Democracy & Education

Justice Citizens, Active Citizenship, and Critical Pedagogy
Reinvigorating Citizenship Education

Keith R. Heggart (University of Technology Sydney),
Rick Flowers (University of Technology Sydney)

Abstract

Recent surveys have indicated a worryingly low level of support for democracy among Australian youth and around the world. For example, in the 2017 Lowy Institute Poll, 36% of Australians indicated that, in some circumstances, a nondemocratic government is preferable. Such concerns, while hardly new, have triggered calls for more civic education and civic involvement. Linked to these concerns are discussions about the way new media (including mobile accessibility, the internet, and social media) is reshaping our understandings of public participation in democracy, especially the way that we conceive of the public sphere. Schools are often seen as important sites for the development of civic values in democratic countries. Having the skills and knowledge to navigate the public sphere in a critical way as well as contribute to it meaningfully is an important part of any activist approach to citizenship education. This paper presents one such example of radical citizenship education, Justice Citizens, and presents a framework that fellow critical educators might use to encourage young people to contribute to the public sphere not as citizens-in-waiting but as justice-oriented citizens.

Submit a response to this article
Submit online at democracyeducationjournal.org/home

Read responses to this article online
http://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol27/iss1/2

Introduction

THERE ARE GOOD reasons to remain vigilant, indeed, increasingly concerned, about the fragility of democracy (Klaas, 2017; Kurlantzick, 2011; Taub, 2016). A sample of reasons can be seen in the rise of populist movements in longstanding parliamentary democracies (Katsambekis, 2017); recent surveys that indicate young people are less supportive of democracy than they have been in the past, as well as ignorant and apathetic about their role in civil society (Foa & Mounk, 2016; Oliver, 2017); and the abiding dominance of oligopolies in both mass media and social media and intensifying debates about how independent or "fake" news reporting is.

KEITH HEGGART is a PhD student at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. He is currently in the final stages of his thesis, *The Possibilities and Challenges for "Thick" Citizenship Education among Australian Stage 5 Students in the Digital Age.* His research interests include civics and citizenship education, student activism, and the use of technology to develop more democratic forms of learning and communities.

RICK FLOWERS is a senior lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. His research interests include citizenship education, popular education and food/cultural pedagogies. His most recent coauthored book is *Food Pedagogies.* In addition to 15 book chapters, journals in which he has published include *Geoforum; Gender, Work and Organisation; Studies in Education of Adults; Portal Interdisciplinary International Studies; Australian Adult Learning;* and *German Continuing Education.*

Despite these risks, there are still new, vibrant, and substantial social movements that suggest a high-level political consciousness among young people (Davies, Ryan, & Pena, 2016). While we acknowledge the serious risks facing democracies, we choose to focus on how people's engagement with civil society and democracy is not necessarily weaker but has changed (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014; Quintelier, 2007). For example, traditionalists might brand online organizing as mere *clicktivism* and *slacktivism,* but techno-optimists argue that Web 2.0 and 3.0 are enabling new ways for digital organizing and present examples of new ways that young people engage in political mobilization and community activism (Gauntlett, 2013; Gerbaudo, 2018; Gladwell & Shirky, 2011; Mora, 2013; Tufekci, 2017). Or when surveys show that young people have less faith and trust in traditional parliamentary democracy institutions, this should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they prefer authoritarian forms of government. It could mean they prefer alternative approaches to democracy that, for example, are more direct and participatory (Fahmy, 2017; Roberts, 2015).

While the nature and value of these new forms of civic engagement are still being explored and debated, it is clear that schools will continue to have an important role in developing active and informed citizens. Civics and citizenship education in schools around the world are contested spaces (Haste, 2010; Tudball & Henderson, 2014), with programs ranging from didactic, minimalist approaches to more active, student-centered maximal ones (McLaughlin, 1992; DeJaeghere & Tudball, 2007; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, & Agrusti, 2016; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). But even maximal activist approaches to civics and citizenship education have had only limited utility in terms of preparing young people to take part in and shape public discourse in the public sphere and via social media. In other words, they do not recognize the changes that have been wrought on society—and those that will continue to be—due to Web 2.0 and 3.0 social media and mobile technology. While so-called digital citizenship programs are prevalent in many education systems, these are often little more than rules about staying safe online and are certainly not adequate preparation for young people to participate in the public sphere (for an example, see the website of the Australian Office of the eSafety Commissioner, https://esafety.gov.au/). More recent approaches to citizenship education are beginning to consider what such an approach might look like (Pathak-Shelat, 2018), and it is in this context that we locate our scholarship.

Drawing on Justice Citizens, a participatory citizenship education program that took place with Year 9 students in Penrith, New South Wales, Australia, this paper develops a framework for what a radical citizenship education program for young people might look like, in this social media age. This program is called Justice Pedagogy, and it draws from the traditions of critical pedagogy, maximal citizenship education, and complexity thinking to describe a more complete model for the development of active and informed citizens. By taking inspiration from several key ideas of complexity thinking, it is possible to reinvigorate both critical pedagogy and citizenship education. This reinvigoration includes much-needed and thoughtful consideration of the elements of a radical citizenship education that will empower young people to be agents in online spaces. This paper presents a brief overview of the Justice Pedagogy framework and discusses, in detail, two components of that framework, critical literacy, and advocacy for systemic change, which are directly linked to young people's online engagement in civil society and the public sphere.

