

YOUNG PEOPLE AND CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

This thesis explores young people's understandings and experiences of citizenship. As members of society who are unable to influence decision making through electoral participation, for children and young people (under the age of 18) practice becomes an ever more important part of their citizenship. The study aims to understand how civically engaged young people experience citizenship in their everyday lives and what their motivations are for participating in civic society. The thesis addresses normative concepts of youth citizenship characterised by the view that children and young people require citizenship education in order to become citizens. Following a review of the literature, the research focused on developing a person-centred understanding of citizenship, seeking to recognise ways in which young people are citizens *now* as opposed to citizens of the future.

It implements a framework that conceptualises citizenship as a contextual lived experience, thereby broadening the concept of citizenship beyond narrow and exclusive parameters that overlook the meaningful aspects of people's everyday lives (Wood, 2014; Larkins, 2014). The research employs a mixed qualitative methodological framework and a series of interviews and focus groups facilitated by visual and creative methods capture the diverse and contextual aspects of what citizenship means to the young people in this study. The empirical findings of this research focus on presenting the issues that young people most emphatically identified as meaningful to their citizenship. A significant aspect of this related to young people's experiences of education and learning which participants believed they should have a greater say in.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project began in October 2015, although its conception comes long before that as I, as a young person myself, began to formulate my own ideas about youth voices and their place in society. The thesis contributes to a growing body of research that argues that young people's voices, experiences and wellbeing are important, not only to the young people themselves, but to the health of our society and democracy which is often reduced to the number of people turning out to vote on election day (Sloam, 2012). My research will show that while voting is important, citizenship is far more nuanced and complex than such narrow and normative perspectives give credit. Young people (which in this study refers to those who are not yet eligible to vote) contribute to society and participate as citizens in a variety of ways. They are often overlooked in a policy rhetoric that focuses on attributes of citizenship that young people have not yet attained, like the ability to vote, employment and financial independence, which are routinely viewed as benchmarks for both adulthood and citizenship (O'Toole et al., 2003).

Chapter Two provides a critical discussion of these benchmarks and the impact that social and economic changes have had on young people's transition to adulthood, often synonymised with citizenship (Hall et al., 1998). The contribution made by the research reported here is the assertion that policy rhetoric (reinforced by narrow, adult-centred conceptions of citizenship) fails to reflect the diverse and meaningful ways young people contribute to society. This argument is illustrated in the analysis chapters by showing the different ways young people in this study engage with civic issues and participate in civil society. Concerns regarding youth disengagement and apathy have influenced the way in which youth is conceptualised and has instigated discussions regarding how to re-engage young people and address the growing 'democratic deficit' (Osler and Starkey, 2010). This dissertation will join the growing body of studies conceptualising citizenship under broad and inclusive definitions, seeking to understand how citizenship is experienced in the everyday lives of young people in the setting of Cardiff Youth Council.

While participating as members of Cardiff Youth Council, young people developed their own opinions of the social issues that affect them in their day to day lives. Campaign groups were organised within Cardiff Youth Council to address the issues that young people across Cardiff felt that their voices were not well represented in. Within the parameters of youth council activities, young people gained knowledge and practical experience through the process of their

participation as they did in formal training and educational settings. The research argues for the recognition of citizenship as a process rather than an outcome (Kehilly, 2009). The overall aims of Cardiff Youth Council were to extend young people's rights and to work towards improving their wellbeing and quality of life.

The research explored how young people chose to articulate their own experiences of what they understand as citizenship and what this meant for their citizenship development. While the effectiveness of youth participation is important to the progression of youth services it was not the aim of this study to evaluate the impact of young people's participation and ability to influence policy making. Nonetheless, these are important elements to youth participation and young people's experiences of these.

1.1 The problem with young people

Citizenship education in the UK continues to problematise youth citizenship as an issue with young people's engagement (and lack thereof) in party politics and electoral participation (Beck, 1998; Biesta et al., 2009). This reinforces the idea that the role of citizenship education should be to re-engage young people with the issue of politics to restore the health of democracy in the UK. However, a growing number of studies advocate for a more inclusive definition of citizenship (see Larkins, 2014; Wood, 2014; Lister, 2008) which argues that focusing on voting and employment as pillars of citizenship overlooks and undermines the vibrant and diverse (and seemingly mundane) ways young people are engaged in civil society.

Young people's citizenship is often referred to in the future tense (Lister, 2003) implying that citizenship is something that young people prepare for rather than already possess. How young people's status as citizens is perceived by adults consequently impacts how they are treated and the extent they are listened to. Lyle (2014) argues that many young people still face obstacles while trying to engage as active citizens in the school setting where there are few opportunities for young people to influence decision making or feel heard. This is reinforced by a policy rhetoric which assumes that young people lack citizenship (Smith et al., 2005) and therefore require interventions to develop their citizenship. This thesis will argue that in order to support children and young people as they develop their citizenship is to recognise their *current* value and contribution rather than viewing them within a deficit model of citizenship (Osler and Starkey, 2010) which diminishes their voices in everyday life.

Young people are increasingly viewed by successive governments as participating members of society and the Welsh Government in particular continue to implement youth policy which advocates that young people are treated as citizens by upholding the United Nations Convention for the Rights on the Child (UNCRC) and involve young people in decision making processes. Initiatives such as the Youth Work Strategy for Wales (WG, 2019) and Child Friendly Cardiff Strategy (UNICEF, 2018) create opportunities for children and young people to inform the development of youth policies and ensure that their voices are represented in youth policy making.

Despite concerns regarding a lack of engagement amongst young citizens, young people have come together globally in the School Strikes for Climate, lead by environmental activist Greta Thunburg. Although demonstrating less trust in politics and democracy (Henn and Foard, 2012) young people have shown more interest in issue politics and connect with a type of politics that they can relate to; that they feel is relevant to their lives (Farthing, 2010). the ways that participants use their own voice and platform to bring attention to the issues that young people face in Cardiff.

However, it is worth remembering that Greta is not the norm and it would be a mistake to take her as a model of youth citizenship. Most ordinary young people are without a global platform and do not have the ear of the United Nations. The focus of this research project relates to localised, everyday issues which young people are interested in and explores how young people participate as citizens to achieve their civic goals.

Lister (2007); Larkins (2014) and Wood (2014) play a key role in developing the viewpoint that conceives children and young people citizens in the present day, challenging the discourse that children are citizens of the future. It positions children and young people as active agents of their own life worlds, recognising that much of the participation that young people are involved in are issue-based, local and contextually relevant to their everyday lives (Vromen and Collin, 2010). Although it is now an established body of study, this theoretical work began in the 1980s and 1990s as research on youth issues shifted to understand the perspectives and understandings of the young people involved in research. Rather than at their position in relation to adults, research began to focus on the present day lives (James and James, 2004). These complex relationships between young people and citizenship provide the starting point for this research. As the above succinct journey through the very theoretical, political and social issues has highlighted, it is

important to focus on the ways young people themselves experience and live citizenship. As such, I focus my work on three interrelated and theoretically informed questions:

1. How do civically engaged young people experience citizenship in their everyday lives
2. What motivates young people to participate in civic society?
3. What role does politics have in young people's citizenship learning?

1.2 Thesis outline

The Literature Review, Chapter Two, lays out the significant issues and themes discussed in this thesis. It begins by providing insight into the terminology used and the ways that is understood in related literature. This is linked to a discussion of youth transitions and understandings of adulthood. This section of the chapter conceptualises 'youth' as a temporary and transitional stage of the life course and explores some of the experiences that are unique to this life stage. The next section discusses the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of citizenship and the implications for social policy over the past two decades. T.H. Marshall's tripartite framework argues a citizenship founded on civil, political and social rights and while it forms the 'basic building blocks' for the conceptualisation of citizenship (Lister, 2008). This section of the literature review draws on T.H. Marshall (1949/1992), Bellamy (2008) and Dwyer (2010) to establish a key conceptualisation of citizenship before developing a broader, more inclusive understanding of citizenship as a lived experience (Lister, 2007). Chapter Two also provides an overview of youth policy making in Wales and explores the ways in which children and young people have been placed at the centre of decision making on matters that affect them and highlight the distinctive differences between English and Welsh approaches to citizenship education. The perspectives of citizenship presented in the later sections of chapter two offer a view of youth citizenship that advocates a broad and inclusive framework in order to recognise the multitude of ways that young people contribute to society as citizens *now* as opposed to in the future (Larkins, 2014).

Chapter Three provides an outline for the research methods used in this empirical study. It explains the practical, epistemological and ethical considerations made throughout the research process. The research adopts a mixed qualitative approach including participant observations, interviews and photo elicitation to explore how young people experience citizenship in their everyday lives. The chapter discusses the methodological implications of conceptualising citizenship as a lived experience focusing, in this case, on a youth centred understanding of the phenomenon in order to *listen* to young people's voices. The research explored young people's

understandings of citizenship in the setting of Cardiff Youth Council. While observations relate to the organisation and activity of the youth council, the data collected reflects a variety of experiences that take place outside of the youth council setting as well. The chapter provides a critical discussion of the research methods used in this study and why they were considered appropriate for the analysis of youth citizenship.

Chapter Four is the first of three analysis chapters. It describes the structure of Cardiff Youth Council and includes relevant information about activities that members engaged in. It provides a contextual understanding of the research setting whilst providing critical analysis of the data which relates to how the young people in this study experienced their participation in the youth council compared to other spaces they frequented, such as school. The young participants are also introduced in this chapter through brief biographical accounts, that set out their motivations for joining the youth council and their experiences of civic engagement through their membership. Finally, the dynamic between adults and young people in Cardiff Youth Council is described.

