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What makes young people politically active?

Comparing activists in political parties youth factions, youth councils and at demonstrations.

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Introduction

Much of the attention to young people's political participation has focused on their turning away from formal politics in terms of voting (Fieldhouse et al, 2007), membership in political parties and their interest and knowledge of politics (Crick, 1998, Wilkinson, 1995). These accounts have been criticised for taking a too narrow understanding of what is political, and scholars have argued that young people opt out of *formal* politics because they have a different understanding, and as a consequence *seem* politically disengaged to political researchers (Jowell and Park, 1998, Henn et al., 2002, Stolle and Hooghe, 2004, Skelton and Valentine, 2003, Marsh *et al,* 2007). However, it seems as if all these accounts are answering the question of why young people *do not engage in formal politics.* This leaves us knowing "very little about what motivates actors to engage politically and what animates and drives the political behaviour" (Hay , 2007, p. 162), and particularly what motivates young people to engage politically (Haste and Hogan, 2006). Accordingly, this paper turns the question around and asks not only *why* young people are politically active, but also what the differences are between activists. The activists explored in this paper are those attending a political party's youth faction meeting or event, in this case Conservative Future (CF), an event organised by the British Youth Council or the 2010 NUS Fund our Future demonstration.

The focus on different acts also has methodological consequences and the data used for this paper is produced using a contextualised survey methodology developed by Klandermans et al. (2009) where both sampling and distribution of the survey occurs in the field. This allows for more specific questions to be asked that are crucial to be able to explore the differences and similarities between those who are politically active in different kinds of political acts. The paper will start with a short discussion on the focus on the active as well as a description of the cases selected to move on to a detailed discussion on the research design and the contextualised survey methodology. Subsequently the paper will move on to presenting exploratory descriptive analysis of the similarities and differences between those who engage in these acts. It must be noted that the dataset on which this analysis is performed on is not complete and more data collection is underway, therefore the results and conclusions should be seen as preliminary. The results show that that albeit the activists being similar in their backgrounds and united in their very high interest in politics, the answer to the question why they participate expose their differences. The attendants of the demonstration display a clear and not very surprising pattern of being highly motivated by a wide variety of types of motivations discussed in the literature from defending their interests to show solidarity, they are dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy and they attend the demonstration with their friends and family. Surprisingly however, they also think that their participation will be more effective than the other groups. In contrast, the motivations of CF and BYC attendants are less clear, where CF do not seem to be motivated by any of the motivations discussed in the literature whilst BYC are most strongly motivated by a sense of representing young people and raising public awareness of youth issues. Both groups are satisfied with democracy and more trusting of government and parliament than the demonstrators, but they are not as sure that their participation will have an impact on public

policy. Overall an inconclusive picture emerges of why young people are politically active and what differentiates activists, and the paper will conclude by discussing avenues for further research.

Activism- what activism?

The decrease in political participation that western democracies have observed in the past decades has been sharper among young people. Young people are not just less likely to be politically active than before, but they are much less likely than adults to vote (Fieldhouse *et al,* 2007), to be members of political parties, express party identification and show interest and knowledge about politics (Henn *et al,* 2002, Crick , 1998, Wilkinson , 1996). Some argue that it is a matter of a life cycle effect which explains the non-participation in terms of them being young and not well integrated in society, and that it will be something they grow out of when they get older (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009, Barnes et al., 1979). However, a closer investigation of the evidence for young people's 'opting out' of politics shows that although they have turned their backs on formal politics, they are active in new forms of engagement such as NGOs and single issue politics (Norris, 2004b). This has led others argue that there is something particular with this generation that has made them opt out of formal politics (Jowell and Park, 1998, Henn et al., 2002, Stolle and Hooghe, 2004, Skelton and Valentine, 2003). Marsh *et al* (2007) suggest that this particular thing is that young people have a different understanding of politics that is not merely decision-making or government, but a lived experience and part of everyday life and that their disenchantment from formal politics is a reflection of that formal politics does not recognise this kind of politics. This argument propose that that young people only *seem* politically disengaged because political scientists use a too narrow definition when studying political participation (Hooghe et al, 2004, O'Toole and Gale, 2008). Consequently, scholars have urged for a wider definition of politics that can encompass these lived experiences (Bang, 2011, Henn *et al,* 2002, Marsh *et al,* 2007, O'Toole and Gale, 2008)

Even if we accept the need to expand the notion of the political to encompass young people's participation, there are some potential limitations to this approach. Despite arguing for a wider understanding of the political it seems as if the research question they are answering is why young people *do not engage in formal politics*, and the answer is that young people have an alternative understanding of politics. This not only continues the separation of spheres where the formal sphere is for adults whilst the 'other' sphere is for young people. But also, as a consequence we know very little about what "motivates actors to engage politically and what animates and drives the political behaviour" (Hay, 2006, p. 163). Therefore this paper turns the question around and asks what makes young people politically active and what the differences and similarities are between those who are politically active in different forms.

