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Education and Civic Engagement among Norwegian Youths

*Jon Lauglo
Tormod Øia*

Norwegian Social Research

Rapport 14/06

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JON LAUGLO
TORMOD ØIA

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Telefon: 22 54 12 00
Telefaks: 22 54 12 01
Nettadresse: <http://www.nova.no>

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Oslo, June 2006

Jon Lauglo & Tormod Øia

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1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives and structure of contents

The present study was commissioned by The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation at OECD. It has two partly overlapping goals: (a) reviewing research on effects of education on civic engagement with special attention to studies carried out in the Nordic countries, and (b) analyzing a nationwide survey of more than 11000 youths in Norway that was carried out in 2002, in order to examine certain aspects of this relationship. As part of the task commissioned by CER/OECD, goal (a) implied that a wider range of research literature will be dealt with initially than what is directly relevant for the empirical analysis we shall carry out.

In our own empirical analysis the main question is what role does education play in building civic engagement among youths under conditions where the great majority of them are still enrolled in school when they reach the voting age (age 18 in Norway) and when close to half of the age group continues to higher education. In assessing what seems to be “influences of education” there is a need to take account of the influence of learning in other arenas than school. We shall especially take account of socialization in the family. Other sources of influence will be formally constituted voluntary organizations that adolescents and youths may join. This we shall deal with through bivariate analysis of the correlates of membership in different types of organizations. We shall not be able to address the role of mass media and informal peer groups which also will condition the role that school plays in building civic engagement.

The content is laid out as follows: Chapter 1 defines civic engagement, discusses trends which condition its salience as a policy issue, and presents main hypotheses about influences on the extent of such engagement. Chapter 2 reviews findings from earlier research and points to the paradox that in spite of the rise in access to education beyond primary school in the last half of the 21st Century and of the importance of education for civic engagement which is shown in cross-sectional studies, there are no signs of increased civic engagement over recent decades, neither in Norway nor in other OECD countries.

Chapter 3 sets out the model of assumed relationships for the present empirical study and describes our sources of data. Chapter 4 provides bivariate and multivariate analysis of correlates of interest taken in politics

and social issues. Chapter 5 presents multivariate analysis of different forms of political activity among youths. Chapter 6 presents findings showing that youths benefit not only in terms of civic engagement but also educationally from growing up in families that take an interest in politics and social issues. Chapter 7 examines education-correlates of membership in different types of voluntary organizations. Chapter 8 looks at effects of measures taken by school to promote civic engagement. Finally, a summary and conclusions, along with recommendations for further research and on policy, are presented in Chapter 9.

1.2 Limitations

The societal context in which education is embedded and in which civic engagement develops, will matter for the civic outcomes of education. The findings reviewed in this study may therefore not be generalizable across all societal contexts. Our own empirical analysis is obviously also similarly limited, since it applies to one country and to relatively recent experience. Further, in analysis of cross sectional data the extent to which it is reasonable to attribute “causality” to observed associations can only be inferred. The best one can do is to control statistically for effects of other traits than those whose effects one seeks to assess. The findings reviewed or generated in this study are therefore not ‘carved in stone’ but in principle provisional.

1.3 What is civic engagement?

“Civic” relates to the domain of collective action which is outside the market and beyond the private affairs of citizens and their families. This domain overlaps substantially with the “public domain”. The term civic derives from the Latin *civitas* (the city state) and thus refers originally to a political entity as a whole. This would imply that “civic” is concerned with the weal of society as a whole. Therefore, it presupposes a degree of identification with the larger society beyond purely sectional goals; and it inevitably assumes that the political order has legitimacy. In OECD countries that legitimacy must be based on political democracy.

“Civic engagement” is a wider concept than “political” activity. It will certainly include the narrowly defined “political” domain which is concerned with collective action that aggregates and expresses interests in order to access, influence or carry out policy at different levels of government. However, whether organized groups (e.g., voluntary organizations) perform political

functions does not follow simply from their declared purpose. Groups formed mainly to provide activities of intrinsic value to their members (e.g., religious bodies, sports clubs) also equip officials and members with skills for collective action and thus indirectly serve as a foundation for more overtly political action. The argument that voluntary associations are an important foundation for democracy, regardless of whether they directly address matters of “politics” or not, is also part of liberal democratic theory. Examples from the 19th Century are the contributions by Alexis de Tocqueville on *Democracy in America* and John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*. Well known 20th century contributions that stress the political functions of more broadly civic activity include Almond and Verba (1963) and Putnam (2000).

A narrow definition of *engagement* would stress *action* or at least *readiness to act*. In this study we shall adopt a more inclusive definition that also includes declared *interest* in politics and social issues, on the grounds that readiness to act in the public domain requires people to take “an interest” to begin with. Not surprisingly, interest in politics and social issues is more widespread than any political and civic activity. We shall also see that in our research material on Norwegian youths, political activism which is not strongly institutionalized is more widespread than membership in explicitly “political” organizations.

1.4 Is there a democratic deficit problem?

Improved civic engagement will be an urgent goal for schools and other agencies concerned with influencing public engagement if trends show declining engagement among youths. Is that the case? We note that compared to older adults, youths vote less often and participate less often in civil society. In the 2005 parliamentary election in Norway, only about half of those who in the 4 years since the previous election had turned 18 and thus had acquired the right to vote, took part. Like preceding generations, one expects the present generation of youths to vote and join organizations in civil society in greater proportions as they achieve more fully adult status (regular work, responsibility for family) and as they grow more familiar with political parties and public issues. In Norway youths of today join voluntary organizations less frequently than their predecessors some decades ago. The proportion joining overtly political voluntary organizations is distinctly low, about 4.5%; and more worryingly, it does not rise much during the 13 to 19 age range.

1.4.1 Are youths becoming more self-centred?

Civic engagement implies at a minimum a “concern” with issues in the public domain, beyond one’s own private life. Is such concern declining among youths? A number of well known contemporary theorists (e.g., Tomas Ziehe in Germany; and Christopher Lasch, Robert Bellah and Amitai Etzioni in the United States) have argued that preoccupation with one’s private domain has increasingly come to characterize Western societies. Worries about adverse social consequences of “excessive individualism” underlie a current interest in “social capital” (Coleman 1988, Putnam 2000). Yet, individualism is a many faceted concept (Oscarsson 2005) which need not mean retreat to one’s private domain and lack of care of interest in the welfare of others. In a positive sense it denotes independence of thought and action and is as such a longstanding ideal for general education and for citizenship in OECD countries.

Is there any evidence in the Nordic countries indicating that youths are growing more individualistic in a negative sense, of becoming more exclusively concerned about their private lives? Research presents a complex picture of trends. In Denmark the IEA Civics Education Study of 18-year-olds (Bruun *et al.* 2003: 425) observes that most youths express agreement *both* with “collectivist” values and with “individualist” ones – suggesting that these types of value are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. A strong individualist sense of personal “agency” need not imply lack of concern about others.

In Sweden, Oscarsson (2002, 2005) has analyzed annual changes during 1986 to 2000, in surveys using nationally representative samples of 15–29 year-olds. A long list of questions concerned basic values. The main finding is great stability over time with the regard to most of the 26 value dimensions he examined. He noted some increased emphasis on “self realization”, “a comfortable life”, “a life filled with satisfaction” and an “exciting life” among youths during this period. There are also signs of decreased concern with certain “collectivist values” such as “clean environment”, the “security of the country” and “world peace”. But at the same time the value which showed the greatest gain over time among youths was the Swedish collectivist value *par excellence*, “jämlighet” (egalitarian social justice).

More striking than any shifts over time is the gap in values between the young and older adults. According to Oscarsson’s (2002, 2005) findings on Sweden, those aged 30–85 profess less attachment to values of personal satisfaction, and more attachment to the collective values of national security and world peace than did the 15–29 year olds. But this gap did not change much during 1986–2000.

In Norway, Hellevik's studies (2001, 1996) used data from repeated public opinion surveys ("Norsk Monitor") since the mid 1980s. He compared people's basic life goals and their views of the means appropriate for reaching these goals, among youths and older adults of different generations. His prime value dimension has at one pole: openness for new trends, tolerance of diversity, and willingness to take risks. The other pole stresses security, and traditional virtues and institutions. This he dubs "modernity versus traditionalism". He finds that youths are strongly overrepresented at the "modern" end, while older adults tend to be more "traditional". There is also a tendency for youths to be slightly more materialistic than older adults. A common element in the orientation of youths to health, environment and consumption is that they appear to have a shorter perspective on time than do older adults. What matters more for them, is to enjoy life here and now while they assign less importance to long-run problems. For example, though youths are worried more than older adults about environmental issues, they are less willing to make sacrifices and take part in activities to protect the physical environment and less likely to support organizations working for environmental protection. Compared to older adults, youths are also less morally upright in the market place: more ready to cheat on insurance claims, less likely to correct mistakes in their own favour at a cash register. Though Hellevik found signs of more ego-centred individualism among youths than among older people, he also found that the type of solidarity to which youths subscribe, ranges further afield (e.g., development aid) and that youths are more tolerant of cultural diversity (e.g. immigrants, homosexuals, and erotic films on TV).

Hellevik tracked cohorts who in his earliest national opinion data were youths, into more recent surveys. He found more "traditional" values as persons grow older. However, on the assumption that the rate of change with age would be similar for more recent cohorts as for those he tracked over age, he concludes that the greatest part of the contrasting values between youths and older people is due to genuine generation differences.

Fauske and Øia (2003) examined change from 1992 to 2002 in NOVA's large scale national surveys of Norwegian youths and found some signs of increased individualism in the values used to assess the attractiveness of occupations. Solidarity among workmates was not as important in 2002 as it was in 1992. In 2002 fewer attached importance to work being "useful to society" than in 1992. In 2002 a greater proportion attached importance to the occupation's prestige. Thus, there were some signs of greater concern with individuality, and less weight on collective values. But this individualism is

not connected with greater stress on creativity or expression of personal talents. In fact, a smaller proportion (55%) in 2002 emphasized the importance of work providing outlet for personal creativity than in 1992 (66%).

On the whole, we see some support in these all too limited findings for concluding that there is a trend among youths away from acting idealistically on “behalf of others”. On the positive side, there are some signs of more openness to cultural diversity. The trend may be captured in “live and let live” and “I do care, but I choose not to commit much time”. Thus, we may be in for a shortage of volunteers for carrying out those aspects of civic engagement which require time and sustained contributions. In our view, the analysis of values and value change among youths in these Nordic studies indicates that there may be a rising challenge for civil society and schools alike: how to stimulate participation in civic activities which require sustained commitment to act and to invest time and effort.

1.4.2 Is low civic participation necessarily a sign of a democratic deficit?

Lipset (1960:14) observed half a century ago that “low” participation in elections may reflect a belief that the electoral outcome makes no important difference. A low rate of participation need not express “blocked” channels or lack of concern; it may simply reflect a high consensus. Conversely, rising levels of participation may be a sign of exacerbation of conflict – as it was in Germany in the 1930s. Issues and campaigns that sharply divide the electorate tend to drive up participation in elections. For example, in Norway, 89% of the electorate took part in the 1994 referendum on whether or not to join the European Union reached, a much higher level than what is typical for elections to parliament (it was 76% in the 2005 election).

With regard to findings in the most recent round of IEA studies on civics education studies (carried out on 18-year-olds in 15 countries), Amnå (2001) notes the strikingly high confidence in national public institutions in the Nordic countries (the police, the courts, the schools, institutions of government, the media) compared to other countries that took part. At the same time, youths in the Nordic countries did not have particularly “high” levels of expected future political participation in terms of voting, joining political parties, standing for office, demonstrating. On the other hand, youths in southern European countries had less trust in public institutions but expected more frequently to be involved in various forms of political activity between elections. Amnå suggests that trust in institutions is balanced against perceived need to get personally involved. While too “low” trust may make political activity seem pointless, “too high” may make it seem unnecessary.

He thought that the declining trend in Sweden during the last two decades, regarding participation in elections among first-time voters and declining memberships in political parties (shown in Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003:20, 22) might reflect much consensus among the main political parties and high trust in government.

In the Nordic countries, politics has become less strongly structured by the type of socio-economic cleavages by social class which in earlier generations fuelled high and broadly based political participation.¹ With high trust in public institutions and a high level of consensus, there may not be much reason for choosing one party rather than another. If his hypothesis is correct, present levels of civic/political participation among youths do not suffice to indicate their potential for such participation in the future for occasions when they perceive remedial action to be necessary. This would be another argument for a wide definition of civic engagement that includes “interests” rather than only “participation”.

1.5 Hypotheses on effects of education

1.5.1 *The “Enlightenment hypothesis”*

The argument that education empowers and converts politically passive “subjects” into active “citizens” has a long history. Radical and liberal advocates of mass literacy and schooling in the late 18th and early 19th centuries believed that education “enlightens” and that enlightenment in turn liberates and empowers. By enabling people to learn and communicate, mass schooling for children and access to adult education for adults would widen people’s mental horizon beyond the confines of their everyday life and strengthen their capacity for independent thought and judgement – even when the powers that be thought schools could be used to prevent restiveness among “the lower social orders”.

Opponents of mass schooling often feared schooling because of its empowering consequences. In the antebellum South in the United States, it was a crime to teach slaves how to read (e.g., as part of their religious instruction), for fear that slaves who could read were more likely to rebel. In England, conservative clergy in the established church the late 18th century and the early 19th century were pessimistic about mass schooling because

¹ For example, Oscarsson (2005:65) shows a long term trend in Swedish elections from 1956 to 2002, towards looser connections with voting behaviour and social class background.

they feared it would undermine the social order and they blamed the spread of popular literacy for the Puritan Rebellion (Lawson and Silver 1973:180). A staple demand of radical movements in the mid-19th Century that sought enfranchisement for the poor (e.g., the Chartists in the UK, and the Thrane movement in Norway) was primary schooling for their children. Marx too, thought that schools, even when they were controlled by the bourgeoisie (and part of the “superstructure” of capitalist society), would have empowering consequences for the proletariat. Thus, mass education was by proponents as by opponents seen as a generally empowering experience that helps transform passive “subjects” into politically empowered “citizens”.

The “enlightenment” hypothesis is still with us. One example is the argument that education promotes tolerance. Lipset in *Political Man* (1960:104) argued that social isolation breeds narrow-mindedness. Seeking to explain findings on intolerant and authoritarian attitudes among the “underdog” in American society, he theorized that groups that are isolated from the activities, controversies, and organizations of democratic society are prevented from acquiring the “sophisticated and complex view of the political structure which makes understandable and necessary the norms of tolerance”. Education would promote tolerance and support for democracy because it enhances people’s capacity to understand complex abstract entities, including political issues, and to develop their own views about such abstractions.

1.5.2 Contents, pedagogy and context make a difference

A recurring question has been how far the hypothesis of “enlightenment effects” of education is valid. In the 20th century, the rise of totalitarian rule undermined unqualified “enlightenment optimism” concerning education, because schools in the hands of totalitarian rulers were overtly used to instil uncritical obedience and hostility to others, rather than tolerance and active citizenship based on independent critical judgement. Research on the effects of such education for “intolerance” is sparse.² But as contemporary examples in the 20th century, the “success” of totalitarian regimes undermined a simple “enlightenment hypothesis” regarding education, and lent support to the view that the democratic civic outcomes of schooling do not follow simply from “exposure to school” but depend on what is taught, on how teaching is conducted and on influences upon learning from the context outside school.

² However, Lipset (1960: 102-103) showed that among Germans who had been schooled largely under Nazism, more educated persons were in the early post-war period more supportive of pluralist democracy, than those with less education.

A mainstream view among educationists has long been that democratically run classrooms prepare youths better for democratic citizenship. One could label this the “progressive education hypothesis” regarding effects of schooling on civic engagement.

1.5.3 “Attenuation of effects” versus “increased educational meritocratization”, as education expands

One could expect that greatly expanded access alters the connection which education has with civic engagement. On the one hand one could hypothesize that other things being equal, civic engagement will be more easily stimulated when a student perceives education to be preparation for elite status than when education confers no awareness of being in any particularly select group. Accordingly, completing secondary education (or teacher education) should no longer make as much *difference* for civic engagement as it did under conditions of much more constricted access. The same would apply to higher education with the advent of mass access. At present the proportion of youths who enter higher education has risen to nearly half the age group in Norway. Attenuation of “education effects” on civic engagement could follow such expansion.

A different hypothesis is increased educational “meritocratization” of civic engagement. When access to secondary and higher education becomes more open and selection becomes more dependent on prior performance in school, and less dependent on what families can afford, youths with talents for leadership but from families with relatively low parental education and income, will no longer face insurmountable barriers to extended schooling and will be more able to rise high in the education system before they involve themselves in civic activities. This points to the possibility of increased strength of the relationship between education and civic engagement, as the education system expands. As we shall see in Chapter 6, in our Norwegian survey material there is a moderate strong positive association between young people’s educational performance and having a background from families in which parents talk with their children about issues in the public domain. That may have been true for earlier generations too. However, now the gates to the higher reaches of the education system are much more open to youths from such politically and socially “alert” families, and one may therefore expect a closer association than in the past between educational ascent and a concern about issues beyond one’s private domain.

Both hypothesis could simultaneously be true, the attenuation hypothesis pointing to a decreased effect of *the experience of education*, and the

meritocratization hypothesis pointing to increased *self selection to education* of persons who have talents and interests in politics and civic issues but who under conditions of more constricted access to education would have acted out these interests and talents among their social class peers, without being channelled through the higher reaches of the education system.

However, we have been unable to locate any historical study that empirically addresses either the hypothesis of “weakened” or of “strengthened” connection between education and civic engagement, as education systems become more inclusive and accessible to youths during the years when one can presume that such engagement is developed.

2 Findings and issues from earlier research

2.1 Trends in research

For more than half a century, positive associations between level of educational attainment and indicators of civic engagement and of tolerance have been noted and much commented upon in studies of public opinion and civic participation in many countries. Important contributions to this body of research date at least as far back as the 1960s.

Another current of research concerns civic education in schools has been carried out under the aegis of IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement). An increasing number of countries have taken part (most of them part of OECD); and there have been several rounds of research. After controlling for the influence of home background, positive associations are in these cross-sectional studies consistently noted between scores on tests of civic education knowledge and on the other hand the interests which students have in politics and their intention of active citizenship.

In both currents of research, the strength and consistency of positive associations between indicators of education and civic engagement are typically interpreted as support for the conclusion that there are clear education effects on civic engagement. In both strains of research, the conceptual maps have often been wider and complex than the traits that could be examined and than the “education effects” inferred. Torney-Purta (2002:203) who has led the series of civic education studies within the IEA series, notes that assumptions of uni-directional “effects” have been replaced by assumptions that interaction is at work, and that the role of school in political socialization is “played in the context of and in concert with other social systems (families, youth organizations, informal peer groups, and the mass media)”. The framework now recognizes that individuals develop and function within a set of “systems” and contexts at different levels, all of which exert influence.

2.2 Educational attainment predicts tolerance and active citizenship

An early contribution to American research on tolerance was Stouffer’s (1955) study that showed a connection of between education and readiness to accord civil liberties to those with whom one strongly disagrees. Lipset (1960:102–103) later reviewed research and presented findings based on broader sets of data, showing that such effects existed also when persons of

the same occupational status but with different levels of education were compared in national survey data. Using UNESCO survey data, Lipset also showed for early post-war Germany that education level was (controlling for occupational status) strongly positively correlated with people's acceptance for pluralist politics. If Nazi-schooling had had strongly enduring effects, one might have expected the opposite. In keeping with the classic "enlightenment hypothesis", Lipset – and subsequently many others (e.g., Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980) have interpreted such findings to mean that exposure to education increases support for tolerance and democracy because it enhances people's capacity to understand complex abstract entities, including political issues, and to develop their own judgements about such abstractions. The idea that education better enables a person to apply abstract principles (e.g., "rights") to concrete cases, was paralleled by Hyman *et al.*'s (1979:31) conclusions from their review and re-tabulation of U.S. survey research findings: that more educated persons are better able to distinguish between principles (e.g. morality) and context specific conventions (e.g., manners).

Since Almond and Verba's (1963) comparative analysis of surveys in five Western countries in the 1960s, the importance of "education level" for voting, taking part in politics and in interest organizations has been confirmed in a large number of studies – after controls for occupationally based social class. For example, in western Sweden Eriksson (2002:25) showed from comparison of the general population of 15–29 year-olds and university students, that university students discuss politics, take part in political demonstrations, belong to political parties, and involve themselves in humanitarian organizations and associations for human rights much more often than other youths. Wollebæk *et al.* (2000:239) found in a Norwegian national survey of the adult population carried out in 1998, strong associations of educational level with participation in most types of voluntary organizations.³ In another study Wollebæk *et al.* (2002:109) report that among university graduates there are three times higher proportion of "active participants" and they spend thrice the time contributed to voluntary organizations, as compared to persons with only primary school. In particular, administrative work and elective offices are dominated by persons with high education and/or income. Persons outside the labour market (and/or with low education and income) were

³ We shall show a similar finding based on our survey material, that among youths who are still in secondary school in Norway, aspiration to higher education is positively associated with membership in most types of voluntary organizations (see Chapter 7.5), thus a foundation may be laid already in secondary school for the traits which people later will exhibit when they have completed higher education.

weakly represented in voluntary organizations. Referring as a rough benchmark to Rokkan and Campbell's (1960) comparison of Norway and the USA in the 1950s which at the time showed strikingly more broadly based participation in interest organizations in Norway, Wollebæk *et al.* (2000) suggest that civic participation may have become more tightly correlated with "high status" than it previously was in Norway – cf. our Chapter 1.5.3).

The three rounds of the IEA Civics Education study have consistently shown, across countries, that children and youths who are more knowledgeable about political institutions and processes also are more interested than others in political and social issues and express more readiness to participate actively in politics and in civil society when they become adults. For example, in the case of Norway, the most recent IEA Civics Education study (18 year olds) showed generally "high" knowledge scores and prevalent attitudes of strong support for democratic institutions and processes. It also showed consistently strong associations between knowledge on the one hand, and attitudes and readiness to participate on the other (Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002).

2.3 Does education predict type of political belief?

The path breaking 5-country comparative study by Almond and Verba (1963) concluded that while education predicts civic engagement, it does not predict well the particular political values and allegiances which citizens have. In line with that observation, analysis by Rose and Pettersen (2002) of data from several Norwegian national surveys from 1993 to 2001 show that education is not a good predictor of support given by adults to any particular "ideal of the good citizen". In their 2001 material they examined support for value dimensions concerned with: law abiding behaviour, socio-political awareness, socio-political involvement, social empathy and tolerance. They found only two statistically significant education effects in multivariate analysis of a large sample (N of about 1300): that "high education" predicts tolerance, and that "low education" predicts expressed support for "law abiding behaviour". The partial regression coefficients were relatively weak, however (.10 or less).

Oscarsson's (2002:83) analyzed value differences among young adults in his large sample from western Sweden. At lower levels of education he found more attachment to "wealth", "a life full of gratification", "power", "comfort" "status" and "happiness" – findings which he interpreted as an emphasis on immediate gratification. Those with completed higher education were more attached to values of "self respect" and "self realization". While these differences could be due to effects of education, they could in our view also reflect different life styles and constraints upon life chances, of the "education groups" compared.

2.4 A Nordic theme – that adult education empowers

In the Nordic countries, a close and symbiotic relationship between adult education and the historical growth of a broadly based civil society is taken so strongly for granted by historians that it has not been subject to much statistical probing. An early Norwegian mass movement promoted reading skills by means of religious adult education. This was the folk-Pietist revival at the beginning of the 19th century led by the lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge. They disseminated religious tracts on a truly mass scale. Tellingly, they came to be known as “readers” (*lesere*). Similarly, in Sweden, the followers of “free churches” (outside the state church) have been known as “readers”. In both countries these religious movements are widely recognized to have had economic and political empowerment consequences among common folk.

Another example is the historical role of folk high schools in all Nordic countries which taught residential courses of relatively short duration for young adults. The Danish bishop N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) played an important role as a source of inspiration for such schools which explicitly aimed at preparation for active citizenship, founded on a blend of humanist Christianity and ideas from the Romantic Movement about ordinary people as carriers of valued national culture. Networks based upon the alumni from these institutions played an important in providing leadership in the mobilization of the farming class for political, cultural and economic collective action in the 19th century (Manniche 1969). In Norway too networks among folk high school alumni were important in establishing local youth league chapters, feeding into a range of rural cultural initiatives (e.g., local libraries, performance of plays, local history) and into centrist politics – frequently with local school teachers as strong supporters (Lauglo 1982).

