoxical nature of theorisations of the relationship between family and civil society calls for empirical investigation. Indeed, it might be argued that the family is not only a gateway to prospective civic participation, but a site of civil society engagement itself (Power et al., 2018).

Methodology

The data presented here derive from questionnaire survey data collected from 976 young people aged 13–14 from seven schools across South and West Wales. The schools were selected to include diverse communities in that they served in urban (3), rural (2), valley (2) Welsh speaking (1) and coastal areas (1). The schools were also selected to achieve variation in size, religious affiliation, the presence of sixth form provision, academic profile and percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) – the conventional proxy for socio-economic disadvantage. In relation to free school meal eligibility, 14.2% of our sample reported that they are eligible, with a further 1.6% selecting 'prefer not to say' and 6.9% indicating that they didn't know. This means that the level of socio-economic disadvantage of our respondents is not too dissimilar from the national level, where 17.8% are eligible for free school meals.

The data were collected via paper-based surveys (in either English or Welsh) administered in the schools. The survey covered a broad range of topics including political affiliations, religious beliefs, eating habits, civic participation and views on issues like crime and immigration. It also explored young people's relationships with their parents and grandparents, including how much time they spend together and the things they are most likely to disagree on. The survey included a section on 'activities to help other people and environment' – capturing responses to questions about various types of civic participation.[1]

After the data had been cleaned and coded, a variety of statistical analyses were undertaken, using both descriptive and inferential analyses. One of the main challenges, analytically, was to develop a useful conceptualization of motivations for civic participation. Following our problematisation of a simple division between 'public' and 'private' spheres, we needed to move beyond the common distinctions between 'self-interest' and altruism'. It may be tempting to suggest that those who participate in civil society

(e.g., through voluntary work) are more altruistic than those who do not. However, this oversimplification masks the unequal access to, and ability to participate in civil society. It also assumes that all civic participation is altruistic, when in fact the motivations for involvement are many and varied (including self-interest and instrumentalism), can overlap and often change over time (Kelemen, Mangan, & Moffat, 2017; Nightingale, 1973). Moreover, certain types of participation in civil society may reinforce rather than undermine existing patterns of unfair advantage and social reproduction (Dean, 2016). Rather than viewing selfishness and altruism in a binary relationship to one another, we take the position that motivations are likely to be mixed.

We decided to conceptualize meaningful civic participation as a condition met when participants say that their participation has been both personally beneficial, and has benefitted others or the environment. Making a distinction between 'meaningful' and 'non-meaningful' civic participation allows us to make some interesting observations in the data. There are some conceptual limitations to the notion of meaningful civic participation as described here – for example, the meaning that someone derives from an activity may depend on their motivations for involvement: an individual motivated by wanting to meet new people and make friends might say that they don't benefit from involvement in volunteering if this criterion is not met, regardless of how worthwhile they feel the activity is. However, notwithstanding these criticisms it seems plausible to suggest that if someone feels there is a dual benefit to their efforts to help others or the environment (however defined), then they will be more likely to continue with this activity, when compared to someone who either does not feel the benefit themselves, or does not feel they are making a difference to others.

The Degree and Nature of Young People's Civic Participation

We asked our participants whether they have been involved in various activities to help other people or the environment over the last 12 months – activities that can be taken to be an indicator of civic participation (Table 1). Providing support for other people who are not friends and relatives was the most frequent kind of activity, followed by giving time to help a cause or charity, and fundraising. Our participants were least likely to have campaigned for something or to have improved their local area. Overall, 26.5% of young people undertake at least one activity 'often', and 58.9% of young people undertake at least one activity 'often' or 'sometimes'.

As discussed, we recognize civic participation as meaningful when a young person participates in at least one activity often or sometimes, and when they think there is a benefit (a lot or a little) to both themselves and to others. According to this measure, 32.6% of participants in our survey have been involved in meaningful civic participation over the

Table 1. Rates of participation in different types of civic activities.