However, even with this focus there is a question as to what political activism means. In response to the urging for a wider definition of the political as van van Deth (2001) argues that the repertoire (things people do) and the domain (where they could have influence) has increased to the extent that "the study of political participation has become *the study of*

everything" (p. 4). Ekman and Amnå (2012) have a similar concern and argue that we need to have a better typology of political *behaviour*. This suggests that with the expansion of the political, we cannot easily call all repertoires political *participation*. Even if repertoires are considered *political* it seems plausible to make a conceptual distinction between for example the political lived experiences and political decision-making. Some have made the distinction in terms of the domain, distinguishing between for example 'formal' and 'informal' or 'conventional' and 'unconventional', where young people are argued to engage in 'informal' and 'unconventional' political repertoires, but this once again maintains the separation of domains where young people's repertoires are seen in contrast to adults'. It seems therefore that an alternative strategy when interested in what makes people engage in different repertoires is to be concerned with the *nature* of the act rather than the *domain*.

One way of distinguishing between different kinds of repertoires is suggested by Klandermans (2004) in relation to participation in social movements. He proposes a typology of movement participation based on the time and the risk required to engage in different acts. Some require little time and little risk, such as signing a petition. In contrast, donating money is low risk but can be indefinite in the time at which one commits to the act. Others require little time but substantial risk, such as occupations or strikes. In contrast, working for an organisation is both time consuming and requires substantial effort. In a similar vein Verba et al. (1995) suggest that different kinds of political acts require different amounts and kinds of resources. For example to donate money to a political party or organisation, one clearly needs to have some spare money, but to stand for election one (also) needs political skills and knowledge, or to work for a political organisation one need to have spare time to give up to go to meetings etc. Not only does different kinds of participation put different demands on the participant, but as Verba *et al* (1995) points out this will lead to different people engaging in the different kinds of acts, and according to Klandermans with different "motivational dynamics"(2004, p.361) Following this it seems plausible that the resources required to engage in a certain repertoire makes for a better like-with-like comparison than comparing activities in the same domain, or even comparing different kinds of participation across domains.

The focus of this paper is on what makes young people politically active and how those who are active are different from each other. The political activities chosen are chosen on the basis on demanding similar levels of resources to engage in. For this paper, politically active is taken to mean attending a meeting or event organised by a political party's youth faction, in this case Conservative Future (CF) or the British Youth Council (BYC) or having attended the 2010 NUS Fund our Future demonstration (Demo). Measuring this kind of political activity has consequences for the research design, data collection method and case selection. The threshold for activity in attending a meeting could be seen as quite high and this derives from a measurement and validity issue of political participation that is further explained in the research design and methods section.

Despite youth scholars claiming there has been too much focus on formal political participation, surprisingly little has actually been said about young people in political parties youth factions. Lamb (2002), Cross and Young (2008) and Bruter and Harrison (2009) are

among the few exceptions focusing on young people engaged in political parties. Lamb (2002) revised Whiteley and colleagues general incentives model and found that a key incentive for young people was to have fun along with altruistic motives and specific interests. Cross and Young (2008) sampled a group of active Canadians and compared them to non-active, and found that the non-active were more suspicious to parties. Bruter and Harrision (2009) compare young party members from 15 European countries and find there are three types of members, the social- moral- and professional minded. For this research the youth wings of the three main parties in England were approached to participate in the research, but to date only Conservative Future has agreed to collaborate. The conservative youth wing has gone through various 'make overs', and over the years their relationship to the conservative party has varied (Lamb, 2002). In 1998, Conservative Future was formed as an umbrella organisation for Young conservatives, Conservative Students and Conservative Graduates. They organise campaigning, training and social events, and have a policy forum to discuss policy ideas.

Youth councils, form a relatively new opportunity for young people to participate and influence politics. In the UK youth councils and parliaments developed, on a larger scale and as they are understood today, as part of both the engagement and the co-governance agenda, but also due to the ratification of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (O'Toole and Gale, 2006). It is in particular article 12 that has set the agenda for young people's participation in politics as it states that children should have the right to influence decisions that affect them. As a result many local authorities have developed youth parliaments or councils to ensure that young people have a voice in the local setting. However, scholars have been critical of the implementation of youth councils. O'Toole and Gale (2006) point out the implantation process has been mixed and there is no standard institutional organisation for youth councils. This is reflected in Matthews (2001) findings where he shows that there are big differences in the relationship the youth council has to the adult institutions and the scope of the council. Milliken (2001) criticised the selection process, where the members are either self-selected or selected by a teacher or other adult because they are 'appropriate' to take part in adult affairs, and this can lead to the councils being made up by an elite group. As such they are not representatives, in any sense of the word, and accountable to a constituency (Milliken, 2001). Because of these inconsistencies in implementation, the British Youth Council which is the umbrella organisation for all youth organisations was chosen as the case to represent youth councils. The BYC were founded in 1948, long before the youth empowerment agenda and UNCRC, with the original purpose to unite young people against the forces of communism. In 1963 they became independent of the British government and became a charity uniting the youth councils and developing their own network of youth councils. They work closely with government, engaging in consultations, producing reports for the government and joining up with other organisations to lead campaigns on for example encouraging young people to vote.