A third Nordic example of adult education for civic engagement is study circles combined with correspondence education. This was developed on a mass scale early in the 20th century by the Swedish temperance movement, and adopted across a wide range of voluntary associations (especially the labour movement) and helped develop leadership “from below” in these organizations and their associated political parties (Paulston 1968).⁴

⁴ Actually, the Swedes imported the study circle idea from the US where it was used in the early Chautauqua movement, an adult education system of lectures and study groups popular in the late nineteenth century (cf. <http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC33/Andrews.htm>). But circles became adapted for large scale use in Sweden and “re-exported” from Sweden to the other Nordic countries and beyond (including “back to the United States”).

The historical importance of these models of adult education for political recruitment was an unusually strong representation of national political leaders who had “risen from below” in the Nordic countries. Erickson (1966) investigated the educational background of members of the Swedish parliament in 1961–62. He found that fully 66% of MPs had only elementary school (6–7 years) as their highest level of formal educational attainment, and that they had relied on self-study or adult education to prepare themselves for public service. He noted the contrast with United States where most national legislators had a law degree.

For illiterate and semi-literate people in developing countries, adult literacy programs can build basic civic skills. A conclusion from a review of evaluations of such programs (Lauglo 2001) is that adult literacy education builds capacity to act with confidence in larger and more “public” social arenas.

2.5 Do effects depend on type of education?

A measure of “modern attitudes” (the OM scale) was developed by Inkeles and Smith (1974) and was widely used in the 1970s and 80s in studies of populations in middle and low income countries. Drawing on sociological conceptions on modernity, as well as on Lerner’s (1964) earlier empirical work, the scale sought to capture such mindsets as: openness to new experience, readiness for social change, awareness of the diversity of surrounding attitudes and opinions, readiness to form one’s own opinions, making efforts to find information upon which to base one’s own opinions, a sense of personal efficacy, an orientation towards the present and future rather than towards the past, a basic trust in the calculability of the surrounding world, valuing technical skills, valuing formal education, respect for the dignity of others, understanding the logic of production and industry, universalism (that rules and norms should apply regardless of one’s person relations with people concerned), and optimism. Some of these elements – respect for others, awareness of diversity, active search for information to form views about the larger world, readiness to form one’s own opinions – can also be seen as conditions for tolerance and for democratic citizenship.

A standard international observation is that high scores on this scale are strongly associated with level of schooling. This was also the conclusion by Fägerlind and Saha (1989) when they reviewed the international research on this scale up to the late 1980s, but they pointed out that there are other forms of education in the world than Western type schooling. They reviewed research on correlates of the OM scale with exposure to traditional Koranic

schooling in two Muslim countries and found that lower rather than higher “modernity scores” were associated with greater exposure to such schools (Wagner and Lofti (1980) on Morocco, and Armer and Youtz (1971) on “an African country” – both summarized by Fägerlind and Saha (1989). We infer that if democratic civic engagement is a robust outcome of (Western) schools, it appears to be because of the internationally widely shared institutional and curricular features of such “modern” schools. It does not mean that *any* form of organized instruction would yield such outcomes.

2.6 Are there effects of classroom climate?

The IEA Civics Education studies sought to trace effects of teaching styles and learning climates. However, a positive association between an “open classroom climate” and learning outcomes in social studies has not been an internationally consistent finding throughout the three rounds IEA studies, nor have the associations – when noted, been strong. The first round of IEA Civics education research in 1971 included 9 countries (Torney *et al.* 1975). A general conclusion was that civics education test scores and support for democratic values were higher when students reported that they were encouraged to state their views freely in their civics education classes. This finding was replicated in most of the 28 countries which participated in the second round that was carried out in the 1990s on 14-year olds (Torney *et al.* 1999) – but some countries were exceptions.

The most recent IEA study of civic education was carried out on upper secondary school students in 16 countries (Amadeo *et al.* 2002). A scale of “Open Classroom Climate for Discussion” was used, with these components: (1) students feel free to disagree openly with teachers about political/social issues; (2) students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues; (3) teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them in class; (4) students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from those of most students, (5) teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions; and (6) teachers present several sides of an issue when explaining it in class. The findings were not internationally consistent. In multivariate regression, the scale was a significant predictor of Civic Knowledge scores in seven countries: Estonia, Israel, Latvia, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia and Sweden. However, it was not a significant predictor in six countries: Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway, and Poland (Amadeo *et al.*, 2002:153). When intention to vote was taken as the dependent variable, the same

predictor was significant in Norway, Israel, Latvia, Russia and Poland (but not in Sweden and Denmark). The magnitude of coefficients which reached significance was in nearly all cases distinctly modest. With “Civic Knowledge” as dependent variable, the distinctly strongest standardized regression coefficient of Classroom Climate that was noted, was 0.17 (in Sweden). When “intention to vote” was the dependent variable, the “significant” effect of “Open Climate” was only 0.09 for Norway.

Thus, the findings from the IEA studies do not conclusively show that students who perceive the classroom climate for discussion to be more “open” are better informed about politics or more engaged in politics and social issues. But nor would a weak association or lack of an association show the opposite – that there is no effect. One would expect effects as measured in the IEA studies on 18-year olds to be “low”. School interventions are a cumulative process over many years which the class room style reported by 18-year-olds may not reflect. Also, by age 18, other sources of influence on civic engagement may have “kicked in” to have more impact than they did at age 14 in the second round of IEA Civics studies.

2.7 Do effects of education last; and are they “education effects” or effects of social status?

How far does schooling have life-long consequences on people’s attitudes and values? Will effects of schooling wear off as the experience of adult statuses overlays these early effects? If so the effect of schooling will largely be to give access to various types of statuses later in life. The most comprehensive set of reviews to date are two studies by Hyman and associates from the United States (Hyman & Wright 1979, Hyman *et al.* 1975). They reviewed and in many cases retabulated data from 38 national public opinion surveys in their 1979 report and 54 surveys in their 1975 report. They found that a person’s education level was consistently and strongly associated with “positive” civic values throughout their life, also when occupational career could be statistically controlled. They concluded (1979:60):

A value on civil liberties not just for the orthodox but also for nonconformists, of due process of law, of freedom from the constrains of arbitrary laws in personal and social relations, of freedom for the flow of not only innocuous but also controversial information, of equality in the social, economic, and political spheres, and of humanitarianism or measures to reduce pain, injury, suffering, or deprivation, and also placing a higher valuation on morals or good conduct towards others than on manners, are more prevalent among adults who have gone to high

school than among those who have not gone beyond elementary school. This profile is most prevalent among those who have gone to college. Despite aging, contrasts persist. No matter which birth cohort or generation was examined, we found that the more educated preserved almost all their distinctive and attractive values up to age 60. Beyond that stage of life, the differences on some values dwindle and occasionally disappear between ages and sixty-one and seventy-two, but on many aspects the differences continue to be large.

Hyman *et al.*'s analysis strongly supports the argument that educational institutions are important arenas within which political socialization occurs, that there are long lasting education effects on a wide range of "civic attitudes" and activities,⁵ and that these effects are not reducible to effects of the status to which education gives competitive access – since education effects persisted also in those cases where statistical controls were possible for other aspects of people's status as they move through life (income, occupation).

Hyman also tracked long lasting effects on "knowledge" from much the same material of opinion surveys (Hyman *et al.* 1975). Across 54 opinion surveys during 1950 to 1960, they noted findings in support of the conclusion that education deepens receptivity to further knowledge, and stimulates active seeking for new information in adults long after they finish their formal schooling. They also found that education produces enduring, large and pervasive effects on what adults of all ages *know* – not only survey items that might reflect academic knowledge close to what they may have learned in school (e.g., civics education, maths), *but also practical knowledge*. The material made it possible to control for sex, religion, social class origins and in some cases also for "current" occupational status. As far as we know, similar use of data from a whole series of from public opinion surveys to assess education effects on civic engagement has not been attempted in other countries.

2.8 Why no increase in civic engagement with rising level of education?

Over the last half century, the level of schooling in the adult population has risen sharply in OECD countries. For example, in Norway, the percentage of youths completing upper secondary education and entering higher education

⁵ There can of course be dramatic experiences events (e.g., wars, mass economic hardships) which alter political attitudes for entire generations well into their adult life, as illustrated in Elder's (1998) research in the United States on *Children of the Great Depression*.

has been rising for many decades. At present close to half of the relevant age group enter some form of higher education. And yet, level of education has not been matched with a corresponding rise in participation rates in politics and voluntary associations for the population as a whole. In some countries, these rates have been declining. In Norway, according to NOVA's data from large scale nationally representative surveys of youths, 76% of youths reported in a 1992 survey that they belonged to at least one voluntary association. In 2002 the proportion had declined to 65%.

In any one election, since the beginning of surveys of voting and voters, the level of education has been a consistently "strong" predictor of making use of the right to vote (Berglund 2003). Yet, in Norway there has been no secular trend for election turnouts to rise – notwithstanding rising levels of education, and the percent of newly eligible voters (age 18) who actually vote is distinctly low. It was about 50% in the 2005 parliamentary election compared to an overall voting rate of 76%. Clearly, political activity is not so strongly determined by education that education could be a driving force explaining long term trends in electoral turnout.

It was noted in Chapter 1.4.2 that political participation, including voting, could be reduced by a high degree of consensus in politics. Lower electoral participation could also be due to increased "individuation" of political behaviour. More voters are floating from election to election as to party preferences, and their preferences are less influenced than in earlier times by social class (e.g., Holmberg and Oscarsson (2004) on Sweden).

In seeking to explain the apparent paradox of expanding education and yet no rise in political engagement, Nie *et al.* (1996) theorize with respect to the United States that political engagement is driven by social status and not by education as such, and that the role of education is to give competitive access to positions of high status in the social hierarchy.⁶ However, as noted there is considerable research showing strong education "effects" both on political participation and tolerance, also when adult social status is held constant (Lipset 1960, Hyman & Wright 1979, Hyman *et al.* 1975). As will be shown in Chapters 4 and 5 in the present study of Norwegian youths, there are effects of successful performance in school as well as of having plans of continuing to higher education while youths are still in school, prior to attainment of position in the adult status hierarchy (and after controls for their parent's educational and occupational status).

⁶ We are grateful to David Campbell of Notre Dame University for drawing our attention to Nie's argument.

With regard to the apparent paradox of rising levels of education but no trend towards a rise in civic engagement at the macro-level, we are left with the conclusion that education has effects on civic engagement but that other countervailing secular trends must also have been at work. We are not able to address empirically what these “countervailing” influences may have been. However, we can think of some possibilities: that individual citizens have become more exposed to criss-crossing (and thus less coherent) influences on their political and civic identity, thus reducing their disposition to participate, (b) that rising consensus in politics has dulled the felt need to become engaged in partisan causes, (c) that the expansion of consumerism and the market has reduced the range of issues which citizens perceive to be left in the “public domain”, and (e) that if local and national arenas are no longer perceived to be as important for addressing political and civic issues as they once were, the impetus to get personally involved is weakened (contrary to the maxim: “Think globally, act locally”).

There could also be interactions with “education” for some of these possible secular trends, e.g., under possibility (e), that it is the more educated citizens who most readily retain civic engagement if the arenas that matter “for making a difference” are perceived to have become more remote.

3 Variables, model, sources of data

3.1 Indicators

The present study on Norway will examine civic engagement in an age group (13–19 year olds) when nearly all youths are in school, except at the top of the age span concerned.⁷ Under the term Civic Engagement we subsume:

- (a) Interest in social issues and politics,
- (b) Participation in political activity:
 - (b.1) Representational Participation (membership in voluntary organisations concerned with politics or advocacy (e.g. youth wings of political parties, environmental advocacy groups);
 - (b.2) Activism (participation in demonstrations and other political events etc which do not necessarily any “membership”); and
 - (b.3) Unlawful Protest (forms of political protest by means which skirt the law or are clearly unlawful – e.g., causing damage to property as a form of protest).

We lack an indicator of tolerance in our material. However, other recent work on Norwegian youths (Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002) has shown that readiness to concede freedom of speech to anti-democratic groups, is associated with high test scores on civic education knowledge.

We shall examine a large data set which will give opportunity to trace the evolution of interests and participation from younger to older age groups (13 to 19-year olds). We shall also be able to analyse the relationship between the various aspects of civic engagement and a range of “education” variables: (a) adjustment to school – valuing school, extent of discipline problems, “school fatigue”; (b) performance (grade point average across key subjects based on self reported grade on the last report card received by the respondent), and (c) plans/aspirations for higher education. We also have information on age and gender. Indicators of the home as a socialization arena will contain (a) a scale measuring the extent of close and transparent relations to parents, and (b) a scale of “political socialization at home”. This latter scale is based on answers to questions about how often students talk with their

⁷ About 15% are estimated not to complete the upper secondary course.

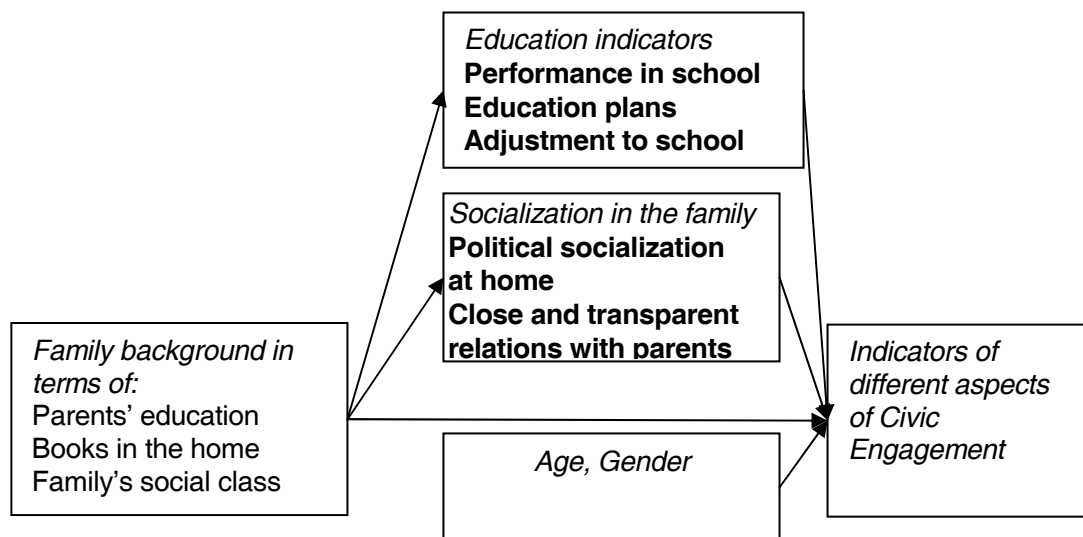
parents about politics and social issues, and a question which asks the youths to assess how far they are encouraged by the parents to “make your own decisions”. In the multivariate analysis we shall control for the influence of social class and the family’s cultural capital (father’s occupation, parental level of education, and the student’s estimate of the stock of “books at home”).

3.2 Model of assumed relationships

Figure 1 shows the assumed *main direction* of influences among the variables on which we have data. Effects of the highlighted (*bold face*) variables in this model on civic engagement, are our main concern. Other variables serve as controls in the sense that account need to be taken of their effects.

Beyond this initial model, our findings will indicate that there also an “arrow of influence” from political socialization in the home to young people’s performance in school and to their education plans – after taking account of effects of the conventional “family background” variables. We shall also find that “close and transparent relations with parents” has no consistent effect across different types of civic engagement indicators.

Figure 1. Model of factors shaping civic engagement among youths



3.3 Sources of data

Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) has carried out a series of youth studies since the early 1990s. We shall make use of the most recent country-wide

survey which was carried out in 2002. The sample has more than 11000 observations and was designed to be nationally representative of youths in six grades of school: the three lower secondary grades (ages 13–16) which are part of compulsory education; and the three post-compulsory grades (ages 17–19) which offer general and vocational specializations. Ninety-six percent of all youths commence a course in the post-compulsory upper secondary school. A school-based target sample will in this case therefore be a good approximation of a general sample of youths in the age range 13 to 17. However, the upper age range of the sample (18–19 year olds) will not include the approximately 15% who by that age are not enrolled in school. The response rate was very high: 90 % or higher in each of the six grades.

In Chapter 8.2 we shall also use data from a large scale youth survey carried out in Oslo in 1996, seeking to cover all students in certain grades of schools in Oslo. That survey had the advantage of including a question on mark received in Social Studies as a school subject for a section of student population who were in the last two grades of basic education (roughly ages 15 and 16). It had a large number of observations in the grades concerned (N = 5945), and also this survey had a good response rate: 96% of the target population. However, for our purposes it had the disadvantage that data on civic engagement were confined to membership in political youth organizations.

4 Interest in politics and social issues

4.1 Measuring interest

The Survey asked: “How interested are you in social issues?” and “How interested are you in politics?” The questions and response options referred to here and elsewhere are of course translations from the Norwegian text used in the questionnaires. The Norwegian “*samfunnsspørsmål*” refers unequivocally to social issues which are subject to public debate, while our chosen translation, “social issues”, may have a broader connotation.

About half the youths said they are “quite interested” or “very interested” in “social issues”. Only ¼ expressed a similar extent of interest in politics. Gender differences are small, but there is a tendency for boys to take an interest in politics (Table 1).

Table 1. “Interest in social issues” and “interest in politics” by gender

	Social issues			Politics		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Very interested	9.0	7.8	8.4	5.1	3.2	4.1
Quite interested	40.6	42.3	41.5	22.5	19.0	20.7
Not especially interested	42.8	46.5	44.7	43.3	48.8	46.1
Not at all interested	7.7	3.4	5.5	29.2	28.9	29.1

N > 10500

Interest in “social issues” and in “politics” are as one might expect strongly correlated. Table 2 shows the distribution of absolute percentages for combinations of answers, along with Ns. If one assigns values from 0 to 3 to the response categories from “not at all interested” to “very interested”, the Pearson correlation is 0.61 .

It is quite common to profess interest in social issues without being interested in politics (some 27% of the total sample). But the opposite is highly unusual (less than 2% of the total sample). The findings agree with the IEA civic education surveys (cf. Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002 on Norway) which also noted some reluctance among youths who are interested in politics in the wide sense (social issues) to identify with “politics” as they more narrowly perceive it.

Table 2. “Interest in politics” by “interest in social issues”. Absolute percentages

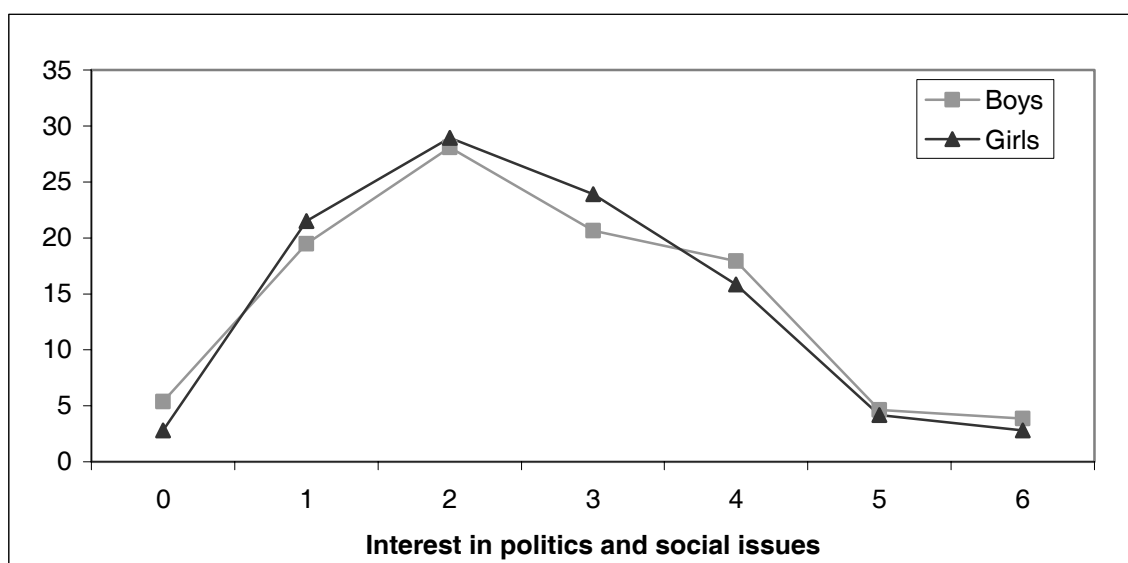
How interested are you in social issues?	How interested are you in politics?			
	(0) Not at all	(1) Not much	(2) Quite interested	(3) Very interested
(0) Not at all	4.0 (430)	1.0 (111)	0.1 (9)	0.1 (7)
(1) Not much)	19.5 (2077)	23.5 (2505)	1.4 (148)	0.1 (6)
(2) Quite interested	4.9 (525)	20.5 (2187)	15.7 (1672)	0.7 (73)
(3) Very interested	0.4 (40)	1.1 (119)	3.7 (394)	3.3 (353)

Numbers in parentheses in body of text: N

We combined the two items into an additive index which we shall call “Interest in Politics and Social Issues”. A score of 0 is given to those who were “not at all interested” on both counts, a score of 6 is given to those who were “very interested” in both politics and “social issues”, other answers were given intermediate values (see component scores for each response options in Table 2).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of this scale by gender. The vertical dimension is percent of total sample having a given score. There is little difference by gender but a slight tendency for greater prevalence of girls at the extreme values of the scale. Only a small minority have scores in the top two categories of the scale, showing only a small minority showing strong interests on both components of the scale. Considering that Norwegian social studies curricula encourage pupils to express their own views in class (Mikkelsen et al., 2005) the minority who score 5 or 6 are quite likely to be socially identifiable by others in their class.

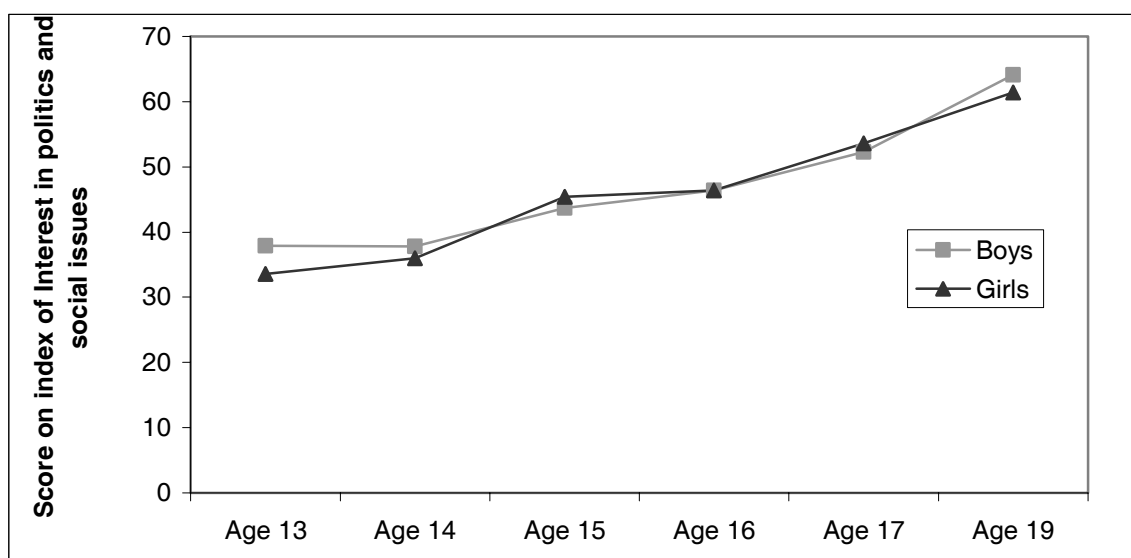
Figure 2. Percentage distribution of index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues, by gender.



Those who score at least 3 on the scale we shall refer to as having “interest”, or “being interested”, when the scale later is simplified for graphic portrayals

of relationships. This score implies that the respondent has checked “quite interested” on at least one of the two component questions which were cross tabulated in Table 2. The scale’s distribution is in our view sufficiently symmetric for Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis (e.g. Chapter 4.8) though the distribution has a longer tail towards the high scores. Figure 3 shows a steady rise in such “interest” with age. At no age is the gender difference statistically significant ($N > 1500$ for each age category).