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all	No reply
Done any fundraising or a sponsored event	7.9%	19.7%	23.2%	41.6%	7.7%
Helped improve your local area	3.5%	11.7%	18.4%	57.2%	9.2%
Campaigned for something you believe in	4.2%	6.9%	12.3%	67.2%	9.4%
Given time to help a charity or cause	9.9%	19.6%	24.3%	37.0%	9.2%
Supported other people who aren't friends or relatives	17.3%	23.6%	23.8%	27.2%	8.2%

last 12 months. 81.7% of those who told us they had benefitted either 'a little' or 'a lot' from their participation also felt that other people or the environment had also benefited 'a little' or 'a lot'. When looking just at those who said they had benefitted 'a lot' from their involvement, 47.6% also felt that other people or the environment had benefitted 'a lot', 33.2% felt other people or the environment had benefitted 'a little', and only 2.9% felt that their activity hadn't benefitted other people or the environment at all (see Table 2).

In terms of demographic variables, female participants are 10% more likely to be involved in meaningful civic participation than males (38.8% compared to 28.5%). Figure 1 shows how levels of participation vary according to political affiliation. When asked 'if an election was held today, and you could vote, what party would you vote for?' Labour was the most popular response (20.8%) followed by Conservative (5.1%) and UKIP (4.7%). It is important to note that over half of participants selected 'don't know' (53.0%) with another 9.3% selecting 'none'. Amongst those who did express a preference for a political party, those who said they would vote Labour (if they could) are more likely to take part and more likely to find it meaningful than those with other political affiliations: rates of meaningful civic participation were 40.5% for Labour, 31.3% for Conservative, and 31.8% for UKIP. Those with no party affiliates are more likely to take part in civic activities (55.8%) than those affiliated with UKIP (54.3%) or the Conservatives (52.1%), but were less likely to find it meaningful (25.6%).

Motivations and Perceived Benefits of Civic Participation

Existing research identifies a number of different potential motivations for volunteering, including sociability, altruism, self-interest (Nightingale, 1973); individual and collective empowerment (Gooch, 2004; Nichols & Ralston, 2011); well-being, community spirit and inclusiveness (Smith & Holmes, 2012; Steffen & Fothergill, 2009; Thoits & Hewitt,

Table 2. Relationship between personal benefits and benefits to others.

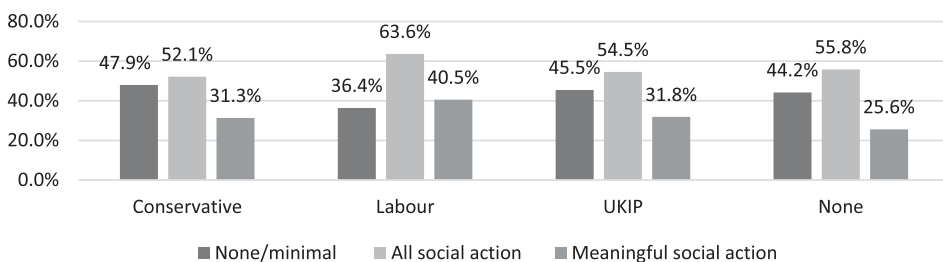|		How much do you feel *other* people or the environment have benefitted?				
		A lot	A little	Not at all	Don't know	Total
How much have *you* personally benefitted?	A lot	99	69	6	34	208
	A little	101	164	7	54	326
	Not at all	9	36	15	14	74
	Don't know	17	43	3	90	153
	Total	226	312	31	192	761

Figure 1. Rates of meaningful civic participation according to political affiliation.

2001); and a concern for the public good (Mangan, 2009). Participants in this study cited a mixture of altruistic and self-interested motivations for civic participation (see Figure 2). Participants were allowed to choose more than one option when answering this question and the most popular response was 'to improve things/help people' (42.9%), gaining enjoyment from participation came second at 28.2%. There is little indication in participants' responses of a sense of pressure or obligation – only a small proportion of participants told us that they were asked (12.6%) or prompted to get involved 'because there was no one else to do it' (2.6%). In addition, relatively few participants identified 'gaining or using skills' (14.0%) suggesting that this was not a primary motivator for involvement (although it is important to recognize that it may still be seen as a secondary benefit or by-product of involvement). Those participants who were motivated by the desire to meet people or make friends, to get a recognized qualification and/or to use their skills or learn new ones, had the highest rates of meaningful civic participation. Those who had been asked to participate or felt that there was 'no one else to do it' had the lowest rates.