Civic Deficit and the Fragile State of Democracy

It has become common to see newspaper articles claiming that democracy is in a parlous state (Ashbrook, 2018; Howe, 2017; O'Malley, 2016). The annual Lowy Poll, which includes an examination of the attitudes of young people in Australia, identifies increased unhappiness with not only Australia's elected leaders but also the very nature of democracy (Oliver, 2017). In the 2017 poll, 36% of Australians indicated that they would support a nondemocratic form of government in some circumstances. This mirrors research indicating that there is less support for democracy worldwide than in the past (Foa & Mounk, 2017), although it should be noted that other commentators have suggested this research is unnecessarily alarmist (Voeten, 2016). Certainly, the development of new forms of extremist groups (Nagle, 2017; Rydgren, 2005) and the increasing popularity of authoritarian forms of government (in Europe, for example, see Zalan, 2016, or in the Philippines, Curato, 2017) are both seen as evidence of the departure from democratic ideals and institutions and cause for concern among academics and politicians (Diamond, Plattner, & Walker, 2016).

These concerns are often presented as part of wider anxieties about civil society. Robert Putnam's body of work about the state of social capital identified the decreasing number of people joining membership organizations and posited a weakening of civil society as a result (Putnam, 2001; Sander & Putnam, 2010). Putnam's theorizing has been highly influential and continues to inspire empirical research that points to the fragility of civil society, public sphere and democracy (Field, 2016; Osborne, Baldwin, Thomsen, & Woolcock, 2017). One important membership organization that can be included in studies about the strength of social capital and civil society are unions (Brook & Frolic, 2015; Holgate, 2015). And in this case, we see plummeting numbers of the trade union movement in many countries (like Australia, see Toscano, 2015). Mainstream political parties in Australia are struggling to attract members as they did in the past, something that has been used as evidence of the increased disinterest of Australians in the way they are governed (Cross & Gauja, 2014). Traditional forms of media, and especially print media, are seeing their circulation figures shrink, even as they are criticized for remaining beholden to vested interests and bias (Muller, 2017). And, of course, there is the challenge faced by all members of society, but especially young people, in determining what is and isn't "fake news" (Notley & Dezuanni, 2017) in the increasingly diverse public sphere.

Ascertaining the validity—or even finding a common ground to engage in public debate—of any of these claims is a challenge, and certainly more research is required to determine if and how attitudes to democracy are changing, both at a global and a local level. A regular feature of these claims, however, are associated concerns regarding the civic involvement of young people

(Armingeon & Guthmann 2014) and what has become known, in Australia, at least, as *the civic deficit.* This deficit, according to Ewins (2006), is characterized by a lack of knowledge about democratic mechanisms and institutions, which is then compounded by young people who are apathetic toward democracy, both democracy in practice and as an institution.

When faced with the list of challenges outlined above, it is perhaps not surprising that Katsambekis (2017) and Crouch (2016) argue that we now live in post-democratic times, at least in the Western world.

New Forms of Democratic Engagement

New forms of democratic engagement—or at the very least, reimagined forms of democratic engagement—are both alive and well in the world. The Arab Spring and Arab Thaw (Davis, 2016) are examples, but so too is the #Occupy movement (Gamson & Sifry, 2013) and also the global Women's Marches that were organized in response to the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States (Strom & Martin, 2017). Closer to home, the high participation rate in the recent marriage-equality postal survey in Australia indicates a level of civic engagement that certainly contrasts with the previous concerns about a civics deficit and democratic decline. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017), young people (between 18 and 19 years of age) were more likely to participate in the postal survey than any other age group, suggesting that they are very much actively involved in civic life, at least in this area. In May 2018, with the third-highest voter turnout for an Irish referendum, a robust debate and campaign about abortion concluded and polls suggested that 87% of those aged 18–24 voted for repeal (McDonald & Graham-Harrison, 2018).

These events (and the many others like it that have taken place recently around the world) are indicative that, at least in certain circumstances and for certain causes, young people (and for that matter, older cohorts of the population too) remain involved and committed to democratic participation and action. These examples are supported by recent research conducted in Australia that indicated that there is increased participation and political awareness among students (Fraillon et al., 2017). This awareness regarding justice, equality, and democratic action (and we are not suggesting that all members of society conceive of these ideas in the same way, nor are we suggesting that these examples have been uniformly successful in achieving their goals) suggest that there is a level of political consciousness present in Australia despite claims of a democratic decline. At this point, then, one must ask why there are such varied accounts of democratic health. How can it be both in decline and also flourishing?

One possible answer to that question lies in the form of civil society and political engagement that young people and a new generation of activists now value. This argument suggests that the decline in civic participation is because people are participating in civil society in ways that are not captured via traditional measures. For example, while Putnam astutely identified the decrease in membership numbers of organizations like the

Australian environmental advocacy group Wilderness Society, it does not necessarily follow that one can assume from that single data point that people care less about the preservation of the natural environment. Instead, it might be the case that young people engage with organizations like the Wilderness Society in new ways—for example, by liking their Facebook page or following them on Instagram. Whether these new forms of participation constitute active citizenship is debatable (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014), and we discuss their efficacy in engendering social change in relation to Justice Citizens later in this paper.