Figure 3. Percent “Interested in Politics and Social Issues” by age and gender

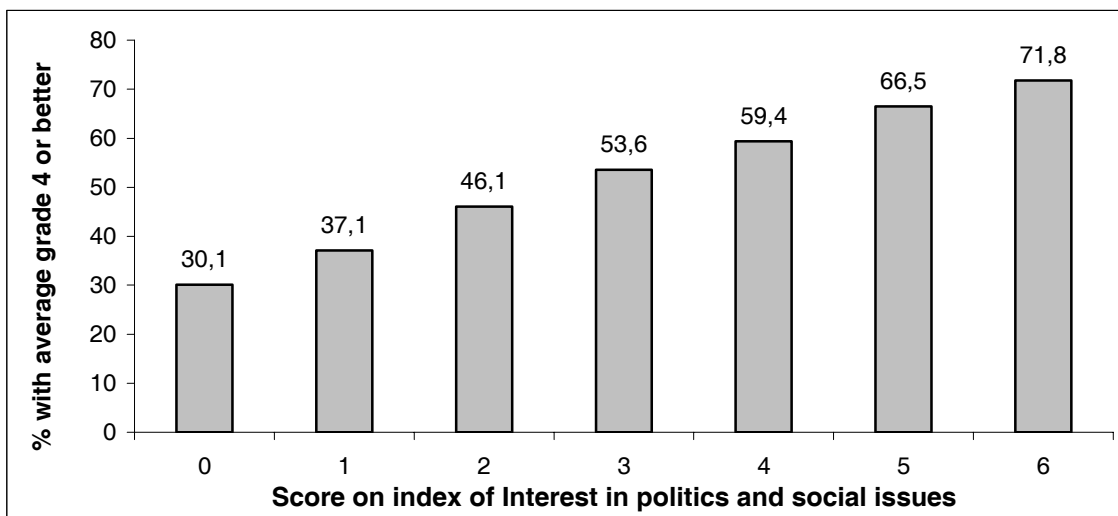


4.2 Academic performance

Girls have a lead in English and Norwegian. In English, 33 % of girls (as compared to 25% of the boys) received a 5 or a 6. In the subject Norwegian the contrast is greater: 30 % of the girls and only 15 % of the boys receive a mark of 5 or 6. There was no gender difference in Mathematics. The marks for Norwegian, English and Mathematics are combined to an overall average ranging from 0 to 6. On this scale girls have an average of 3.85 while boys achieve 3.62. 54% of girls but 42% of boys have an average grade point of 4 or better across the three subjects. As shown in Figure 4, there is a positive and quite linear relationship between getting good marks and having an interest in politics and social issues.

Figure 4 shows a positive and quite linear relationship between getting good marks and having an interest in politics and social issues. The stronger the interest youths have in politics and social issues, the more often they get good marks (and vice versa) – in keeping with the “Enlightenment hypothesis”: that civic engagement increases with cognitive knowledge as produced by schools.

Figure 4. Percent with grade-point average in key subjects of least 4, by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



N > 10300

A positive relationship with grades also fits the widely noted finding that civic engagement rises with *level* of education, for performance at lower stages of schooling will affect the chance of ascending to the higher ones. We shall later show that the positive association with grades is robust, in the sense that it persists after controls for “family background”.

It is hardly surprising that the relationship with grades is positive, given the generally consistent pattern which exists in international research literature between various measures of “civic engagement” and educational *attainment* (level of education) in the adult population. Other things being equal, one would good educational achievement to translate into enhanced likelihood of attaining higher levels of formal education. The observed relationships raise the question of whether it holds when family background also is taken into account? To this we shall return in Chapter 4.8 and for other measures of civic engagement in Chapter 5.

We would expect an even stronger association with performance in social studies, not only because social studies may itself lead to civic engagement but also because an interest in politics and social issues to begin with can be assumed to motivate students for social studies as a subject. In the Civic Education IEA studies, a positive correlation has been consistently found between scores on Civic Education knowledge tests and various measures of civic engagement. (Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002: chapter 6 on Norwegian 18 year-olds; Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003:30 on Sweden, Torney-Purta *et al.* (2001) and Torney-Purta (2002) on IEA findings internationally). We lack a measure of performance in social studies in the 2002 national survey of youths in Norway. But such information was included in a large

scale survey of youths in Oslo in 1996 which showed grade in social studies was a much better predictor of participation in political youth organizations, than were grades in other school subjects (see Chapter 8.2).

4.3 Ambition for higher education

Hirschi (1969) notes that a person's perceptions and actions will be shaped by goals and expectations about the future. Do plans and expectations for one's education in the longer run, predict the interest which youths take in politics and social issues? Educational ambition is in our survey material gauged by: "How long education do you think you will get?" The response options were "university or other higher education", "the general education program in upper secondary school", "vocational programmes in upper secondary school", "other" and "don't know". As might be expected in a sample of 13–19 year olds, many were too young to have a clear expectation and others suspend ambition until they near the completion of their secondary education. Thus, 24% checked "don't know". More girls than boys aim for higher education (51% as compared to 42%). As one would expect, high performers aim more often for higher education. But also among the distinctly "low performers" (a grade point average of 2 or less), 24% aspired to higher education.

There is a strong association between "planning higher education" and interest in politics and social affairs (Figure 5).⁸ Multivariate analysis in Chapter 4.8 will show that "planning higher education" (expressed as a dummy variable) is a stronger predictor of the extent of interest in politics and social issues, than is average grade (expressed as a continuous scale). This bivariate finding will be confirmed in multivariate analysis.

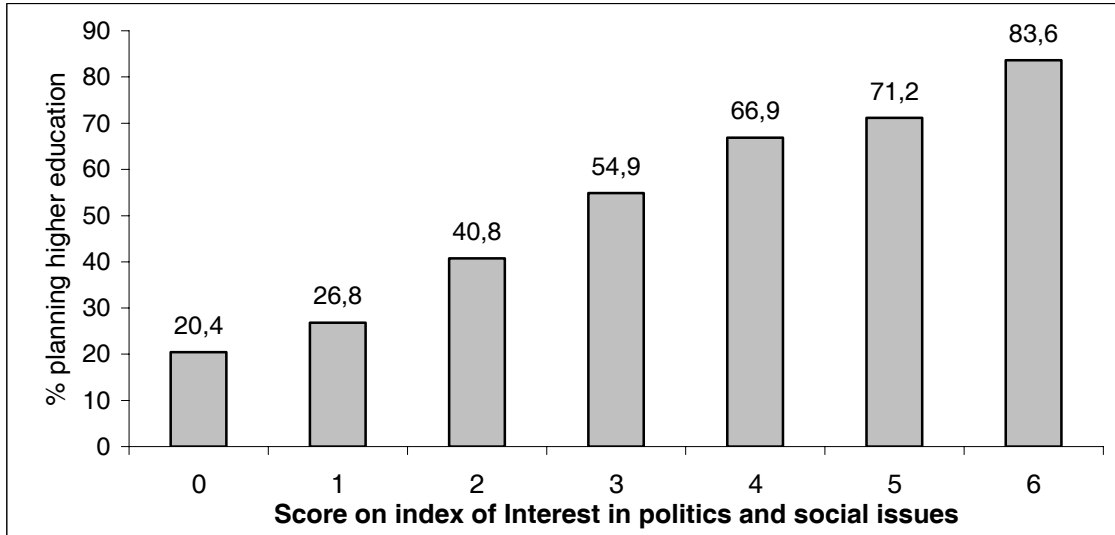
4.4 Labour market prospects "after I complete my education"

Youths in the sample were asked to state how far they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I think I will have great problems finding employment even if I educate myself". There were four response options ranging from "fully agree" to "fully disagree". 4.4% said "fully agree" and another 10.8% checked "agree somewhat". At the time of our survey unemployment in the Norwegian labour force was distinctly low: 2.6% – compared to the average across EU/EFTA countries of 6.7%. However, unemployment in the 16–24

⁸ American analysis of the "National Assessment of Education Progress" data has also shown educational ambition to be a strong correlate of "civic knowledge" (Niemi and Junn 1998). The same applies to the 2000 IEA civics study (Torney-Purta and Stapleton 2002).

age range of the labour force was 13% – close to the 14.6% which was the average youth unemployment rate across EU/EFTA countries at the time.⁹

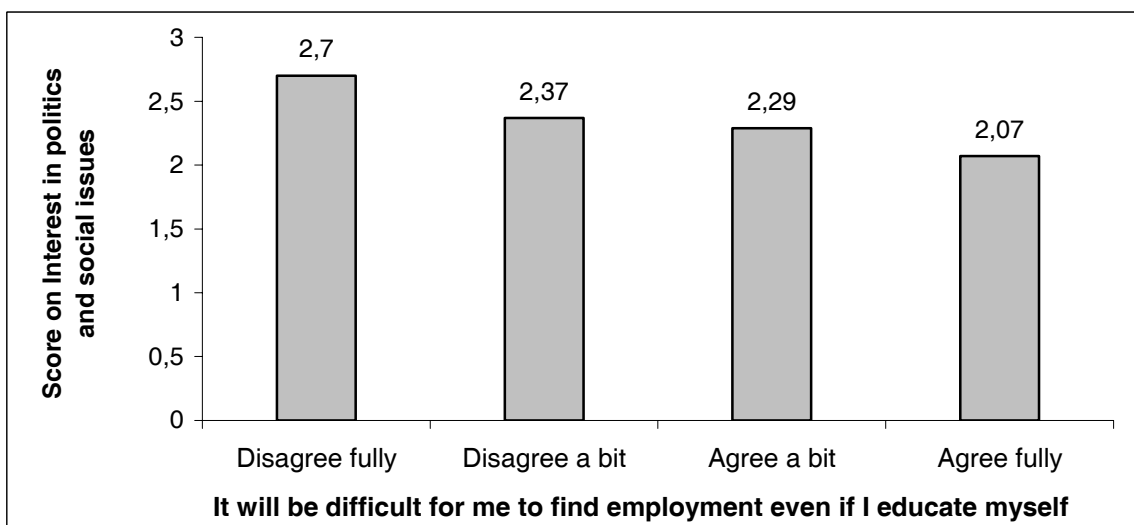
Figure 5. Percent planning higher education, by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



N > 10500

The more pessimistic youths are about their prospects when they will enter the labour market after completing whatever education they expect to get, the less interest they take in politics and social issues (Figure 6). In multivariate analysis, this variable was found to make a difference for the chance of having taken part in unlawful forms of activism (Chapter 5.6); otherwise there was no relationship.

Figure 6. Average score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues by how difficult youths expect it will be to find employment "even if I educate myself"



⁹ Source Statistics Norway at <http://www.ssb.no/ssp/utg/200401/03/>

4.5 Adjustment to school

Does civic engagement go with smooth adjustment to life at school and to the regime of school? Or are politically interested youths impatient with school and have conflict with its authority more often than others do? A view of such youths as educationally well adjusted “status seekers” points to the former expectation – as would the view that both adjustment to school and interest in the larger public domain are expressions of harmonious integration into society. On the other hand, a view of youths as rebels – or simply as assertive and confident young people who are impatient to be treated as adults, would point to friction with school and to mental disengagement from pedagogic processes which require them to adapt and adjust.

4.5.1 Valuing school

Table 3 shows statements with which the youths were asked to agree or disagree. Response options ranged from “fully agree” through “agree a bit” and “disagree a bit” to “fully disagree”. A common theme is the extent to which the students value their school experience. The profile of answers shows some ambivalence. Nearly all (about 9/10) see schooling as important for their future. Nearly as many (84 %) say they “like school”, but nonetheless a very substantial majority (69 %) also say “school is boring”. Clearly, it is possible *both* to enjoy school and value its importance, and also to experience much boredom there. Many young people do not perceive their school as an adequately orderly environment for learning. Close to 50% of the students agree that there is too much noise and disruption during classes. A still higher proportion says teachers should deal more strictly with disruptive students.

Table 3. Attitudes to school by gender

Attitude statements	% “Fully agree” or “Agree a bit”		
	Boys	Girls	Total
I enjoy school	83.5	86.1	84.4
School is boring	71.0	67.0	69.0
It is important to get good grades	95.5	95.9	95.7
The teachers should be stricter with disruptive students	60.2	67.4	63.9
There is too much theory and not enough practical knowledge and skill at school	80.9	79.1	79.9
School will be useful regardless of what I do later	89.0	91.9	90.5
We learn many exciting things at school	64.5	62.8	63.6
I often dread going to school	16.5	16.8	16.7
Our teachers teach well	69.6	63.1	66.2
It is more important for me to meet friends than to learn everything and to do well at school	50.0	43.4	46.6
I think I learn more during the breaks than in classes	15.3	10.6	12.9
There is altogether too much noise and disruption in the classes	45.0	49.4	47.3

Bold face: significant difference between males and females at $p < .05$

In factor analysis, 8 items are part of a one-factorial solution which explains 24 per-cent of item variance and with high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75).

Items loading positively on the factor are:

- I enjoy school
- We learn many exciting things at school
- Our teachers teach well
- My schooling will be useful regardless of what I do later

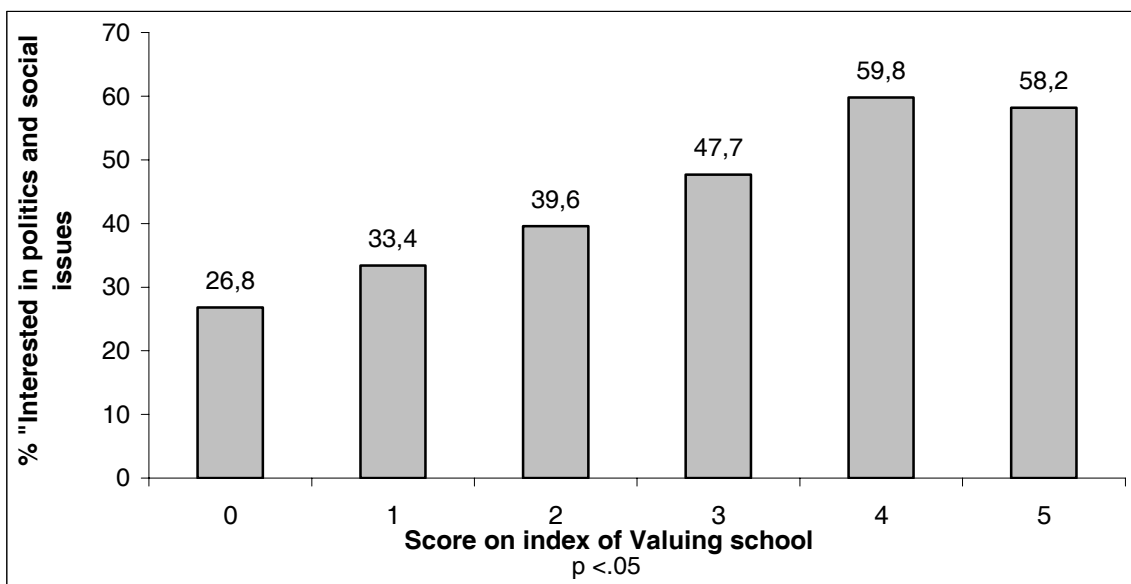
Items loading negatively are:

- I think I learn more during breaks than in classes
- School is boring
- I dread going to school
- Meeting friends means more to me than learning everything and doing well in school.

We used a scaling procedure that sets the scale to have a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 5. A value of 5 means agreement with all items having a positive loading and disagreement with all items having a negative loading. We shall call the scale "Valuing school". Girls scored slightly higher (2.01) than boys (1.95). There were only minor differences by age. This "first factor" has high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75). How does this scale relate to young people's interest in politics and social issues?

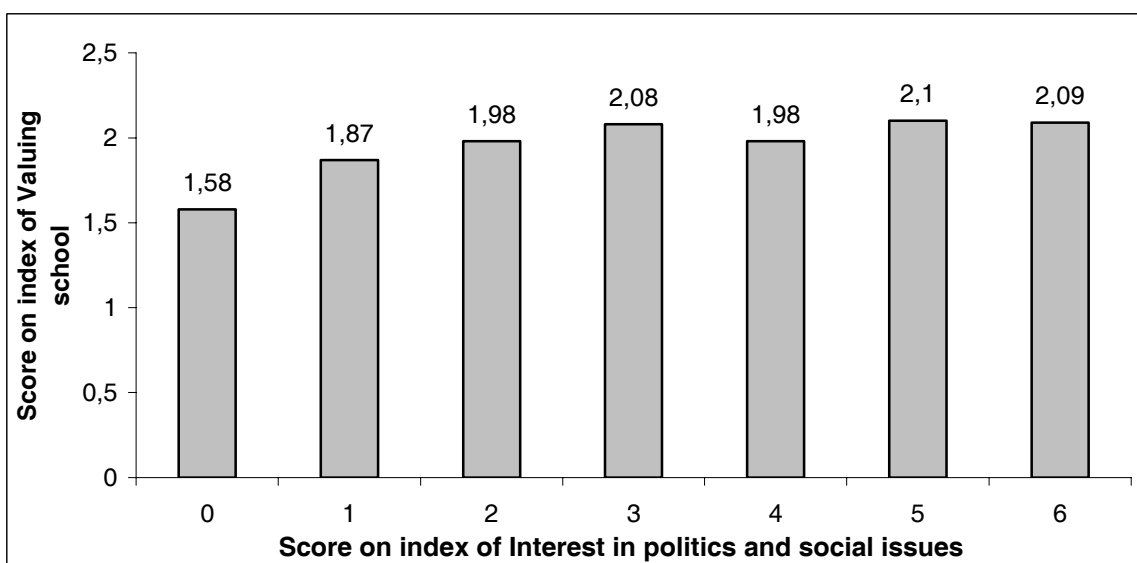
Though such a bivariate relationship may seem straightforward, the impression which statistics convey depends in this case on how the relationship is portrayed. In Figure 7, we see that the percent expressing a clear "interest" in politics and social issues, increases with "valuing school" – except at the top end of scale. However, if one looks at the full range of scores on the "Interest in politics and social issues" (Figure 8) and compares average scores on the "valuing schooling" scale, we see that *a distinctly positive relationship only applies to low end of the political and social "interest" range*. For the approximately 75% of youth who score at 2 or higher on the scale of "interest in politics and social issues" (cf. Chapter 4.1 and Figure 2), the extent of positive attitudes to school is much the same. Thus, very low or non-existent interest in politics and social issues goes with distinctly low appreciation of school. But the opposite does not hold for youths who are unusually strongly interested in such issues. Youths taking a clear interest in politics and social issues (scoring at least 3 on the scale), do not distinguish themselves from the "less interested" mainstream.

Figure 7. Percent “Interested in Social Issues and Politics” by score on index of Valuing School



In multivariate analysis we shall see that while “Valuing School” has a weak but positive association with “Interest” (Chapter 4.8), the relationship with actual participation in political activity depends on the type of activity (Chapter 5.4-5.6). In the most “activist” forms of political expression there is hardly any positive association, and in the case of the kind of political activism that makes use of unlawful means, there even is a hint of a negative association.

Figure 8. Average score on index of Valuing School by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



4.5.2 Discipline problems

A series of questions concerned infractions or school rules or conflicts with school authority. The format for these items was: “Have you participated in, or done any of the following, during the last twelve months?” The response options were “not at all”, “once”, “2–5 times”, “6–10 times”, “10–50 times” and “more than 50 times”. Table 4 shows the percentage who reported that they had been involved at least “once” in each type of conflict.

Table 4. Occurrence of discipline problems by gender

Have you during the last year:	% reporting occurrence at least “once”		
	Boy	Girl	Total
Sworn at a teacher?	53.5	37.9	45.5
Quarrelled furiously with a teacher?	28.8	24.1	26.4
Been sent to the Principal’s office for an offence?	23.0	8.0	15.3
Been told by a teacher to leave the classroom?	32.8	16.5	24.4
Been absent without legitimate reason?	50.7	56.8	53.8

All gender differences are significant at $p < .05$

To us, the frequency of such self-reported misbehaviour is surprisingly high. The percentage saying they have “sworn at a teacher” at least “once” during the last 12 months is 45.5%. About $\frac{1}{4}$ report they have had a furious quarrel with a teacher. We recall from Table 3 that close to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the pupils think teachers should be stricter with disruptive students, and that close to $\frac{1}{2}$ think there is too much disruptive noise in their classes.

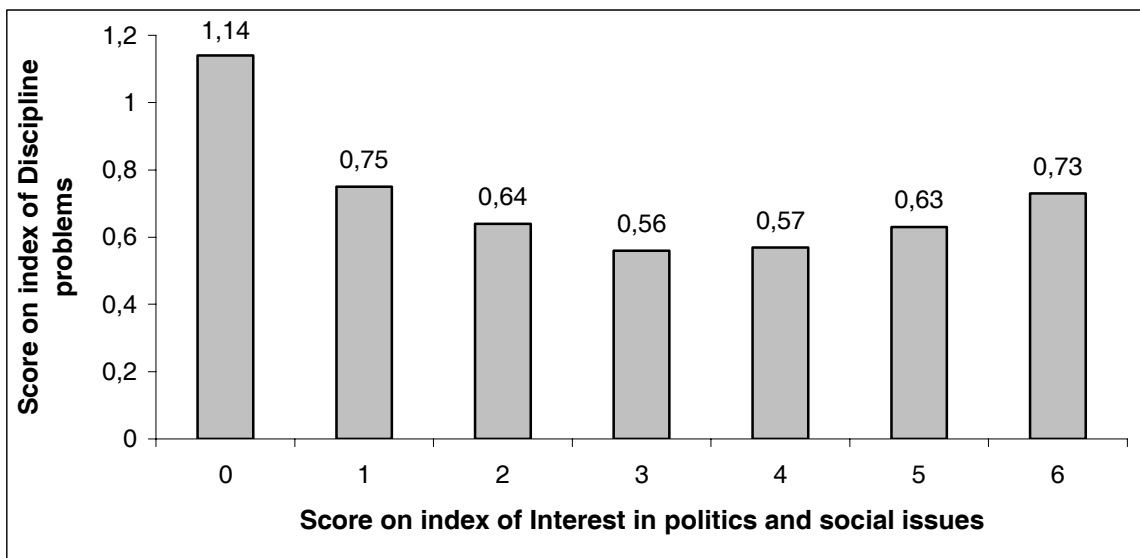
Girls are less often than boys involved in open conflicts with school authority, but they are absent from school more often without legitimate reason. This infraction need not entail much “overt conflict” if a false reason could be accepted by the school. Moreover, in upper secondary education (about half of the sample), some schools allow students a certain minimum quota of “unexcused” absences on the grounds that students should become increasingly responsible for their own attendance as they mature.

The five statements in Table 4 load on a single underlying factor which explains 54% of item variance in factor analysis ($\alpha = .74$). We constructed a simple additive scale of “Conflict with school authority” on which scores can range from 0 to 5. A score of 0 means “no conflict/infraction of rules” on any of the five components. Boys score higher (0.80) than girls (0.54) on this index.

A moderately weak negative correlation exists for between taking a stronger interest in “politics and social issues” and conflict with school

authority: ($r = -.10$). However, the relationship shows a hint of curvilinearity when it is examined more closely. Figure 9 shows average score on this scale by each value on the index of Interest in politics and social issues. Those with no such interest at all (0 or 1 on the index) are the ones most likely to have had conflict with school authority. However, next in line are those with the strongest interest in politics and social issues (scores 5 and 6). This minority (about $\frac{1}{4}$) of the “strongly interested” have more often had a conflict with the regime of school than what is the case for most students. We shall see that signs of such “friction” with the regime of school are more pronounced for those youths who involve themselves in different form of political *activity* (Chapter 5). It even applies to those youths who have “worked within the system” by taking part in student council activities (Chapter 8.3). We suggest that youths who are strongly enough interested in politics and social issues to “do something about it”, are too assertively independent to bend easily to school authority and stay “within the rules”.

Figure 9. Average score on index of Discipline Problems by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



$N > 10500$ Eta = .16 Eta squared = .025

4.5.3 School fatigue

The 2002 youth survey contained questions seeking to capture mental or behavioural disengagement from the teaching and learning processes in classrooms “during this last school year”: “daydreaming during class”, “not doing assigned homework”, “being unable to concentrate on what is being taught”, “falling asleep during class”, and “being tardy for classes”. The response options were: “every day or nearly every day”, “some times each week”, “once

a week”, “rarely”, and “never”. Table 5 shows the percent reporting such behaviour “at least some times each week”, by gender.