Overall those who met our criteria for meaningful civic participation were more likely to identify motivations than those who didn't, and they were less likely to indicate that they were motivated by none of the options provided (3.1% for those involved in 'meaningful' civic participation compared to 7.4% for those involved in 'non-meaningful civic participation').

Unsurprisingly, enjoying participation and gaining qualifications are associated with benefitting 'a lot' from participation; but those motivated by wanting to improve things/help others, whose friends/family participate, who were asked or felt like there was no one else to do it, were less likely to say that they have benefitted a lot from
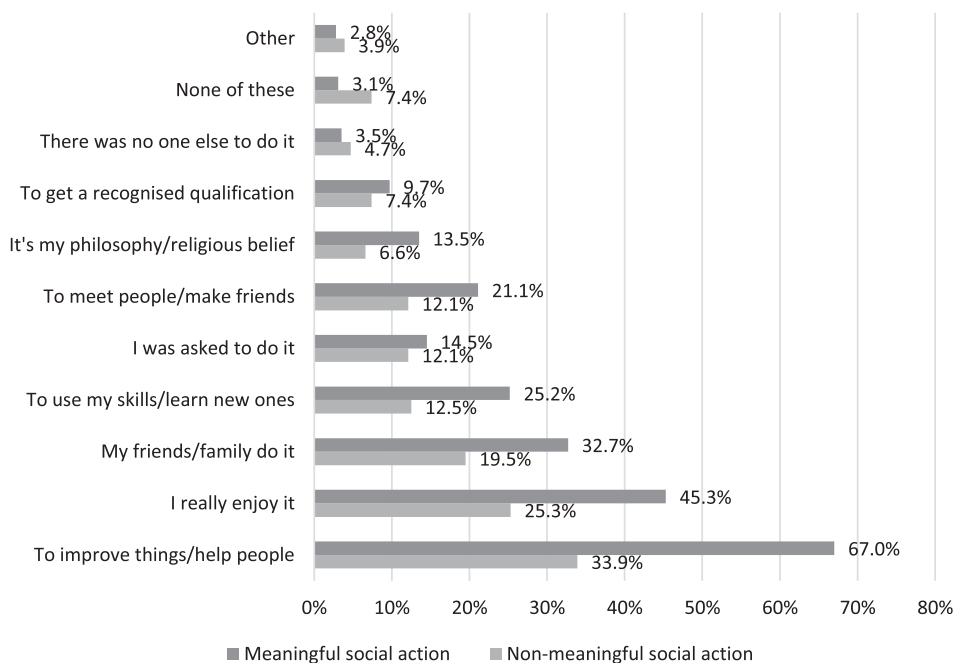

Figure 2. Participant motivations for civic participation.

participation (see Figure 3). Amongst those who felt that other people/the environment benefitted 'a lot' from their participation, meeting others/making friends, using skills/ learning new ones, getting a qualification, and feeling like there was no one else to do it were the most frequently cited motivations (see Figure 4).

The Importance of Family in Young People's Civic Participation

As already mentioned, existing research identifies a number of different potential motivations for volunteering. We asked our participants how they got involved in activities to help other people and the environment– allowing them to select more than one option. Figure 5 shows those participating in civic activities into two groups according to whether or not they met our criteria for meaningful civic participation. Family is the most frequently identified route into civic participation for both groups with 65.4% of those involved in meaningful civic participation selecting this option. School was the second most frequently cited route into civic participation, followed by friends.[2] Somewhat surprisingly, places of worship are a conduit to participation for under 15% of participants overall (11.7% for those involved in 'non-meaningful civic participation', and
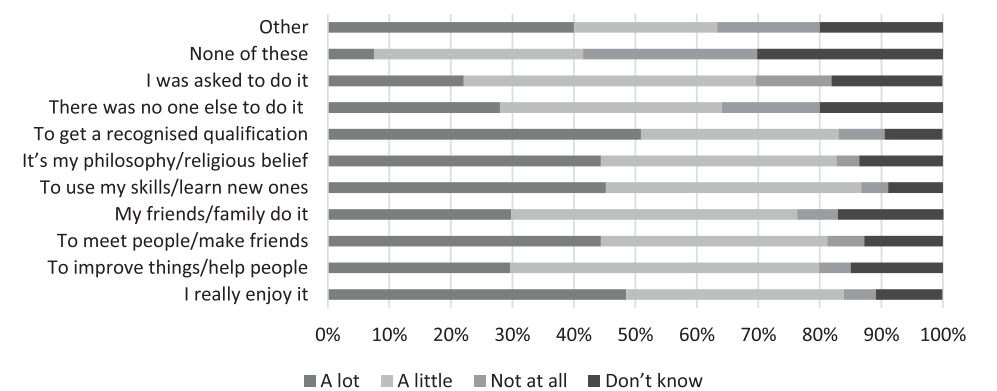