There certainly appears to be evidence that grassroots social action can be mobilized. One example, from the environmental advocacy movement, is that of more than 140,000 people turning out across over 55 towns and cities in Australia for the People's Climate March shortly before the Paris Climate Summit in 2015 (ABC News, 2015). Rallies and marches calling for action are, of course, not a new form of civic engagement. They have been a staple of political action groups and social movements for more than a century. However, something that is new, and worthy of close examination, is the role that social media plays in developing the impetus for action, as well as the dangers that are inherent in the increasingly ubiquitous mobile technologies that are often deployed to initiate or support social movements (Fuchs & Sandoval, 2015). While this is significantly more involved than simply liking or sharing social media posts, as discussed before, it is possible that many of the participants had no or only limited affiliation with membership organizations and instead only became engaged with the issue through their own involvement in debates, often taking place in various digital public spheres and across social media (Gunningham, 2017). Such an approach, with its focus on individual causes rather than belonging to an organization, has been described as "networked individualism" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 8).

The New Possibilities and Challenges of Social Action with New Media

The ubiquity of mobile technology has meant that social media has become more important in the lives of people, and especially young people. In Australia, young people are often classified as avid users of social media (GFK Bluemoon, 2011), with most of them spending many hours per week in front of screens. This increased use of mobile technology and social media is in the process of altering the way that we both use and create media, and young people are in the vanguard of this change. Some of the earliest advocates to champion the rapid growth of the internet in the 1990s as the dawn of a new era of public participation were Rheingold (2000) and O'Reilly (2000). The next generation of techno-optimists included Gauntlett (2013) and Shirky (2011), who have argued that what is exciting and significant about the Web 2.0 generation of new media is the potential it offers for "ordinary" people to be authors and thereby be creative. These opportunities, in turn—so the argument goes—strengthen community, social capital, and participatory democracy. There is no shortage of activists, consultants, and scholars who remain

optimistic about the possibilities that new-media technologies offer to activists not only to mobilize large and diverse numbers of people for social change campaigns but also to enable participatory and emancipatory learning strategies. Countless websites and books describe how to plan an online or cyber-activist campaign and make grand claims about their grassroots and revolutionary potential.

There are, however, a growing number of kindred spirits in critical pedagogy, committed to emancipatory learning and social action, who are sceptical and critical of these claims. Sceptics argue that closer attention should be paid to the nature of action and learning in cyber-campaigns. Some use terms like *slacktivism* and *snarktivism* to suggest that getting millions of people to retweet, sign a prewritten petition, or forward a YouTube clip does not constitute active, let alone critical, learning and pedagogy. Furthermore, techno-sceptics such as Mendelson (2012), Taylor (2014), and Tkacz (2014) have asserted the new-media landscape is characterized by the same high level of dominance by large corporations as the traditional media landscape and so argue that claims about Web 2.0 platforms such as YouTube, Wikipedia, and Facebook being harbingers of more grassroots democracy and community-building are inflated. Allmer, Fuchs, Kreilinger and Sevignani, (2014) have raised concerns about platform, or surveillance, capitalism, in which customers of platforms like Facebook, for example, do the labor for Facebook by creating the content which drives profits. In a more sinister way, the data that companies like Facebook gather about users' locations, preferences, and friendship groups is often sold to advertising and marketing companies. Another, related, concern is the way these social media platforms have been used by various agencies to attempt to shape public opinion. For example, Twitter estimates more than 50,000 bots were active in the lead-up to the U.S. general election in 2016 (Glaser, 2018).

In addition, the nature of discourse and argument that takes place online has been problematized. Speaking about the public sphere, and specifically its online presence, Flichy (2010) and Gladwell (2010) have both argued that the lack of face-to-face contact means that ongoing political engagement is unlikely to be sustainable. Fuchs (2014) has also identified the prevalence of intimidating and "fake" discourse that takes place online, and Papacharissi (2010) has suggested that the notion of the public sphere might need to be reconsidered to better reflect the public/private nature of online communication and also the echo chambers that form as consumers of the media curate their own feeds and limit the diversity of discussion.

Despite the opportunities afforded by social media, there are unique challenges present in civil society brought about by these new media and technologies. As stated earlier, young people are among the highest users of social media, in Australia and around the world. As social media and online spaces continue to grow and become increasingly important, it is essential to question how education systems are preparing young people to actively engage in these spaces. If an increasing part of our lives take place in online spaces, then surely there is a necessity to teach young people to behave as active citizens in those spaces.

Schools as Sites of Resistance and Challenge

The alleged decline in democracy and concerns about young people's apathy and lack of knowledge have sparked calls for educational systems to better prepare young people to participate in democracies. This is not a new phenomenon, and we agree with Ghazarian, Laughland-Booy, and Skrbis (2017), who argued that while young people might be interested in politics, they are unsure how to participate. Educational systems around the world, including the UK, Australia, Singapore, and South Korea, have, over the last two to three decades, placed the development of active and informed citizens as one of the central goals of the various education systems. There is, however, disparity among these approaches (Kerr, 1999), in particular how young people are conceived of as citizens (Veugelers, 2007). For example, in Australia, despite the emphasis on "active citizens," young people are more often seen as "citizens in waiting" (Arvanitakis & Marren, 2009), rather than agents capable of enacting positive social change. Veugelers (2007) has explained this as the tension between schools' efforts to reproduce existing societal norms and efforts to teach students to engage in practice that make society more equitable and just; such an approach often challenges the status quo.