Protest participation is of particular interest from a youth perspective as not only did Barnes *et al* suggest already in 1979 that young people are more likely to participate in the more radical kind of participation of protest, but this has in recent years received more

support in relation to the argument that young people are leading the shift from formal political participation to the 'new' (Marsh et al., 2007, Dalton, 2008, Norris, 2004a). The UK team of the *Caught in the Act: Contextualising Contestation,* has surveyed 12 demonstrations in the UK since 2009 covering a wide variety of issues from climate change to anti-fascism. From the demonstrations that have been surveyed by the UK Caught team (See Appendix 3) the student demonstrations of 2010 are the most directly relevant to young people and therefore serve as the most appropriate demonstration to use for this research. The student demonstrations were a result of mobilisation in opposition to the Coalition's plans for a hike in tuition fees and spending cuts in education. On November 10, a national demonstration against fees and cuts was called by the National Union of Students (NUS) and University and Colleges Union (UCU). This demonstration attracted over 50,000 participants (making it the largest UK protest since Stop the War in 2003) and culminated in the infamous Millbank 'riots'. The demonstration was unsuccessful in its demands and in 2012 the higher fees were introduced.

Research design and data collection method.

One of the biggest challenges with researching those who are politically active is that as the literature on political engagement has pointed out they form a minority of the general population (Stoker , 2006, Hay, 2007, Pattie *et al,* 2003). This has the consequence that in cross-sectional general population surveys, which are a popular method of exploring political participation (see for example; Almond and Verba, 1963, Putnam, 2000, Pattie *et al*¸ 2003, Whiteley, 2009), those who are active are likely to form a minority of the sample and be underrepresented (Saunders, 2011). Although this can to some extent be overcome through weighting or other sampling techniques, or may be an accurate reflection of the level of political activism and participation in the population, if we are interested in what makes people engage in certain acts rather than others cross-sectional surveys also present other limitations.

Firstly, there is an issue with the measurement of political activity in the survey instrument. Surveys ask the respondent for what political actions they have performed in the *past*, with different timescales such as for example *past five or ten years* (as in World Values Survey, wave 2010-12 and Barnes et al's study respectively), or *ever* (as in the European Values Survey). Barnes et al. (1979) point out this shows that there is an assumption of a link between past and future behaviour. Even if past behaviour can be taken to be an indication of the likelihood of similar future behaviour there is no certainty that this will be the case. The timing of the past behaviour is a particularly pertinent issue if it is the case that the nature and or level of political behaviour vary along the life cycle. For example, a survey item asking about past behaviour would misrepresent those who were more radical when they were younger but now mainly participate in more moderate forms or not at all. They will be perceived to be more politically active and in a wider range of activities, when in fact there may have been substantial changes in the kinds and intensity of political participation they engage in. Furthermore, this kind of question fails to take the frequency of the political

behaviour in to consideration where someone might have done something once or twice in the past, but never again. This person would however still be treated the same as someone who engages in the same act on a regular basis.

Secondly, Klandermans (2012) argues that despite the cross-sectional surveys collecting vast amounts of data, they strip data of contextual variation. They cannot ask specific questions about how the participant experience the political participation they engage in, other participants, their motivations to participate in that particular outlet, the goals of the outlet or the perceived efficacy of the particular outlet. All these indicators have been seen to be important for mobilisation for specific events, play a role in rational choice or selective incentive models and are, to a large extent, what differentiates the different outlets. Klandermans (2012) argue that "questions such as who participates in protests, why they participate, and how they are mobilised all lack, to date, comparative, evidence-based answers" (p. 233), and this to a large extent also holds true for political parties youth factions and youth councils.

In contrast to the decontextualized survey methods, Mason (2002) argues that qualitative methods have "an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts" (p. 1). However, there are also drawbacks when it comes to comparability and quantity of qualitative data. Quantitative data does not only more easily lend itself to presentation of descriptive statistics and summary statistics such as explorations of the distribution of the data which both form part of the interpretation of the data, but it also allows for systematic assessment of the *strength* of a relationship between variables (John, 2010). Furthermore, the favouring of qualitative methods in youth literature based on the critique of the definition of politics has led to a lack of quantitative data that explores young people (see for example Marsh et al, 2007, Henn *et al,* 2002, Weller, 2007, Lister, 2001, Lesko, 2001). This is furthered because many surveys start their sampling at the age of 18 (e.g. Hansard Audit and World Values Survey).

The *Caught in the Act* project has developed a survey method that attempts to merge the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative data by using a contextualised survey. To overcome the small sample and intensity issues of general population surveys they survey only those who attend protests by conducting the sampling and survey distribution in the field. This also overcomes the critique presented above of the past behaviour and frequency because it literally catches the respondent in the act of participating and ensures that only those who are *active in the same way* are the ones being surveyed. Some might of course be more active than others and attend a lot of events, therefore the survey instrument also includes a question of their past participation at events, asking both whether the participation has occurred in the past 12 months or ever and how many times in the past. Perhaps most importantly, the survey is highly contextualised. This not only enables questions that can give richer information about how the respondent perceives the event, what made them participate in the particular event they were surveyed at, to what extent they agree with the goals of the organisation or how effective they think the organisation is. But it also puts the researcher in the same space as the respondent when participating in the act and that way the respondent and researcher share the experience of the event.

There are however of course setbacks of this method as well. Firstly, there are practical problems such as gaining access to events and the limit to the number of events that can be mobilised and surveyed within a given time period. Secondly, statisticians would be concerned with the sampling strategy as well as interviewer bias. These are overcome by two measures in the research design. Firstly, interviewer bias is overcome by separating the task of respondent selection from that of actual interviewing, by employing 'pointers', or field supervisors, who randomly select the subjects for survey before directing interviewers to them. Secondly, to deal with representativity issues, in order to ensure that each demonstrator has an equal chance of being selected for the survey, pointers estimate the size of the demonstration at assembly and randomly select respondents in every n-th row where the n is determined on the basis of estimated numbers attending the demonstration. This minimises the coverage error and ensures that the entire demonstration is surveyed. For more details on the survey method see van Stekelenburg et al. (2012), and Klandermans (2009).