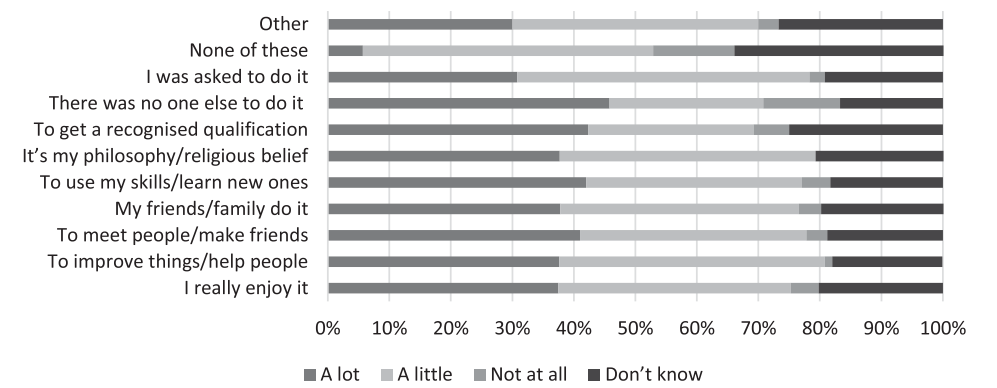**Figure 3.** Personal benefits according to motivations.

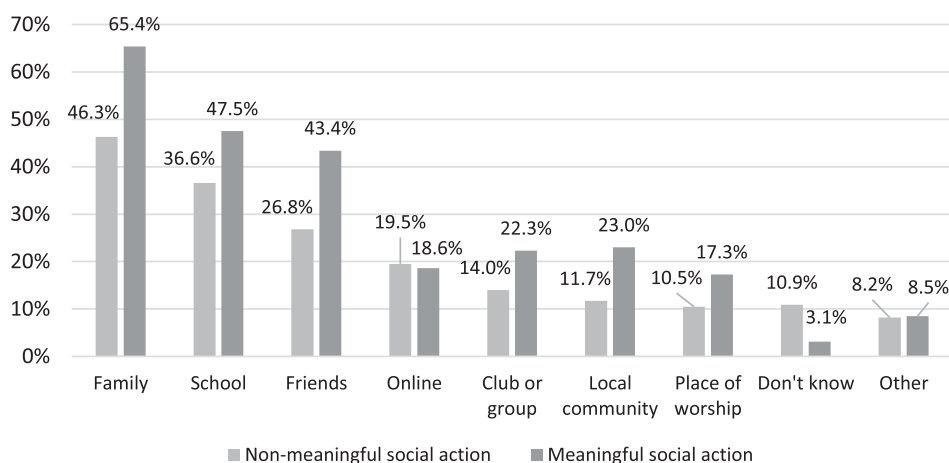**Figure 4.** Benefits to others/the environment according to motivations.

Figure 5. Routes into civic participation.

17.3% of those involved in 'meaningful civic participation'), and even when looking just at those who indicated that they are religious, this number only rose by three percentage points (compared to 1.0% of non-religious participants). Those meaningfully involved in civic activities were more likely to identify each of these various routes into civic participation (apart from getting involved online, which was the same for both groups). They were also less likely than those involved in 'non-meaningful civic participation' to say that they didn't know how they got involved.