Within the curriculum area of civics and citizenship, this tension is particularly keenly felt. Whether civics exists as a separate subject, as it does in Singapore or in the UK, or is integrated across other subject areas, as it is in New South Wales, Australia, it is generally possible to place the individual programs along a continuum between maximal and minimal (McLaughlin, 1992) approaches. On one hand, minimal approaches are those that generally address the civics side of the curriculum; that is, there is an emphasis on teacher-centered, didactic learning, and the content is usually limited to the nature, mechanisms, and institutions of government. Maximal approaches, on the other hand, are more likely to embrace activist and experiential notions of learning, with an emphasis placed on community and grassroots action and organizing. This maximal/minimal dichotomy is a useful shorthand for referring to different approaches to civics and citizenship education, but we must also note that it deals almost exclusively with public notions of citizenship and ignores more recent work that takes into account citizenship within the private sphere (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003).

Maximal approaches to civics and citizenship have much in common with critical pedagogical approaches to education, as has previously been explored by DeJaeghere (2006, 2008). In particular, critical pedagogy emphasizes the capacity and desire of students to shape curriculum, rather than have it determined for them (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988, 1992; McInerney, 2009). There is also, in both critical pedagogy and maximal civics and citizenship education, a focus placed on unmasking domination and subordination and working to engender positive social change in communities and more globally.

There is a rich and diverse history of maximal approaches to civics and citizenship education in Australia. One of the most well-known examples is the ruMAD (Are You Making a

Difference) program, established by David Zyngier (2003, 2007), which seeks to equip young people with the skills and understanding required to be agents of social change within their local communities. This program, which has been used in more than 1,000 schools across Australia, emphasizes the development of connections and real-world learning. As part of ruMAD, students might do everything from writing to their local council to engaging in the cleanup of a local creek.

However, one aspect programs like ruMAD (and other similar maximal citizenship education programs that exist in Australia) could give more priority to is strengthening the capacity of students to participate in the public sphere, specifically in online spaces. Even those programs that make use of digital tools could prioritize more the teaching of young people to engage carefully and critically in the digital arena or the public sphere. For example, they might make and record films to send to peers in other countries, as they did in the Global Connections program (Schultz, Guevara, Ratnam, Wyn, & Sowerby, 2009)—but we should note this is not the same as equipping young people with the skills to engage in digital organizing and advocacy.

This is not to say that there are not digital citizenship programs in place in schools around Australia. Indeed, there has been a rapid increase in such programs as parents and teachers have expressed growing concerns about the safety of young people online. These programs generally encourage students to adopt a range of safe behaviors and adopt good security practices, like protecting their passwords. However, while these programs have a place, it is certainly not what we consider to be digital citizenship. Just as maximal approaches to citizenship in the nondigital sphere need to be about more than paying taxes or voting every four years, maximal approaches in the digital sphere need to be about more than safe behaviors.

Radical Citizenship Education: Justice Pedagogy

In the preceding sections we have suggested that civic engagement has changed in the social media era. We have also explained the way that traditional—and even activist—models of civics and citizenship education do not, as a whole, pay enough attention to the new ways that people are engaging with the public sphere. In this section, we present our vision of a form of radical citizenship education that equips young people with the skills and values that will allow them to engage meaningfully and actively as citizens. We call this radical citizenship education Justice Pedagogy. We present the whole framework but focus specifically on themes that allow young people to engage meaningfully in the online world.

Justice Pedagogy is based on Justice Citizens, a participatory critical citizenship education program that was trialed among Year 9 students in a Western Sydney school in 2013 and 2014. During the course of Justice Citizens, students were required to identify an issue related to justice—however they chose to define that—and then research, shoot, edit, and publish a film about that aspect of justice. As part of Justice Citizens, students met with community groups, interviewed refugees and artists, and workshopped film and research techniques with journalists. They made films about refugees in Western Sydney, about drug and alcohol abuse, about teenage pregnancy, and about domestic violence. These films were then shown to the community at a film festival, supported by the local council and a number of other local community groups and businesses in order to generate discussion and action about the matters. Students also shared these films via YouTube in an effort to engage a wider audience in the discussion. Students also blogged and used Twitter and Facebook to discuss topics raised through their films.

This project formed the basis for empirical research that sought to understand young people's conceptions of active or justice-oriented citizenship and how those conceptions might be shaped by critically inspired approaches to citizenship education. The researchers undertook a critical ethnographical approach to the research, culminating in the development of 10 research portraits that expressed different findings about young peoples' conception of citizenship, including distributed decision-making, critical literacy, and advocacy for systemic change. The development of these concepts as related to the Justice Citizens curriculum is discussed next.

The portraits and the concepts derived from them informed the development of Justice Pedagogy. As described earlier, Justice Pedagogy is a combination of citizenship education, critical pedagogy, and complexity thinking. Drawing from the work of critical theorists and especially the Frankfurt School (Biesta, 1998), critical pedagogy privileges a partnership between students and teachers and the development of a critical consciousness, with which students are capable of recognizing not only their own marginalization but also their ability to resist it.