Table 5. Indicators of School Fatigue by gender

Have you this school year:	% reporting occurrence at least “some times each week”		
	Boy	Girl	Total
Been daydreaming or thought of other things, during classes?	58.0	65.2	61.7
Not done your home work?	39.9	32.7	36.2
Had such great problems concentrating that you were unable to keep up with what the teacher was teaching?	26.0	25.8	25.9
Fallen asleep during classes?	7.0	3.5	5.2
Been late to classes?	18.8	14.9	16.8

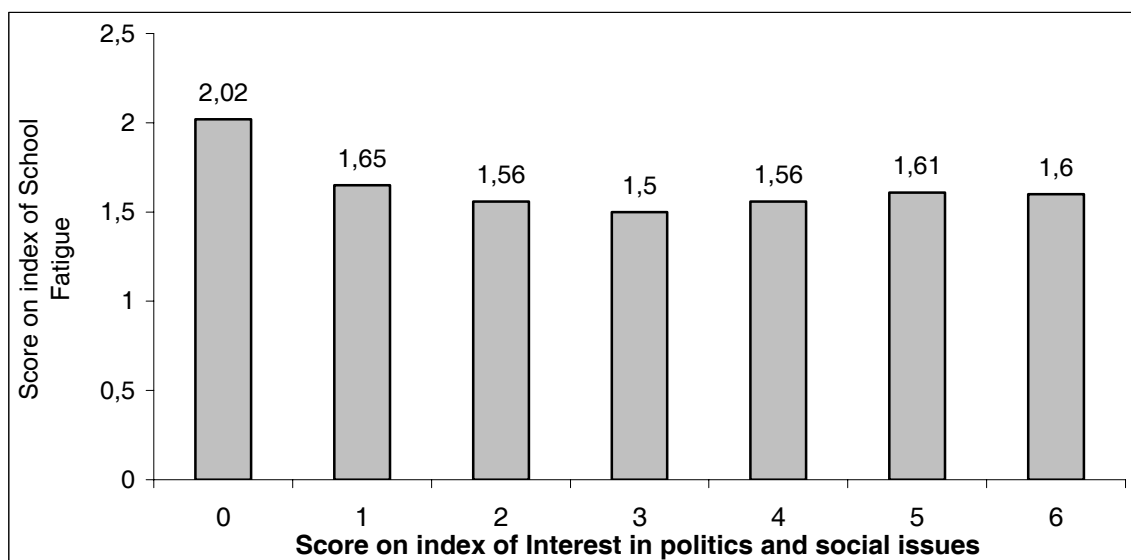
Bold face: significant gender difference, at $p < .05$.

In factor analysis, all items load on a “first factor” that accounts for 49% of total item variance (Alpha= .74). We label this dimension “School fatigue”. The scores were added to a scale ranging from 0 to 4. On each item a score of 1 means that the person answered “every day”, or “nearly every day”. A score of 0 on the scale means the student has checked “never” on all counts. Boys have a slightly higher average score (1.62) than girls (1.57). In contrast to “Valuing school”, this scale refers to experience and behaviour rather than to perceptions or attitudes.

School fatigue was found to rise monotonically with age, from a mean score of 1.13 for 13-year olds to 1.96 for 19-year-olds. Could it be that such a rise is unavoidable under conditions of mass enrolments in secondary education? As youths mature, they acquire new needs and wants which can make everyday life at almost any school seem increasingly narrow.

When School fatigue is examined in relation to Interest in politics and social issues, there is a non-linear relationship (Figure 10). The 4% of students who are totally uninterested in social and political issues (a score of 0) have a markedly higher School fatigue than others. Thus, again there is an effect at the extreme low end of the “Interest” scale. However, for the other 96% of the sample there is no clear pattern. We shall find a more pronounced pattern when School fatigue is examined in relation to the various forms of political activity in multivariate analysis (Chapter 5.4-5.6).

Figure 10. Average score on index of School Fatigue by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



N > 10600 Eta = .13 Eta squared = .017

We conclude with regard to “Adjustment” that youths with unusually strong interests in politics and social issues are not docile eager beavers at school. They appreciate the value of schooling a bit more than what their peers. But they suffer “school fatigue” as much as the mainstream; and they experience “friction” with the regime of schooling more often than youths of “middling” interests in politics and social issues.

4.6 Summing up the bivariate analysis

Interest in politics and social issues grows steadily as youths progress through secondary education. The pattern is much the same for girls as for boys. Docile compliance with institutional rules and uncritically eager acceptance of life at school are not characteristics of politically and socially interested youths. Those whose political and social engagement is unusually strong, have run-ins with school authority more often than the less socially engaged mainstream. Those who have no interest in politics and social issues whatsoever are even more likely to have conflicts with the regime of school.

Civic engagement is much more clearly a correlate of *personal ambition and performance in school* than of *adjustment to school*. Aspiring to higher education is a particularly strong correlate of being interested in politics and social issues. If “interest” during youth is translated into future participation in politics, Norwegian civil society and political life will be dominated by an

educational meritocracy. We lack benchmarks for assessing whether the indication in our data is stronger than they would have been for earlier generations of youth. But given the great increase in access to secondary and higher education in the last 50 years in Norway, and given the existence in the past of broadly based popular movements that also included the relatively “unschooled”, it could well be that the nexus between education and politics has grown closer and that it will continue to do so.

The strong association between being socially/politically engaged and planning to go to higher education has implications for how one interprets a strong representation of university educated adults in politics and civil society. It could be that to a large extent, the civic engagement of the university educated adults was formed while they were students in secondary school, on the road to higher education.

4.7 Family background

Performing well at school and expecting higher education are well known to correlate with the connection which a student’s family has with the economy and its occupational structure. Terms such as “class”, “strata” and “status groups” are used to denote such a connection which individuals have with the economy through the households to which they belong. The importance of family’s closeness to high status culture for young people’s navigation through the education system has also long been noted. Are the noted “education effects” in our findings attributable to such cultural resources of the home?

It is too narrow to see “family background” merely as a matter of the family’s position in cultural or occupationally based hierarchies. In particular, Coleman (1988) argued that close relations between parents as part of an adult community on the one hand, and the school on the other, are helpful for students’ educational achievement and attainment. Weak ties with parents (and between parents) may divert youths both from school work and from caring about the public domain of the “adult world”. The case for looking at *lateral relations*, not only the family’s position in social and cultural hierarchies, is strong with regard to political socialization. Moreover, in spite of the correlates which civic engagement has been shown to have with level of education and with occupational social class, engagement with politics has not in a country like Norway been the exclusive turf for a privileged economic or cultural elite. Broadly based popular movements have had a strong presence in politics since the mid 19th century. We expect that parents, not

least by their own example and regardless of their own social class or cultural “capital”, will influence the extent to which children develop an engagement with the public domain. There is therefore reason to conceive “family background” in wide terms. It could even be that other things being equal, parents who care about “the public domain” turn out to be an *educational* resource for their children. In Chapter 6 our findings support this hypothesis.

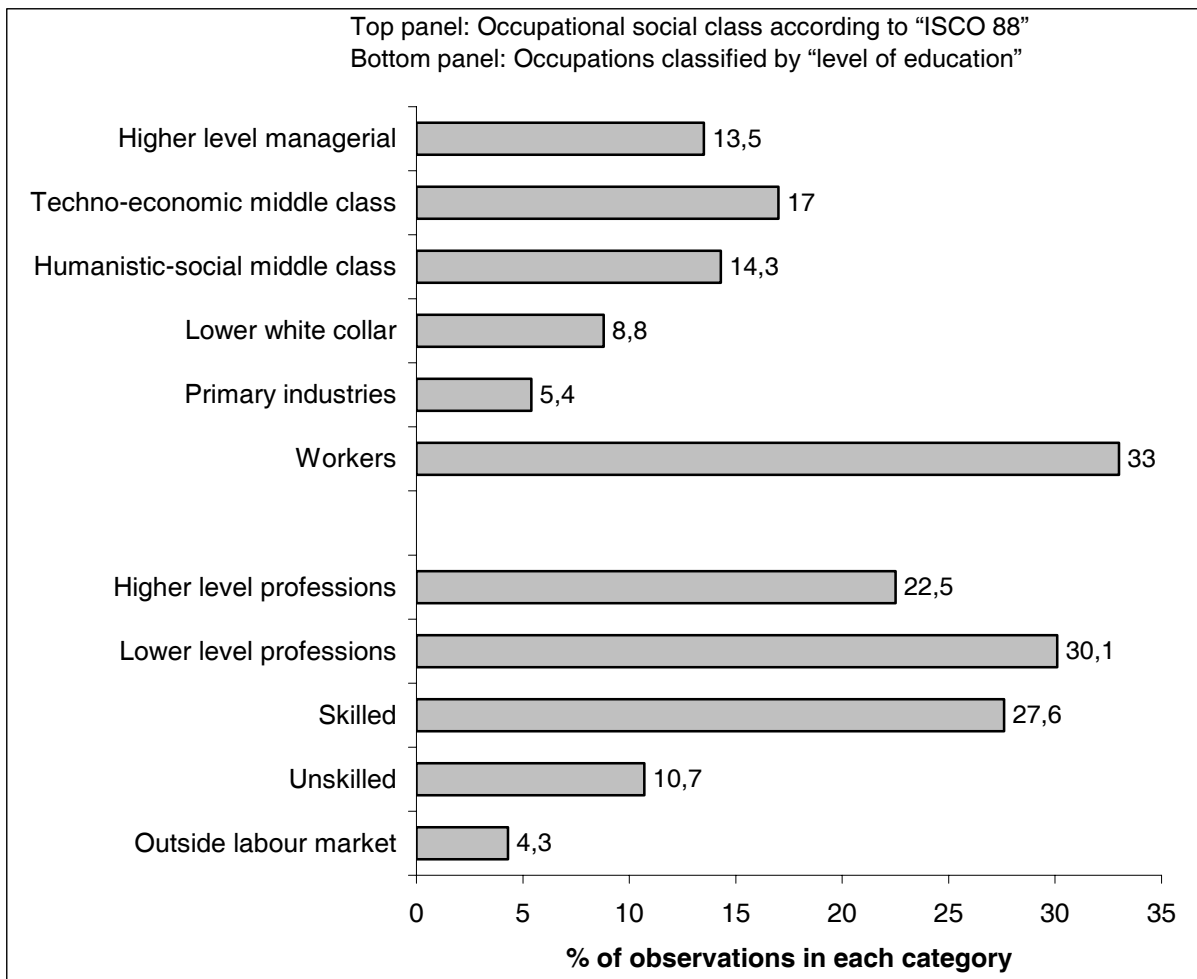
4.7.1 The family’s connection to the economy

The survey we use asked about parents’ occupations. Two classifications were used of the answers. One is based on revised version of ILO’s ISCO88 classification of occupations (Hoffmann 1993). The first digit of this classification has 6 categories and distinguishes among Higher managerial occupations, Technical and economic middle class, Humanistic-social middle class, Lower white collar, Primary industries, and Workers. In our material students had been classified according to their father’s occupation except when there is insufficient information, in which case mother’s occupation was used.

The other classification in the survey data file uses the level of education which in Norway usually is required for access to the occupation concerned. There are five levels: “not gainfully employed”, “workers”, “skilled workers”, “professions requiring short cycle higher education”, and “professions requiring long-cycle higher education”. In this scheme cases are classified according to the parent with the “higher” occupation. Thus, the categories approximate an ordinal scale as to education requirements of occupations. Though this scheme may have the weakness of much built-in overlap with measures of parental education, it has the advantage of distinguishing more finely among different categories of “worker”. On the other hand, the scale based on ISCO88 has more categories for what is usually thought of as middle class occupations.

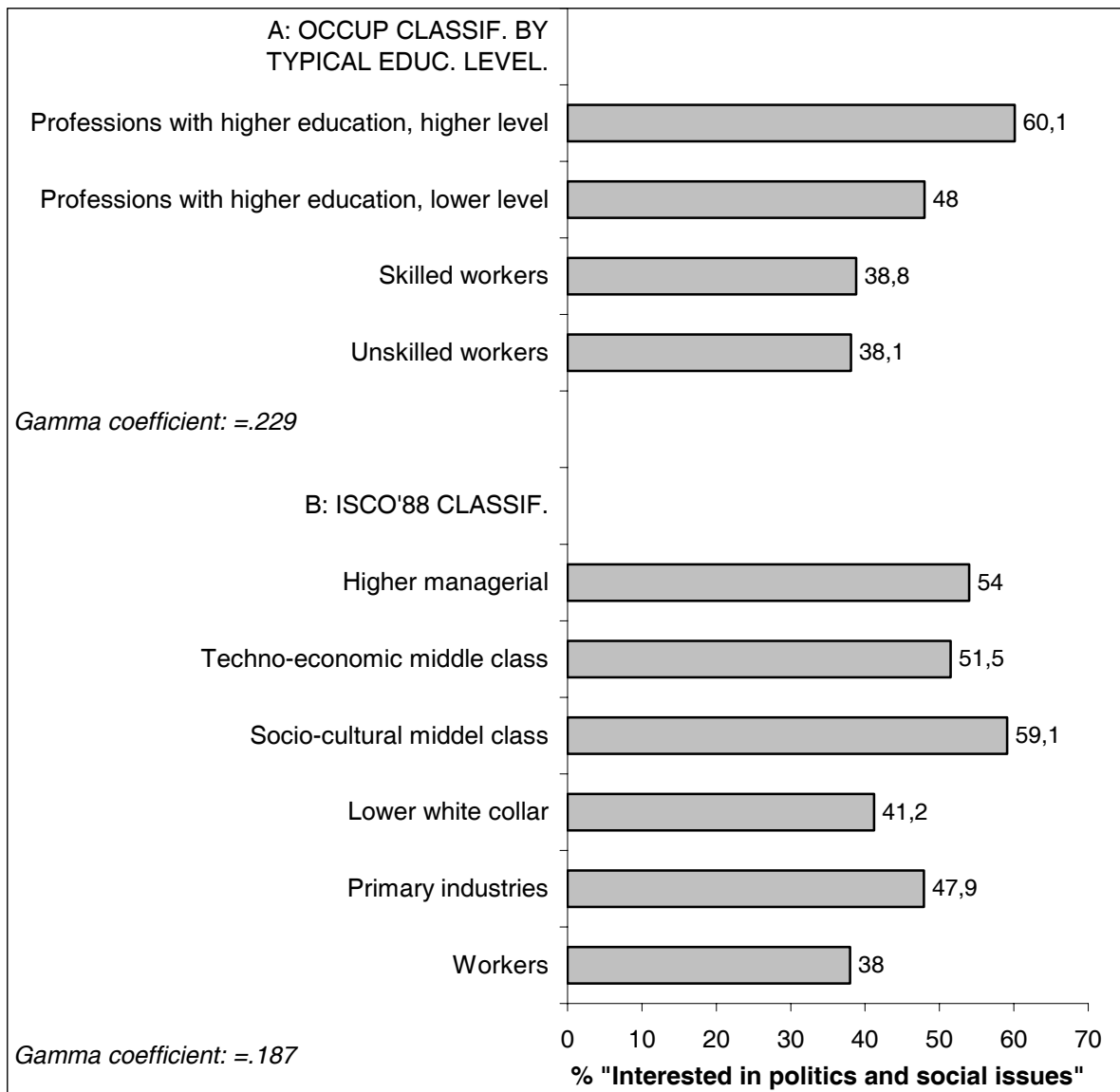
We shall for bivariate analysis show findings for both classifications, but since we have also direct measures of parental education, we choose the ISCO scheme as a set of predictors for multivariate analysis. Figure 11 shows the percentage distributions of youths according to each classification. How do young people’s interest in politics and social issues relate to these categorizations of their family’s social class background?

Figure 11. Percentage distribution of youths by their family's social class



It is children of parents whose occupations normally require long-cycle higher education, who stand out by their greater “interest” (Figure 12 – top panel). Occupations based on short cycle higher education also make a “positive” difference compared to occupations which do not have this requirement. Thus, youth are most likely to take an interest in politics and social issues when they grow up in a home with parents at work in occupations that typically require high educational attainment.

Figure 12. Percent “Interested in politics and social issues” by social class



In the ISCO 88 categorization of social class (bottom panel in Figure 12) the highest average on the “interest” index is found among students from the socio-cultural middle class. Their interest scores are higher than those whose families are in the “higher managerial” class. There is a further jump down to the score for those with a background from the “techo-economic middle class”.

The findings suggest that what matters most for youths’ interest in politics, is parental occupations which are strongly associated with cultural capital. We assume that the “socio-cultural middle class” are mainly professionals working in the social services of the welfare state. Persons interested in issues in the public domain may also be attracted to public employment to

begin with.¹⁰ It would in the interest of such families to take an active interest in politics since their own working conditions depend strongly on decisions by public authorities.¹¹

Figure 12 (Panel B) shows that interest in politics and social issues is no simple function of young people's origin in a hierarchy of occupational social class as defined by economic functions. The association which is most in keeping with the notion of a hierarchy of "advantage conferring" social positions is the occupational classification that takes account of the level of education typically required in for different occupations (Panel A). This importance of the "education element" in occupational classifications fits the next finding – that father's and mother's education, as separate indicators of family background, matter for young people's interest in politics and social issues.

4.7.2 Parents' educational attainment

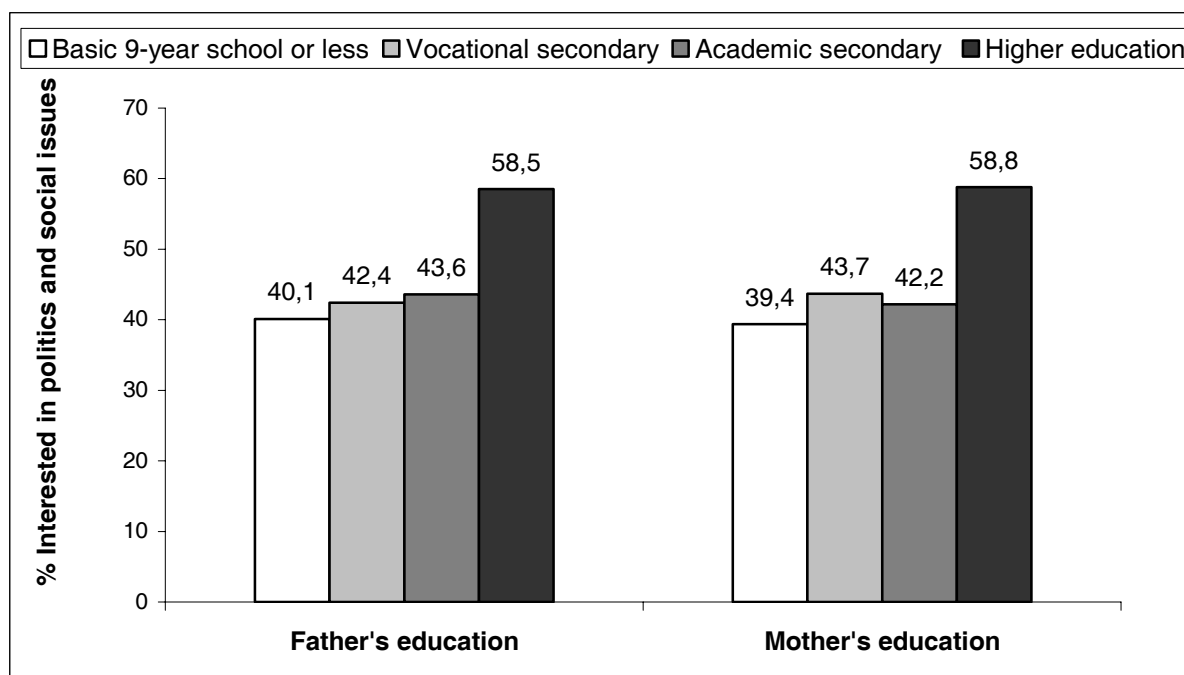
Given the type of social class correlates just discussed, one would expect parental level of education to make a difference for civic engagement among youth, and so it does. For both parents, educational attainment was measured by four levels: basic education, vocational secondary education, general secondary education, and higher education. (Not surprisingly, mother's and father's level of education were found to be strongly correlated).

Figure 13 shows the association between respectively mother's and father's educational level, and percent of youths showing "interest in politics and social issues" (i.e., a score of at least 3 on the 0–6 scale). There is a marked increase of "interest" when the parent has *higher* education, and much less difference among the other parental education categories.

¹⁰ Since Morris Rosenberg's (1957) path-breaking study on occupational values half a century ago, an international research literature has developed on self-selection according to people's values, to different types of occupation. Students preparing to enter the "large" public sector professions (teaching, nursing, social work) are generally found to attach value to being of service to others and of "working with people".

¹¹ We see in the bottom panel, that children of parents in primary industries are more interested in social issues and politics than children of workers and lower functionaries. This might in part have a similar logic – that the interest in farming families in politics in part is due to their great stake in the economic allocations of the state. However, this is speculative.

Figure 13. Percent of youths who are “Interested in Politics and Social Issues” by their father’s and mother’s level of education



Gamma coefficients: with “father’s education” = .224, with “mother’s education” = .209

4.7.3 “How many books are there at home?”

This type of question has been widely used in social surveys since the first comparative IEA study (Mathematics, 1967) sought to capture the home’s education-relevant cultural resources by asking students to estimate the number of books their family had at home. It has become a staple in many social surveys of youths because it has been found to predict educational performance and educational ambition quite well.

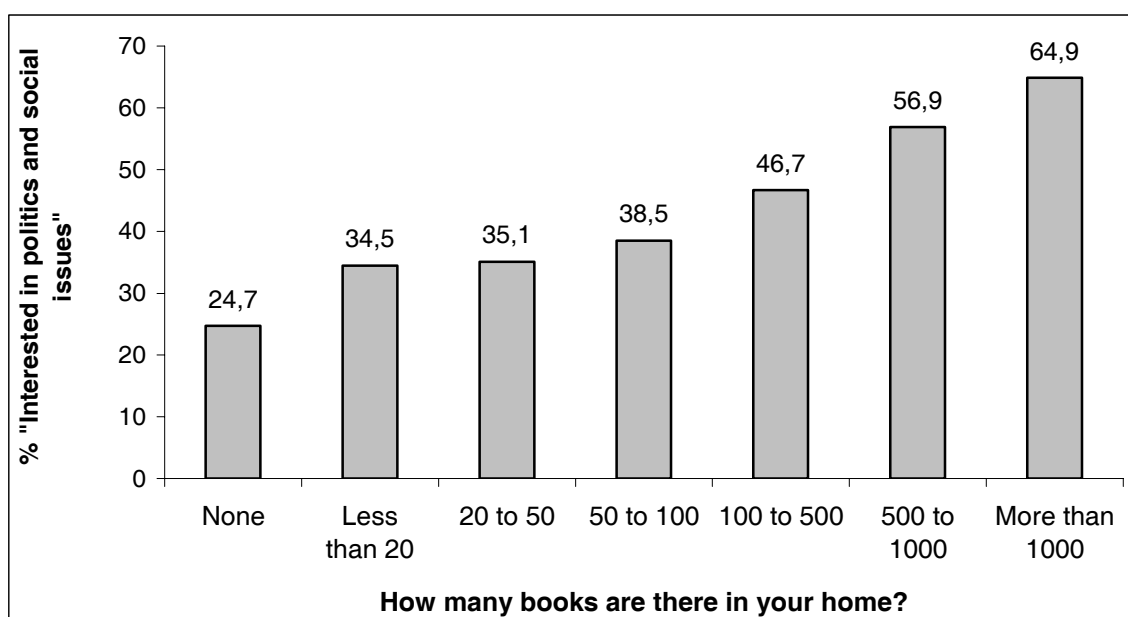
There will be much variation among people at the same “level” of education, as to their interests in cultural pursuits. It is interesting to note that the 19th century pioneer of Norwegian sociology, Eilert Sundt, in his study of conditions of the working class in Oslo in the 1830s, observed that the extent of reading materials in the home was a predictor of the care and interest that families took in ensuring that their children attended school. His study on *Pipervigen og Ruseløkbakken. Undersøgelser om arbeiderklassens kår og sæder i Christiania* is made available on the web.¹²

The Norwegian 2002 youth survey contained the question: “How many books do you think there are at home? (50 books is about 1 meter of bookshelf space)”. These response categories were offered: “None”, “Less than 20”, “20 –

¹² http://www.rhd.uit.no/sundt/bind3/eilert_sundt_bd3.html#Piperviken

50”, “50 – 100”, “100 – 500”, “500–1000” and “more than 1000”. We find a strong association between this measure and the percentage of youth taking a clear “interest” in politics and social issues (Figure 14). The trend is a steady rise, with a “near plateau” in the range from “less than 20 books” up to an estimated 50 books, and as measured by the gamma coefficient for degree of association between two “ordinal scales”, it is stronger than any of the other measures of “family background” so far analyzed.