Parents also appear to play a strong role in encouraging young people to take part in civic activities (Figure 6): 53.2% of young people said that their parents encouraged their involvement – higher than all other options including friends (29.1%) and teachers (24.3%). Participants were allowed to select more than one option when answering this question. The data suggest that parents play a stronger part than grandparents in encouraging civic participation (only 14.7% of young people said that they were encouraged by
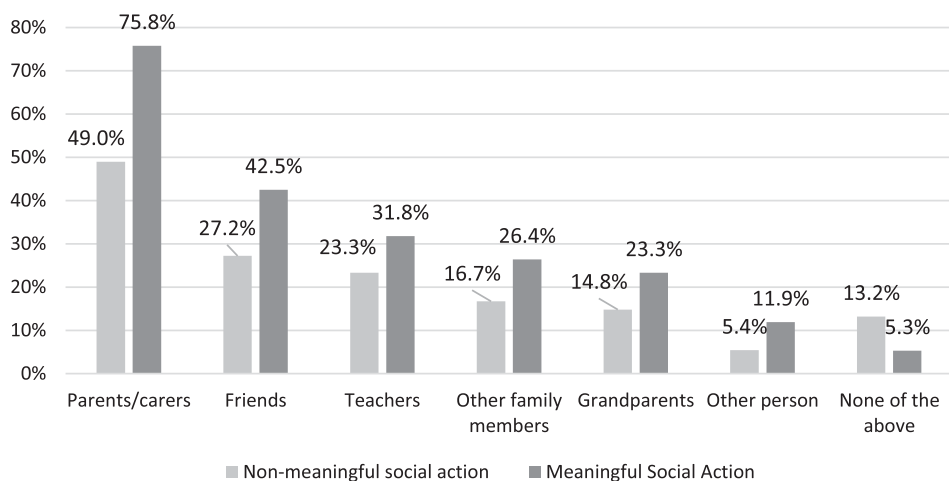

Figure 6. Who encourages young people to participate?.

their grandparents) but this may obscure the role of indirect transmission (influence via parents).

A Key Role for Mothers

We used a binary logistic regression model to explore variables that could be used to predict whether young people are engaged in activities to help other people or the environment and whether or not it fits our criteria of 'meaningful'. We used a stepwise (likelihood ratio) logistic regression to identify possible predictors of civic participation. A stepwise (likelihood ratio) logistic regression was used to identify possible predictors. All models report odds ratios (Exp(B)), standard error (SE), statistical significance, −2 Log likelihood (−2LL), Nagelkerke R^2, Hosmer & Lemeshow Test results, and classification accuracy. Table 3 shows the variables used to predict whether young people are engaged in activities to help other people or the environment – we have four types of variables, including socio demographic (gender, ethnicity, eligibility for FSM), familial (including relationships with the mother, father and the grandparent seen most), religious and educational factors. We calculated a measure for 'relationship with parents and grandparents' based on participants answers to questions about how much they have in common with, admire or feel they have learnt from them. In relation to grandparents – we asked our participants to focus on the grandparent they see most, and in 81% of cases this was a female grandparent – either their mother's mother or their father's mother. The measure for positive school experience was calculated using participants' level of agreement with three statements: my teachers know me well, my teachers are fair to me, and my teachers treat me with respect.

Table 4 shows the results of the logistic regression in predicting civic participation. Only two variables were found to be associated with whether the young people reported undertaking activities to help other people or the environment (either often or sometimes) or not. This suggests that the relationship with mother (as measured here) is the strongest predictor of young people's civic participation – the more positive this relationship, the more likely that they are engaged in activities to help others or the environment (an improvement in this relationship of one standard deviation was associated with a 39% increase in the likelihood that a child is engaged in a civic activity). This is followed by

Table 3. Variables used in predicting whether children are engaged in (a) civic participation and (b) meaningful civic participation.

Routes into civic participation	Variable
Socio-demographic	Gender
	Ethnicity
	Eligible for free school meals (FSM)
Family	Relationship with mother[a]
	Relationship with father[a]
	Relationship with closest grandparent[a]
Religion	Religious faith
School	Positive school experience[b]

[a]Object score calculated using categorical principal components from three relationship variables: In common with; Admire; Learn from.
[b]Object score calculated using categorical principal components from three school experience variables: My teachers know me well; My teachers are fair to me; My teachers treat me with respect.

Table 4. Results of logistic regression in predicting civic participation.