There are clear parallels between critical pedagogy and maximal forms of citizenship education, as explored by DeJaeghere (2006). Of particular relevance to this paper, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have propounded a form of citizenship education called justice-oriented citizenship, in which students learn to challenge the macro-economic structures that prolong inequality within society. They have contrasted this with other forms of citizenship education, in which civic participation and engagement is minimized. However, critical pedagogy, and perhaps to a lesser extent, maximal forms of citizenship education, have reached something of a theoretical impasse; they have, rightly, in our minds, been challenged for their exclusively class-based critique of society, at the expense of ignoring other axes of oppression, like race and gender (hooks, 1994, 2003). While it is not within the scope of this paper to explore these ideas fully, we instead suggest that the introduction of theoretical tools drawn from complexity thinking (Davis & Sumara, 2008) might provide us with new avenues for theory building. We are seeking to move away from the linear traditions of critical pedagogy and instead embrace creative, organic, and improvised approaches. In order to do this, we have drawn the concepts of self-organizing systems, distributed decision-making, and emergent learning from complexity thinking and used these to refresh concepts that are common to many forms of critical pedagogy: grassroots organizing, learner-centered democracy, and naming the world. These three concepts were then explored further to develop the
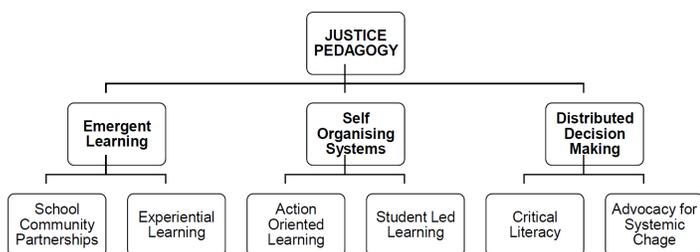
Figure 1. Framework of Justice Pedagogy

Justice Pedagogy framework, with six key features being identified (as shown in Figure 1).

As this paper focuses on young people's engagement with social media and the online public sphere, we focus on the concept of distributed decision-making and the themes of critical literacy and advocacy for systemic change.

Distributed Decision-Making

Complex systems are characterized by distributed decision-making and nonlinearity (Byrne, 2014). As opposed to simple systems, where best practice is conceived in linear terms and often involves a hierarchical structure with a clear plan and direction to follow, complexity thinking requires us to conceive of learning spaces in a radically different way. This approach will assist in addressing some of the criticisms of critical pedagogy. In earlier traditions of critical pedagogy, even when it distanced itself from didactic teaching, much emphasis was placed on the role of the teacher, especially the way she or he led dialogue or enabled participatory forms of deliberation. We argue that it is necessary to consider that the behavior of the system will be a result of the actions of a diverse range of actors, rather than the sole result of a teacher's interaction with students.

Critical pedagogy has been criticized for replacing one form of indoctrination with another (Ellsworth 1989; Johnson & Morris 2010). By adopting complexity thinking, notions of distributed decision-making, and nonlinearity, it is possible to move beyond the role of the teacher and instead begin to consider the behavior of the whole environment, which will be a result of the actions of a diverse range of participants. Thus, classroom learning spaces need to reflect that knowledge and learning does not, as some would suggest, flow directly from the teacher or the instructor to the student (or vice versa), who passively accepts it. Rather, it is a many-fold and multidirectional process, where learning occurs between the teacher and student, but also student to the teacher, and students to students, and this process should be acknowledged as part of the learning process. This means that decision-making, if it is to be informed and based on all the participants' understandings, should be distributed and not strictly hierarchical. Although not specifically writing about critical approaches to education, Davis and Sumara (2009) have described the role that distributed decision-making plays in complexity theory approaches to education in a way that de-localizes the nexus of power:

Pragmatically speaking, with regard to shared/distributed work or understandings, the upshot is that a person should never strive to position herself or himself (or a text or other figurehead) as the final authority on matters of appropriate or correct action. Structures can and should be in place to allow students to participate in these decisions. For us, then, an important element in effective educational and research practices is the capacity to disperse control around matters of intention, interpretation, and appropriateness. (p. 42)

Such an approach was evident in Justice Citizens. Although we had originally expected students to identify topics for their films that we felt were important—for example, we wanted them to look at topics like homelessness or racism—the students responded by identifying topics they felt were more relevant to the local communities. Students also had a lot of leeway in deciding how best to approach the task of film-making. Some chose to attend technical training sessions that we provided, while others preferred an "experiment and see" approach. This is an example of the way that the decision-making power did not rest solely in the hands of the teacher but was more equally shared among all participants in the class. Furthermore, Justice Citizens was different to other traditions of critical pedagogy in that it was less about structured approaches to learning and instead privileged the idea of being flexible, organic, and improvised. This was present in a number of ways in Justice Citizens, most obviously in the way that teachers and students needed to adapt the focus of their films, as described above, but also in the ways students recalibrated their ideas and expectations in terms of their films and their audiences. For example, several students "remixed" their films—making a version to show at the film festival but also shorter versions to share on YouTube because they felt that these shorter versions were more likely to appeal to the YouTube audience.

We have taken a wide view of the notion of distributed decision-making, beyond the bounds of the participants of Justice Citizens and including the way that public opinion is shaped in the (digital) public sphere. To engage with this process of decision-making, young people need to develop the critical literacy skills to critique what they are reading and discussing in that space, and they also need to skills to successfully engage in that space in such a way as to build support for their intent to challenge injustice. This leads to two key themes: critical literacy and advocacy for systematic change.

Justice Citizens was firmly focused on real-world problems. We sought a way for young people to enter into discussions taking place within the public sphere about topics that were of importance to them. Via Justice Citizens, we were seeking to model and develop a level of critical literacy with the students by encouraging them to confront both the prejudices present within online material and their own prejudices about specific topics that they encountered. By using the term *critical literacy* in this way, we are drawing upon the work of critical scholars like Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) who have argued that the development of critical literacy is more than just teaching students to read or write more effectively; instead, there is a specific focus on identifying marginalization and oppression and empowering students to challenge this. This was a part of Justice Citizens that presented challenges for many of the students who participated. In particular,

some of the students began, through an analysis of different forms of media that they used, to consider the way the media represented women or the lack of Indigenous Australian representation online and were concerned at the limited opportunities afforded to those groups.