Figure 14. Percent “Interested in politics and social issues” by “How many books are there in your home?”



Gamma = .264

“Books at home” could be more than merely a measure of “literacy resources” or affinity for high status culture. It could be that it also indicates that people take an interest – through books, in a wider world outside their private domain. Thus, within each category of “father’s education” and “mother’s education in our survey material we found a positive association between the respondent’s estimate of the magnitude of “books at home” and whether that he/she talked about politics and social issues with parents. Within each of the 4 “father’s education” categories, the gamma coefficients between “books in the home” (on a 7-point scale) and talking about politics and social issues (a 4-point scale) ranged from .11 to .23. Similarly, the gammas ranged from .16 to .23 within each of the 4 “mother’s education” categories. All associations were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Thus “education” matters in several ways for a young person’s interest in politics and social issues. There is the noted effect of the young person’s

own educational performance and ambition; and there is the effect of parents' education, and of a home that values written cultural products.

Previous findings in the IEA Civics education studies in Norway (Mikkelsen et al, 2002:194) and Sweden (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003: 32–33) indicated that that indicators of the home's "cultural capital" were better predictors of the more passive forms of civic engagement (knowledge, intending to vote) than of intentions to engage in more active forms of political participation. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the effects of the cultural capital indicators show positive effects for the two most common forms of political activity "Activism" and "Representational Participation".

4.7.4 Close and transparent relations with parents

In current writing on social capital as influenced by Coleman (1988), there is emphasis on the importance of close and stable social relationships between children and their parents, and of close relations between families and schools. There is in such theorizing an underlying worry that trends towards weaker families and communities in contemporary society would make it harder to meet the needs which children and adolescents have for security and encouragement as well as for monitoring and constraint by adults. Do such close relations with parents affect the extent to which youths develop civic engagement?

The survey contained a battery of statements which sought to capture relations between youths and their parents. The response options were: "completely correct", "quite correct", "roughly correct", "quite incorrect" and "completely incorrect". Some of the items are based on Alsaker, Olweus and Dundas (1991). The full battery of these questions is shown in Table 6, with the percentage of boys and girls who answered either "completely correct" or "quite correct" when asked to assess whether the statements applied to their own situation.

Clear majorities of youths say that parents largely are kept informed about where they are, what they are doing, who they are with. On the whole, parents keep the closer tabs on their daughters than their sons. To some extent parents keep track of school work. Half of the young (most of them girls) say they are often praised by their parents for doing well. About 2/3 feel they are taken seriously when they have something to tell their parents.

About 1/20 of the youths report strongly negative communication: that parents accuse them of being stupid and hopeless, that parents say they are disappointed in them. Quarrelling with parents is not very common. 15% say it happens "often" (more girls than boys). There is a minority (about 10%, more boys than girls) who try to keep their spare time activities hidden from parents – a sign of weak mutual trust.

Table 6. Percent giving the answer “completely correct” or “quite correct” to statements describing relations with parents. By gender

Statements	% answering “completely correct” or “quite correct”		
	Boys	Girls	All
My parents usually know where I am and what I am doing during my spare time	65.8	74.7	70.4
My parents know quite well who I am with during my spare time	75.3	81.8	78.6
My parents usually know when I have homework due (e.g., written assignments, essays, projects)	30.4	37.6	34.1
My parents often praise me for doing well	46.7	54.7	50.8
My parents often tell me I am stupid and hopeless	6.6	4.0	5.2
My parents are disappointed in me	5.1	3.5	4.3
When I have something to tell my parents, I feel they really take me seriously	66.2	65.6	65.9
My parents often ask how I am getting along at school	68.4	65.5	66.9
My parents often ask who I am with and what I am doing when I am away from home	61.2	65.6	63.5
My parents always ask how things went when I have had quizzes or tests at school	68.8	69.5	69.2
When I have been out at night, I tell my parents what I have been doing even if they don’t ask.	20.8	30.8	25.9
When I have received grades on tests and assignments I tell my parents how it went	57.4	66.5	62.1
I try to keep most of my spare time activity hidden from my parents	12.0	7.4	9.7
I often quarrel with my parents.	11.9	17.2	14.6

Bold face: significant gender difference.

Factor analysis of this battery gave a strongly dominant first factor which accounts for 34% of item variance and has an alpha coefficient of 0.82 . The factor seems to indicate both close and transparent relations: monitoring by parents, trust, positive communication, interest, and support. The component items, all of which load positively on the factor, are:

- My parents often ask me how I am getting along at school.
- My parents often ask who I am with and what I am doing during my spare time.
- When I have received grades on tests and assignments I tell my parents how it went.
- My parents often praise me for my doing well.
- My parents usually know where I am and what I am doing during my spare time.

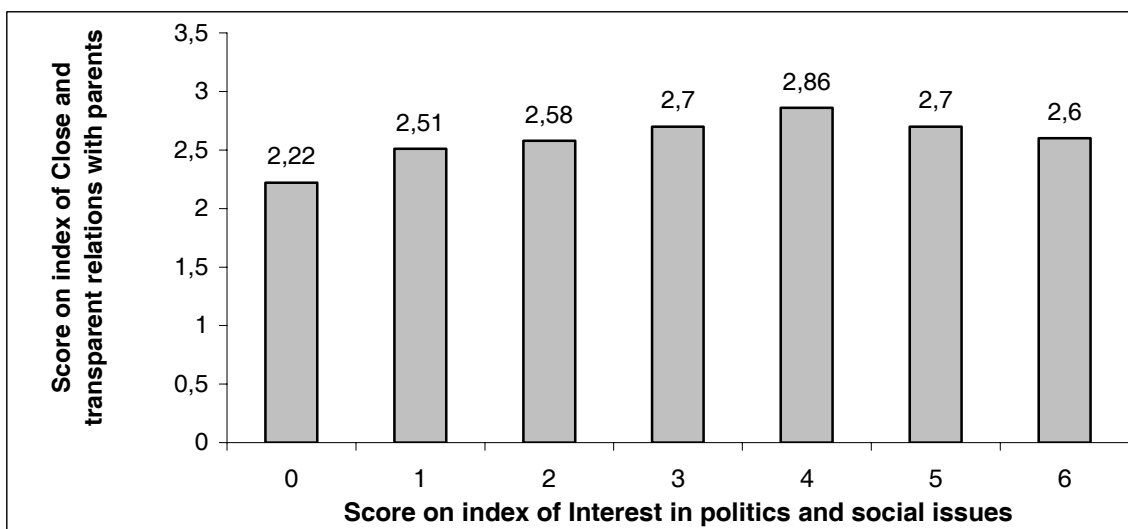
- My parents know quite well who I am with, during my spare time.
- My parents usually know when I have assignments due.
- When I have been out in the evening, I tell my parents what I have been doing, even if they don't ask.
- My parents always ask "how tests have gone".

The five response options of each item were scored 0 to 4. Items were summed to a score which then was divided by the number of items, so that the possible scale values also range from 0 to 4. We label the resulting index: *Close and transparent relations with parents*.

We had no clear expectation of how scores on this scale would relate to civic engagement. On the one hand, one might think that close relations with parents would facilitate the integration of youths into adult community and its norms of active citizenship. On the other hand, freeing oneself from "too close" and too dependent relations with parents can be part of a larger independence project which youths need to undertake in order to be fully mature adults. Engaging with the social and political world on one's own terms can be part of that independence project.

Figure 15 shows the bivariate relationship with interest in politics and social issues. Only at the bottom end of the scale of Interest in Politics and Social Issues, is there a positive association with extent of "parental monitoring and support". Those with no interest whatsoever in politics and social issues have as a group the very weakest scores on the scale for close relations with parents.

Figure 15. Average score on index of Close and Transparent Relations with Parents, by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



But there is some curvilinearity across the full range of “interest” scores which could fit the idea of countervailing influences. Those with middling interests in politics and social issues are the ones with the closest relations with parents. To some extent this bivariate relationship is an effect of age. We know from Figure 3 that youths grow more interested in social issues as they grow older. The correlation with age was, not surprisingly, found to be significantly negative ($r = -.29$). As adolescents mature they will take more autonomy and privacy for granted and their parents will be less bent on monitoring. Control for age is therefore important in assessing whether this scale has net effect on civic engagement.

4.7.5 The importance of the home for socialization to civic engagement

Some social theory has stressed the importance of youths as a collectivity unto themselves, with readiness to ignore or depart from the views of the older generation. Karl Mannheim (1947:35) wrote: “Youth is neither progressive nor conservative by nature, but is a potentiality which is ready for any new start”. Currently influential theories of individuation in present day modern society (Beck 1999, Giddens 1998, and Ziehe 1989) assert that youths are becoming detached from the social categories which have strongly shaped identities in the past: gender, ethnicity, social class and nation state. However, even if previously strong social categories turn out to be of some declining importance, this need not mean that youths are cut adrift from the influence of their homes.

Research that probes into the role of families in the formation of civic and political engagement among youths is surprisingly sparse, but there are some relevant pointers: The IEA-civics education study on Swedish 18-year-olds showed a strong association between “discussing with parents” and the extent to which youths expect to take part in various forms of political participation in the future (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003:32). A Norwegian study by Sivesind and Ødegård (2003:136–137) analyzed data from a 2001-citizenship survey, and they focused on the 14–23 age group in that wider material. The survey asked: “How often were there political discussions in your home when you were growing up?” They found in multivariate analysis that answers consistently and strongly predict: faith in the value of politics and in the importance of voting, taking part in political discussions, and civic volunteering. Clearly, “politicking families” matter for political socialization in Norway.

Our present survey asked: “How often do you talk about social issues and politics when you are together with...”. Then followed a list: “your friends”, “your mother”, “your father” and “teachers, students in your

classes”. Response options were “often”, “sometimes”, “seldom” and “never” for each type of interlocutor. About 4/10 said they “often” or “sometimes” talk about such issues with parents (Table 7). “Friends” were mentioned slightly less often. Thus, parents have a continued importance as interlocutors with regard to issues in the public domain. “Teachers, students in your classes” were mentioned less often (about 1/3) by the respondents, though Norwegian social studies curricula strongly recommend that students be encouraged to state views and engage in discussion with others.

Table 7. Frequency of talking about politics and social issues with: parents, friends, and “teachers and students in your class”. By gender

Talking about politics and social issues when together with...	% talking “sometimes” or “often”		
	Boys	Girls	All
Your friends	39.6	35.6	37.5
Your father	44.3	43.5	43.9
Your mother	40.3	39.5	39.9
Teachers, and students in your class	32.7	33.7	33.2

Bold face: statistically significant gender difference. N > 10500

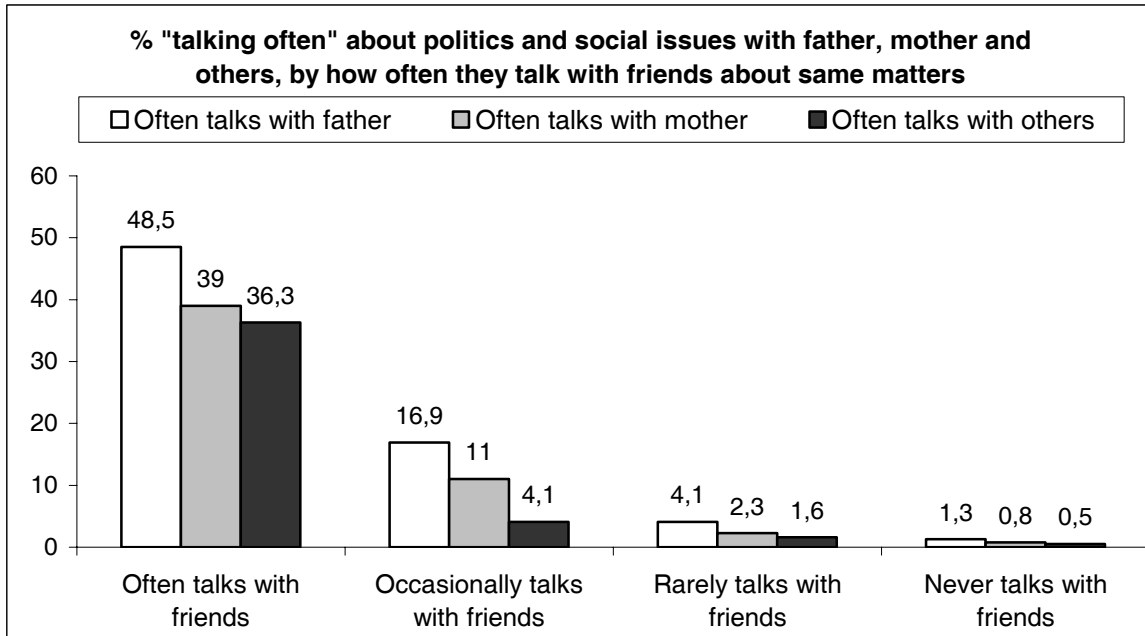
We also found that youths talk *more* with their parents about social and political issues as they get older. The same was true for talking “with friends” and “with teachers and with other students in your class”. Further, parents and friends do are not polarized alternatives as interlocutors. Those who talk more frequently with their friends are also more likely to do so with their parents (and with others) as shown in Figure 16. Thus civic engagement finds expression (and presumably stimulation) in diverse social relations that typically complement each other. We conclude that the home remains a main arena for discussion and that it gains in importance – rather than receding, as youths mature.

4.7.6 Who influences whom?

Balanced mutuality of influence is less likely in the relation between youths and their parents, and between youths and their peers. Politically interested parents will have developed views about political issues long before their children started taking any interest or were ready to engage in much discussion of such matters. Unless there is some development of reciprocal interest, children and youths would increasingly withdraw from discussion with parents, as children mature (We found the opposite to be the case – such discussion becomes more common as children mature). When discussion occurs with some regularity, we think it is fair to assume that it is mainly the “old” who influence “the young”. One would expect modelling by parents to matter

(parents voting, being activists, discussing with each other and their own friends, taking part in civil society). “Talking with parents” is therefore a measure of the home’s importance as an arena for political socialization.

Figure 16. The more youths talk about politics and social issues with their friends, the more they also talk with parents and others about such matters



4.7.7 Socialization for autonomous decision making

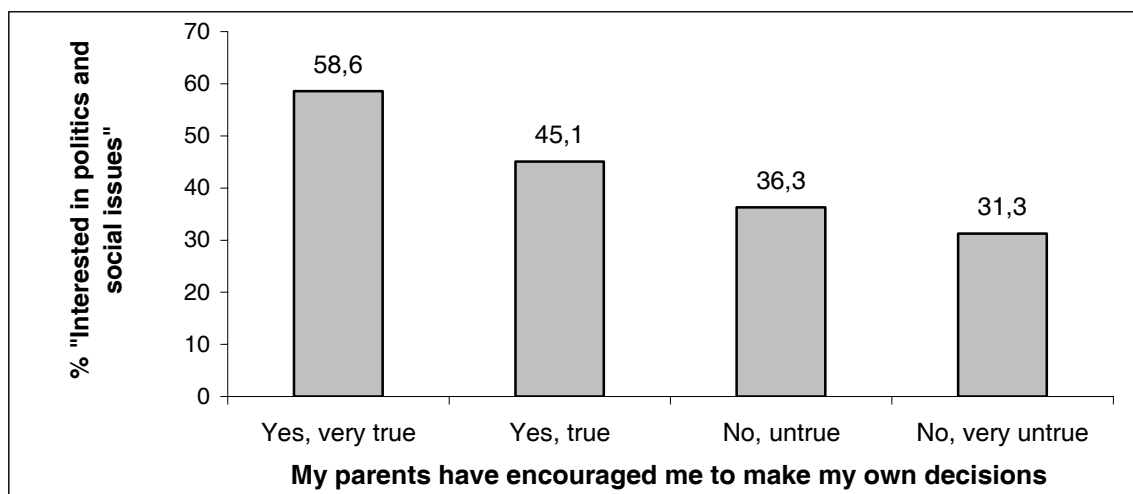
We assume that discussions with parents are most likely to make a sustained positive difference for young people’s own civic engagement as youths mature, when the parents encourage their children to develop their own views and make their own decisions. In our survey, the youths were asked to reflect on how they had been brought up and to indicate on a 4-point scale agreement or disagreement with: “[My parents] have encouraged me to make my own decisions”. Figure 17 shows that this measure is correlated with the interest taken in politics and social issues. Those encouraged to be more independent are also more interested in politics and social issues. The gamma coefficient exceeds that for “books in the home” (Figure 14), which stood out as the strongest predictor among the conventional “home background variables.

4.7.8 Measuring socialization at home to independent engagement with politics and social issues

To devise a measure of political socialization in the home we combine indicators of “talking with parents” with affirmative answers to the question of whether parents generally encouraged the respondent “to make my own

decisions”. The resulting scale is a 0–6 index which sums up scores 0–3 on the two items of “talking with father” and “talking with mother” about politics and social issues – on the condition that the respondent gave answers indicating that the parents approved of “my taking decisions on my own”. If the respondent indicated that parents disapproved of “my taking decisions on my own”, the scale is given the value 0 (regardless of scores on the two first components). Thus the scale measures family support for young people’s *independent* engagement with politics and social issues. This scale was found to have a Pearson correlation of .51 with the index for Interest in Politics and Social Issues.

Figure 17. Percent “Interested in politics and social issues” by extent to which parents encourage the youth “to make my own decisions”



Gamma = .269

4.8 Multivariate analysis of interest in politics and social issues

How are the noted bivariate relations affected by the presence of other effects? We shall perform OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) linear multiple regression to assess this issue. In keeping with the model assumed in Figure 1 we see civic engagement as directly affected by the “education indicators” of performance, ambition for higher education, and by the series of indicators of adjustment to school. We also assume that civic engagement is affected by socialization in the home. In assessing the net effect of these variables we shall control for age and gender. We shall further include as control variables the parents’ level of education, “books in the home”, and the family’s occupational social class. Table 8 summarizes results of stepwise regressions.

The dependent variable is the full 0–6 range of scores on Interest in politics and social issues. Since the predictors are a mix of “dummy variables”

(presence or absence of a trait, taking on 1 or 0) and of continuous scales, one needs to look at the standardized regression coefficients – the so-called *beta weights* to assess strength of prediction effects. However, to compare across *those variables which are in dummy variable form* it is also appropriate to look at the unstandardized regression coefficients (*the Bs*). These will be less affected than the beta weights by differences among the predictors in the proportion of cases being assigned the value “1”.¹³

Table 8. Regression analysis of index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3 (with controls for cultural capital and social class)	
	B	Beta weight	B	Beta weight	B	Beta weight
Age	.113	.145	.073	.094	.077	.099
Gender (girl)	-.175	-.063	-.118	-.043	-.111	-.040
Educ. performance and expectations						
Average grade	.253	.158	.145	.091	.106	.066
Planning higher education (dummy variable)	.596	.216	.403	.146	.342	.124
Adjustment to school						
Valuing school (scale)	.317	.117	.173	.064	.183	.068
Disciplinary problems (scale)	-.008	-.004	-.008	-.004	-.001	-.001
School fatigue (scale)	-.012	-.007	-.018	-.010	-.037	-.021
Socialization at home						
Political socialisation (scale)			.311	.424	.299	.407
Close and transparent relations to parents (scale)			-.022	-.011	-.030	-.015
Constant	-.968		-.204		-.397	
R square	.158		.314		.323	
R square change			.156		.009	

Coefficients in **bold face**: $p < .05$. $N > 10\,000$ for all pair wise estimates of covariance.

Model 1 in the table includes only age, gender, and those other predictors which have to do with the respondent’s own education – performance, plans,

¹³ A general constraint in regression analysis is that a trait possessed by only a very small proportion of the population analyzed, will show up as having a low effect even if the effect is strong for those cases which exhibit the trait. The reason is of course that the model is concerned with accounting for the variation which occurs in the dependent variable in the total set of cases analyzed. Traits which are present in a minute proportion of cases cannot have much impact on that variance.

and adjustment to school. Age is a continuous variable (from age 13 to 19). Gender is a dummy variable where 1 is assigned to “girl” and 0 to “boy”. Performance in school is the grade point average (0 to 6 scale) across the subjects Mathematics, Norwegian and English on the “last report card received”. Planning higher education is a dummy variable (values 0 and 1).

Model 1 confirms findings from bivariate analyses. Planning Higher Education is the strongest predictor. Next in order of importance, going by the beta weights is Educational Performance. Age matters – confirming that *ceteres paribus*, interest in politics and social issues increases with age. “Valuing school” matters – but less than educational performance and ambition. Other predictors in Model 1 show little or no effect. There is a slight gender effect: boys score higher than girls. With a near balance in the sample of roughly ½ in each gender category and given the large number of cases, even a slight gender difference will easily attain statistical significance.

Thus, adolescents grow more interested in politics and social issues as they mature – regardless of how well they perform in the education system and how they adjust to that system. The aspects of their education which most affect the development of these interests are: how far they expect to “rise” in the education system, how well they are performing at school, and to a much lesser extent – that they generally appreciate the value of school. Extent of conflict with school authority (discipline problems), or their extent of personal disengagement from the process of education (school fatigue) have no significant effect. All together, Model 1 explains about 16% of the variance in the “interest index” (cf. the R square), which in our view is a moderately strong effect.

Model 2 adds as predictors indicators of socialization in the family (discussing politics and social issues with parents given that parents encourage independence) and the scale of close and transparent relations with parents. We see a dramatic rise in predictive power. The *increase* in explanatory power (.156) in Model 2 is in fact as strong as the total R square (.158) was in Model 1. We also see considerable reduction in the regression coefficients of those “education indicators” which in Model 1 made a clear difference: “average grade”, “planning higher education” and “valuing school”. This simply means that these traits co vary considerably with political socialization at home. We have deliberately followed a conservative procedure for assessing effects of socialization at home – giving statistical full play to “education indicators” in Model 1. But one could argue that home influences are “prior” to school influences and should therefore be entered first in the regression, something which would have further served to show

their importance. We take the increase in predictive power which nonetheless occurs from Model 1 to Model 2 to mean that the home matters at least as much as the school does, as an arena for political socialization.

If civic engagement very much were to be the prerogative of economic and cultural elites and their offspring, effects of “education indicators” and “family socialization” in Model 2 would largely be reducible to the social status of the family to which youths belong. Conversely, in a distinctly egalitarian social context with broadly based civic engagement, conventional measures of “family background” would add little predictive power.

Model 3 adds as control variables the family’s position in cultural and socio-economic hierarchies. The control variables include more precisely: mothers’ education, father’s education, a 7-point scale of “books in the home”, and a string of dummy variables measuring social class according to father’s occupation classified in 6 groupings: workers, lower functionaries, primary industries, techno-economic middle class occupations, socio-cultural middle class occupations, and higher administrative positions.

The findings in Model 3 fit an egalitarian model since adding these conventional “family background variables” makes little difference. The predictive power of the model (R square) increases by only .009, indicating miniscule “direct effects” of social class and cultural capital. The beta weights of the predictors in Model 2 are not much affected, suggesting that “indirect effects” of social class and cultural capital also are distinctly weak.

We conclude that the pattern of effects which were shown in Models 1 and 2 are not reducible to the “prior” influence of social class and cultural capital. The education system is in its own right an important arena for socialization to taking an interest in politics and social issues. The “education effect” which matters most is level of ambition: planning higher education, rather than academic performance as such. Home influences that are not reducible to social class and cultural capital, matter even more for developing interests in politics and social issues.

5 Political activity

Giddens (1998) maintains that traditional representative democracy with its parties and institutions is perceived as remote from everyday life by many politically engaged people, and that citizens (including youths) increasingly are attracted to new forms of political expression which are closer to their life. Beck (1999, 2002) argues that new forms of “sub-politics” have emerged with a theatre of action removed from parliament and local government. Examples are loosely constituted advocacy groups and networks concerned with e.g., ecology, animal rights, and consumer rights. Thörn (2002:176) refers to such phenomena as the “politics of life”.

The rise of such informally organized activism can be seen conditioned by increased detachment of youths from previously stronger identity shaping categories of gender, family, class, ethnicity and the nation state which Bjereld *et al.* (2005) argue result from globalization trends. The new social movements have contributed to politicization and democratization of the private sphere and of everyday life – according to this view. These theoreticians share the view that the new social movements, networks, and action groups are an opportunity for renewing politics by bringing it closer to people’s everyday life. How far does youth take part in the type of political activity which is closer than the traditional forms, to political expressions in “the street”?