For the other events there have only been minor changes in this methodology, mainly due to contextual factors. Firstly, the events organised for CF and BYC are smaller and in a confined space and therefore a census of the attendants was feasible instead of selecting a random sample. Furthermore, these events are more structured than demonstrations so the survey is distributed at the point of registration or entrance to the place for the event, ensuring that everyone was surveyed.

Operationalizing dependent and independent variables.

Following the discussion above, the dependent variable of political activism in this paper is thus defined not only as political participation which demands a certain amount of resources, but it is measured as attendance at an event or a meeting. This is operationalized as attending an event organised by Conservative Future (CF), British Youth Council (BYC) and the Fund our Future student demonstration in 2010 (Demo).

What explains political participation has been given a lot of attention in the literature with various explanations being proposed. Lowdens et al. (2006) summarise these neatly in the CLEAR framework, where C stands for Can do, L stands for like to, E stands for enabled to, A stands for asked to and R responded to, the indicators for each set of variables is summarised in Table 1. Based on the literature an ideal type activist should score high on most of these variables, and be highly motivated and committed to the cause, their participation should be initiated and sustained by social networks that mobilise them and they should believe that their participation can make some difference.

The 'Can do' variables follow from the work of Verba *et al* (1995) on civic culture and Putnam's social capital (2000). This is also what is seen to be lacking among young people and has justified intervention in terms of civic education (Crick, 1998). Other resource variables relate to the biographical availability of the respondent such as education, income, socioeconomic class and ethnic background, and these are intended to measure social integration to society which increases the likelihood of someone being politically active.

Resources is a challenging variable to measure when researching young people because of their transitional nature and some will be more or less reliant on their parents depending on where in the life cycle they are. It is however still an interesting variable to compare within this group to explore whether differential resources matter among the active, but there will have to be modifications to which measurements are useful. Education levels for example would not be a very reliable measure because a young person's education level may not be a reflection of their choice to study longer, but merely a reflection of their age. Instead, some biographical data will be used as indicators of biographical availability but more importantly active engagement in organisations. Active engagement in other organisations is an indication not only of their social capital, but also how much time they would have to spend being active in the organisation in which they have been 'caught'.

The like to variables relate to motivations to participate and this is a variable that the contextualised survey is particularly well suited to measure. Constantini and King (1984) examined the literature on motivations and found eleven motivations which have been investigated by previous research. These include; strong party loyalty, issue concern, community obligation and networking for both social and professional reasons. Whiteley et al. (1993) express this in their general incentives model that take selective incentives, moral concerns and social norms as well as affective motivations in to account. Klandermans (2004) distinguish between identity, ideology and instrumental motivations to participate in social movements. These overlap with what Whiteley et al. (1993) develop in their general incentives model, where their benefits, costs and selective outcome incentives fall under Klanderman's instrumental category, whilst selective process incentives, altruistic motives, social norms and possibly expressive fall under identity, and the ideological motivations are the same. The importance of motivations and incentives could be seen to derive from rational choice theory, where action is a combination of opportunities and desires (Elster, 2007). As such, the motivations to participate are linked to the 'enabled to' variables, where the different kinds of events and acts offer different incentives to participate. Differential motivations (deriving from different incentives) could thus be part of the reason for why people engage in different acts and will therefore be paid special attention in this paper.

The importance of being asked to participate is a finding that has been found across the literature on political participation, from general political participation (Verba et al., 1995) to social movements (Morales, 2009). But it can also differ who is asking, and this shows differential embeddedness in social networks (Saunders et al., 2012). For this research, all of those who are being surveyed are mobilised, but it will be explored whether their mobilisation patterns are different, in terms of who had asked them to participate. Lowdens et al. (2006) further argue that the 'responded to' variables is not only that the participation will make a difference, but that they believe that their participation can make a difference. In other words their assessment of the efficacy of their participation. Norris (2004a) distinguishes between internal and external efficacy. The former has to do with the feeling that the government is responsive to their interests whilst internal is that the individual can affect government and the policy process. This is particularly interesting to explore for young people as it seems as if the alienation argument is particularly concerned with young people's

Table 1 The CLEAR framework variables

Type of variable	Variable	Measurement
Differential political acts	This is measured by surveying different political events. But also a question to explore overlapping activism.	Sampling method, and question asking whether they are
Can do: Resources	Biographical availability	Gender, Age, Social class
	Social Capital: How many organisations have you been an active member in in the past 12 months?	None One 2 or 3 More than 3
Like to: Motivations	Motivations: Respondent asked to what extent they agree or disagree that they participated in order to… (5 point scale from strongly disagree to strongly)	Defend my interests Express my views Pressure politicians to make things change. Raise public awareness Moral obligation.
Enabled to	N/A	N/A
Asked to: Mobilisation	Asked to: Who approached you to attend this event? (tick all that apply)	No-one Family Friends A fellow student Members of my organisation
Responded to: Efficacy and Alienation	Alienation: Respondent asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement. (5 point scale)	I have no influence over policies that affect me.
	Alienation	Events like these are the only way to influence
	Personal efficacy	My participation in [organisation] can have impact on public policy in this country.
	Organisational efficacy	How effective do you think the organisation/demonstration is in achieving its goal? (2 Goals)
	Satisfaction with democracy (10 point scale)	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the functioning of democracy in your country?
	Trust in institutions: (Not at all, not very, somewhat, quite, very much)	Government Parliament Parties