Advocacy for systemic change is another feature that is often missing from traditional citizenship education programs. While *activism* is often seen as a word with connotations related to disobedience, violence, and disorder (Kennelly, 2009), it is a word that must be reclaimed by civics and citizenship educators if we are to engage in pedagogies that encourage active citizenship among young people. In order to do this, it is not enough simply to encourage young people to take part in causes that only address the symptoms of oppression rather than the root causes of that oppression. Indeed, there is a requirement to actively campaign for systemic and institutional change. While it might, for example, be a worthwhile and beneficial exercise to make refugees and asylum seekers more welcome in your own community, such an approach will not, in and of itself, challenge the oppression or marginalization that these groups experience on systemic and institutional levels. In some ways, such exercises might only serve to alleviate the feeling that we, as privileged people, should be doing something, rather than leading to any significant change in the relations of power among these different groups within society. Therefore, if one is going to encourage active citizenship, there is an imperative to help young people learn to challenge those systems rather than simply teaching them how to act within the systems that perpetrate the racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression present within society today.

Such an approach is more easily said than done; however, we think that there is potential in some of the ways that social media is being used to build powerful and effective social campaigning mechanisms. The key feature of social media here is what boyd (2014) described as scalability: the potential for social media to amplify specific messages far beyond the audience that they would otherwise have been able to access and to move beyond the old broadcast model of one-to-many to a many-to-many model. These possibilities for increased audience volume and interaction, and the leverage that comes with it, is a powerful mechanism for encouraging systemic and institutional change. It would be remiss to suggest that such an approach is a panacea to social movement ills; for example, scholars like Tufekci (2017) have identified that there are relatively weaker links among participants in social media campaigns than there are among those who have had long relationships and regular face-to-face meetings, such as those who participated in the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1960s. Other scholars have described this approach, somewhat dismissively, as "slacktivism" (Christensen, 2011) or "clicktivism" (Butler, 2011). While there is some truth in their critique, we think a more measured consideration would also take into account the various social media–mediated successes, such as the campaign for people to change their Facebook profile pictures to an equal symbol to indicate their support for marriage equality (Penney, 2014). Techno-optimists see potential in the ways that young people can use social media as a platform to shape public opinion and attempt

to advocate for systematic change. In Justice Citizens, there was a modest attempt to explore what such an approach might look like. The students' films were all published on YouTube and shared widely from both the students' accounts and also from the school's social media accounts. While none of the films went viral, students' films were exposed to a wider audience than they would otherwise have had the chance. As of October 2017, the total number of views of all the films was more than 1,000.

Conclusion

Justice Pedagogy offers an exciting insight into fresh approaches to civics and citizenship education. It does this by leaving behind much of the baggage of previous approaches, which emphasized content-based curricula and didactic pedagogy, and instead uses a new vision of critical pedagogy to suggest innovative approaches to civics and citizenship education. By borrowing conceptual constructs from complexity thinking, it is possible to imagine new structures and contexts that will encourage the flourishing of a more equitable and empowering pedagogical space.

References

ABC News. (2015, November 29). Australians join global rallies for climate change action ahead of Paris talks. ABC News. Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-29/climate-change-marches-around-australia/6984094

ABS. (2017). National Results, Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, 2017. Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1800.0

Allmer, T., Fuchs, C., Kreilinger, V., & Sevignani, S. (2014). Social networking sites in the surveillance society. *Media, Surveillance, and Identity: Social Perspectives,* 49-70.

Armingeon, K., & Guthmann, K. (2014). Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy in European countries, 2007–2011. *European Journal of Political Research, 53*(3), 423–442.

Arvanitakis, J., & Marren, S. (2009). *Putting the Politics Back into Politics: Young People and Democracy in Australia Discussion Paper.* Sydney, Australia: Whitlam Institute (UWS).

Ashbrook, J. (2018, January 25). Commentary: Democracies in crisis worldwide, Trump has damaged ours. *Statesman.* Retrieved from http://www.statesman.com/news/local/commentary-democracies-crisis-worldwide-trump-has-damaged-ours/tFw7VXIdQJ5cR6y1N6nVjN/

Biesta, G. J. (1998). Say you want a revolution . . . Suggestions for the impossible future of critical pedagogy. *Educational Theory, 48*(4), 499–510.

Brook, T., & Frolic, B. M. (2015). *Civil society in China.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Butler, M. (2011). *Clicktivism, slacktivism, or "real" activism: Cultural codes of American activism in the Internet Era* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from http://individual.utoronto.ca/christine/sources/clicktivism.pdf

Byrne, D. (2014). Thoughts on a pedagogy of complexity. *Complicity, 11*(2), 40.

Christensen, H. S. (2011, February 7). Political activities on the internet: Slacktivism or political participation by other means? *First Monday, 16*(2). Retrieved from https://firstmonday.org/article/view/3336/2767

Cross, W., & Gauja, A. (2014). Evolving membership strategies in Australian political parties. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 49*(4), 611–625.

Crouch, C. (2016). The march towards post-democracy, ten years on. *The Political Quarterly, 87*(1), 71–75.

Curato, N. (2017). Flirting with authoritarian fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the new terms of Philippine populism. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 47*(1), 142–153.