Dependent: All civic participation	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE
Constant	1.45	0.066	1.75	0.098
Relationship with mother[a]	1.39***	0.067	1.36***	0.067
Male (base = female)			0.70**	0.134
−2LL	1298		1291	
	$x^2 = 23.62$ df = 1 $p < 0.001$		$x^2 = 30.93$ df = 2 $p < 0.001$	
Nagelkerke R^2	3.2%		4.2%	
Hosmer & Lemeshow Test	$p = 0.850$		$p = 0.227$	
Classification accuracy	60.7%		61.1%	

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.
[a]Object score calculated using categorical principal components from three relationship variables: In common with; Admire; Learn from. Variables not included in model: Relationship with father; Relationship with closest grandparent; Positive school experience; Ethnicity; Religion.

gender – males are significantly less likely to be engaged in civic participation than females (30% less likely after controlling for their relationship with their mother). No other variables were found to be important predictors of civic participation – including religion.

Table 5 shows the results of a logistic regression in predicting meaningful civic participation. The first thing to note is that more variables were associated with young people's engagement in meaningful civic participation. Again, participants' relationships with their mother was the strongest predictor of meaningful civic participation, followed by the participants' gender. We also have three new factors that are significant in predicting meaningful civic participation. In model three we can see that a young person's relationship with their closest grandparent was also significantly associated with their civic participation (an improvement in their relationship with their closest grandparent of one standard deviation was associated with a 23% increase in the likelihood that they engage in civic participation after controlling for their relationship with their mother and their gender).

Interestingly, a young person's relationship with the grandparent they see most appears to reduce the importance of their relationship with their mother. Indeed, when considered together they appear to have very similar effects. Nevertheless, these results suggest the benefits of positive relationships their mother and the grandparent they see most is cumulative – having a positive relationship with both family members appears to double the likelihood that they engage in meaningful civic participation than if they only had a positive relationship with one family member.

A positive school experience (as indicated here by relationships with their teachers) also appears to be associated with young people's civic participation (an improvement in their positive school experience of one standard deviation is associated with a 17% increase in the likelihood that they engage in meaningful civic participation after controlling for their gender and their relationships with their mother and the grandparent they see most). The positive role of school reduces the importance of family relationships, but only very slightly (Table 5).

Lastly, young people's socio-economic circumstances (as indicated here by whether they report to be eligible for free school meals) also appear to be associated with their engagement in civic participation. Those whose parents are in receipt of state benefits are 34% less likely to be engaged in meaningful civic participation compared to young

Table 5. Results of logistic regression in predicting meaningful civic participation.

Dependent: Meaningful civic participation	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Variable	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE
Constant	0.48	0.070	0.56	0.099	0.56	0.099	0.57	0.099	0.60	0.102
Relationship with mother[a]	1.39***	0.076	1.36***	0.076	1.24*	0.085	1.19*	0.087	1.19*	0.087
Male (base = female)			0.72*	0.139	0.71*	0.140	0.70*	0.140	0.70*	0.141
Relationship with closest grandparent[a]					1.23*	0.089	1.22*	0.089	1.22*	0.089
Positive school experience[b]							1.17*	0.074	1.18*	0.074
Eligible for FSM (base = non-FSM)									0.66*	0.214
−2LL	1212		1207		1201		1197		1192	
	$x^2 = 19.78$ df = 1 $p <$ 0.001		$x^2 = 25.36$ df = 2 $p <$ 0.001		$x^2 = 30.85$ df = 3 $p < 0.001$		$x^2 = 35.50$ df = 4 $p < 0.001$		$x^2 = 39.58$ df = 5 $p < 0.001$	
Nagelkerke R^2	2.8%		3.6%		4.3%		5.0%		5.5%	
Hosmer & Lemeshow Test	$p = 0.965$		$p = 0.991$		$p = 0.334$		$p = 0.611$		$p = 0.543$	
Classification accuracy	67.4%		67.4%		67.4%		67.5%		67.5%	

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.
[a]Object score calculated using categorical principal components from three relationship variables: In common with; Admire; Learn from.
[b]Object score calculated using categorical principal components from three school experience variables: My teachers know me well; My teachers are fair to me; My teachers treat me with respect.
  Variables not included in model: Relationship with father; Ethnicity; Religion.

people not eligible for free school meals after controlling for family relationships, gender and school experience.