efficacy, where they do neither think that their participation in formal politics will make a difference, nor that the government is responsive to their interests. The comparison of those who are active in different kinds of outlets from the institutionalised parties to the non-institutionalised demonstrations allows exploration of how widely spread alienation is, if it is also something that those who engage in formal and semi-formal politics feel or if it is only what makes people engage in informal politics.

Results and Analysis.

The results presented here are based on crosstabs and chi squared tests conducted on the data that has been collected to date, and as such these results are exploratory and preliminary and the analysis will have to be replicated on the full dataset. In total there are 226 respondents from six events, two BYC, three CF and one demonstration.[1] There is an almost equal split between men and women in the sample, whilst women are in a slight majority in CF (69.2%) but in minority in both BYC and DEMO (45.3% and 41.8% respectively). A clear majority of all respondents are born in Great Britain. There is a significant difference in the age distribution between the groups where most of the BYC members fall in the youngest categories, whilst CF has a more equal spread across the ages, except for the youngest category. The attendants of the demonstration mainly fall in the 17-20 and 21-23 groups, which is not surprising considering it was a demonstration concerned to a large extent with tuition fees, and strongly mobilised by student unions and NUS. With regards to class there is overall a majority who identify as lower middle class. Not surprisingly a majority of CF attendants identify as upper middle class or lower middle class, whilst most of BYC and DEMO attendants identify with lower middle class and working class.[2]

Table two shows the distribution of the motivations variable and the indicators for different motivations. The question was phrased in such a way that the respondent indicates their agreement or disagreement on all types of motivations, this was measured by a five point scale that for this analysis has been collapsed in to three categories. All of the motivations except for defend interests came out as significant from the chi squared test, but it can still give an indication of the distribution across the groups. As seen in the right hand column (%of total of sample), none of the motivations came out as a clear strong motivation for the group of activists as a whole, the one receiving the highest percentage of agreement is to raise public awareness (52.6), but this is only slightly higher than the agreement with expressing views (51.2%) and pressure politicians (45.8%). Furthermore, the small differences between the 'agree' responses to these motivations and the neutral responses suggest that no motivation is particularly strong among the activists as a group. However, the strongest disagreement is with moral obligation (47.2), which is almost double compared to the frequency of the agree responses.

Breaking it down to the groups however a more complex image emerges. It is clear that the DEMO attendants identified the strongest with the motivations they were asked to respond to whilst the BYC and in particular the CF attendants did not identify with the

[1] The details of the data is presented in Appendix 1.
[2] For details on the biographical profile of the sample, see Appendix 2.

Table 2: Like to variables % per organisations				
	% BYC N= 79	%CF N=52	%DEMO N=95	% of total of sample N=226
Motivations defend my interests (not sig)				
Disagree	28	16.7	19.9	18,8
Neither	50	47.2	45.6	47,3
Agree	22	36.1	40.5	33,9
Express my views				
Disagree	5.6	2.3	1.2	3
Neither	54.9	52.3	34.9	45,8
Agree	39.4	45.5	64	51,2
Pressure politicians				
Disagree	21.3	15.2	0	10,1
Neither	47.5	51.5	38.8	44,1
Agree	31.1	33.3	61.2	45,8
Raise public awareness				
Disagree	8.5	36.8	3.6	12
Neither	40.8	34.2	31.3	35,4
Agree	50.7	28.9	65.1	52,6
Show solidarity				
Disagree	37.8	28.9	6	20,4
Neither	32.4	55.3	31.3	38
Agree	29.7	15.8	62.7	41,5
Moral obligation				
disagree	72.2	64.7	21.3	47,2
neither	22.2	29.4	36	30,1
agree	5.6	5.9	42.7	22,7
Represent young people				
disagree	9			
neither	22.4			
agree	68.7			
Stand for election				
disagree	72.9	32.4		57.3
neither	18.6	51.4		31.2
agree	8.5	16.2		11.5

motivations presented. In contrast, a majority of both BYC and CF attendants were neutral on three of the motivations (defend interests, express views pressure politicians) indicating that this was not a strong motivation for their participation. Furthermore, a majority of BYC attendants fell in to the disagree category for solidarity and moral obligation. The only motivation that a majority of BYC attendants agreed with was raising public awareness of youth issues, and this follows from the purpose of BYC as being a lobbying organisation for youth issues. As such however, it is surprising that the motivation to pressure politicians did not come out stronger.