Chapters Five and Six discuss the two key analytic themes: learning and community. Citizenship education has attempted to increase youth turnout and prepare young people for when they 'become' citizens once they are eligible voters. What is often overlooked by education policy is the diverse and varied nature of young people's civic engagement, which this study aims to shed light on. Learning and citizenship in many ways are cut from the same cloth. In the research, the acquisition of knowledge is viewed as a tacit aspect of young people's citizenship, particularly in relation to what is understood by participants as 'life skills'. Biesta and Lawy advocate for a greater recognition of citizenship learning that takes place in the everyday lives of young people, rather than an individualised concept taught within the classroom (2006). The notion of learning, identified as a meaningful aspect of young people's citizenship by the participants themselves, is presented as a way in which young people are able to exert agency and influence decision making within the spaces they encounter. The chapter pays particular attention to every day experiences that young people highlight as learning processes that facilitate meaningful and relatable citizenship development. With respect to the temporary life stage in which young people find themselves in, discussions often turned to career and educational aspirations that impacted their citizenship development. By adopting a dual dialogue of what Uprichard identifies as *being and becoming*, young people are continually looking forward to their transition to becoming adults (2008).

Chapter Six begins by conceptualising notions of community as an aspect of young people's civic participation. A concept that quickly arose in the data, participants drew upon their experiences of community to articulate what they understood to be examples of their citizenship. This included feeling a sense of belonging to various places and people, as well sharing common interests. This chapter explores how notions of place, culture and identity reflect on young people's experience of citizenship and the influence these issues have on the ways they choose to participate.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis and revisits the key questions which the research set to discuss and answer. This chapter summarises the main themes and provides a critical discussion as to how this research contributes to understandings of youth citizenship. It highlights some of the key findings from the research and considers the wider implications for social policy. This chapter also outlines the contribution the thesis makes to youth and citizenship research, and considers potential avenues for further research in this area. The upcoming development of the Welsh Curriculum creates an opportunity for young people's voices to be supported and encouraged within the curriculum. This would allow (and encourage) young people to participate meaningfully as citizens in school rather than only in designated platforms which are intended to elevate youth voices. The contribution this research makes to policy supports the Children's Commissioner's argument for the embedding of the UNCRC into the Curriculum. Not only to educate pupils of their civic right to be listened to on matters that affect them, but also for adults who hold the power to either support or undermine youth voices in everyday spaces, on everyday matters.

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has briefly introduced the topic of youth citizenship and refined the fields of research that this doctoral thesis is situated within. It has also outlined the contents of the remaining chapters that explore the nuances of young people's citizenship in the context of their everyday lives. The following chapter reviews the literature that informed the research design and methodology of this study and provides an in depth critical discussion of youth citizenship.

Chapter 2: Youth Citizenship: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The topic of this study broadly explores two areas of research: youth and citizenship. While there are many nuances within these fields, this chapter will provide an overview of the literature on both as separate concepts and conclude by drawing on their relationship. The chapter will begin by introducing and defining the concept of 'youth'. It will go on to discuss how youth transitions have changed over time, since they are intrinsically affected by the social and political context in which such transitions take place. The second section of this literature review will focus on citizenship, the historical origins of the concept, and how these perspectives are relevant to how citizenship and youth transitions are conceptualised today. This chapter will argue that policy rhetoric has focused on teaching young people how to be citizens, and section 2.3.3 will critically discuss how education policy has sought to prepare and responsabilise young people for citizenship (Beck, 1998; Biesta et al, 2009). The chapter will begin by conceptualising youth and the social and economic impacts that have influenced changes in youth transitions. It will then consider how young people have been framed as citizens (or citizens in the making) before presenting the theoretical framework that underpins the proceeding chapters.

2.2 Conceptualising Youth

Conceptualising 'youth' is a sociological activity; it relates to the context of time, place, socioeconomic circumstances, education, family life and so on (Jones and Wallace, 1992). Focusing on young people's lived experiences has enabled researchers to explore the challenges that young people face in a variety of social, political, and economic climates. Adulthood is traditionally associated with full time employment, marriage, and parenthood. However, such life stages are significantly delayed for young people in the present day. Age can offer a set of chronological markers which can be used help to understand how people's experiences of the life course are impacted by societal structures (Talbert and Lesko, 2015). Youth is not a homogenised experience, it is nuanced, varied and related to the contextual circumstances of each individual. The empirical contributions presented in Chapters Four and Five account for young people's experiences that are contextual and lived, predicated by the arguments presented in the following review of the literature. Youth, a unique and temporary phase in one's life, signifies a period of accumulating rights and gaining independence. It is a transitional stage of the life-course where identities are formed and relationships negotiated, as several 'stages' are completed which mark the transition from youth to adulthood (Settersten and Ray, 2010). Most notably, the completion

of education and entry into full time work are used as markers to explore different patterns of youth transitions and the impacts of structural inequality in young people's lives (Walther, 2006). Through these stages, young people also accrue legal rights. In the UK, children aged 13 can start part-time work, and at 16 in Wales one can start full-time work. In the UK someone can have consensual sex, get married, pay taxes and register to vote at 16, and at 17 can learn to drive. One's relationship with the nation state necessarily changes throughout the life course. Kennelly and Dillabough (2008) argue that the study of youth citizenship should 'account for how the lived social and political status of young people may intersect with larger cultural narratives of democracy and citizenship' (p.497). The transition from youth to adulthood has been affected by many economic and cultural changes which have disrupted and dismantled the linear and structured transition to adulthood that many young people once made. Changes in the labour market have required young people to adapt to changing circumstances such as globalisation, while new technologies increase competition in employment. Markers of adulthood such as obtaining employment and purchasing a house (Krahn et al., 2017) are becoming increasingly difficult for young people to attain as economic conditions in the UK impact the availability of stable employment, while housing prices continue to increase (Furlong, 2012). The number of households renting in the UK increased from 2.8 million in 2007 to 4.5 million in 2017, with the largest category consisting of 25-34 year olds making up 34% (ONS, 2019). Transitions to adulthood have changed since the de-standardisation of the life course (Furlong et al., 2006). The extension of education, employment precarity, marrying and having children later in life have made the youth-adult transition less entrenched than previous generations. Consequently, modern youth transitions are increasingly diverse as traditional social lives are reshaped.

How the youth transition is defined has important consequences for youth and education policy. Youth transitions are measured against what is perceived as successful according to the key life stages outlined in section 2.2. Youth policy, designed to support young people in achieving their goals and caring for their wellbeing – as seen in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales (WG, 2019) – is informed by how 'youth' is perceived. The reality of young people's experiences of their transitions to adulthood are not accurately reflected by adult's perceptions of success since key markers to adulthood are being delayed further. Therefore, it is important that the ways in which young people are supported through their transitions to adulthood, or independence, is also adapted to reflect a more flexible and diverse process. For this to happen we must listen to what young people have to say, as well as acknowledge the social, economic and cultural contexts in which their lives are situated.

The extension of education and economic instability have had a significant impact on young people's transitions and life decisions. Risks posed by austerity policy measures have led to a reduction of funding to public services in the UK. Educational attainment, (un) employment, precarious work, housing support and homelessness; young people's experiences are often positioned as a problematic and a burden (Farrugia, 2010). As Jones suggests, 'the focus tends to be on the problems young people appear to pose for society, rather than on the problems society creates for the young' (1995, p.5). However, this is distinctive from the perception of 'youth issues' in Welsh policy making which places the well-being of the child at the centre of decision making (see section 2.4). In this instance, the main interest that policy makers have in transitions research is identifying barriers that impact young people's entry into the labour market. This focus on the labour market has tended to overshadow other aspects of young people's lives. The delay to employment and changing economic environment generate new discussions about the complexity of youth transitions today. The UK government has increasingly emphasised the importance of higher education in a growing knowledge economy in which information and knowledge become increasingly more valuable over industrial labour (Chandler and Munday, 2020; Lauder et al., 2012). Students have been encouraged to perceive qualifications as investments for their future and higher education as leading to improved access to employment opportunities. As a result, the number of young people entering higher education has increased significantly over the last thirty years. Tomlinson (2008) found that students perceived their higher education credentials as having a 'declining role' in the labour market. Students are seemingly aware of the complexity of the labour market and respond to competitive pressures by acknowledging the increasing importance of 'soft' qualifications that future employers might find attractive. That is, one's personal and social behavioural credentials that an employer might value. As Tomlinson's participants argue that 'the degree is not enough' anymore, and as the number of graduates entering the labour market increases, so does the competition to find employment. Tomlinson points out that 'instead of reflecting an increase in the skills and knowledge demands needed to *do jobs*, the upsurge in higher education credentials simply means that the stakes have been raised for what is needed to *get jobs*' (p. 50, emphasis in original). Ikonen and Nikunen (2018) highlight the need for an 'entrepreneurial mindset' in a neo-liberal society, as young people respond to these challenges with self-help resources, peer support and information gained through social media. In times of insecurity, when formal qualifications are necessary but no longer enough, those who have the resources are able to adapt to the needs of the labour market. This neo-liberal shift has created an expectation that young people will invest

in themselves through their education, but it also means that young people are entering adulthood with large amounts of debt, often into insecure and casual jobs (Furlong and Kelly, 2005).

This section of the literature review has provided an insight to conceptualisations of youth that foreground the following discussion of youth citizenship. It has conceptualised 'youth' as a temporary and transitional stage of the life course. The next section will introduce the concept of citizenship, summarising briefly the different viewpoints that form the foundation of the theoretical perspective this study adopts. This chapter will return to the issue of youth to explore where young people are positioned in relation to citizenship status in the later stages of this literature review.

2.3 Citizenship

Citizenship, as is the case with many sociological concepts, is 'essentially contested' (Lister, 2003). It necessarily refers to a category of membership and, consequently, it raises questions around the inclusion and exclusion of various groups of people from that membership. Canning and Rose (2001) highlight the porous nature of citizenship arguing that it can be understood as in threefold; as a political status, one's sense of belonging to a community and a set of social practices that define the relationship between people and the state, and the people within their community. This status is defined by the practices of inclusion and exclusion, as discussed in this section, which shape and maintain a common sense of political identity. This section of the literature review will explore these in greater detail and move onto a more in depth discussion aiming to reconceptualise young people's citizenship in section 2.5.