Ethnicity, Religiosity and Participation

Although they were not revealed as significant factors in the regression model above, there do seem to be some curious differences in levels of participation according to ethnicity and religiosity that deserve further consideration. Amongst our sample 41.2% identified as Christian, followed by 18.8% identifying as Muslim, 6.8% identifying as 'other' and less than 1% identifying as Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist; 29.8% of participants told us that they belong to no religion. Non-religious participants are less likely to participate in civic activities (24.2%, compared to 26.6% of Christians and 30.6% of Muslims), and less likely to say that it is meaningful (29.4% compared to 36.1% of Christians and 31.8% of Muslims) (Figure 7). This suggests that participants' religiosity is playing a key role.

In terms of ethnicity (Figure 8), overall levels of civic participation were highest amongst those participants who identified their ethnicity as white or 'other' (both at 72.5%), with a rate of 66.0% for those identifying as mixed, 59.4% of those identifying as black, and 57.4% of those identifying as Asian. However, meaningful civic participation
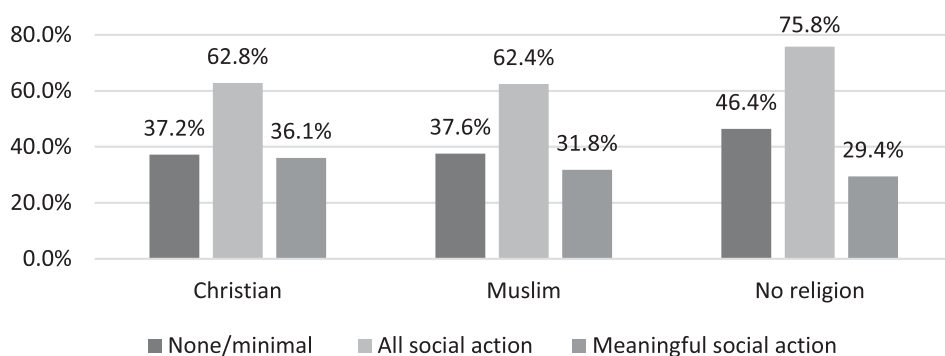
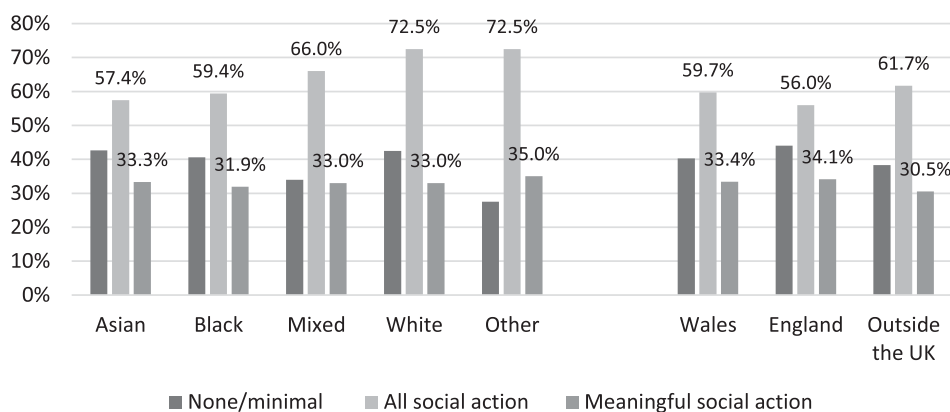**Figure 7.** Rates of meaningful civic participation according to religion.

Figure 8. Rates of meaningful civic participation according to ethnicity and birthplace.

was at a similar level across all ethnic groups, ranging from 31.9% for Black participants to 35.0% for participants identifying as 'other'. These data suggest that further exploration is needed to examine how social or cultural norms might be affecting rates of civic participation. Those born outside of the UK were more likely to participate in civic activities (61.7%) than those born in Wales (59.7%) or England (56.0%), but less likely to find it meaningful (30.5%, compared to 33.4% for those born in Wales and 34.1% for those born in England, see Figure 6). It could be that those born outside the UK are part of more mobile families who don't have embedded connections that could be fostering engagement for those with family living close by; this is something that warrants further investigation.