Davis, J. (2016). *The Arab Spring and Arab Thaw: Unfinished revolutions and the quest for democracy.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Davis, B., & Sumara, D. (2008). Complexity as a theory of education. *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry, 5*(2).

DeJaeghere, J. G. (2006). Intercultural meanings of citizenship in the Australian secondary curriculum: Between critical contestations and minimal constructions. In B. Levinson & D. Stevick (Eds.). *Reimagining civic education: How diverse societies form democratic citizens* (pp. 293–317), Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Dejaeghere, J. G. (2008). Citizenship as privilege and power: Australian educators' lived experiences as citizens. *Comparative Education Review, 52*(3), 357–380.

DeJaeghere, J. G., & Tudball, L. (2007). Looking back, looking forward: Critical citizenship as a way ahead for civics and citizenship education in Australia. *Citizenship teaching and learning, 3*(2), 40–57.

Diamond, L., Plattner, M. F., & Walker, C. (Eds.). (2016). *Authoritarianism goes global: The challenge to democracy.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R., & Morrell, E. (2008). *The art of critical pedagogy: Possibilities for moving from theory to practice in urban schools.* New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 297–324.

Ewins, T. (2006). Re-invigorating civics and citizenship education. *Agora, 41*(3), 50–52.

Fahmy, E. (2017). *Young citizens: Young people's involvement in politics and decision making.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Field, J. (2016). *Social capital.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Flichy, P. (2010). *Le sacre de l'amateur* [The rise of the amateur]. Paris, France: Seuil.

Foa, R. S., & Mounk, Y. (2016). The democratic disconnect. *Journal of Democracy, 27*(3), 5–17.

Foa, R. S., & Mounk, Y. (2017). The signs of deconsolidation. *Journal of Democracy, 28*(1), 5–15.

Fraillon, J., Gebhardt, E., Nixon, J., Ockwell, L., Friedman, T., Robins, M. & McAndrew, M. (2017). *NAP Sample Assessment. Civics and Citizenship Report, Years 6 and 10.* Sydney, Australia: ACARA.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Continuum.

Fuchs, C. (2014). *Social media: A critical introduction.* London, UK: Sage.

Fuchs, C., & Sandoval, M. (2015). The political economy of capitalist and alternative social media. In C. Atton (Ed.)., *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media* (pp. 165–175). Abingdon, UK: Routledge

Gamson, W. A., & Sifry, M. L. (2013). The #Occupy movement: An introduction. *The Sociological Quarterly, 54*(2), 159–163.

Gauntlett, D. (2013). *Making is connecting.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Gerbaudo, P. (2018). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism.* London, UK: Pluto Press.

GFK Bluemoon. (2011). Like, post, share: Young Australians' experience of social media. Qualitative research report. Sydney, Australia: The Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Ghazarian, Z., Laughland-Booy, J., & Skrbis, Z. (2017, December 13). Schools are not adequately preparing young Australians to participate in our democracy. *The Conversation.* Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/schools-are-not -adequately-preparing-young-australians-to-participate-in-our-democracy-88131

Giroux, H. (1988) Literacy and the pedagogy of voice and political empowerment. *Educational Theory, 38*(1), 61–75.

Giroux, H. A. (1992). Literacy, pedagogy, and the politics of difference. *College Literature, 19*(1), 1–11.

Gladwell, M. (2010). Small change. *The New Yorker, 4,* 42–49.

Gladwell, M., & Shirky, C. (2011). From innovation to revolution: Do social media make protests possible? *Foreign Affairs, 90*(2), 153.

Glaser, A. (2018, January 19). Twitter admits there were more than 50,000 Russian bots trying to confuse American voters before the election. *Slate.* Retrieved from https://slate.com/technology/2018/01/twitter-admits-there-were-more-than-50 -000-russian-bots-confusing-u-s-voters-in-2016.html

Gunningham, N. (2017). Review essay: Divestment, nonstate governance, and climate change. *Law & Policy, 39*(4), 309–324.

Haste, H. (2010). Citizenship education: A critical look at a contested field. In L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth* (pp. 161–188), Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Holgate, J. (2015). An international study of trade union involvement in community organizing: Same model, different outcomes. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 53*(3), 460–483.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom.* New York, NY: Routledge.

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A Pedagogy of Hope.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Howe, N. (2017, October 31). Are Millennials giving up on democracy? *Forbes.* Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2017/10/31/are-millennials-giving -up-on-democracy/#20ee71c02be1

Johnson, L., & Morris, P. (2010). Towards a framework for critical citizenship education. *The Curriculum Journal, 21*(1), 77–96.

Katsambekis, G. (2017). The populist surge in post-democratic times: Theoretical and political challenges. *The Political Quarterly, 88*(2), 202–210.

Kennelly, J. (2009). Good citizen/bad activist: The cultural role of the state in youth activism. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 31*(2–3), 127–149.

Kerr, D. (1999) Citizenship education: An international comparison. *International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Paper 4.* London, UK: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Klaas, B. (2017, March 10). Democracy is dying around the world—and the West has only itself to blame. *Quartz.* Retrieved from https://qz.com/928351/donald-trumps -autocracy-democracy-is-dying-around-the-world-and-the-west-has-only-itself -to-blame/

Kurlantzick, J. (2011, May 19). The great democracy meltdown. *New Republic.* Retrieved from https://newrepublic.com/article/88632/failing-democracy-venezuela-arab -spring

Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. A. (2014). The networked young citizen: Social media, political participation and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society, 17*(2), 143–150.