This pattern could to some extent be a consequence of the survey questions being developed as a protest survey and therefore the questions follow from the social movement literature. However, as shown in the literature review there is crossover between the social movement literature and the general political participation literature in terms of the motivations. However, following the professional motivation presented by Bruter and Harrison (2009) and in consultation with the organisations other more specific motivations to the other outlets were included in those surveys. For BYC the motivation to represent young people and for both BYC and CF stand for election was included. A majority of BYC attendants (81.3%) agreed with the representation motivation, this is not surprising considering that some of the BYC respondents were Members of UK Youth Parliament and were thus elected as representatives. However, on the motivation to stand for election in the future neither of the groups agree, BYC disagree whilst the majority of CF attendants fell in to the neither category. The attendants at CF are perhaps the most interesting because they are neither agreeing nor disagreeing with any of the motivations measured here, giving the impression that they are rather blasé about their participation. Particularly interesting is that they do not join with the intention of standing for election in the future, as although this only being one of the functions of a political party, it is the one thing that sets political parties apart from any of the other kinds of political participation. This leaves us wondering what it is that makes them participate in the first place, and suggests that there is something else at work here that makes them participate and that the different motivations is not the main distinguishing feature between the activists.

Table 3: Active organisational involvement past 12 months % per organisation

	% BYC N= 79	%CF N=52	%DEMO N= 95	% of total of sample N=226
None	2.7	15.4	24.5	14.9
One	16	13.5	22.3	18.1
2 or 3	46.7	48.1	40.4	44.3
More than three	34.7	23.1	12.8	22.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

The CLEAR model provides us with other potential explanations for what makes people participate politically. Table three shows the active organisational involvement for the respondents in the past 12 months, or the ‘can do’ variables. This shows that almost 67% of the respondents were active in 2 or more organisations, indicating support for the social capital thesis that more organisational involvement also leads to political participation. This pattern holds true when breaking it down to the groups where a majority of the sample in each of the groups fall in to the 2 or more categories. However, looking at the ‘none’ responses for the demonstrators shows that a greater proportion of them were not members of other organisations. For both CF and BYC the respondents in the none category should probably be interpreted none except for the one they have been ‘caught’ in, and therefore can be combined with the ‘one’ category. As such the difference between the groups becomes more stark, where a greater proportion of the DEMO attendants than the other two groups were not active in any other groups.

Table four shows the ‘asked to’ variables in terms of the mobilisation channels. The question is a yes or no question and they can tick all that apply to who approached them to attend the event. Therefore the total percentage refers to everyone who has ticked that they have been asked by each of the indicators, rather than as a percentage of the indicator across all options. The result shows that the most common mobilisation channel is ‘friends’, closely followed by ‘fellow students’ and ‘no one’, but none of the mobilisation channels stands out with a clear majority. Looking at the breakdown of the groups it is possible to see that there are some big differences. CF are the most likely to not have been asked by anyone to participate, which may say something about their determination to participate politically. This is perhaps also reflected in the comparatively and surprisingly low percentage who have been asked by the members of the organisation. This again leaves us wondering what it is that makes particularly the attendants of CF to be politically active as they do not report that they have any strong motivation nor have they been asked to participate. BYC members are the most likely to be asked by their family, which may be an indication of socialisation from parents, but is also probably a reflection of the nature of BYC as an umbrella organisation for organisations that may have adult versions as well, such as for example St Johns Ambulance. Attendants of demonstrations are the most likely to have been mobilised by friends and fellow students, and considering the nature of the demonstration used in this sample this is not a surprising finding.

Table 4 Who approached you to join the organisation % of Yes responses per organisation

	BYC N=79	CF N=52	DEMO N=95	TOTAL N=226
no one	20,3	51,9	14,7	25,2
family	25,3	1,9	9,5	13,3
friends	19	11,5	42,1	27
fellow student	8,9	11,5	47,4	25,7
members of the organisation (not sig)	19	21,2	26,3	22,6

Table 5 shows the responded to variables operationalized as satisfaction with democracy, trust in national government, parliament and political parties and interest in politics. This table also reports on personal efficacy, alienation and organisational efficacy, operationalized as agreement with the statements presented in the table (for more details see table 1). For satisfaction with democracy there is a slight majority for very satisfied (37.3) compared to satisfied (33.5), but breaking this down to the different groups it becomes very clear that the demonstrators are the most dissatisfied with democracy (45.3), whilst not surprisingly a strong majority of CF are very satisfied with democracy (57.7). Interestingly however is that more attendants of CF are also dissatisfied with democracy compared to the BYC attendants despite the strong majority of the very satisfied. Not surprisingly the demonstrators are the ones who are the least trusting of government and parliament, CF are the most and BYC fall in the middle with no large majority in either of the responses. The trust in political parties is different, because overall 49.1% say that they do not trust political parties, this is in contrast to the spread of responses to the government and parliament, and interesting as political parties make up both of these political bodies. The pattern of trust is however not surprising, where a large majority of the demonstrators do not trust parties and a majority of CF most likely to trust, although 25% answer that they do not trust political parties which is somewhat ironic. BYC attendants are again more ambivalent to the levels of trust, but a small majority do say that they do not trust political parties, and this could potentially make up part of the explanation as to why they are not involved in a political party. Also not surprisingly, the sample as a whole report high levels of political interest (62.5 very, 25.9 quite), and a majority of the attendants in the different groups fall in the very or quite category.