Citizenship provides a framework to understand the kind of society one aspires to live in, drawing on a variety of understandings of what constitutes the 'good life' and how the relationship between the individual and their community facilitates that. A concept that is founded on one's membership to a political community, citizenship often involves participation in collective decision making that seeks to regulate social life (Bellamy, 2008). One's understanding of citizenship is dependent on the kind of philosophical perspective adopted (Dwyer, 2010). Respectively, notions of citizenship contain individualistic and collectivist qualities, thus appealing to broad ideological perspectives. Its ideological underpinnings make it impossible to distinguish a universal definition of citizenship and will be a point revisited throughout the chapter. However, there are a number of key concepts that are consistent amongst the scholarly literature on the

topic of citizenship which will be critically discussed in this chapter. Primarily that it is identified as the link between the state and the individual, one's membership to a community (in which issues of inclusion and exclusion arise) and the social status that allows people to make claims in relation to state welfare (Lewis, 1998).

The foundations of these perspectives involve certain rights that people enjoy as citizens and obligations that maintain the functioning of the community. An ideological argument presented in this chapter draws on combinations of the two. Embedded within these ideologies is the ethic of participation which presents citizenship as 'a reciprocal and therefore a social idea' (Faulks, 2000, p.1). Citizenship, therefore, provides a framework in which these rights can be recognised and fulfilled. Crucially, the relationship between individuals and the state conveys a citizenship membership to a political community through which democratic decision making can be made. This section of the literature review will consider how the notion of citizenship membership raises questions regarding the inclusion and exclusion of different social groups and the ways that citizens make claims in relation to this membership against the state. It will offer a definition of citizenship that crudely outlines the philosophical underpinnings and its origins, to develop a more complex and detailed understanding of citizenship. As the chapter will go on to argue, the evasiveness of 'citizenship' is both part of its strength and weakness in the attempt to problematise and understand social inequalities and exclusion. Although this presents challenging in defining citizenship, it also allows for suitable adaptation and evolution as society and social rights adapt and evolve too. The actions and interactions that take place within a political community demand equality and social change in relation to voting rights, women's rights, environmental rights and disability rights, to name but a few. As Bellamy suggests, 'political communities and rights alike are constructed and sustained by the activities of citizens. People feel bound to each other and by the law only if they regard themselves as involved in shaping their relationships with each other and the state through their ability to influence the rules, policies and politicians that govern social life' (2008, p.32). The following discussions will go on to develop a more nuanced discussion of citizenship, drawing on the work of T.H. Marshall (1949/1992) and Bellamy (2008) who provide important conceptual foundations for citizenship to be understood in relation to.

As citizenship relies on social connections, the context in which citizenship is understood is important. As societies have changed over time, so too has the concept of citizenship. The following section will introduce the foundations that contemporary understandings of citizenship

have been built upon. It identifies exclusionary aspects of citizenship that are ingrained into the fabric of its definition and presents a perspective that argues for a more inclusive understanding of citizenship and is more reflective of the societal changes outlined in section 2.2.1.

2.3.1 Defining Citizenship

Historically, citizenship's roots are embedded in Ancient Greek and Roman traditions. Notions of citizenship have transformed since their first conception in Greece as societies have evolved, and so have the ways in which decision making is made. However, the historical context of citizenship identifies a useful starting point at which the concept was developed. These schools of thought can also be seen in more recent conceptualisations of citizenship. This section intends to briefly summarise these historical contexts (for a more detailed discussion see Dwyer, 2003; Heater, 2006; Faulks, 2000). Citizenship as obligation lies within the tradition of civic republicanism originating in classical Greece. For Aristotle (1948), it was human nature to want to belong to a political community. The concept of fraternity was of utmost importance; a body of citizens should be small enough to know one another. Citizenship was characterised by active engagement in the polis and related to a strong commitment to civic duty. This is visible in strands of communitarian thought that help construct contemporary citizenship and policy debates. An example of this is the Big Society promoted by the UK Coalition government in 2010 which encouraged people to take a more active role in their communities, shifting responsibility from the state to the individual (Powell, 2013). For Aristotle, citizenship was reserved for the select few: adult male elites, with women confined to the private sphere and slaves and 'outsiders' also excluded (Lister, 2003; Faulks, 2000). In this respect, the concept of citizenship has always involved an element of exclusion. Where boundaries are drawn, marginalised groups will fall beyond these parameters. This will be further explored in section 2.5, that discusses the benefits of conceptualising citizenship under broad and inclusive terms. While the Roman Empire was influenced by Aristotle's idea of citizenship, it expanded to include all those living within the empire, moving towards a more universal definition of citizenship (Heater, 1990). Instead of focusing on elements of kinship and fraternity within small, closed groups, citizenship was underpinned by legally defined rights and duties. Nonetheless, power remained with wealthy magistrates and senators. Giddens (1985) highlights the relationship between class struggles and the extension of citizenship rights and we continue to see social movements impact and reshape the boundaries of citizenship.

While civic republicanism of Ancient Greece focuses on communal duty, ideological perspectives in 21st century liberalism are centred upon individual rights. This can be linked to the development of capitalism as people began to challenge feudal order and demand individual rights to liberty and property, and society shifted from a monarch-subject relationship to state-citizen (Heater, 1999). The notion of individual freedom is at the centre of liberalism and as a reaction to oppressive monarchic rule, such freedoms include that from an overbearing state. John Stuart Mill (2000) believed in a more progressive notion of citizenship which should include both men and women with the same rights. He argued that citizenship involves the liberty to choose one's own preferences in life which is achieved through the protection of civil and political rights. Those who lacked the appropriate education, however, were believed incapable of making sound judgements and should not be able to vote (Oliver and Heater, 1994). Civic republicanism promotes the interests of the wider public over that of the individual, whereas liberalist theories believe that individuals should be able to pursue self interest, as the idea of community is not as close knit.

Dwyer argues that communitarianism is the 'lasting legacy of civic republicanism' (2003, p.25). Communitarian theorists oppose individualism and argue that liberalism overlooks the importance of community in the shaping of identity. The individual cannot exist separately from the community, but rather the community brings meaning to the self (Cockburn, 2013). Communities fulfil both social obligations as well as their individual rights and communitarians argue for a participatory politics which recognises this. The community provides individuals the opportunity to deliberate on civic issues. Moral beliefs stem from shared community values and obligations are therefore reflective of each community. An emphasis on obligations is linked to the notion of the 'common good' which, similarly to civic republicanism, takes precedence over individual preferences.

Moreover, citizenship consists of basic notions of the individual and the community (Dwyer, 2010). These philosophical traditions help to better understand and contextualise the development of citizenship in modern day societies, and the ideological influences in policy making. At this point it is useful to turn to T.H. Marshall's theorisation of citizenship. While this chapter acknowledges the limitations of his work, the thesis will first draw on Marshall's theory of citizenship to later develop an understanding of young people's relationship with participation and rights. It is important to remember that T.H. Marshall's citizenship framework was written in the context of the Second World War, during the establishment of the welfare state. Despite

receiving a great deal of criticism since its publication, *Citizenship and Social Class* (1949/1992) provides a useful starting point for the theorisation of citizenship and is regarded a significant and influential contribution to the development of citizenship policy and social rights in the UK. The overarching definition provided by Marshall views citizenship as a status and involved membership of a national community, with the expectation of rights granted by the nation state while in return the individual is expected to carry out duties and responsibilities within their political communities. A distinctive feature of Marshall's citizenship is that he offers no universal principle that defines what exactly citizenship grants or requires. This creates some challenges when implementing a citizenship framework in a practical sense since it results in a variety of interpretations depending on the ideology and positionality of the individual interpreting it. Dwyer notes that the outcome of this is that 'the extent of the rights and duties that citizenship entails is open to ongoing debate and challenge over time' (2010, p.39). This point will be returned to throughout the literature review as the argument that the theorisation of citizenship is a processual practice is developed.

Marshall outlines a theory that links three universal rights which are of central significance and are embedded into the development of social institutions and material conditions. At this point it is worth briefly turning to the work of Alfred Marshall (1873) who argued that it is a citizen's right to access an education. Unlike T.H. Marshall, Alfred Marshall's motivations were not grounded in equality but rather to 'civilise' the working man. Whereas T.H. Marshall developed an understanding of citizenship that centred around notions of a universal status and equality. Alfred Marshall's citizenship, which was embedded in respectable behaviours and middle class values of self improvement and respect, established the foundations for an early theorisation of citizenship and social rights (Dwyer, 2010). These values and ideologies permeate citizenship discussions about what the 'good citizen' looks like and how they conduct themselves in society (Smith et al., 2005).

Marshall's definition consists of civil rights which relate to rights to liberty and equality in law; political rights which refer to the right to vote and participate in the political process, and social rights which grant citizens access to basic welfare and full participation in society. Marshall argues that every citizen, irrespective of class, share an 'equality of status' with other people within that community. As this chapter will go on to discuss, the exclusivity of citizenship and its reliance on one's ideological perspectives in defining both the obligations and rights involved undermine the possibility of an 'equality of status'. Marshall indicates that there is an inextricable link between

an 'equality of status' and the duties and responsibilities of each citizen holding that status. Despite the various ways citizenship has been defined and redefined over the years, notions of status, rights and responsibilities have been consistent features of its conceptualisation. These responsibilities, however, are not clearly defined by Marshall himself, and are instead left up to '[the] societies in which citizenship is a developing institution [to] create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured' (Marshall, 1949/1992, p.18). This vagueness is indicative of the contested nature of citizenship as a concept and the need for the ongoing reassessment and debate of its relevance and parameters in an evolving and developing society.