McDonald, H., & Graham-Harrison, E. (2018, May 27). Ireland votes by landslide to legalise abortion. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/ world/2018/may/26/ireland-votes-by-landslide-to-legalise-abortion

McInerney, P. (2009). Toward a critical pedagogy of engagement for alienated youth: Insights from Freire and school-based research. *Critical Studies in Education, 50*(1), 23–35. doi.org/10.1080/17508480802526637

McLaughlin, T. H. (1992). Citizenship, diversity and education: A philosophical perspective. *Journal of Moral Education, 21*(3), 235–246.

Mendelson, B. J. (2012). *Social media is bullshit.* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Mora, F. A. (2013). Emergent digital activism: The generational/technological connection. *The Journal of Community Informatics, 10*(1).

Muller, D. (2017, June 19). Mixed media: How Australia's newspapers became locked in a war of left versus right. *The Conversation.* Retrieved from https://theconversation .com/mixed-media-how-australias-newspapers-became-locked-in-a-war-of-left -versus-right-79001

Nagle, A. (2017). *Kill all normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right.* Abingdon, UK: John Hunt Publishing.

Notley, T., & Dezuanni, M. (2017, November 20). Most young Australians can't identify fake news online. *The Conversation.* Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/most-young-australians-cant-identify-fake-news-online-87100

Oliver, A. (2017). *The Lowy Institute Poll 2017.* Sydney, Australia: The Lowy Institute for International Relations.

O'Malley, N. (2016, December 1). Democracy under threat as young people warm to authoritarian rule, researchers say. *Sydney Morning Herald.* Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/world/democracy-under-threat-as-young-people-warm-to-authoritarian-rule-researchers-say-20161201-gt1usr.html

O'Reilly, T. (2000, April). Keynote speaker: Tim O'Reilly—Open Source: The Model for Collaboration in the Age of the Internet. In *Proceedings of the Tenth Conference on Computers, Freedom and Privacy: Challenging the Assumptions* (p. 7). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Association for Computing Machinery.

Osborne, C., Baldwin, C., Thomsen, D., & Woolcock, G. (2017). The unheard voices of youth in urban planning: Using social capital as a theoretical lens in Sunshine Coast, Australia. *Children's Geographies, 15*(3), 349–361.

Papacharissi, Z. (2010). *A private sphere: Democracy in a digital age.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Pathak-Shelat, M. (2018). Social media and youth: Implications for global citizenship education. In I. Davies, L.-C. Ho, D. Kiwan, C. L. Peck, A. Peterson, E. Sant, Y. Waghid (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Citizenship and Education* (pp. 539–555). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Penney, J. (2014). Social media and symbolic action: Exploring participation in the Facebook red equal sign profile picture campaign. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 20*(1), 52–66.

Putnam, R. D. (2001). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Quintelier, E. (2007). Differences in political participation between young and old people. *Contemporary politics, 13*(2), 165–180.

Rainie, L., & Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The new social operating system.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Roberts, N. C. (Ed.). (2015). *The age of direct citizen participation.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Rydgren, J. (2005). Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family. *European journal of political research, 44*(3), 413–437.

Sander, T. H., & Putnam, R. D. (2010). Still bowling alone? The post-9/11 split. *Journal of Democracy, 21*(1), 9–16.

Schugurensky, D., & Myers, J. P. (2003). Citizenship education: Theory, research and practice. *Encounters on Education, 4*(Fall), 1–10.

Schultz, L., Guevara, J. R., Ratnam, S., Wyn, J., & Sowerby, C. (2009). Global Connections: A tool for active citizenship. *Development in Practice, 19*(8), 1023–1034.

Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., & Agrusti, G. (2016). *IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016. Assessment Framework.* Amsterdam, The Netherlands: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

Shirky, C. (2011). The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign Affairs January/February,* 28–41.

Strom, K. J., & Martin, A. D. (2017). Thinking with theory in an era of Trump. *Issues in Teacher Education, 26*(3), 3–22.

Taub, A. (2016, November 29). How stable are democracies? "Warning signs are flashing red." *New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/americas/western-liberal-democracy.html

Taylor, A. (2014). *The people's platform: Taking back power and culture in the digital age.* New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.

Tkacz, N. (2014). *Wikipedia and the politics of openness.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Toscano, N. (2015, October 27). Trade union membership hits record low. *Sydney Morning Herald.* Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/national/trade-union-membership-hits-record-low-20151027-gkjlpu.html

Tudball, L., & Henderson, D. (2014). Contested notions of civics and citizenship education as national education in the Australian curriculum. *Curriculum and Teaching, 29*(2), 5–24.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Voeten, E. (2016, December 5). That viral graph about Millennials' declining support for democracy? It's very misleading. *Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/05/that-viral-graph-about-millennials-declining-support-for-democracy-its-very-misleading/?utm_term=.e961c7e0f40a

Veugelers, W. (2007). Creating critical-democratic citizenship education: Empowering humanity and democracy in Dutch education. *Compare, 37*(1), 105–119.

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal, 41*(2), 237–269.

Zalan, E. (2016, October 1). Hungary is too small for Viktor Orban. *Foreign Policy.* Retrieved from http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/01/hungary-is-too-small-for-viktor-orban/

Zyngier, D. (2003). Connectedness—Isn't it time that education came out from behind the classroom door and rediscovered social justice. *Social Alternatives, 22*(3), 41–49.

Zyngier, D. (2007). Education through elegant subversion. *Professional Voice, 6*(3), 51–56.