Table 5 also reports the alienation, personal efficacy and organisational efficacy measures, including those which did not come out as significant in the chi square test to give an indication of the attitudes of the sample. Overall, the activists do not feel particularly alienated as 60.8% report that they disagree with the statement that they have no influence over policy that affects them. This pattern also holds when looking at the breakdown of the groups, where a majority of the respondents in all groups report that they disagree with the statement. For the second alienation variable the overall pattern is split more equally, where 42.5 % disagree with the statement whilst 40.3% agree. Breaking this down to the groups the pattern is similar for both BYC and DEMO but a clear majority of CF attendants disagree with the statement. Overall then it is possible to say that neither of these groups of activists report a high level of alienation, which is understandable as they are activists. The patterns of alienation are quite similar across the groups except for CF attendants that also see other ways of having influence the situation for young people than the way that they are participating.

In contrast, personal efficacy, measured as agreement with the statement that participation can have impact on policy, has a clear overall majority in the agreement category. The pattern is similar across the organisations as well, but surprisingly a larger majority of the DEMO attendants (80%) agree with this statement than the BYC and CF

Table 5 Responded to variables				
Satisfaction with democracy	% BYC N= 79	%CF N=52	%DEMO 95	% of total of sample N=226
Dissatisfied	5,5	13,5	45,3	24,5
Satisfied	38,4	28,8	32,6	33,6
Very satisfied	46,6	57,7	18,9	37,3
Don't know	9,6	0	3,2	4,5
Trust in national Government				
Not	39,5	11,8	53,8	39,1
Somewhat	34,2	15,7	33,3	29,5
Yes	26,3	72,5	12,9	31,4
Trust Parliament				
Not	28,9	8	51.1	33,6
Somewhat	38,2	20	33	31,8
Yes	32,9	72	16	34,5
Trust political parties				
Not	42.9	25	67.7	49,1
Somewhat	35.1	9.6	23.7	24,3
Yes	22.1	65.4	8.6	26,6
Interest in politics				
Not at all	3.9	0	2.1	2,2
Not very	7.8	0	15.8	9,4
Quite	39	5.8	26.3	25,9
Very	49.4	94.2	55.8	62.5
I have no influence over policy that affects me (notsig)				
Disagree	65.3	61.5	56.8	60,8
Neither	17.3	11.5	22.1	18
Agree	17.3	26.9	21.1	21,2
Events only way to influence situation for young people				
disagree	51.3	60	42.5	42,5
neither	13.2	28	17.2	17,2
agree	35.5	12	40	40,3
Participation can have impact on public policy in this country (not significant)				
disagree	9.2	17.3	3.2	8,5
neither	18.4	19.2	16.8	17,9
agree	72.4	63.5	80	73,5
Organisation effective in achieving goal 1				
not at all	4.2	14.9	15.6	11,5
somewhat	18.1	34	37.8	30,1
quite/very much	77.8	51.1	46.7	58,4
organisation effective in achieving goal 2				
not at all	6.8	6.4	27.8	15,7
somewhat	20.5	23.4	34.4	27,1
quite/very much	72.6	70	37.8	57,1

attendants (63.5% and 72.4% respectively). This is a surprising finding not only because the outcomes and impact of demonstrations are actually notoriously difficult to measure (McAdam, 1999, Giugni , 1998, Costain and Majstorovic, 1994), but compared to the other outlets the protests are the least embedded in the political system. As the youth faction of one of the governing parties, CF is the most embedded in the political process and closest to the actual centre of power. The fact that they then report the lowest (albeit admittedly still high) levels of personal efficacy is surprising, but may be a reflection of the Henn *et al's* (2002) argument that the youth factions are at the margins of the organisation where "their importance lies in their continuing ability to recruit and socialise a distinct elite rather than a mass network of supporters" (p. 172). As such it is still surprising that fewer of BYC attendants compared to the DEMO attendants report that they agree, because they directly lobby parliament and government on youth issues and have also been involved with consultations with the government. Perhaps most interestingly it seems as if the DEMO attendants are less alienated than the more institutionalised or formal types of participation, and therefore it is doubtful whether it can be seen as a driver for their 'alternative' participation.

Table 6 The goals of the organisations	
BYC	Goal 1: Providing opportunities for 11-18year olds to use their voice Goal 2: Providing creative ways to bring about social change
CF	Goal 1: Represent young people across the UK and their views in the Conservative Party Goal 2: To hold fun and exciting campaigning, policy, social action and fundraising events across the UK
DEMO	Goal 1: Defend rights of students and university staff" and the second one being Goal 2: Secure accessible further and higher education for generations to come.

The organisational efficacy presents some interesting patterns, where overall there is a majority who agree with the organisation being effective in achieving its goals. Breaking this down to the groups it is possible to see that a clear majority of both BYC and CF attendants believe their organisations to be effective in achieving its goals, whilst the DEMO attendants believe that the demonstration is effective in achieving the first goal, but not the second. This is clearly a reflection of the goals that can be seen in table 6 where the first one is "Defend rights of students and university staff" and the second one being "Secure accessible further and higher education for generations to come". This is particularly interesting in the context of the personal efficacy responses though, where the demonstrators were the most efficacious whilst here they are less sure about the efficacy of their activism.

Discussion and conclusion

The focus of this paper was to explore why young people are politically active and what differentiates those who are active in different ways, focusing on attendants of events organised by Conservative Future, British Youth Council and attendants at the NUS Fund our Future demonstration in 2010. There are challenges when studying those who are politically

active, not only are they in a minority of the population, but as this paper argued that it is not enough to look at the scope of participation, but it is also important to consider the nature of the act. This has consequences for the research design and the data collection method, and this paper presented data collected using the contextualised survey method developed by Klandermans et al (2009).