Some scholars question the relevance and appropriateness of the inclusion of social rights, as Marshall does, in the theorisation of citizenship arguing that while the civic/political rights uphold a capitalist system, the social rights strand of Marshall's citizenship is in opposition to this with the aim to redistribute goods and services (see Oliver and Heater, 1994; Rees, 1995; Barbalet, 1998). Many of these critiques relate to the seemingly overlooked issue of cost involved in the redistribution of goods and services to achieve equality of status. However, Dwyer (2010) argues that social rights are therefore integral to the conceptualisation of citizenship since they make it possible for marginalised groups to lay claims to their rights and are integral to the ongoing development of British society that Marshall had envisioned. Dwyer (2010) goes on to set out an argument that positions Marshall as supportive of sufficient funding of social rights to ensure 'a reasonable level of service' but also notes that 'hindsight allows us the dubious luxury of pointing out that what is deemed reasonable by some is condemned as inappropriate or adequate by others, depending on the political stance taken' (p.47). This observation is fundamental to the theorisation of citizenship that is developed in this chapter, as well as wider social policy implications. The notion of citizenship explored above reflected the able-bodied, middle-class, white male citizen, and marginalised groups fell outside of Marshall's definition. In response to this, Marshall also received extensive criticism for his use of exclusive language and social outlook (Alcock, 1985; Williams, 1992; Heater, 1999) as well as the overly optimistic assumption that individuals would uphold the vague set of duties and obligations that his theory of citizenship implies (Heater, 1999).

Marshall has also received criticism for placing a greater emphasis on unconditional these social rights than the duties that accompany them (Roche, 2005; Giddens, 1994; Selbourne, 1994). The assumption that people will uphold their social and civic and political responsibilities reinforced

by the post-war social climate. It also failed to acknowledge the context and impact of various social inequalities on an individual's perceived ability to make 'morally conscious' decision making in relation to their duty (which according to Marshall, is vague). Dwyer (2000) indicates that Marshall's expectation for citizens to uphold such duties came after the Second World War in which notions of duty and patriotism were closely related to ideas of sacrifice and scarcity. At which point, the welfare state had been created only recently and fears of welfare dependency had yet to be developed (Dean, 2019). It was the establishment of the welfare state that Marshall claimed brought about the idea of social citizenship in which he believed would ensure the inclusion and full participation of 'even the poorest members of society' (Dwyer, 2010, p.4). Social citizenship provides a benchmark to assess the access different groups have to resources and welfare rights. As Dwyer goes on to argue, 'if certain individuals or groups lack substantive rights to welfare, and they are unable to participate in society in meaningful ways, then the very idea of citizenship as a shared common status, begins to unravel' (2010, p.15). Social citizenship therefore creates opportunities for the exploration of exclusion while accounting for different social groups such as age, class, race and disability.

However, despite the various pitfalls and criticisms of Marshall's framework, it 'remains a potential benchmark against which exclusion from full citizenship status can be measured and the dynamics of social divisions constructed around several dimensions explored' (Dwyer, 2010, p.49). The focus of this thesis is on young people's exclusion from citizenship status, their marginalisation from decision making and their ability to participate in civic life on equal terms. However, citizenship provides a framework for which other groups' marginalisation can be examined and reveals important questions around people's access to resources and opportunities and the actions that people take in order to obtain these entitlements. Drake (2001) argues that a simple membership does not go far enough, and that full citizenship membership requires some form of participation. He states that the clearest and easiest way to do so is through voting, however, section 2.5 in this chapter will argue that, amongst voting, there are also other ways in which citizens can participate in (and contribute to) society in meaningful ways. When membership is exclusive and restrictive, participation becomes significantly more important in establishing citizenship rights.

The relationship between *status* as the enjoyment of rights and *practice* as the performance of wider social responsibilities further characterises citizenship as a concept and is a consistent feature of citizenship debates (Oldfield, 1990; Lister, 1997, 2003). This dichotomy reflects the

school of thought aligned to liberalism and civic republicanism (see pages 12-13 of this chapter) and we begin to see how the concept of citizenship has evolved over time. Lister (2003) argues that the status and practice dimension of citizenship provides a useful structure for examining social differences. Focusing on the 'difference' of age, notably young age, as this thesis does, raises questions as to whether and to what extent young people are engaged as members of a political community finding ways to extend the rights of other young people in Wales. Citizenship situates this relationship of status and practice within a wider relevance to other groups marginalised from citizenship status. It is through practice that claims are made to extend their citizenship rights and membership to their political community. Citizenship therefore provides a lens to analyse the shifting boundaries within societies (Canning and Rose, 2001). Drake (2001) argues that membership is not enough but that participation within a society is also a requirement of full citizenship. Social rights help to define the extent and quality of welfare entitlements and can be used to contextualise wider debates relating to welfare struggles (Dwyer, 2010; Dean, 2002). As part of the human condition, welfare rights are viewed by some as identified with the notion that individuals are bestowed with equal worth. This theoretical assumption is centred around the argument that the redistribution of resources and opportunities as opposed to the redistribution of outcomes.

Citizenship has an intrinsic link to politics since it relates to the membership of an exclusive community (as discussed above), involving decision making around the collective life within that political community. Citizenship is, therefore, whatever people within that community make it. As this chapter has argued so far, participation within this community facilitates the evolving definition of citizenship and its boundaries. Bellamy (2008) argues that, for the people within a political community, it is 'their participation or lack of it [that] plays an important role in determining how far, and in what ways, it treats people as equals' (p.26). This point is particularly salient when exploring young people's citizenship as they are frequently depicted as not participating and in need to re-engaging with the political process (see section 2.3.2). Rather than focusing on rights, as Marshall does, Bellamy's definition of citizenship entails three overlapping elements that establish a condition of civic equality:

- Membership of a democratic political community
- Collective benefits and rights associated with that membership
- Participation in the community's political, economic, and social processes

The first strand of this definition relates to who is a citizen, and considers who might experience exclusion from this membership. Bellamy states that 'citizenship implies the capacity to participate in both political and socio-economic life of the community. Yet the nature of that participation and the capabilities it calls for have varied over time and remain matters of debate' (2008, p.26). This is an integral point to make in defining citizenship and one this chapter seeks to reiterate throughout. The membership and status relating to one's citizenship is reliant on the ability to participate within the political community. The chapter will go on to consider how children and young people are impacted by narrow and exclusive understandings of citizenship and what steps can be taken to create a more inclusive environment for them to participate in (see section 2.5).

The collective benefits and rights associated with citizenship can be set out in two approaches. The first being a sense of mutual equality and respect amongst citizens, and the second involving the rights that enable citizens to participate in democratic decision making. Bellamy (2008) argues that both positions are problematic due to the ideological differences that occur within society. Neo-liberals, for example, would argue that the free market ought to decide the outcomes of equality amongst citizens. Whereas social democrats would be more supportive of universal health care and social security systems. Such ideological differences can also be seen in democratic and electoral processes that support the first past the post voting system verses proportional representation. It is due to these ideological differences that Bellamy (2008) argues that making rights the primary consideration for citizenship is too reductive since we tend to see rights as individual entitlements. Nevertheless, this should not distract from the important role they have that enable people to obtain certain goods and services that are important for someone to 'lead a life that reflects their own free choice' (Bellamy, 2008, p.27). This includes the ability to have access to food, shelter and good health which are preconditions for agency. The final element that Bellamy identifies as a defining feature of citizenship is participation. As discussed throughout this chapter, participation is closely related to the collective rights of those within a political community. This strand of citizenship is a particularly important and recurring issue throughout the thesis, particularly in relation to children and young people's citizenship debates which move beyond markers such as voting.

A crucial point that Bellamy (2008), and others mentioned in this chapter, make is that social rights are delivered on the condition that individuals demonstrate and fulfil their duties and responsibilities, encapsulated by the notion that citizens have the 'right to have rights' as

determined by the citizens themselves through the process of democratic participation. In summary, Bellamy provides a concise definition of citizenship as:

‘a condition of civic equality. It consists of membership of a political community where all citizens can determine the terms of social cooperation on an equal basis. This status not only secures equal rights to the enjoyment of collective goods provided by the political association but also involves equal duties to promote and sustain them – including the good of democratic citizenship itself’ (Bellamy, 2008, p.28).

Defining citizenship is a challenging task and is influenced by the ideological stance of the person presenting the argument informing this definition. However, it is this subjectivity that ‘captures the complexities of citizenship as both highly individualised and, at the same time, a collectively invoked social identity’ (Canning and Rose, 2001, p.432) which draws on both individual and collective experiences of citizenship and exclusion. This chapter has illustrated the relevance of practice in relation to the political and legal status of citizenship. It does this by arguing that the extension of rights, sense of belonging and processes of participation (necessarily) complicate and contextualise conceptualisations of citizenship beyond its legal connotations. Citizenship, and people’s association with it in terms of status and practice, will continue to evolve as society is shaped by the historical, cultural and spacial contexts it is situated within. As Dwyer (2010) indicates, ‘the criteria and conditions for provision are defined as a society develops and various groups and classes lay claim initially to ‘their’ rights, crucially often in conflict with one another. Social and economic rights and the struggle that surrounds them are, therefore, central to citizenship’ (p.45). As a result, the relationship that people have with the social institutions they interact with are, in this sense, the cornerstone of understandings of citizenship.

This section has provided a critical discussion of the ideological perspectives that contribute a framework of citizenship used in this thesis. The historical backdrop of citizenship lays the groundwork for discussions about the social and political exclusion of young people in society. Introduced in 1992, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) formally sets out children’s rights and is integral to arguments around the theory and practice of young people’s citizenship. The Convention refers to a set of civil, political, social, and cultural rights that children are entitled to. The UNCRC was the first substantive framework to formally protect children’s rights and recognise them as active members of society. In an increasingly globalised society with access to digital platforms widely available, young people are engaging with a variety

of social issues (see section 2.5.2). This increasingly globalised and digital arena requires a broader understanding of what social contributions might determine citizenship membership. Finally, children and young people's membership of various communities provides opportunities to carry out duties and obligations within their neighbourhoods, schools and social groups. Section 2.5 in this chapter will present the ways in which young people demonstrate an engagement and awareness of their responsibilities within the communities and family.