The findings below will give some support to such theories *as far as youths are concerned*, for they will show that involvement in stably constituted political groups (“organizations”) is a marginal phenomenon among 13–19 year olds in Norway, but that participation in more loosely constituted “Activism” is quite common and rises with age. We lack data, however, for assessing whether these patterns have become stronger in recent years than they were some decades ago.

5.1 Indicators of political activity

Table 9 shows the percentage who report they have been involved in various forms of political activity. The question was so formulated that it would include past activity, not just recent political activity within some specified period.

Table 9. Participation in political activities by gender

Type of political activity	% saying they have been involved		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Active in youth group of a political party	9.7	10.2	10.0
Active in other political organizations	4.6	4.5	4.6
Achieved mention in mass media in connection with some political cause	7.0	6.5	6.7
Taken part in campaign to collect signatures for a cause	31.6	41.6	36.8
Taken part in a political public event (rally, demonstration etc.)	15.5	23.1	19.5
Written political statements on walls etc.	5.1	2.7	3.9
Taken part in unlawful protest events	8.5	2.9	5.6
Caused damage to public or private property as part of protest action	5.7	1.5	3.5
Boycotted certain products or firms	11.6	12.1	11.8
Been active in student council	21.4	28.3	25.0
Taken part in youth councils, "local youth government" etc.	7.7	9.1	8.4

Bold face: gender difference significant at $p < .05$.

5.2 Gender differences

Table 9 shows that boys are more involved in extreme and unlawful forms of advocacy, such as writing slogans on walls, and causing damage to property as part of protest. This is in keeping with earlier findings. For example, in Sweden boys, more often than girls, think such activities can be an effective form of political advocacy (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003: 13).

Girls, on the other hand, are more active in lawful political activity: campaigns to collect signatures for a cause, participating in rallies and demonstrations, taking part in a rally, and especially in representative roles within the school's internal participatory bodies. If translated into sustained commitments these trends suggest that women will become the majority in an increasing range of elected public offices. Other findings point in the same direction.

Wollebæk *et al.* (2000:107) analyzed data from a national survey ($N > 1600$) on the extent of adult persons' involvement across a range of voluntary organizations and showed that men were more active than women in terms of frequency and time devoted to voluntary participation. There was also a strong positive association with level of education. However, for youth the gender difference appears to be reversed. Sivesind and Ødegård (2003:132) used the 2001 Citizenship Study (Medborgerundersøkelsen) to study 14–23 year olds and compare them to older adults. They concluded that girls, more

than boys, resembled older adults by having more confidence in traditional forms of democratic politics and in participating in such politics. Thus, there are signs that women in Norwegian civil society and politics are catching up with men, and that women may surpass men in the future as the younger generations replace older ones in politics. We did find among the 13–19 year olds that males are slightly more interested in politics and social issues than women, especially in politics (Table 1). But as we shall in the analysis below, females are more active than males when it comes to political *activity* – as long as the form of its expression stays within the law.

It is possible that one reason this greater involvement of females, is the persistent importance of social justice as a political value. As noted earlier, Oscarsson (2002a, 2002b:82) has shown change in values among Swedish youth towards a stronger concern with social justice, and that women are more attached to egalitarian values than men are. There is of course nothing new in women, more than men, looking out for the weak and the vulnerable and to be more ready to sacrifice their own interests and needs for the good of others. For example, Norwegian research showed back in 1980 that women graduates from upper secondary school were more prone than men to attach importance to “doing something good for society as a whole” (*samfunnsnyttig innsats*) when deciding upon a career (Eeg-Henriksen 1983). It is also possible that political concerns with social justice now, more often than in earlier times, extend beyond the boundaries of the nation state – as a result of globalization. Women in the Nordic countries and elsewhere have traditionally shown stronger compassion than men, with poverty and suffering internationally, through support for religious missions. A trend towards dominance of women in politics may well result in greater attention to “soft” social concerns in political discourse.

5.3 Political activity indexes

Factor analysis of the items in Table 9 confirmed a three-factorial structure, with each factor having three items which had markedly higher loadings than other items. Simple additive scales, each based on three items, are created for each of these three dimensions of political activity.

The first factor, *Representational Participation*, refers to participation in formal organizations which are part of, or close to, institutionalized political representation, and which serve as recruitment channels to political office. The components are “been active in a youth branch of a political party”,

“been active in another political organization”, “participated in youth council, municipal council of youth, etc”.

The second factor, *Political Activism* refers to advocacy that is directly expressed in the public domain outside formally organized interest groups (though such groups may be involved in organizing or supporting it). Its components are participation in “a campaign to collect signatures”, “a political rally or demonstration”, and “boycott of certain products or firms”.

The third factor, *Unlawful Protest*, refers to activity by methods which skirt the border of legality or are clearly beyond that border. The items are: “written political statements or slogans on walls etc”, “taken part in unlawful actions”, “damaged public or private property as a form of protest”.

Each of these three scales can take on values from 0 to 3. Zero means a person has taken part in no action on any of the three components. A score of 3 means the person has taken part in all three types of political activity indicated by these components. After commenting upon the distribution of these scales, we shall convert them to dummy variables for use as dependent variables in logistic regression.

Figure 18 below displays average scores by gender. As one could expect from results in Table 9, Girls score significantly higher on Representational participation and on Political Activism while boys score higher on Unlawful Protest.

Figure 18. Average scores on scales measuring different forms of political activity, by gender

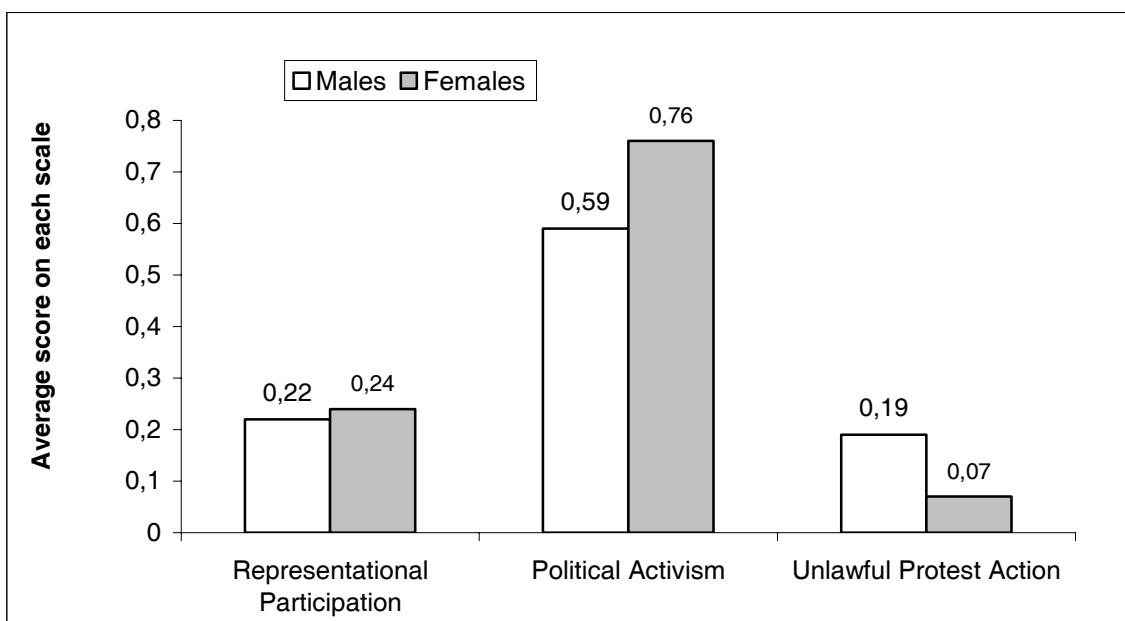
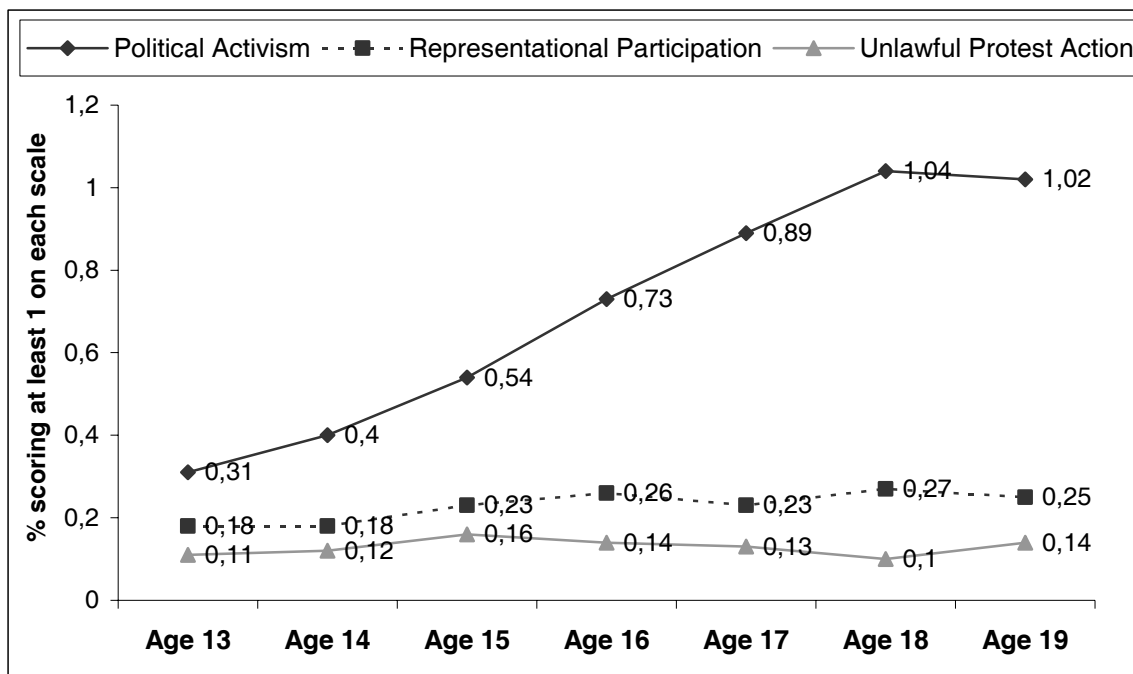


Figure 19 shows scores by age. We saw earlier in Figure 2 that interest in politics and social issues rises steadily with age. Is there a similar for political activities? “Activism” does indeed rise sharply with age and levels off in the very highest age category. With regard to “Representational Participation” there is a slight upward trend to age 16 but no subsequent rise. Given that this is the gateway to politics as traditionally institutionalized in formal organizations, the curve is remarkably flat. There is no trend at all for Unlawful Protest to rise with age.

Though the scales are expressed in the “same metric”, the component items may not be comparable and one might therefore doubt the comparability *between* scales as to intensity of involvement. However, we think the findings indicate much more broadly based involvement in Political Activism than in the other two forms. Such a pattern fits Beck’s (1999, 2002) claim that civic engagement among youth is not captured by involvement in established channels of interest representation. A much larger proportion of youth are involved in Activism than in political organizations that are formally organized as representative bodies.

Figure 19. Percent scoring at least 1 on indices of Representational Participation, Political Activity, and Unlawful Protest, by age



These three scales have different relationships with scores on the “interest” scale. Figure 20 shows the proportion scoring at least 1 on each of the three activity scales, by score of the index of Interest in politics and social issues. With increased “interest” in political and social affairs, there is more

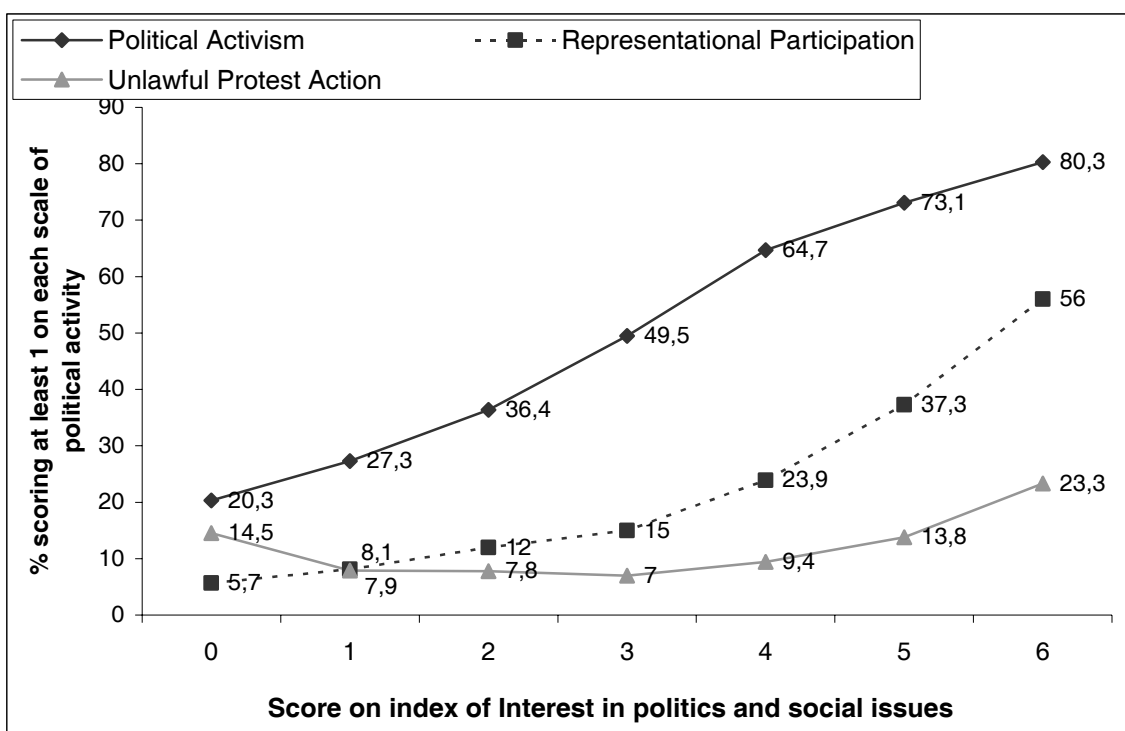
Representational Participation as well as more Activism. For any level of score on the Interest scale, the proportion of youth who have “participated” is distinctly higher with regard to Activism than to Representational participation.

It is interesting that Unlawful Protest has a curvilinear relationship to civic and political interest. The rate of participation in Unlawful Protest is highest among youth towards the high end of the Interest scale. But Protest political activity is also more common among those with no interest at all in politics and social issues. Presumably, at that “low end” of the interest scale, such actions may have some affinity to vandalism.

We shall next explore the relationships which scores on these scales have to education and family background. Since these scales are sharply skewed (on each of them, most cases have 0), we shall use Logistic Regression rather than OLS linear regression. For each scale, the dependent variable will be 1 if the respondent has a score of 1 or higher, otherwise it will be zero.

To simplify the analysis of factors associated with these scales, we shall bypass the detailed presentation of bivariate relationships which was part of Part One of this report, and move directly to multivariate analysis, taking with us as predictors the indicators which were analyzed in Part One in order to ensure some comparability between findings for “interest” and findings regarding different forms of political action.

Figure 20. Percent scoring at least 1 on indices of Representational Participation, Political activity, and Unlawful Protest Action by score on index of Interest in Politics and Social Issues



5.4 Representational Participation

Table 10 shows the results of logistic regression of “Representational Participation”. Twenty-three % of the sample has been excluded because of “missing information” on at least one of the three components of scale. Of the remaining cases, 16% had been involved in at least one type of such activity – thus scoring “1” on the dependent variable in the table. We shall concern ourselves with the overall explanatory power of the three models in Table 10, and with significance and magnitude of the estimated B coefficients which may be taken as a measure of relative strength of predictive impact of each predictor. The table also includes “Expected B” (also known as the “odds-ratio”).¹⁴ Even when using the “Nagelkerke procedure” which yields the highest estimates of total explanatory power (“quasi R square”), the explanatory power of all three models (R squared) is distinctly low. It is only 6 percent in Model 3.

Direct comparison is not appropriate with Table 8 because of the difference in method. However, adding as control variables the family’s occupational social status, parental education and “books in the home” (in Model 3) hardly affects the structure and magnitude of the coefficients and makes no appreciable difference, neither for predictive power, nor for the magnitude of the regression coefficients (the Bs).¹⁵ As in the linear regression of the Interest scale (Table 8), the multivariate logistic analysis in Table 10 shows no significant effect for age. A weak positive effect of being a girl is significant only in Model 2.

Education related predictors make a difference. “Planning higher education” and “valuing school” do have consistently positive coefficients. Performance has a weak positive effect that is not consistently significant statistically across the three Models. It is interesting that “the participants” show *more* School Fatigue and have *more often* had Disciplinary Problems, than those with no record of such Participation. There is a positive effect of “Political socialization in the home” (Models 2 and 3) but it is not a dominant predictor. There is no significant association with the scale of “Close and transparent relations to parents.” The strongest predictors are Valuing School

¹⁴ The odds ratio expresses the probability of going one step up (or down) on the scale according to which the dependent variable is measured.

¹⁵ A logistic regression with only these “home background” predictors gave extremely low R square: .010 (Nagelkerke procedure), further confirming the relative unimportance of the conventional “family background variables” as predictors of young people’s participation in representative bodies.

and paradoxically also having Disciplinary Problems. Though school is “valued”, the findings show signs of impatience with school and friction with school authority among these early recruits to conventional “politics”, rather than their being pliant conformists with the regime of school.

Table 10. Logistic regression of “Representational Participation”

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3 (with controls for occupational social class and cultural capital)	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
Age	.009	1.009	-.007	.993	-.006	.994
Gender (girl)	.102	1.108	.121	1.129	.113	1.119
Education performance and expectations						
Average grade (scale)	.131	1.140	.069	1.072	.049	1.050
Plans higher education (dummy)	.310	1.364	.204	1.226	.205	1.228
Adjustment to school						
Valuing school (scale)	.396	1.486	.297	1.346	.306	1.358
Disciplinary problems (scale)	.288	1.333	.303	1.353	.301	1.351
School fatigue (scale)	.141	1.151	.149	1.161	.146	1.158
Socialization in the home						
Political socialization (scale)			.162	1.176	.155	1.168
Close and transparent relations with parents (scale)			.072	1.075	.071	1.073
Constant	-3.70	.025	-3.58	.028	-3.83	.022
R square (Nagelkerke procedure)	.025		.045		.049	
R square increase compared to model 1			.020		.024	
R square incr. compared to model 2					.004	

Bold face: p <.05 For all models: N > 8600

5.5 Activism

Activism is the most commonly occurring form of political participation: 44% report experience of involvement. It is “main stream” also by being the one type which “rises with age” as youths mature. Table 11 shows that the predictive power of all three models is much higher with regard to such Activism than it was for the Representational Participation scale. Again we see that adding controls for “home background” (Model 3) makes little difference for predictive power as compared to Model 2, adding only about 1% to the estimated R square. Activism rises strongly with age and is an activity in which women are strongly present. The pattern of other regression

coefficients and their direction are similar to what we found for Representational Participation in Table 10, but their magnitude is greater. As was the case for the “Interest scale” in Table 8, there is a strong and positive effect of “plans to enter higher education”, and also a clear and positive effect of doing well in school.

“Close and transparent relations with parents” has a negative effect: Activists show independence from parents. This need not be a sign of conflict since we also see that “political socialization in the home” makes a quite a strong difference. In general, it is “education indicators” – not family indicators”, which dominate as important predictors for this “mainstream” type of civic engagement among youths.

Table 11. Logistic regression of Political Activism

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3 (Controlling for cultural capital and occupational social class)	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
Age (in years)	.266	1.304	.234	1.263	.241	1.273
Gender (girl) (dummy var.)	.326	1.386	.389	1.475	.393	1.482
Educational performance and expectations						
Average grade (scale)	.455	1.576	.395	1.484	.333	1.395
Plans higher education (dummy)	.648	1.912	.547	1.729	.485	1.624
Adjustment to school						
Valuing school (scale)	.149	1.160	.088	1.092	.107	1.113
Disipline problems (scale)	.149	1.161	.146	1.157	.158	1.171
School fatigue (scale)	.253	1.288	.242	1.274	.219	1.245
Socialization in the home						
Political socialization at home (scale)			.207	1.230	.188	1.206
Close and transparent relations with parents (scale)			-.128	.880	-.139	.870
Constant	-7.400	.001	-6.646	.001	-7.197	.001
R square (Nagelkerke procedure)	.178		.210		.222	
R sq. increase compared to model 1			.032		.044	
R sq. increase compared to model 2					.012	

bold face coefficients: $p < .05$ $N > 8600$

“Valuing school” ceases to have a significant effect in models 2 and 3; but there are clear *positive* effects of School Fatigue and of having Disciplinary Problems. Thus, again there is some tension between political activity, and on

the other hand, submission to school authority and “staying tuned” to the instructional process of the classroom.

5.6 Unlawful Protest

The IEA 2000 Civics Education studies of 18 year olds asked youths how likely it is that they in the future would become involved in certain unlawful forms of political activity. Surprisingly, it appears that such activity has not been much examined in publications from this international study. However, the Swedish report analyzed the proportion expecting to be involved in activism which would block traffic (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003). The proportion “certain to get involved” was much higher among boys than among girls. The report also found that youths expecting to be involved in such activity discussed politics with their parents more often than others. Such militant activists were also overrepresented among those who would join political groups (p 38), but they remained a small minority among all “joiners” of such groups.

In our Norwegian sample 9% say they have been involved in protest activism by unlawful means. The logistic regression in Table 12 shows a slightly negative effect of age (younger ones being most likely to report such activity). In Norway too Unlawful Protest is very distinctively “male”.

As in the earlier analyses, adding controls for the conventional “home background variables” adds extremely little to explained variance and does not appreciably alter the magnitude of effects or the pattern of coefficients.¹⁶

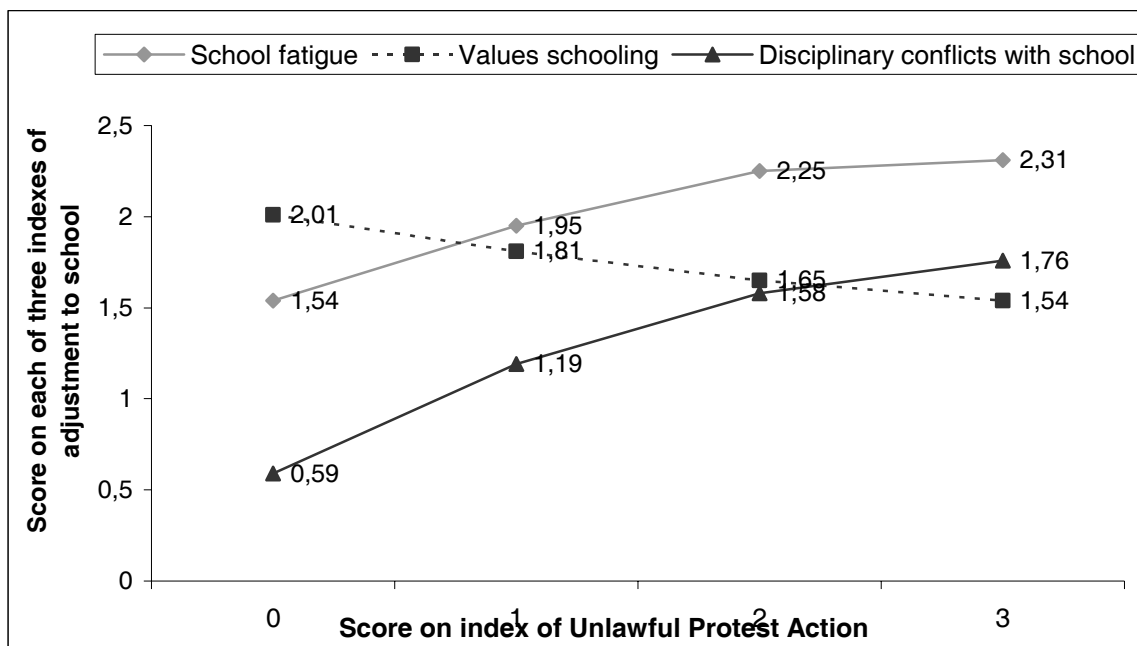
The table shows strong effects of several predictors that indicate marginalization from school. Performance and “planning higher education” are not statistically significant predictors. Rebellion against rules within school and rebellion outside are strongly connected. Across all three models in Table 12 there is a strong association with “Disciplinary Problems” – much stronger than those noted for other the forms of political activity. There is also a strong positive association with School Fatigue. Model 1 shows a weak but significantly negative association with “valuing school”.