Taking an ideal model of an activist that emerge in the political participation literature it seems as if there are three central characteristics. They are committed and motivated to participate in their cause, their participation is initiated and sustained by social networks that mobilise them, and they consider their participation to make a difference. Overall, it is a complex image that emerges from the data where the demonstrators fit well in to this image, whilst BYC attendants fulfil some of the criteria by being somewhat motivated, mobilised and efficacious, CF attendants barely fulfil the efficacy criteria. This could be a reflection of the different types of participation that are explored here where for both BYC and CF the participation is part of an institutionalised context that ‘pulls’ the attendants to the events as part of their membership in the organisation. In contrast the demonstration is a one off event, which may have a higher threshold to participate and therefore requires stronger motivations and a stronger ‘push’ to participate.

Even if the level of institutionalisation to some extent can explain the different patterns of the characteristics of the activists, there are two other issues that arise from this analysis with regards to the BYC and CF attendants. The image that emerges of the BYC attendants is one of altruistic motivations to participate and they display a lot of the characteristics that are desirable of an active citizen. However, as such their aversion to stand for election, and distrust for political parties could be seen as worrying. They seem to be happy to work along the borders of and with formal politics, but do not wish to be involved in party politics. This on its own would not be worrying as we neither can expect everyone to be a member of a political party, nor might it be desirable, but combined with the fact that these politically interested altruistically motivated young people who are willing to be active display an aversion to *political parties*, not *politics*, is cause for concern.

The CF attendants are particularly perplexing as they are not particularly motivated, not asked by anyone to participate, and think that there are other ways of influencing the situation of young people than through their organisation. Linked to this is the personal efficacy that for CF attendants is lower than for the other groups, which may be a reflection of the role that CF has in the party organisation as more of a recruitment and socialisation mechanism than feeding in to relevant policy (Henn *et al*, 2002). However combined with the motivations that the CF attendants display it seems like there is a mismatch in the purpose of the organisation and why their members are active. It may be that the motivations measured and analysed here simply did not capture the motivations of party members, although some have been found among young party members in other studies (Lamb, 2000, Bruter and Harrison, 2008). This may also be a reflection of the limitations of the sample in terms of numbers and it only being made up by CF attendants, but it is impossible to say until more data has been collected. As it stands, it is difficult to understand what it is that makes young CF members to be politically active.

To be able to fully answer the question and understand why young people, in particular CF members, are politically active further data collection and analysis needs to be conducted. The survey does include other indicators that could perhaps help explain their activism. For example there is an open ended question asking why they participated in the event, which was not included here as it remains to be coded, but this could potentially contribute to better answer why they participate. Furthermore, questions about how they find the event and other members could better capture the social elements of the activism, which in the motivations presented here is not measured. Furthermore, parental socialisation may also play an important role, as it was seen to be a mobilising factor for BYC attendants, and there also a question asking whether their parents were politically active. These are some of the avenues that could be explored to fully answer the question what makes young people politically active.

Appendix 1: The surveys and sample				
Event	**Attendants**	**Response rate**	**Frequency**	**% of sample**
Total BYC			79	35
Total CF			52	23
Total demo			95	42
TOTAL SAMPLE			**226**	**100**
BYC- UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting, Nottingham	225	13%	44	15.5
BYC- Annual Council Meeting, Cardiff	170	25%	35	19.5
CF Meeting	100	29%	27	11.9
CF PG reception	35	17%	6	2.7
CF East Midlands Conference	34	55%	19	8.4
NUS demonstration	(estimated) 50000	15%	95	42

Appendix 2: Biographical profile across organisations and the total of the sample				
	% BYC N= 79	%CF N=52	%DEMO 95	% of total of sample N=226
Gender Female	41.8	69.2	45.3	49.6
Age 0-16	45.6	1.9	0	16.4
17-20	44.3	28.8	31.6	35.4
21-23	3.8	26.9	46.3	27
24-26	5.1	21.2	12.6	11.9
27-29	1.3	21.2	9.5	9.3
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
Social class Upper class	0	2	1.1	0.9
Upper middleclass	14.5	41.2	17.4	21.9
Lower middle class	36.8	33.3	38	36.5
Working class	31.6	13.7	30.4	26.9
Lower class	2.6	2	4.3	3.2
None	14.5	7.8	8.7	10.5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
Country born				
GB	96.2	94.1	89.4	92,9
EU	2.5	0	5.3	3,1
Non EU	1.3	5.9	5.3	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Appendix 3: Demonstrations covered by UK Caught in the act.				
Climate march 2009		1000	243	24.3%
May Day, 2010		1000	178	17.8%
Take Back Parliament, 2010		1000	351	35.1%
No to hate crime, 2010		1000	169	16.9%
Unite against fascism, 2010		1000	194	19.4%
Fund our Future, 2010		1000	147	14.7%
Climate march, 2010		1000	360	36%
Second student demonstration, 2010		1000	98	9.8%
Million women rise, 2010		1000	178	17.8%
TUC, 2010		1000	211	21.1%
Occupy London, 2011		1000	144	14.4%
London Pride, 2012		1000	192	19.2

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