2.3.2 Political Engagement

Politicians and academics alike have been concerned by a 'crisis in citizenship' across Western democracies as falling electoral turnout is seen to undermine the foundations of civic participation (Sloam, 2012). While low voter turnout is widespread, a particular interest in youth turnout argues that the solution to low voter turnout is to educate the 'disaffected' and 'apathetic' youth (Harris et al., 2010). Policy responses in the UK have focused on promotion of civic engagement to address a perceived deficit in democracy (Norris, 2011) as seen in the introduction of citizenship education across the UK (Kisby and Sloam, 2012). Consequently, political science research has focused on understanding the cause of low youth turnout and how political parties might re-engage the youth electorate (Henn and Foard, 2013). Rather than apathetic, young people were found to show an interest in politics, however they lacked the confidence in their understanding and ability to be able to influence political processes. Henn and Foard (2011) show that while only 12% of their respondents said that they had no interest in politics, 55% said that they lacked confidence in their knowledge of British politics. Sloam (2012) argues that young people also feel the strain from the financial crisis as unemployment rates are high and youth services face cuts. These studies suggest that the notion of 'youth apathy' is misplaced and that frustration with politics, and lack of confidence in their ability to influence policy makers, is a more accurate cause of low turnout than a lack of interest (Sloam, 2007; Henn and Weinstein, 2006). Henn and Foard's studies (2011, 2014) argue that young people are too often viewed as a homogenised group and assumptions about voter turnout are made on a broad-brush basis. Instead, they argue that research should approach youth political views with particular consideration of socio-demographic backgrounds and educational experiences that shape their outlooks and political interests. A focus on youth voting behaviour as a key marker of their citizenship further excludes young people from being fully recognised as citizens. Section 2.3.3 will argue that this preoccupation obscures young people's civic participation outside of voting and results in education policies which focus on teaching young people how to become

citizens rather than supporting them through their citizenship development, which is ongoing and processual. Harris et al. (2010) found that young people appeared to be marginalised by conventional politics as their needs and interests relative to their own experiences were not acknowledged. Their study focused on a perspective of youth participation that falls outside of traditional and radical paradigms. Although their participants claimed they were interested in social and political issues, their participatory practices were informal, individualised and everyday activities rather than traditional forms of participation such as voting and party membership which were more widely recognised as forms of engagement by adults. As a better understanding of youth political (dis)engagement was gained, academics began to call for a broader understanding of both participation and politics to be more inclusive to young people. Studies investigating youth citizenship have highlighted a disconnect between normative definitions of politics and the type of politics which young people relate to, understand and experience. O'Toole et al. (2003) argue that previous research in this area relies too heavily on quantitative research methods which makes youth perceptions of the 'political' difficult to define. O'Toole et al. claim that:

'Too often, concern about youth political disengagement is focused on an impending future crisis of political participation and on the future failure to induct young people effectively into 'adult politics', rather than on the failure to engage with young people and with the issues that affect and concern them. Overall, if there is one lesson our research suggests, it is that political literacy cuts both ways: perhaps government should listen more.' (2003, p.359)

While there is a long-standing tradition of qualitative approaches to researching youth, studies on youth political engagement has tended to focus on quantitative methods (see Swaddle and Heath, 1992; Butler and Kavanagh, 1997; Park, 2000). Researchers such as O'Toole et al. (2003) introduced a more qualitative and creative approach to exploring young people's understandings and experiences of politics. They argue that the assumption is often made that young people need to be re-engaged with politics in order to improve democracy, however, to identify non-participation in formal political processes as apathetic is overly simplistic and does not account for nuances in young people's civic participation. A broadening of conceptions of 'political' was argued to better serve young people than excluding them by overlooking the relevance of their own experiences. This argument will form the foundation on which this doctoral research will be based and will be further developed in section 2.5 of this chapter. Nonetheless, the preoccupation

with youth turnout and political disengagement, which authors such as O'Toole et al. (2003) highlight, was the defining feature of citizenship education (Crick, 2002). The following section will explore this in greater detail and critically discuss the development of Citizenship Education in the UK, a policy implemented because of growing concerns regarding the perceived political apathy amongst young people.

2.3.3 Citizenship and Education

For many years, citizenship has existed as a common concern for schooling in the UK (Smith, 2016) as politicians have attempted to increase voter turnout, which dropped significantly in UK General elections from 71% in 1997 to 59% in 2001 (House of Commons Research Papers, 2013). In 1990 Education for Citizenship featured as one of five themes introduced to the National Curriculum following the House of Commons Commission on Citizenship Report *Encouraging Citizenship*. Beck (1998) identifies several issues with the chosen approach to citizenship education, most notably the lack of discussion or debate about how citizenship is conceptualised in this context. This issue is returned to in sections 4.3.1 and 5.2.1 which consider how able young people in this study felt to participate as citizens in school compared to other spaces they access. Beck (1998) questions how pupils and teachers will know the adequacy of pupil's understanding of citizenship when the concept itself is left ambiguous. Education for citizenship focused on preparing young people for the responsibilities of citizenship and emphasised the young people's role within their communities. Beck found the idea of education *for* citizenship problematic and strongly argues that children and young people should be educated *about* citizenship. This perspective raises questions about how young people are perceived, educated, and supported through to adulthood. Section 2.5 will discuss how notions of citizenship have been broadened to capture the ways that young people are already engaged and participating as citizens. It argues that education should facilitate the process of citizenship through youth, as opposed to viewing young people as not yet citizens, as *Encouraging Citizenship* does. Instead, 'the focus would be, rather, upon extending young people's knowledge and understanding of political ideas, institutions and issues' (Beck, 1998, p.108). Education *for* citizenship positions young people as passive recipients as opposed to active agents, reinforcing notions that children and young people are citizens in waiting. Education about citizenship seeks to empower young people to become active decision makers in their own right, forming their own opinions.

Instead, citizenship education came to be predominantly influenced by the concept of 'active citizenship'. Successive governments have used notions of the 'active citizen' to place emphasis on personal responsibility and a wider duty to one's community (Hall et al., 2000). Beck (1998) defines the active citizen as one who 'supports the New Right agenda of severely cutting back on public expenditure and public provision of welfare in favour of a mixture of privatised and voluntary provision' (p.101). This ethos is supported by initiatives such as the Big Society (Powell, 2013) introduced by the the UK Coalition government in 2010. Social policy rhetoric shifted from a 'passive' citizenship (based upon social rights) to notions of the 'active' citizen (focusing on social responsibility). Popular across the political spectrum, under the New Right 'active' citizenship was a response to a growing concern that a dependency culture was developing in the UK and too many people were beginning to rely on the welfare state. As evident in John Major's Citizen Charter, reduction of the 'nanny state' along with a promotion of 'active citizenship' intended to reduce a reliance on the welfare state and promote the idea of support through community volunteering and social responsibilities. This, however, as Beck (1998) indicates, was also accompanied by a reduction in funding allocated to services. Active citizenship has continued to influence youth policy and has impacted social perceptions of young people and their contribution to society (Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Henn and Oldfield, 2016). Critiques of active citizenship argue that the term has negative connotations relating to young people's citizenship, which is perceived as lacking (Bessant et al. 2016). However, as Smith (2016) illustrates, it is possible for active citizenship to be reframed as something that young people should be empowered to do, focusing on supporting young people's voices in adult spaces in order to ensure their voice is heard. Smith (2016) argues that viewing young people as social actors recognises that action is a key component of citizenship. However, a key component of this is conceptualising citizenship as a participatory process (Percy-Smith 2016) as opposed to an outcome, as the active citizenship agenda in citizenship education suggests.

Nonetheless, notions of active citizenship have played a significant role in policy reforms, particularly under New Labour and the Third Way which has focused heavily on increasing the number of young people volunteering and participating in community activities. The effectiveness of teaching citizenship in schools continued to be evaluated over the years as concerns about the disengagement of young people in politics and decline in voter turnout persisted. In 1998 citizenship education was re-evaluated by 'The Advisory Group for the Teaching of Citizenship and Democracy in Schools' who published a report that instigated the implementation of Citizenship Education in England and Wales. Commonly known as the Crick Report (1998), citizenship became

part of the curriculum under the subject of Personal Social Education. The Crick Report continued to advocate preparation for citizenship, focusing on social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. In this sense its roots remained in ideas of 'active citizenship', while addressing issues of conceptualising citizenship that Beck initially highlighted. It associated political citizenship with republicanism rather than liberalism, focusing on skills and virtue of character (Lockyer, 2008). This position had significant implications for the way that citizenship education was implemented in lessons and is relevant to arguments presented in sections 4.3.1 and 5.2 – 5.2.3.

The introduction of Citizenship Education (2002) emphasised the need for reciprocity between rights and duties and identified a strong connection between volunteering within the community and political activity. It aimed to prepare young people for civic and political participation, stating that 'politics encompasses activity where 'ordinary people' share decision-making' (Crick, 2000, pp.59-74). Lockyer argues that the UNCRC and the Crick Report complement one another in the task of addressing the issue of citizenship in schools by seeking to produce a 'nation of engaged citizens' (p.21). The primary focus of the UNCRC is on children's rights, whereas the Crick Report focuses on responsibilities. While they might be considered opposing by some, Lockyer (2008) argues that interpreting the UNCRC in light of the report 'allows children to be politically active citizens' (p.20). Consequently, participatory rights both entitles and obliges children to become politically engaged and allows them to be active citizens. In this argument, Article 12 of the UNCRC becomes particularly important as it outlines the child's right to express their own views on matters that affect them and be listened to. Crucially, this viewpoint allows for children to be seen as equal citizens whilst not holding universal electoral rights. Section 2.4 of this chapter discusses the benefits of embedding the UNCRC in the Welsh Curriculum in more detail. Lockyer acknowledges the vulnerability of children in this kind of decision making and proposes that the importance of teaching citizenship and 'political skills of persuasion' rests upon children's lack of autonomy as they can often be overruled by others. Sections 4.3 and 5.2 explore the impact on young people's citizenship in situations where they experience access to decision making opportunities compared to where these are denied.