Figure 21 illustrates in bi-variate format the relationships between scores on the Unlawful Protest scale, and the three forms of adjustment to school – in this case using the full range of index scores on “Unlawful Protest” rather than the dichotomy to which the dependent variable for

¹⁶ On their own, these control variables hardly have any predictive power of their own: Estimated R square was .003 (Nagelkerke procedure).

statistical reasons is constrained in the logistic regression in Table 12. While “appreciation of the value of schooling” declines with rising scores on the index of Unlawful Protest, Disciplinary conflicts and indications of “School Fatigue” rise strongly. All differences among means are highly significant statistically, with Etas of .050 (Valuing school) .045 (Disciplinary conflict), and .129 (School fatigue).

Figure 21. Average scores on indices of different aspects of adjustment to school, by score on index of involvement in Unlawful Political Protest



Unlawful protest outside the school is thus quite strongly associated with “inside” frustration with school and its authority structure. We are not necessarily imputing any particular direction of causality to this relationship. It is worth repeating, however, that there is no significant relation between such Protest and weak performance at school or with lack of plans for higher education.

In the multivariate analysis in Table 12 we include a new predictor: whether the respondents think they will face problems finding work when “you finish your education”. Such expected marginalisation from the labour market had no significant association with the scales examined previously. But for “Unlawful Protest” there is an effect: those involved in such militancy are more likely than others to expect problems finding work.

It is interesting that the home still matters as an arena for political socialization. There is a significantly positive association (Models 2 and 3) with discussing politics and social issues with parents. This fits observations in research on student radicalism in the United States from the 1960s: that

militancy more often was an extension of parental values rather than rejection of them (Flacks 1976). We also note in Table 12 clearly negative effects of “close and transparent relations with parents”. This indicates much autonomy from parents. In this case such “independence” cannot be assumed to occur under conditions of harmony, because family relations tend to be more turbulent for this group of militant protestors than they are for others. We found that those who reported “frequent quarrels with parents” more often than others also had taken part in Unlawful Protest. The same applies to those who reported higher frequency of quarrels between “adults in our family”. Similar associations were not found with the scales of Political Activism or Representation Participation.

Table 12. Logistic regression of Unlawful Protest

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3 (With controls for cultural capital and occupational social class)	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
Age	-.072	.930	-.116	.890	-.113	.893
Gender (girl)	-.714	.490	-.663	.515	-.652	.521
Education performance and expectations						
Performance at school.	.049	1.050	.023	1.023	-.016	.984
Average grade						
Planning higher education	.067	1.069	.023	1.024	-.069	.933
Low confidence in finding work after completing education	.154	1.166	.159	1.172	.166	1.180
Adjustments to school						
Valuing school	-.086	9.17	-.060	.941	-.053	.948
Disciplinary problems	.717	2.048	.700	2.014	.717	2.048
School Fatigue	.329	1.390	.302	1.353	.278	1.321
Socialization in the home						
Political socialization (scale)			.118	1.125	.105	1.111
Close and transparent relations with parents			-.279	.756	-.289	.749
Constant	-2.214	.109	-1.002	.367	-1.171	.310
Estimated quasi-R square (Nagelkerke)	.156		.166		.171	
R sq. increase comp. to model 1			.010		.015	
R sq. increase comp. to model 2					.005	

Bold face print: $p < .05$ $N > 8600$ in all three models.

6 Does talking with parents about politics and social issues boost young people's educational achievement?

The unusually strong effects of “political socialization in the home” which have been noted with regard to civic engagement, makes us wonder whether education serves as an avenue for social ascent especially for adolescents from families that are “politically and socially aware”. Could it be that within any socio-economic stratum, children do better in education system and develop higher ambitions if they have parents who show more concern than others do, with issues and activities beyond the confines of their private world? There would be several plausible explanations for such effects. One could think of such resources as a form of social capital for education. Such social capital would be more of a “bridging” and “linking” type (further flung networks) than the family-internal “bonding” variety which Coleman's (1988) path breaking conceptualization of social capital focused attention on. An effect on children's education might of course also reflect the influence of parents as models: e.g., that socially aware parents are thoughtful and conscientious persons who influence their offspring to buckle down, work harder, and aim higher. An effect could also reflect some genetic inheritance of both talents and other personality traits. But, is there an effect?

In examining this question we shall as before control for age and gender, on the grounds that girls tend to perform better and that it becomes harder to get “good grades” at higher stages in school. We shall initially adopt educational achievement as the dependent variable (average grade across Mathematics, Norwegian and English). Otherwise we shall include social and cultural family background variables as predictors, on the grounds that these usually are the “family background” measures which are used in studies of educational achievement (Table 13).

In Model 1 we see that age, gender and the usual range of “family background” variables together explain 13.4 % of the variance in youths' average grade. In assessing strength of effects, we need to look to the beta weights, not to the “raw” b's, since the predictors are a mix of dummy variables and differently unitized scales. Age has a negative effect, suggesting that it becomes more difficult to get good grades at school, as adolescents mature and rise to higher stages in the education system. There is a positive gender

effect – girls do better. Otherwise we find the usual effects of such predictors: having parents with higher education, having homes with evidence of closeness to high status culture (“books”), and having parents in middle class occupations (or in primary industries) help for doing well in school.

Table 13. Regression of educational performance on social class background, parental education, and extent to which youth and parents talk about politics and social issues

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	beta weight	b	beta weight	b	beta weight
Gender: girl	.215	.124	.231	.133	.218	.126
Age	-.047	-.096	-.058	-.119	-.059	-.119
Parents have higher education						
Father	.127	.070			.114	.063
Mother	.116	.063			.093	.051
Books in the home (7 pt. scale)	.128	.189			.109	.161
Social class: reference category “workers”						
Higher administrative occupations	.229	.094			.201	0.82
Socio-cultural middle class	.257	.108			.231	0.97
Technical– economic middle class	.201	.091			.182	.082
Primary industries	.271	.074			.241	.066
Lower functionaries	-.028	-.010			-.026	-.009
Political socialization in the home (scale)			.113	.245	.078	.168
Constant	3.679		4.285		3.784	
R square	.134		.083		.159	
R square gain compared to model 1					.025	
R square gain compared to model 2					.076	

Bold face coefficients: significant at $p < .05$ $N > 9500$

In Model 2, we introduce as predictor our scale of political socialization in the home: based on these components: (a) talking about politics and social issues with one’s mother, (b) ditto with one’s father, and (c) with the additional item of perceiving upbringing at home as “encouraging me to make my own decisions” (see section above on Measuring political socialization at home).

This model explains 8.3% of the variance in the grade point average. Looking to the beta weights, we see that the effect of “political socialization” is of moderate-strong magnitude: .245, considerably stronger than the positive effect of being a girl in the same model, and stronger than any of the usual family background indicators included in Model 1. In model 3, the

magnitude of the beta weight for political socialization is reduced (suggesting that some of its effect in model 2 could be due to its association with the conventional family background variables, especially “books in the home”) but it tellingly remains as strong a predictor as the “books in the home”. A deliberately conservative “net measure” of the effect of political socialization, net of all other predictors, is the gain in R square from Model 1 to Model 3. This amounts to .025 (or 2.5% of additional variance explained).¹⁷

We conclude that there are clear tracks of family influences other than those which are picked up by conventional social and cultural class indicators, and that children benefit not only in terms of developing a civic engagement of their own, they also benefit educationally from talking about politics and social issues with their parents – regardless of the parents’ social class position and of the level of formal education attained.¹⁸ To us, the finding supports the view that the sociology of educational achievement has focused too narrowly at those aspects of “family background” which fit the concern which more general social theories have with hierarchically structured social inequality. Within “classes” or “strata”, there is much variation among families which makes a difference for how well children and youths navigate the education system. Having parents that care about the larger social world, beyond their private domain and who talk about such matters with their children, is one trait that makes such a difference.

¹⁷ This is deliberately conservative by assuming that all “joint effects” on the grade point average which political socialization may have with the predictors in model 1, are due to those other predictors without any portion of such statistically “shared effects” being due to political socialization. One could well argue, however, that “books in the home” is not causally prior to political socialization, but a kindred condition at the same level of causality, indicating that the family has interests beyond its private domain.

¹⁸ Excluding from “political socialization” measure, its “pedagogic” component which concerns whether the young person thinks s/he has been brought up to “make your own decisions” does not reduce the effect on educational achievement.

7 Membership in voluntary organizations

The rise of broadly based party politics was in the Nordic countries tied to the growth of popular movements and to interest organizations connected with these movements. These organizations are characterised by defined membership, election of local officials and of delegates to representative organs at higher levels (county, national level), within an organizational hierarchy of interest expression and aggregation. Examples are political parties, organizations representing the range of occupations and industries, and the various forms of sports and cultural activities. Some organizations have youth wings (e.g., political parties); others are mainly concerned with the needs and interests of youth and young adults (sports clubs, youth leagues, and youth clubs). In theories of liberal democracy this web of civil society organizations serves important functions by (a) providing a training ground in civic skills (organizing, representing, public speaking) and (b), serving as intermediaries between citizens and government by aggregating and expressing interests – in addition to benefiting members directly and providing them with a forum for sociability.

NOVA's national surveys of 13 to 19 year-olds show that the participation of youths in political voluntary organizations has been fairly stable at about 4 percent since the early 1990s. However, the rate of membership of youths in other voluntary organisations has declined by about 10 percentage points from 76% overall in 1992 to 65% in 2002. While the rate of overall membership has declined, organizations that provide services to the members, rather than promoting "causes", have grown.

Sports organizations are by a wide margin the type with the greatest membership. 4 out of 10 youth belong, more boys than girls (Table 14). Other types which gather fairly large numbers of youths are musical or choral groups, and "youth clubs". These are usually located in towns and receive some municipal support, and provide youths with a place to meet and share in organized leisure.

7.1 Interest in politics and social issues

By comparing columns 10 and 11 in Table 14, we can assess the extent to which membership is associated with taking an "interest" in politics and social issues. In 13 of 16 cases, those with such interest are overrepresented among the "joiners". Only in the case of Motor Clubs is membership associated with *not* having such an interest. Membership in voluntary organizations is not necessarily an expression of interest in wider social and political issues. But for most types of voluntary associations, there is a connection.

Table 14. Membership in different types of voluntary associations by gender, education indicators, and Interest in politics and social issues

Type of voluntary association	Percent who are members, by gender and type of upper secondary program						Percent with certain traits, by membership (whole sample)									
	Whole sample N > 11 000			Upper secondary sample N > 5500			% with average grade 4 or better		% expecting to go on to higher education		% "taking interest" in politics and social issues					
	Boys	Girls	All	General program	Other programs	% who are members, by type of upper secondary program	Members	Non members	Members	Non members	Members	Non members				
	Col. No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11				
Political association	4.2	4.7	4.5	9.8	4.0	61.2	47.5	74.3	45.3	87.3	44.4					
Protection of the environment, ecology	0.9	1.6	1.2	1.9	1.3	65.7	47.9	68.3	46.4	83.8	46.0					
Red Cross, Norw. People's Aid etc.	1.8	1.5	1.7	2.6	2.1	45.1	48.2	54.6	46.5	66.7	46.5					
Religious association	4.9	5.9	5.4	7.4	4.1	64.1	47.2	58.5	46.0	60.3	45.7					
Temperance league	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.3	0.7	54.2	48.1	53.4	46.6	59.6	46.6					
Supporter club for sports (Rural) youth league, Norse language league, 4H	10.0	2.1	5.9	6.4	6.5	49.8	48.1	52.3	46.3	58.1	46.0					
Hobby club (stamps, models, etc)	3.8	4.9	4.4	5.4	3.8	56.5	47.8	52.8	46.4	57.0	45.9					
Musical band, choir, orchestra	2.3	1.4	1.8	1.3	1.1	50.8	48.1	50.5	46.6	56.1	46.3					
Scouts	6.5	11.8	9.2	9.4	5.4	65.6	46.4	55.7	45.7	55.2	44.3					
Sports club	2.8	1.7	2.2	2.1	1.0	45.8	48.1	46.2	46.7	53.7	46.4					
Hunting and fishing clubs	45.0	36.0	40.4	39.4	31.2	55.5	43.1	51.3	43.5	50.2	41.0					
Youth club	6.5	0.8	3.6	4.0	5.4	65.7	48.2	45.7	46.7	49.1	46.8					
Club for keeping pets and other animals (dogs, rabbits, aquarium, horse riding)	10.1	8.2	9.1	4.5	4.4	49.9	48.0	38.1	47.5	46.2	45.4					
Motor club	1.1	4.9	3.0	2.9	2.2	56.1	47.9	44.4	46.7	44.3	46.7					
Other type of organization	3.7	0.5	2.0	0.9	3.1	36.9	48.4	28.6	47.0	38.6	47.2					
	10.9	10.3	10.6	12.3	8.6	53.0	47.6	52.1	46.0	57.3	45.4					

Bold face entries: significantly higher than comparison category (at p < .05), e.g., respectively for boys versus girls, general program versus other program, and members compared with non-members under each series of comparisons in cols 6 to 11.

Though “membership” in itself may not entail much activity, national surveys in Norway indicate that even seemingly “passive” members will take an interest in the organization’s purpose and will have some awareness of its activities (Selle 1999: 147–151; Wollebæk *et al.* 2000:251–253). Being a member also means being connected to a network which can be activated if a need arises.

Swedish findings from the 2000 IEA-civics study (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2002:39) show a strong positive association between intention to vote among 18-year old youth, and the number of voluntary associations to which the person belongs.

7.2 Gender

Table 14 shows the relative frequency of membership in various associations according to NOVA’s 2002 youth survey. Columns 1 to 3 show percent who are members by gender. Not surprisingly there are gender differences.¹⁹ In keeping with the strong involvement of girls in Political Activism (Figure 18, Table 11), we find in Table 14 that they are overrepresented in advocacy groups (political organizations, environmental organizations). Not surprisingly, belonging to such organizations is strongly correlated with high scores on Interest in political and social issues (col. 10 and 11), suggesting that these are the organizations in which members most strongly show a “civic” interest. Only a small minority of youth belong to these organizations: 4.5% in political associations, and 1.2% in environmental groups. The “overrepresentation” of girls is especially striking in environmental groups.

Strong involvement of girls in such overtly political organizations was also found in the most recent IEA Civics Education study in Norway (Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002:186–187).²⁰ The Swedish civics study also showed

¹⁹ With such a large sample (N is about 11000) one might think that even very small differences that could be trivial in terms of their substance, would easily become “significant” in the sense that the probability is small that the difference could occur by sampling chance. However, since the proportion of youth involved in nearly all of these activities is quite small, the number of cases in the numerator of proportions can be quite small (e.g., 1% is about 110 persons).

²⁰ The IEA Civic Education study did not find a significant association between membership in political associations in their sample of 18+ year olds, and scores on a test of civic education knowledge (Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002:187). In our case and with a larger sample (N > 10 000 in most analyses, as compared to N > 2000 in the IEA study) there is a clear and significant association with grade point average across the subjects of Mathematics, Norwegian and English (col. 6 and 7 in Table 15) for both “political association” and “environmental protection association”.

that girls generally were more optimistic than boys about being able to “make a difference” if they were to involve themselves in such activities as voting, political parties, trade unions, contacting mass media, demonstrations, joining action groups. The one exception was protest activity by unlawful means. Boys more than girls expected to “make a difference” if they were to take part in this type (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2003:13).

7.3 Type of upper secondary program

Columns 4 and 5 show memberships in organizations for that subset of the sample who are in upper secondary education. Students are in this stage divided into different optional programs of study. The table distinguished between the “general program” which is preparatory for higher education, and “other programs” which usually have a vocational preparatory main function. In most of these “other programs” supplementary courses are needed to qualify for higher education.

Students in the “general program” are overrepresented in a wide range of voluntary organizations. Some of these have a clearly political, moral or cultural side – civic in the sense of promoting the “public good”. Other organizations, even if joined for personal benefit, could be said to have a civic side in that they have core activities of performance in a *in a public arena* (competitive sports, music, choir). In only two types of organization are students from the “other programmes” significantly overrepresented: motor clubs, and hunting and fishing clubs. In other organizations, statistically non-significant differences usually “favour” students in the general program.

Thus, youths in tracks which prepare for higher education tend to be overrepresented among the “joiners”. This is especially the case in those organizations which concern the public good or which involve athletic or cultural performance in public space. In this sense, there is an association between having entered the “general program” of secondary education and membership that could be construed to indicate “civic engagement”.

7.4 Performance in school

It is an internationally well-documented finding, dating at least to Almond and Verba (1963) comparative study of civic culture, that persons with higher levels of education are more prone to join voluntary organizations. One would similarly expect that youths who are “joiners” do better in school than others. Findings from a previous survey of youths in Oslo fit this expectation (Friberg 2005).

Are all forms of participation positively associated with “high” educational performance? Columns 4 and 5 in Table 14 show respectively for

“members” and “non members” of various organizations, the percentage of students who on the last occasion when they received a report card from school, received an average of 4 or better in Norwegian, Mathematics and English. Joiners tend to get better grades. In 10 out of 16 cases the difference is statistically significant. In percentage points the difference is most pronounced for environmental protection, religious organizations, musical/chorus activity, sports, and political organizations. All of these are overtly “civic” in the sense of serving the “public good” and/or staging events or performances in the public domain. In only one case – those who belong to motor clubs – is there a significant difference in grade point average in favour of those who are not members. This was also a distinctly “male” activity (col 1).

7.5 Ambition for higher education

A very similar pattern applies to ambition for higher education. When there is a significant difference between members and non-members, it is the members who most often aspire to higher education. The one exception showing the opposite trend is “motor clubs”. With regard to certain other organizations, there is no significant difference. These all relate to outdoors leisure: Hunting and Fishing clubs, and Scouts.²¹ Thus, there is no “iron law” – what applies to most organizations, does not apply to all. It appears that these “education indicators” are strongly correlated with types of organizational membership which also goes with “stronger” interest in political and social issues. The education indicators are weakly correlated (or uncorrelated) with types of organizational membership which shows no positive connection with attitudinal civic engagement.

Since self selection will be involved in any organization that is voluntary, all these associations raise questions of what comes first, membership or particular personal traits which may be associated with the reasons why people join to begin with?

7.6 What is chicken and what is egg: “joining” or “civic attitudes”?

Stolle and Rochon (1999) note from surveys of adults in Germany, Sweden and the United States that members of voluntary associations are better

²¹ Clubs for pet keepers may seem to fit, but in this case the findings turned out to be affected by the age distribution. The members are disproportionately in junior secondary education where the need to think about life after upper secondary school may still seem remote.

informed about politics, and more interested in civic affairs than non-joiners, and that active participants stand out even more in this respect, than passive members. Stolle (2003) point to a substantial international research literature which shows “joiners” to exhibit higher levels of trust than non-joiners. She then compared non-members, members who had just joined, and members who had participated for a longer period. She concludes that experience of membership over time builds a person’s trust in other members and leads to stronger personal engagement in the organization. However, with regard to generalized trust in other persons, the self-selection effects were more pronounced than any effects of having been a member for some time.

One might expect similar trends with regard to “civic attitudes”. In organizations with a clear political or civic purpose (serving the public good), there would be much self-selection to membership of persons with previous interest in these purposes. At the same time, participation would over time tend to strengthen identification with that purpose and build trust in other members. However, in organizations whose purpose seems remote from collective promotion of external goals, it is doubtful that membership would build interest in politics and wider social issues – though leadership roles could still build transferable “civic” skills in defining issues, building consensus, acting on behalf of others.

The types listed towards the top in Table 14 are those for which it is found the strongest association between membership and scores on the “social and political interest” scale. It is above all in these organizations that one would expect an “effect” on civic attitudes from membership.

The underlying causality of the connection between “education” and involvement in voluntary organizations is similarly problematic. Previous research on the dynamics behind such commonly observed correlations is sparse. However, if there is a direct “causal” relationship, we think it is more likely that “education” provides mindsets conducive to joining, rather than the experience of “belonging” to organizations influencing young people’s navigation of the education system.

We have shown in Table 13 that youths who talk with the parents about politics and social issues, tend to perform better in school than others. Similarly, “joiners” and “high achievers” may both disproportionately often have homes which, regardless of social class and cultural capital, encourage children to lead an active life.

8 Effects of measures taken by schools

How far are the type of correlations noted between education indicators and indicators of civic engagement, due to the interventions which schools undertake in order to promote civic engagement? One intervention is the teaching of Social Studies as a school subject. Another is adopting a style of teaching in such subjects (and other subjects) that seeks to encourage students to develop their own views and engage in discussion with others. We have reviewed the ambiguous findings on effects of “open classroom climate” in Part One. Yet another intervention is participatory councils which give student representatives an opportunity to take part in decisions affecting their class or their school.

8.1 What is learned in Civics Education?

Starting in 1971, three rounds of international studies of Civics Education have been conducted under the aegis of the International Association for Educational Achievement (IEA). In 1999 Norway took part in the second round which was a study of students in lower secondary education (14 year olds), and in the 2000 study of upper secondary school students (18 year olds). Both of these assessed in some detail the “civic education knowledge” of students and their intention to vote and in other ways involve themselves in civic activity in the future.

With regard to the study of 18-year olds, the Norwegian country study concluded that on the whole Norwegian students do well compared to students in other countries, as indicated by the “international mean score” on indices used. Average test scores on Civic Education knowledge were much the same as in Sweden and Denmark and above those in most other countries. Perceptions of democracy and of the good citizen are close to the international mean. There was strong support for women’s rights among the students, but attitudes are not quite as supportive as in most other countries regarding rights of immigrants.

Average score on a patriotism scale is a bit lower than the “international mean”, but confidence in government and public institutions was stronger than in any other participating country. Norwegian students are also among those who most often perceive their civics education classes to encourage open discussion. Norwegian 18-year olds show high intention to vote in

elections, but display relatively low intention to get involved in representational civic and political activity in “organizations”. They are more interested in getting involved in more direct forms of political activism (Mikkelsen et al 2002: 241–242).

As recognized by the IEA studies, such learning outcomes will be shaped by a variety of sometimes interacting sources (Amadeo *et al.* 2002:22, Mikkelsen *et al.* 2002: 4–6), only one of which is what is taught and learned in civics education at school. What is mainly due to learning *at school* is therefore problematic, and it may be pointless to seek a quantitative measure of purely school-based learning, if learning outcomes result from strongly interacting influences, only one of which is instruction and facilitation by teachers.

But even if external influences matter greatly, mapping of gaps between what is learned and what the goals are will be useful information for education. A country’s own curriculum should be the most important source of such goals. Performance relativities with other countries are also useful as benchmarks for how well a system is doing relative to goals shared with these countries. On the whole, the IEA studies point to the conclusion that what is achieved in civics education is reasonably satisfactory in Norway. The main ground for concern is that youth in Norway, more often than in most of the 15 other countries in the IEA Civics round on 18-year olds, show lower interest in getting involved in political and civic organizations. While there is strong confidence among youths in public institutions, there is ironically some disdain for politics, which is the contestation through which such institutions are made accountable to the public.

Our own survey materials cannot add findings on “what is learned” in Civics Education, but we have confirmed the finding from the IEA studies that Norwegian youths show less interest in “politics” than in “social issues” and that while they rarely join political organizations, they much more often take part in less firmly institutionalized forms of political activism, and that “Activism”, rather than membership in political organizations, rises with age, as adolescents mature into young adults.

8.2 Is membership in political youth organizations predicted better by achievement in social studies than by other school marks?

In the IEA studies on Civics education, “indicators of civic engagement” are generally found to be positively associated with high scores civics education achievement test. There is a possibility that similarly strong associations

might occur between “civic engagement indicators” and tests or graded performance in other school subjects than social studies.

The IEA civics education studies did not test knowledge and skills in other schools subjects than civic education, nor have these studies collected information on the scholastic achievement of students as based on the schools’ own assessment. The Youth in Norway 2002 survey does not contain information on marks in Social Studies. However, another the Youth in Oslo survey carried out by NOVA in 1996 study, contains such information (See Chapter 3.3). The target population was the entire population in the top two grades of compulsory education and the first grade of the post-compulsory upper secondary schools in Oslo. Relevant information on grade in social studies was only obtained for respondents in the last two grades of compulsory education (ages 15 and 16). Grades in other school subjects were also collected, as well as information about whether the respondent was a member or not, of any political voluntary organization. As was shown in our Table 14, this is the type of organization in which membership has the strongest association with interest in politics and social issues. Table 15 shows results from logistic regression of such membership, based on data from the 1996 Oslo survey.