Discussion

The data presented here show firstly that there are extensive levels of civic participation amongst young people, but secondly the importance of families in fostering this participation. Our research reveals a link between civic participation and family ties, suggesting that there could be an intergenerational transmission of civic participation: those with a positive (self-reported) relationship with their parents and grandparents are more likely to participate meaningfully in activities to help other people or the environment. While we are yet to ascertain the direction of the relationship we feel this association is significant enough to warrant further investigation.

Parents seem to play a key role in providing a route into civic participation and encouraging our young participants to get involved – even more so than a positive experience at school or through friendships with peers. The data we present undermine the idea that strong families do not contribute to civil society – and suggest instead that strong bonds forged within the family can lead to linkages outside it. This calls into question the bracketing out of the family inherent in European conceptualizations of civil society and undermines the utility of the separation between 'public' and 'private'. It could indeed be the case that strong family ties support a healthy civil society. Some would argue that this finding fits the US libertarian framing of the family in civil society – but our data do little to support the assertion that the family belongs to the political right.

Our findings also reveal the gendered nature of civic participation – both at the individual level (with female participants being more likely to be involved, and more likely to find it meaningful), and it terms of intergenerational family relationships. Both relationships with mothers and (predominantly female) grandparents were identified as predictors for meaningful civic participation, suggesting that positive intergenerational relationships with female family members are associated with meaningful or mutually beneficial civic participation. This is suggestive of a matrilineal transmission of civic values with mothers and grandmothers as the most significant agents, and offers strong support to the arguments long made by feminist scholars for better recognition for the role of women in civil society (Fraser, 1997; Landes, 1988), and of the domestic or personal domain as a political space. Again, the steadfast distinction between public and private is blurred when we consider the ways in which family relationships are linked to civic participation, lending support to the notion that these private interests are what constitutes the public sphere (Fraser, 1997). Of course, this finding also raises questions about where fathers are located in this framework and why their influence is not visible in the data.

There are a number of caveats to consider. Our data only capture accounts of civic participation at a particular point in time, and cannot account for life-course issues. Existing research indicates that young people volunteer less than older adults, and so it is reasonable to assume that some of those surveyed will go on to become 'active' in civil society at a later date. The coordinates of religion and ethnicity add a layer of complexity to our findings and suggest that social and cultural norms may influence civic participation.

Of course, the way in which the family fosters these dispositions is complex, and requires further investigation. Whilst family seems to be significant for many of the participants in our study, questions remain about the level of influence within different families, and how family interacts with other potential influences like school and peer group. Political affiliation, religiosity and ethnicity all seem to be related to levels of civic participation, suggesting that a number of different social and cultural factors might be at play.

In conclusion, our data show that the family is far more important in developing a propensity for engagement in civil society than is commonly understood, even more important than the school perhaps. Correspondingly, it could be argued that closeness and bonds within the family lead to strong linkages beyond it. This article underscores the importance of undertaking more research to enhance understandings of the indices of the intergenerational transmission of values and behaviours linked to civil society, and supports a re-evaluation of the family home as a potential site of civil society engagement alongside a wider recognition of the role of women in civil society.

An important next step will be to undertake qualitative work with parents and grandparents to explore their orientations to civic participation and their accounts of intergenerational sharing to better understand the *process* of influence or sharing of values and behaviours. It will also be necessary to examine the gender implications of these findings in relation to other socio-economic contexts and in relation to other civically-oriented traits such as political engagement.

Notes

1. We modelled parts of our survey on the second wave of the UK-wide Youth Social Action (YSA) survey (commissioned by the Cabinet Office and Step Up To Serve, and undertaken by Ipsos Mori) to measure the proportion of 10–20 year olds taking part in 'social action' across the UK (Cabinet Office, 2015). We adapted the YSA 2015 categories of 'social action' (conceptualized in this article as civic participation), omitting 'tutoring, coaching or mentoring' – as we felt this would not be relevant to 13–14 year olds.
2. Our data reflect a much stronger role for family in stimulating civic participation (or 'social action') than the YSA (2015) dataset, in which educational institutions were the most common route into participation. This distinction between the two datasets could be due to the wider age range of young people surveyed by YSA. Older participants may feel less connected to their immediate family and may be living away from their childhood home. Furthermore, we also recognize that colleges and universities are often proactive in encouraging voluntary work and other kinds of civic participation, and that older teenagers and young adults may participate in these activities to boost their CV (Clary et al., 1998).

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