Citizenship and Education policies have been criticised for focusing too narrowly on children and young people's responsibilities and the preparation for citizenship, with the view that it is linked to voting age (Haste and Hogan, 2006; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004). While different ideological perspectives will guarantee that citizenship will always be a contested concept, the

balance between rights and responsibilities will differ between contestations that define how citizenship is understood. It is important to acknowledge that one cannot exist without the other (Lockyer, 2008). This thesis argues for a rights based, youth centred citizenship. However, to remove the notion of responsibilities from youth citizenship entirely would be to undermine the responsibilities that young people already exist in their daily lives. Part of what will make marginalised groups' citizenship membership more inclusive is conceptualising citizenship from a 'person centred' perspective. The Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC), created in in 2008, was established in response to the *Governance of Britain Green Paper* (2007). Its aims were to define what citizenship means to young people, increase youth participation, promote active citizenship and, lastly, investigate whether the voting age should be reduced to 16. The YCC provide a vague definition of citizenship:

'What do we mean by citizenship? When we say citizenship we mean both a person's membership in a political community and the rights, privileges and responsibilities associated with that. For the YCC, citizenship includes the activities that individuals undertake for the benefit of their community. This includes activities like political engagement, public service, volunteering and participation' (2009, p.9).

The authors of the paper acknowledge that young people are not apathetic and in fact show political interest. They recognise that young people are typically more involved in informal political activities, demonstrating this by taking part in debates, protests, boycotts and community projects. The YCC argue that the kind of 'creativity, energy, enthusiasm and commitment' (2009, p.9) that is shown in informal activities would provide young people with a greater voice if it were demonstrated in formal political activity too. The final report argued that 'if decision makers change their activities and behaviours and choose to create more genuine connections between young people and community, voluntary and political activity, there will be benefits for everyone' (2009, p.10). It acknowledges that not everyone understands citizenship in the same way and that to embed this notion of citizenship learning and experience successfully, it must be embedded from a young age. While the report still focuses on increasing participation in formal politics, it also encourages volunteering and community involvement to 'provide positive experiences, skills and confidence' for young people (p.15). This discussion is returned to in Chapters Four, Five and Six which present the empirical findings of this study and explore different ways that youth experiences of citizenship were supported in relation to positive experiences, the development of skills and improving self-confidence.

Youth councils were identified by the YCC as providing young people the opportunity to participate in local government, become more involved in their local communities and ultimately act as a space where young people can voice their concerns. The Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales, Funky Dragon, was also identified in the report as an organisation that provides young people all over Wales with 'the opportunity to get their voices heard on issues that affect them and to be involved in decision making' (p.47). Funding for Funky Dragon was subsequently cut in 2014 following cuts to youth services nationwide. Cuts to youth funding highlight the tension between young people and political institutions, particularly where young people feel that their needs are not represented or accounted for by government (Henn and Oldfield, 2016). The YCC (2009) argues that the process of increasing youth participation involves a commitment from policy makers and those in power to provide more opportunities for young people to voice their opinions and to respect and listen to them.

Citizenship education in the UK has been viewed by policy makers as the solution to the democratic deficit identified in low youth turnout and disengagement, by advocating an active citizenship amongst young people (see section 2.3.2). The introduction of citizenship education in schools has been broadly supported (Henn and Foard, 2014), however, its implementation is debated. Young people themselves have raised concerns about their perceived lack of political knowledge (Henn and Foard, 2012; Dermody et al., 2010), their resulting lack of confidence, and have suggested that teaching political literacy would be an appropriate remedy. This, however, relies on availability of competent teachers and school delivery which the final report from the Youth Citizenship Commission argues has been inconsistent. The report suggests that if citizenship education is to be successful, its delivery should include:

- Trained and motivated specialist teachers
- A supportive head teacher
- Practical experience, and
- Good links with the community

(2009, p.40)

Perceived as a threat to democracy, as youth voter turnout remains consistently low, young people are taught citizenship in order to prepare them for adult life. In this sense, adulthood and citizenship are often synonymised. Biesta et al. (2009) argue that a citizenship education that is

embedded into the curriculum masks deeper issues relating to citizenship learning. They identify citizenship education as having a neoliberal agenda, individualising the 'problem' of youth citizenship and placing responsibility on young people to resolve this issue by educating themselves in order to be accepted as demonstrating 'appropriate' citizenship behaviours. At this point it is worth reflecting again on the notion of social and economic risks increasingly affecting young people which has been reinforced by the individualised responsibility to manage such risks.

Biesta et al. (2009) argue that 'young people learn at least as much about democracy and citizenship...through their participation in the range of different practices that make up their lives' (p.7). Young people are also increasingly more interested in cause-orientated, micro politics (Farthing, 2010), as will unfold in the coming analysis of the findings presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six, which explore the significance of youth issues and civic engagement. Instead of voting for change, some young people are *doing* change by using public transport and making conscious consumer choices. Furthermore, the use of social media has seen an increase in online political participation. Farthing (2010) also calls for the recognition of what he calls an 'active rejection' of traditional politics by young people as it demonstrates how young people negotiate new political agendas. In this sense, non-participation in formal politics is framed as somewhat empowering. Young people's trust in the state to tackle issues they are concerned about is falling and, as a result, young people are taking personal responsibility for their actions, for example by boycotting companies, and posting images of single use plastic to call out supermarkets, or 'beach clean-up' challenges. This idea of the antipolitical dismantles the normative framework in which policy makers conceptualise citizenship and draws on a more diverse and nuanced understanding of how citizenship can be performed.

This section has explored how narrow conceptions of citizenship, which focus on voting and political participation, tend to overlook the multitude of ways in which children and young people are participating in society, and therefore are not able to sufficiently support young people in their citizenship development. By broadening conceptions of citizenship and becoming more inclusive of youth experiences, we can recognise the different ways in which young people enact citizenship in their everyday lives. The following section will discuss how a broad and inclusive understanding of citizenship can help support young people further develop their citizenship and value the contributions they make in society. It will begin by addressing the context of participation and children's rights in Wales as these facilitate inclusive, rights-based understandings of citizenship.

2.4 Policy making and children's rights in Wales

Wales has been considered a champion of children's rights since the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1998. Youth policy in post-devolution Wales has embedded the values of the UNCRC, often receiving cross-party support within the Assembly. Butler and Drakeford observe, 'an interest in and experience of working with children and young people was a theme that connected a series of players in the 1999 Assembly' (p.10, 2013) and influenced the approach Wales took to youth policy. The Welsh Assembly established the UK's first independent human rights institution for children (Butler and Drakeford, 2013). The Children's Commissioner for Wales was introduced in 2001, whose role is to safeguard and promote children's rights, is inherently involved in upholding the UNCRC. These policies indicated from an early stage that children's issues would be considered a priority on the political agenda in Wales, heavily focusing on citizenship rights, and ensuring that children and young people were made aware of these. This established a commitment to include children and young people in policy making and contributed to the development of youth participatory structures in Wales. The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure (WG, 2011) supports this by requiring Welsh Ministers to have due regard to children's rights in policy making decisions. The following pages outline the development of youth policy making in Wales and illustrate its distinctive features that supported by the UNCRC which is the basis for all work relating to children and young people.

Extending Entitlement: Support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales (NAW, 2002), which Butler and Drakeford refer to as 'the foundation document of post-devolution policy-making for children in Wales' (2013, p.11), sets out a series of services and opportunities that are free at the point of use, universal and unconditional. It outlines a framework for supporting young people in Wales, seeking to extend positive experiences for young people as a whole. Distinctive to youth policy making in England which focused on individualised approach with an emphasis on making young people responsible for making use of opportunities that were available to them in order to succeed in life. Whereas the National Assembly for Wales focused on young people's potential to succeed as embedded in the quality of services available to them, while recognising that:

'[young people's] ability to take advantage of the opportunities available to them depends critically on good health, self confidence, high expectations, the ambition to be independent and the life skills to make effective choices, together with the encouragement and support of family and community' (NAW, 2002, p.8).

The document establishes a Young People's Partnership 'to ensure that services work in close co-operation with young people' (p.5). This framework sets the tone for a collaborative approach to youth policy making in Wales by encouraging links and networks with local authorities and emphasising the value and importance of consulting young people in decisions that affect them. It promotes a strategy that keeps young people at the centre of decision making and ensures that children and young people are given the opportunity to express their views and that they are listened to. In *Extending Entitlement*, local authorities were identified as being responsible for the quality of their Youth Service, with the focus on personal and social development through informal learning and access to a range of information, support and opportunities. This also involved ensuring that youth services were relevant and responsive to the needs of young people. This maintained that young people should have a voice and influence within youth work services, as well as wider policy developments that impact them. This was all underpinned by the need for appropriately trained and qualified youth workers. *Extending Entitlement* highlighted the importance of providing a 'welcoming setting' that, while offering opportunities for training, education and work experience, also involved a variety of recreational and social activities in a safe and accessible environment. All of which were considered important factors in 'building young people's capacity to become independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process' (NAW, 2002, p.10). In the context of Welsh policy making, Welsh Government quickly positioned itself as viewing young people as having something positive to contribute to society and recognised value in celebrating their successes.

Rights to Action (WG,2004) was the Welsh Assembly government's proposals to transform children and young people's lives. It is characterised by seven core aims deriving from the UNCRC which were to underpin policies and programmes for children and young people in Wales. The report reflects the view that children and young people should be supported to achieve their potential and should be considered valuable members of society.

- have a flying start in life;
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing;

- are not disadvantaged by poverty;
- the adoption by the Assembly of regulations prohibiting corporal punishment in all forms of day-care, including childminding.