Table 15. Logistic regression of membership in political youth organisations. Grade in social studies and other subjects included among the predictors. Youths aged 14–16 in 1996 Oslo sample

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Exp (b)	B	Exp (b)
Grades obtained on the last report card				
English	.248	1.281	.171	1.187
Mathematics	-.106	.900	-.208	.813
Natural science	-.045	.956	-.081	.922
Norwegian	-.125	.883	-.081	.923
Social studies	.496	1.643	.412	1.509
Gender (girl)			-.304	.738
Books at home (scale)			.260	1.296
Plans higher education			.451	1.570
Constant		-5.069		5.419
Estimated quasi R square (Nagelkerke procedure)		.016		.034

Bold face print: $p < .05$ $N=5945$

In this subset of the Oslo sample, 217 youths (about 3%) were members of a political youth organization at this early age. Given that the material will

include only the top two grades of lower secondary education, typically 14–16 year-olds, the analysis has the limitation of pertaining only to *distinctly early joiners* in political organizations. However, the nation wide data we have analysed showed that there is surprisingly little increase in such participation from age 16 to 19.

Model 1 shows that grade obtained in social studies is strongly and positively associated with being a member of a political youth group. For the other subjects, there is no statistically significant coefficient of association.

In Model 2 controls are introduced for gender, “books at home”, and whether or not the respondent has plans to enter higher education (already at this early age of 14–16). We see that all these variables have significant and reasonably strong regression coefficients (especially “plans higher education”) and that the R square is increased but it remains at a distinctly low level.

The association between membership and doing well in social studies, remains significant and is not attributable to the measure we have of cultural capital in the home (books at home). None of the coefficients for marks achieved in other subjects attains significance. Thus, grade in social studies is the only one that predicts membership. In our country wide 2002 material of 13-19 year olds), better grade point average across Norwegian, Maths and English was positively associated with joining political organizations. We have no ready explanation for this discrepancy between findings from the two samples.

Model 2 shows that more boys than girls join such organizations at this early age in Oslo. In the Oslo material “books in the home” was the only indicator of the family’s “cultural capital”. Its effect on early of civic engagement is in keeping with findings in our main survey material. So is the prediction effect in Model 2 of having plans of higher education.

For social studies educators it should be satisfying to note the association between successful performance in their subject and early involvement in a political organization – and that this clearly matters more than performance in other school subjects. Several explanations are possible. School based learning in social studies as a subject may dispose an adolescent to join a political youth group. However, one can also expect those with an initial active interest in politics and social issues to do well in social studies at school and to be more inclined to begin with, to join a political organization. Strong parental encouragement may be especially important for joining a political group at such an early age. It is also likely that participation in a political youth organization leads to dispositions and knowledge from which

youths benefit in their social studies course. Socially engaged youth will be more prone than others to discuss politics and social issues with others, in school as well as outside school, and to keep up with politics and social issues in the media. These are complementary explanations, in keeping with the view that achievement in school subjects as well as civic engagement results from a variety of sources and that interaction among these is likely.

8.3 Is civic engagement stronger among those with experience from student councils?

In the 2002 Youth in Norway survey, the youths were asked if they had experience from participating as student representatives in any participative council at school. Such councils are established in all schools, with representation both at class level and at school level. Does such participation add further explanatory power to the type of multiple regression models which we have used so far in this study? We can use the Youth in Norway 2002 sample to examine this question with regard to our various indicators of civic engagement. Table 16 shows results for OLS multiple linear regression of Interest in Politics and Social Issues; and Table 17 presents findings from logistic regression of the indicators of political activity. Since the predictors are a mix of dummy variables and differently scaled continuous variables, the Beta weights are the appropriate indicators of predictive strength. For all dependent variables in these two tables, the strength of “participation in school councils” as predictor is striking.

In table 16 we see that as a predictor of “taking an interest”, experience from student councils adds a net of .024 to the estimated R square. This measure is a conservative measure of its strength of association with the dependent variable, since it is net of any predictive power it has jointly with other predictors in Model 2. Looking to the regression coefficients, the strength of predictive power for “experience of student council” is close to that of “plans higher education” as measured by the “b” coefficient. (Since these variables are both dummy variables, a direct comparison between the b’s is in this case appropriate). In terms of the standardized b (beta coefficient), student council experience is the “next strongest” predictor in Model 2.

Table 16. Regression analysis of Interest in Politics and Social Issues. Participation in student councils included among predictors

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Beta weight	B	Beta weight
Age	.113	.144	.113	.144
Gender (girl)	-.172	-.062	-.198	-.072
Performance and expectations				
Average grade	.244	.153	.203	.127
Plans higher education	.592	.214	.556	.201
Low confidence in finding work after completing education	-.052	-.032	-.039	-.024
Adjustment to school				
Valuing school	.298	.110	.267	.099
Disciplinary problems	-.008	-.005	-.034	-.019
School fatigue	-.004	-.002	-.009	-.005
Participated in student councils			.505	.159
Constant	-.873		-.736	
Estimated quasi-R square (Nagelkerke procedure)	.158		.182	
R square change			.024	

Bold face: $p < .05$ Pair wise computation of covariance. $N > 9000$.

The relative strength of the predictor stands out even more with regard to political activity, than with regard to “interest” in politics and social issues – as shown in Table 17.

If participatory structures within the school function are perceived by youth as genuine forums for consultation rather than merely serving as “playing at democracy” without any real consequences, one would expect that representational activity at school, would especially predispose youth to involve themselves especially in Representational Participation in “real politics” outside school – on the grounds that both forms of activity imply working within a representational system. One would accordingly expect stronger coefficients for this dependent variable than for the other dependent variables in Table 17. This is also what we find. There is a strong increase in estimated R square from model 1 to model 2 as one would expect when Participation in Student Councils is added as a predictor. The *increase* is even stronger than the total estimated R square in Model 1 when age, gender, and the other “school indicators” are the predictors.

Table 17. Logistic regression of three forms of political activity. Participation in student councils included among predictors

	Dependent variable											
	Representational Participation				Political Activism				Unlawful Protest			
	Model 1 B	Exp (B)	Model 2 B	Exp (B)	Model 1 B	Exp (B)	Model 2 B	Exp (B) (Bernt Eide / Samfoto)	Model 1 B	Exp (B)	Model 2 B	Exp (B)
Age	.011	1.011	.013	1.013	.267	1.306	.275	1.317	-.070	.932	-.071	.931
Gender (girl)	.104	1.110	.014	1.014	.337	1.401	.300	1.350	-.706	.493	-.741	.476
Educational performance and expectations												
Performance (Average grade)	120	1.128	-.015	.985	.443	1.557	.383	1.566	.049	1.050	.009	1.009
Plans higher education	303	1.355	.210	1.234	.642	1.901	.606	1.833	.061	1.063	.017	1.017
Low confidence in finding work after completing education	-.052	.943	-.008	.992	-.075	.928	-.056	.946	.154	1.167	.168	1.183
Adjustment to school												
Positive attitudes to school	.400	1.493	.315	1.370	.124	1.133	.075	1.078	-.077	.926	-.108	.897
Disciplinary problems	.291	1.338	.229	1.257	.148	1.160	.112	1.118	.713	2.040	.693	2.005
School fatigue	.150	1.162	.142	1.152	.267	1.306	.262	1.299	.332	1.394	.333	1.395
Participation in student councils												
Constant	-3.691		1.373	3.949	-7.311		.780	2.182	-2.268		-2.155	
Estimated quasi R square (Nageikerke procedure)	.026		-3.388	.115	.180		-7.253	.208	.155		.163	

Bold face coefficients: $p < .05$ $N > 8600$ for all models

Student participation in school governance starts at an early age early in Norway. Already from the first grade onwards, the national curriculum recommends that representatives be elected to a class council for each class, and to a school wide student council. In grades 8 to 10 (lower secondary) and in the upper secondary stage such councils are mandatory. There is also a schools council with representation of students along with representatives from school management, teachers, and other staff. In view of these practices, it is reasonable to see such participation as largely “causally prior” to experience in political youth groups outside the school.

The regression coefficients for “student council” as a predictor are positive for all the dependent variables. The prediction is strongest on “Representational participation”; next in order of strength is the effect on “Political Activism” – while the effect on “Unlawful Protest” is the weakest of the three. One could have expected a negative association between having been “working within the system” as a student representative at school, and involvement in Unlawful forms of protest political activity in the larger public domain, if the former served as vaccination against the latter by building faith in the legitimacy of the rules of the larger political system. That does not fit the findings. Table 17 shows that experience of “participation in student councils” is also positively associated with experience of unlawful forms of political protest.

Overall, we think the findings indicate strong genuine effects of the experience of participation in student councils though it is reasonable to assume that some portion of these statistical effects is due to self-selection to student councils, of students with broadly political interests and skills. Could “political activity” in the broad sense, both at school and outside school, be largely reducible to family influences? To control for family influences, a further extension of Model 2 was run for each dependent variable in Table 17. A range of family background variables were included in addition to the predictors shown in Model 2 in Table 17: mother and father having higher education, “books in the home”, close and transparent relations to parents, the family’s occupational social class, and whether the respondent talked about politics and social issues with parents. Adding these additional predictors did not alter the pattern of coefficients shown in table 17. The effects of Participation in student councils were, as one would expect, reduced by the introduction of these additional predictors but not by much and it remained distinctly strong. The b coefficients were 1.297, 0.686, and 0.453 for respectively Representational Participation, Political activism and Unlawful Protest (as compared to 1.373, .780 and .524 in Table 17). The strength and statistical resilience of the coefficients add to the argument that “student council” experience is an important source of civic engagement.

9 Conclusions

Civic engagement is engagement with political and social issues that are objects of collective action, beyond one's private domain and outside the market. The term "civic" implies acceptance of the legitimacy of the political order and working within its basic rules, rather than seeking to overthrow it. In OECD countries that legitimacy must be based on political democracy. A narrow definition of engagement will focus on readiness to initiate or participate in *action*. Our wider definition includes also an active *interest* in such issues.

9.1 Is there a democratic deficit that schools need to address?

A need to use schools more actively in order to build civic engagement would be especially important if youths are becoming more exclusively concerned about their private lives. Research on trends over time on such matters is internationally sparse. In some countries there is evidence of declining membership rates among young people in voluntary organizations. In Norway the membership of youths in political organizations, though low, appears to have remained constant since the early 1990s. However, there is some support for the view that youths have laxer honesty than older adults in dealings with firms and other impersonal institutions and that they are less willing to make personal sacrifices for the public good. The gap between young and old is so great that it probably cannot be explained by correlates of aging. Swedish research points to great stability over recent decades in the value profile of youths. It shows increase in certain aspects of individualism but continued and possibly increasing support for egalitarian values. There is also evidence of youths being more tolerant of cultural diversity than older generations. Possibly, there is a trend towards a mindset of "live and let live" which would favour the tolerance aspect of civic engagement. At the same time it may point to reduced supply of people willing to devote time and effort in a sustained way, to organizations concerned with interest advocacy and the common weal.

IEA studies of Civic Education have also shown that in a number of countries there is a tendency for youths to be sceptical of politics as an institutionalized activity, even when the level of trust in public institutions and agencies in fact is high – as they are in the Nordic countries. It is still not clear whether scepticism of "politics" and reluctance to get involved in stably

organized civic activity is a sign of a "not caring" since low involvement can also indicate wide consensus and youths taking political institutions and processes for granted.

However, a healthy democracy benefits not only from citizens being "informed" and "concerned". Without a participative form of civic engagement there is no stable and broadly based aggregation and expression of political interest. It is an important task for schools in OECD countries to promote such participation, especially since schools (and increasingly higher education) are the dominant institutional arena outside the family, for youths during their politically formative years.

9.2 Does education boost civic engagement?

International research literature shows a strong and systematic association among adults between "level of education" and indicators of civic engagement – including tolerance. Education matters also when occupational social status is statistically held constant. These effects are so consistent and strong that it is reasonable to assume considerable causal influence from "education" to "civic engagement".

We find in our Norwegian data on secondary school students that doing well in school and, especially, expecting to continue to higher education, are positively associated with civic engagement – both "interest" and participation. The one exception is participation in protest action by unlawful means. This may indicate that educational "success" promotes an engagement in politics that stays within "the rules of the game" – at least in the context of Norwegian society.

Higher education in particular has in a number of studies and countries been shown to make a statistical difference for civic engagement. Some of this effect is probably due to a foundation laid while youths are on their way to higher education. The secondary school age (in Norway 13 to 19) is a politically formative period during which interests in political and social issues rise. The single most important "education predictor" of civic engagement of Norwegian secondary school students is not performance in school, but whether they hope and plan to progress to higher education. This remains a valid observation also after controls for their family's cultural capital and social class.

9.3 The importance of student council experience

We find in our research material strong support for the conclusion that experience of student council participation predisposes youths to become engaged in political activity. This is inferred from associations which we judge to be so strong and statistically resilient that they probably indicate a causal influence even if some portion of the association will be due to self-selection to student council activity of those who have an interest to begin with.

9.4 Civic engagement and adjustment to life at school

Civic engagement is not part of some pliant and conformist adjustment to life at school. Valuing school – recognizing the importance of education and expressing on the whole appreciation of life at school, is positively associated with taking an “interest” and with participation in the traditional form of “youth politics” and civic involvement. The latter would be youth wings of political parties, and voluntary organizations concerned with advocacy. However “valuing school” is not associated with the kind of “Activism” that requires no sustained organizational involvement by participants. In the case of Protest action that resorts to unlawful means, those who “value school” more are slightly less likely to be involved.

School Fatigue, which mainly measures mental disengagement from the classroom process of learning and instruction, has no significant association with interest in politics and social issues. However, it has a positive effect on all three types of political activity examined on the Norwegian data on youths: *Those who are more active politically report more frequently than others such disengagement.* This is most strongly so for Protest resorting to unlawful means. But it also applies to political Activism of the “lawful” and mainstream kind, and (less strongly) to Representational Participation of the traditional and formally organized kind.

The clearest sign that political activity goes with a degree of friction with schools as institutions is the pattern of relations with Discipline Problems. Those who more frequently have had run-ins with school authority are also more likely than others to have taken part in Unlawful Protest. It is interesting to note that a similar but weaker pattern applies to the “lawful” types of political participation: Activism as well as membership in political youth organizations. Discipline problems are more frequent even among those who have experience of participation in student councils within the school. However, there is no association between Discipline Problems and

merely taking an interest in politics and social issues. Thus it is those who convert their interest in actual political participation, who more often than others have had conflictual relations with school authority. We see these findings as signs of assertive independence among politically active youths.

9.5 Political socialization begins at home

Being “interested” in politics and social issues or belonging to that small minority of youths who take part in traditional form politics (Representational Participation) shows no association with having “Close and transparent relations with Parents.” However, there is a weak *negative* effect on Activism of the mainstream variety, and a stronger negative effect on being involved Unlawful Protest. These forms of political activity appear to be especially associated with assertive independence. Relations with parents can of course still be “close” but not of the kind which means that parents stay closely informed about the daily activity of their children.

The positive associations between civic engagement and “Political Socialization in the Home” are strikingly consistent and usually quite strong, across all indicators of civic engagement, and all statistical models. This measure of home influence reflects both how frequently the student talks with parents about politics and social issues, *and* that such communication occurs in a family context where the student is encouraged to make his/her own decisions. The effect is especially strong with regard to Interest in politics and social issues and for “lawful” forms of political activity. But it is interesting to note that the coefficient is also significantly positive for “Unlawful Protest” giving some support to the hypothesis that also militant protest tends to have a positive base in socialization in the family – rather than being rebellion against parents. The Norwegian findings show that young people’s active interest and involvement in politics continue to be strongly rooted in the family contrary to much current theorizing about the declining influence of the family as a source of young people’s identities in contemporary modern societies.

9.6 Gender and civic engagement

Girls participate more than boys in the mainstream form of political Activism. On the other hand, boys are much more likely to take part in Protest action by unlawful means – which involves only a distinctly small minority of youths. We read the findings to indicate that the already strong involvement of

females in Norwegian politics will be further strengthened in future years as these young people reach their participatory prime in politics and civil society.

9.7 Suggestions for research

9.7.1 A paradox of rising education and yet no rise in civic engagement at the macro level

There is an unresolved paradox in the research literature: At the micro-level cross-sectional research within countries consistently has shown a positive statistical effect of education on civic engagement. Yet, at the macro-level one sees rising levels of education without any similar rise over time in levels of civic engagement in the population. A major challenge for research on political and civic participation is to reconcile these findings. In our view, existing research rules out one explanation that has been offered: that the education correlate is spurious and due to effects upon civic engagement “caused” by the social positions to which different levels of education lead. What macro-level secular trends could have dampened civic engagement, so as to counteract the “boosting” effect of rising education levels? We see these possibilities:

- Citizens in increasingly complex and mobile societies are less disposed to participate because they are exposed to less coherent influences on their political and civic identity.
- The urge to get involved is dulled by rising consensus in politics.
- The range of issues which citizens perceive to be in the “public domain” is narrowed as more is “left to the market”.
- The impetus to get involved is reduced because local and national arenas for collective action seem less important as a result of globalization. If so, the problem with the maxim “Think globally, act locally” is that it cannot compete with the motivational force behind “Thinking locally, and acting locally”.

9.7.2 “Meritocratization” or “attenuation”?

If civic engagement were a function of experienced exclusiveness of status *within* the education system, one would expect some attenuation of the relationship between education and civic engagement, as the higher reaches of education become less exclusive. On the other hand, one can expect increased educational meritocratization of recruitment to politics as talented

and socially skilled youths from ordinary homes acquire opportunities to rise within the education system – while previously they might have risen to civic and political leadership within their social class of origin, outside of any select educational institutions. We also perceive another possible reason for “meritocratization”: that it is the more educated citizens who are most likely not to lose their civic engagement if the arenas that matter “for making a difference” are perceived to have become more remote – even beyond the nation state. Research on such issues seems to be wanting.

9.7.3 The role of “friction” in the development of civic engagement

We found that youths who are actively involved in politics show impatience with school and more often than others have run-ins with school authority, though they also value the importance of school and have their eyes set on higher education. Apart from some studies on student radicalism of the late 1960s and early 70s, research has neglected the relationship between “friction with school” and socially committed youth. Is such “friction” a general trait across countries, or is Norway unusual in this respect? Does such friction apply to youths across the political spectrum, including those who identify with mainstream political parties? Does it shape political participation or is it a result of the same personality traits which lead to such participation? What conditions exacerbate or ameliorate such “friction”?

9.7.4 The role of socially engaged families as a source of young people’s civic engagement, and of their educational achievement

The importance of the family for socialization to politics and civic participation is poorly researched. Too often it has been assumed that the only “family background” traits which matter are social class and cultural capital. Regrettably, current fashions in social theory that focus on increased individualism steer attention away from probing more deeply into those aspects of “family background” which matter for civic engagement. Our findings support the view that family influences on young people’s civic engagement are strong. What matters is growing up in a family that cares about the public domain. Young people who have such a family background are not only more likely to get involved with the public domain, they also seem to benefit educationally from such a background. Our findings on these statistical associations are not reducible to social class or cultural capital. More direct measures than what we have had available are desirable on

families' involvement with issues in the public domain. Attention is needed to this neglected theme of research.

9.8 Suggestions for policy

The task commissioned by OECD/CERI for this study asked for policy recommendations. What we can offer regardless of any particular country context must necessarily be rather bland:

- Regardless of whether countries face a growing “democratic deficit”: Civic engagement is good for democracy and good in the long run for social cohesion. Secondary education is now nearly universal in many countries and comprises formative years for civic engagement. Policy makers should recognize that the building of civic engagement is an important task for secondary schools.
- Student-councils are an early grooming ground for active citizenship. Countries should introduce civic engagement as theme in their annual educational indicators. One set of indicators could be rates of student participation in participatory councils.
- Countries can usefully review the arrangements for participatory councils in schools with a view to broadening their base and widening their function.
- Indicators of civic engagement should be included in national surveys which are combined with achievement testing. These indicators should not be confined to membership in organizations; they should also include volunteering and activism.
- Families that in which parents and their children talk about politics and social issues matter for civic engagement (and for educational performance and ambition) among secondary school students. Indicators of “home background” in national surveys (in PISA combined with testing of students) should be widened to include measures of such family influences.
- As secondary schools now are the main institutional arena outside the family, during young people’s formative years for civic engagement, there is a case for organizing education in such a way that it provides common social space for youths from diverse cultural and social origins.

Sammen drag

Hvilken betydning har utdanning for unges engasjement i politikk og samfunnsspørsmål? Denne rapporten gjennomgår internasjonal forskning og analyserer svar på spørreskjema fra 13–19-åringene som er under utdanning, hovedsakelig fra NOVA-undersøkelsen *Ung i Norge 2002*. Utvalget er landsrepresentativt og stort (N > 11000). «Engasjement» måles ved hvor interessert de unge er i politikk og samfunnsspørsmål, ved deres deltaking i organisasjoner, og i ulike former for aktivisme som ikke nødvendigvis er tuftet på noen fast organisasjon.

De unges skoleprestasjoner gir positive utslag på deres engasjement; og deres planer om å ta høyere utdanning gir enda sterkere utslag. Disse sammenhengene er robuste; de gjenstår etter statistisk kontroll bl.a. for de unges sosio-økonomiske familiebakgrunn. Resultatene kan bety at den statistiske effekt som tidligere forskning har vist at høyere utdanning har for engasjement i politikk og samfunnsliv i den voksne befolkning, i stor grad skyldes at grunnlaget for slikt engasjement ble lagt *på veien til høyere utdanning*. Vi viser også at ungdommer som er medlemmer i frivillige organisasjoner er faglig flinkere på skolen enn andre og at de oftere har planer om høyere utdanning. Dette gjelder de fleste typer frivillige organisasjoner. Resultatene reiser spørsmål om det skjer en tiltagende utdanningsmessig «meritokratisering» av rekruttering til politikk og samfunnsliv.

Vi finner at kommunikasjon med foreldre om politikk og samfunnsspørsmål har stor betydning for de unges samfunnsmessige engasjement. Foreldre er faktisk litt viktigere for de unge enn jevnaldringer, som samtalepartnere om politikk og samfunnsspørsmål. De som har slik kommunikasjon med sine foreldre presterer også bedre på skolen enn andre unge. Vår hypotese til forklaring er at ungdommer vises vei til å bli «overskuddsmennesker» i forhold til tilværelsens krav og muligheter ved at de oppdras av foreldre som selv er «overskuddsmennesker». Å bry seg om saker utenfor ens private sfære er tegn på slikt «overskudd».

Samfunnsengasjerte ungdommer verdsetter utdanningens betydning. Samtidig viser de tegn til utålmodighet med elevtilværelsen. De som er politisk aktive kjeder seg ofte på skolen og har oftere enn andre unge opplevd konflikt med skoleregimets regler og disiplin. Dette også unge som har deltatt i skolens indre rådgivende organer. De politisk aktive fremstår på ingen måte som glatte, tilpasningssøkende konformister.

Deltakelsen i politiske ungdomsorganisasjoner er lav, og den andelen som deltar øker nesten ikke med stigende alder. Dette til tross for at de unges interesse for politikk og samfunnsspørsmål er jevnt stigende i de aldersgrupper som vårt materiale omfatter (fra 13 til 19 år). Et enda mer perifert fenomen er den type protest som bruker ulovlige midler. Hyppigheten stiger ikke med alder, og deltakelsen har heller ingen entydig positiv sammenheng med interesse for politikk og samfunnsspørsmål. Det som derimot blir klart hyppigere med stigende alder og som når ut til det største antall er annen politisk aktivisme (ved lovlige midler). Aktivismens betydning og organisasjonenes svake stilling kan passe med en del teori om særpreg ved senmoderne samfunnstilstander. Men vi har ikke sett forskning som har vist at slik aktivisme er mer utbredt nå enn i tidligere generasjoner.

Ellers finner vi overrepresentasjon av jenter i de typer politisk aktivitet som har flest deltakere. Det kan bety at en i framtida vil se tiltagende kvinne-representasjon i politikk og organisasjonsliv.

Utdanningens betydning for samfunnsengasjement og den sterke stigningen i de siste 50 år i befolkningens utdanningsnivå, skulle ha medført stigende deltakelse i politikk og organisasjonsliv i de aller siste generasjoner. Dette har ikke skjedd. Dette paradoks er en utfordring til videre forskning på feltet. Det er tydelig at andre og dempende faktorer har betydning. Vi kaster i denne rapporten fram ideer om hva disse faktorer kan være.

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