All local authorities in Wales were invited to set up a ‘children and young people’s forum’ with the aim that local organisations were to listen to young people’s voices. The report argued that young people were particularly concerned with the lack of respect they received from adults, both in a personal sense as well as more generally. It was noted that negative messaging about children and young people in the media were detrimental to this issue and that aims to change attitudes about children and young people were instrumental in translating children’s rights into action. This was expressed emphatically in the *Rights to Action* report, demonstrating the views and feelings of children and young people on the matter, and its significance in their lives.

‘Young people are seriously concerned about the lack of respect given to them by adults. The Assembly Government shares this concern. Children and young people should be seen as young citizens, with rights and opinions to be taken into account now. They are not a species apart, to be alternately demonised and sentimentalised, nor trainee adults who do not yet have a full place in society. Adults must not fall into the trap of automatically speaking for them and making assumptions about what they need’ (WG, 2004, p.4).

Another key feature of *Rights to Action* was acknowledging that ‘youth’ was not a homogenous group but rather a multifaceted with complex individual needs and experiences. Instead, it was argued that in valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity was a necessary step in tackling inequalities in children and young people. The notion of an inclusive education was proposed as a key feature of this and sought to establish a continued process of breaking down barriers to children and young people’s access to learning opportunities.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) sets out the legal framework for simplifying and improving the well-being for people who need care and support and for carers in order to transform social services in Wales. This includes both adults and children and puts them and their well-being at the centre of decision making.

The Act outlines 8 components that are distinctive of well-being:

- Making sure you have your rights
- Being physically, mentally and emotionally happy
- Protected from abuse, harm and neglect
- Having education, training, sports and play
- Positive relationships with family and friends
- Being part of the community
- Having a social life and enough money to live a healthy life
- Having a good home

Seeking to encourage people to become independent and to give them a stronger voice and more control over their lives. This allows the individual to make informed decisions about what they need. Much like the policies discussed above, the *Social Services and Well-being Act* promotes a child-centred framework that facilitates services users in identifying their needs and support. It argues for a change in culture in order to help individuals to take care of their well-being. This is primarily achieved through placing the individual at the centre of policy and practice, through consultation and community networking. All with the aim to increase independence and move away from long term care and support wherever appropriate. This, again, adopts a preventative collaborative approach and is very much reflective of the position that Welsh Government takes in support and social services. Well-being and safeguarding are placed at the forefront of the Act and place high importance of involving the child and their family in the provision for this.

Children's rights are central to this provision and emphasise that in order for personal outcomes to be achieved, a clear understanding of what these are require an understanding of what matters are most important to the child involved. The Act calls for a better understanding of the whole family's circumstances, recognising the impact this has on different needs for care and support. A key component to *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014)* is ensuring that children and young people are consulted on matters that affect them. This is a central theme in Welsh policy making and one in which the research sought to uphold throughout the data collection.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) requires public bodies to consider the long-term impact of their decisions and aim to prevent issues such as poverty, health inequality and climate change. It recognises the importance of involving people in the achievement of the Act's goals, while reflecting the diversity of each area of Wales. The Well-being of Future

Generations Act sets out 7 goals that public bodies are bound by, but emphasises the need for support from other sectors and individuals in order to achieve them.

The Well-being goals outlined include:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

The Act embodies the qualities of many of the policies discussed in this chapter such as balancing the long-term needs with short-term, as well as focusing on preventative measures to achieve the goals listed above. The Act suggests an integrative approach in meeting these goals, and that public bodies should consider the impact of their objectives on each well-being goal. The Act also has a collaborative focus that values the involvement of people who express an interest in the goals in order to reflect the diversity of different areas in Wales. What is significant about this piece of legislation is that it directly relates the role that institutions have on an individual's health and well-being. Particularly the lives of generations to follow.

The underlying argument presented in this section is that policy making in Wales supports and encourages the involvement of young people in decisions that affect and interest them. The Future Generations Report (2020) recommends that qualifications and assessments at 16 should be restructured to focus on diversity, again, reflecting this emphasis on person-centred decision making. The report argues that dropping the current testing system in Welsh schools would support the aspirations of the development of the new Curriculum for Wales due to be rolled out in 2022. The recommendations also outline that a plan for schools to focus more closely on skills that equip pupils for lifelong learning that leads to better match jobs to people and people to jobs. Aspects of the youth transition that are becoming increasingly fragmented and challenging (see section 2.2).

Youth Work Strategy for Wales (2019) was co-developed with young people and the youth work sector, the strategy sets out the aims of youth work in Wales as supporting young people's

personal, social and educational development. It seeks to be embodied an ethos of youth work that empowers young people, enabling them to develop their voice and influence in society. Recognising that youth work can adopt a variety of meanings, the strategy outlines that youth work can take place in a variety of settings and contexts; is an important part of the wider education service; it adapts over time and can change young people's lives for the better. Youth work supports young people through significant changes and often turbulent periods of their lives and can help young people develop a sense of belonging (Farthing, 2010). The strategy sets out a vision of youth work by establishing a clear focus in Wales that aims to strengthen and improve the service. Its vision is one in which young people are thriving and are supported to 'find their voice, formulate and convey their ideas, develop autonomy, build skills, make friends and, importantly, have fun' (WG, 2019, p.11). Young people are expected to play an important role in the decisions that affect them in their day to day lives, as well as decisions that affect their futures. Another important aspect of youth work that is highlighted in the strategy is the need for youth work to be recognised and valued, and that this understanding is universal. A clear understanding of the value of youth work in young people's lives, and the wider social and economic benefits of this, enables a model of youth work that understands the scope and scale of youth work. This also establishes a longevity for the future of youth work and seeks to establish relationships and partnerships with other services and organisations.

Youth Engagement and Progression Strategy (2015-2018), also known as the 'Cardiff Commitment', Cardiff Council pledged its commitment to increasing the engagement and progression of young people in education, training and employment. Its focus is on equipping young people with the skills and knowledge necessary to reach their full potential in regards to employment. The strategy aims to ensure that 'all young people in Cardiff are provided with the support, choices and opportunities to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens' (Cardiff Council, 2016, p.3). In order to achieve this, public, private and voluntary organisations are invited to work in partnership with schools and other education providers to increase children and young people's employment opportunities.

Child Friendly City Cardiff Strategy (2018) recognises that, while many children in Cardiff are happy, healthy and listened to, there are still significant challenges to a large portion of the population and disparities between different areas within the city. It aims to remove barriers that make it difficult for some young people to enter employment, promoting a smooth transition in

this areas, prioritising independent living for all. Overall the ambition is for Cardiff to be a great place for children and young people to grow up and:

- Understand their rights and influence decisions that affect their lives.
- Experience equality of opportunity in all that they do.
- Be safe, respected and free from any form of discrimination or harm.
- Experience and share kindness in their everyday lives.
- Move around independently and safely and are able to enjoy the freedoms of the city.
- Have a great start in life and grow up healthy and cared for.
- Experience a high quality and inclusive education that prepares them for life.
- Easily access any information, advice or support that they may need, when they need it.
- Share in the success of the city in all its forms, whatever their background.

Cardiff Council and Unicef embed a children's rights approach to the implementation of this strategy, which aims to place children and young people at the centre of planning and delivery of services that impact their lives. It recognises that services are rarely designed around the experiences and voices of children and young people which can lead to them becoming further marginalised. This risk is increased for those living in vulnerable situations. 7 principles were established to ensure that a Children's Rights Approach is embedded in the Cardiff initiative:

1. Every child and young person is valued, treated fairly and with respect
2. Has their voice and their needs heard
3. To have a safe and supportive home life
4. Learn about their rights
5. Are able to maintain good physical, mental and emotional health, as well as knowing how to stay healthy

Developing skills is a key element in achieving Child Friendly City status. The strategy argues that children's rights should guide the decisions made in areas such as education, health and social care, as well as other issues they encounter such as planning, transport and the environment. Their participation in the design and delivery of these services is integral to a children's rights framework and would ensure the empowerment of children and young people's voices and ability to hold organisations accountable. Skills are presented as a means of achieving this involvement and that relevant training supports young people's participation in decision making opportunities.

Section 2.3.1 identifies the significance of status and practice in conceptualising citizenship, and argues that in instances where status is compromised, for example the lack of ability to vote, practice becomes ever more important in ensuring that an individual's interests are represented and considered in decision making. The UNCRC encourages a shift in thinking about the status of children and acknowledges them as citizens in their own right, despite their lack of formal political influence (Williams, 2013). The policies outlined in this section have illustrated ways that the Welsh Government have prioritised the needs and well-being of children and young people to accommodate this exclusion from formal political processes which are often related to an adult framework of citizenship.

To summarise, this section has provided an overview of some of the key policies that impact children and young people's lives in Wales, and their ability to participate in their communities, as well as living healthy and happy lives. These policies reflect a viewpoint of children and young people that values their voices and experiences and seeks to embed these into future decision making. The following section explores Citizenship Education in Wales and the continuing ways that youth policy making in Wales seek to involve children and young people in decision making processes.

2.4.1 Citizenship Education in Wales

Citizenship has existed as a common concern for schooling in the UK concerning community engagement, civic action, social inclusion and democratic participation (Smith, 2016). Citizenship Education is not a stand alone subject in Wales but is instead delivered through Personal Social Education (PSE), Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC), and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Citizenship Education in Wales adopted a more communitarian framework, distinctive to England in its approach to teaching citizenship drawing on discourses of Welshness (Smith, 2016). This was established through two key policies: 'Community Understanding' and 'Curriculum Cymreig'. *Community Understanding* (CCW, 1991) outlined the significance of community in Wales, stating that thoughtful consideration of community in schools will enable pupils to recognise and appreciate their 'common experience of their cultural heritage' (CCW, 1991, p.2). *Developing the Curriculum Cymreig* aimed to enable educators to embed themes of Welshness into their school ethos as well as incorporating concepts of citizenship and cultural identity. Smith (2016) argues that *Community Understanding* provided a more useful framework

for citizenship education than its successor as it developed more comprehensive themes of citizenship, culture and community. The implementation of Citizenship Education through PSE and ESDGC was situated within both global and local perspectives. Primarily concerned with active citizenship, sustainable development and global citizenship, these two policies focus on personal and social responsibility incorporated into overarching themes of self development. ESDGC aims for educators to involve learners in decisions taken by schools and argues that children should be given opportunities to have their voices listened to, as well as encouraging them to listen to the voices of others.

Criteria for ESDGC:

1. Understanding, skills and values relating to sustainable and global citizenship
2. Teaching and learning (in subjects) relating to ESDGC
3. Policies and practice that promote and implement ESDGC
4. Supporting the development and sustainability of ESDGC in school

The ESDGC is highlighted as one of the themes in PSE and acknowledges its relevance to active citizenship which 'encompasses the role of learners within the community, their rights and responsibilities, political literacy' (WAG, 2008, p12). The ESGC sets out an ethos or philosophy embedded within the school's organisation. Whereas PSE, on the other hand, became a statutory requirement for schools in 2003, organised through themes of community, emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual health, environment, learning, moral concerns, social well-being, and vocation. The PSE Framework (2008) draws upon the UNCRC, Rights to Action and the Education Act (2002) aiming to create learning opportunities for pupils through the engagement in conversations about their personal and cultural identity in the context of citizenship. The PSE framework claims that the guidance inhabits a broad, balanced, holistic approach to PSE, but Smith argues that the proposed outcomes are only achievable if the framework is sufficiently supported by the staff, ethos and organisation of the school.

Sections 2.4 and 2.4.1 have discussed how approaches to youth policy making in Wales have established a youth-centred ethos, adopted by the Welsh Government from the early stages of devolution. The child's right to express their opinion and have a voice has been consistently placed at the centre of policy making and education policy has made efforts to develop an understanding of citizenship that is sensitive to the history and culture of Wales that has been overlooked by decisions based in Westminster. However, Lyle (2014) argues that adults' perceptions of children and young people can complicate the implementation of the UNCRC as

the Measure requires. Lyle's findings show that teachers frequently referred to children's immaturity and incompetence in regard to their rights, claiming that children did not 'know enough to use their voices in an appropriate manner (p.220). Consequently, she questions the broader implications of these perspectives for children's rights. The establishment of youth forums, councils and parliaments implies that new approaches to youth participation platforms seek to be more inclusive of young people's views. However, there is the risk that young peoples' voices will only be taken into consideration in spaces carved out for youth participation rather than providing opportunities for young people to influence decision making in everyday spaces. Lyle argues that the school environment can be restrictive of children and young people's rights, and that 'society in general does not take seriously the idea of children contributing to debates about things that affect them, whether in or out of school' (2014, p.217). While the Measure (2011), in theory, should promote the implementation of the UNCRC, particularly in education, societal attitudes can significantly restrict this. For youth policy to move beyond rhetoric and into practice, adults must view children and young people as competent and agentic and their opinions as valid and important. Therefore, teachers particularly must find ways to support the political child and provide opportunities for their participation in everything the school does.

The curriculum in Wales has received significant policy attention in recent years and at the beginning of 2020 a report was released outlining plans for education reform. The Curriculum for Wales Guidance (WG, 2020) aims to enable pupils to develop as 'healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society' and focuses on equipping young people to 'learn throughout their lives' (p.11). The language of the guidance suggests a focus on empowering children and young people by recognising diversity and aiming to tailor assessment to each learner's needs. Informed by the UNCRC, the guidance argues that the application of a children's rights approach to education must include 'the right [...] to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives, [therefore] involving children and young people in decisions about learning should be at the heart of the curriculum design' (p.41). While the tone of this reform leans towards creating a more inclusive society, adopting a holistic (and seemingly participatory) approach to education, it still retains some of the old language that reinforces normative understandings of citizenship itself, stating that 'learners will demonstrate greater ability to influence events by exercising informed and responsible citizenship' (p.104). In response to the proposal to reform the Welsh curriculum, the Children's Commissioner for Wales also highlights some areas that children and young people could be better supported by the curriculum. She argues that restructuring the curriculum offers an opportunity to embed children's rights within

the school environment, applying a 'rights-based pedagogy to ensure children and young people learn in a rights-respecting environment' (Holland, 2018, p6). This approach supports an inclusive model of citizenship (discussed in more detail in section 2.5) by viewing young people as rights-bearing agents within educational processes.

2.5 Broadening conceptions

The arguments presented in the final stages of this literature review provide the theoretical perspective which supports the methodological position and analysis chapters in exploring young people's experiences and understandings of citizenship. Youth research has shifted from research *on* young people to research *with* young people. Cockburn argues that 'there is a need for a normative and ideological shift in viewing childhood not as a 'preparatory stage' but as a central component in society with an important and legitimate role to play in the continuation of that society' (1998, p.113). The following sections will critically explore scholarly arguments which propose that conceptions are broadened in both youth and citizenship studies to more equally account for young people's social contributions.

Children are often assessed against an adult template when their citizenship is examined (Lister, 2008). Narrow parameters can obscure the ways children and young people enact and experience citizenship. By viewing citizenship as a process of participation, young people's experiences of citizenship can be more fully realised. This viewpoint seeks to establish a more inclusionary conception of citizenship that recognises their participation as current citizens, rather than future citizens. Critics of normative definitions of citizenship call for a conceptualisation that includes and values people who do not fall within the narrow definition of Marshall's citizenship which is exclusively employed, adult, able bodied, heterosexual white men (Dyck, 2005; Lister, 2003). Instead, they argue for a more inclusive citizenship acknowledges the importance of contextual circumstances that affect one's ability to participate and feel heard. Lister (2007) argues that traditional definitions of citizenship portray a false universalism which assumes a full citizenship membership but fails to acknowledge differences, divisions and inequality. A differentiated universalism, on the other hand, takes into account the different ways in which people participate as citizens at different stages of their life. As sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 argue, citizenship policy has often focused heavily on education and by adopting a normative, adult-centred perspective societal, cultural and economic differences are overlooked. Furthermore, as discussed in section 2.2.1 of this chapter, young people's lives are becoming de-standardised and non-linear, affected by changes in the economy and youth policies. Normative assumptions of youth citizenship

homogenise young people and overlook the diversity of their experiences and aspirations. While education forms a significant part of young people's lives, citizenship policy would benefit from recognising that understandings of citizenship are learned (and expressed) in the context of the everyday, often in settings outside of the classroom. Chapter Three demonstrates how these values are implemented in the research design in order to create opportunities for young people to be recognised as citizens now.

Smith et al. (2005) found that young people often articulated quite normative and exclusionary understandings of citizenship and were 'less fluent in the language of rights than responsibilities' (p.249). 'Good citizenship' was something that participants found easy to identify, further contributing to the exclusionary nature of normative conceptions of citizenship. Some models of citizenship in their study offered more inclusionary definitions of citizenship by focusing on having a 'positive impact' in the community, often involving some level of volunteering (p.436). Conversely, other participants understood citizenship in a more employment-oriented way, focusing on economic independence, comparative to ideas of social commitment to work identified in Marshall's definition of citizenship. Smith et al. (2005) argue that defining citizenship in terms of economic independence reinforces class divisions rather than challenging them. This raises the question as to what social implications promoting a broad, person-centred definition of citizenship would have on how young people are perceived as members of society. Promoting a more comprehensive view of citizenship therefore allows for a greater recognition of the ways young people already participate as citizens and is a central theme of this thesis. Jones and Wallace (1992) argue that such narrow conceptions overlook examples of young people's social citizenship that take place in the home, school and in part-time work. Consequently, they also argue for a broader, more inclusive conceptualisation of citizenship so that young people's status as citizens now can be better appreciated. Smith et al. (2005, p.441) refer to citizenship as a 'life-long project' and argue that it should be regarded as a fluid identity, one which is subject to change throughout the life course and can be shared by both young and old. The 'social constructive participation' model offers a more inclusive framework for which different practices can be valued as expressions of citizenship rather than obscured by a narrow focus on traditional forms of citizenship. The 'social constructive' model allows for young people to be recognised as citizens, active amongst their communities. However, both models of citizenship are exclusionary in some way to those who do not easily fall into either category. Smith et al. (2005) illustrate the challenges one encounters in attempting to conceptualise citizenship and, often, the definitions provided by participants themselves are also normative and exclusionary. Citizenship, outlined in

section 2.3.1, is built upon the concept of membership which inevitably constitutes both inclusion and exclusion. For this reason, citizenship offers a useful and interesting framework to explore young people's experiences within society.

Conceptually and practically this research situates itself in a broad and inclusive understanding of citizenship which necessarily involves conceiving citizenship from a 'difference-centred' viewpoint (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). To broaden the notion of citizenship is to conceive it as a lived and contextual experience. Wood (2014) argues that a focus on the everyday is a political stance as it gives voice to marginalised groups by recognising spaces which are continuously overlooked by normative definitions of citizenship. Consequently, to understand the complex and diverse experiences of citizenship, one must consider the geographical, political and cultural contexts of people's lives. Citizenship, conceived as a lived experience, cannot be divorced from the context of that experience; it considers the 'meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives' (Hall and Williamson, 1999, p.2). By recognising the importance of young people's lived, contextual experiences, citizenship is viewed as a process, rather than an outcome achieved when one reaches social majority. Wood (2014) argues that by perceiving 'everyday life [as] a lived process within which citizenship acts accumulate' (p.217) we can better understand how everyday life acts as an arena for which citizenship is negotiated and claimed through the informal practices of traditionally disempowered and marginalised groups of people. Particularly with the rise in new technologies and social media, social and civic issues are deliberated on global platforms and in some cases can influence decision makers (see section 2.5.2). Theorists of inclusive citizenship argue that young people benefit from a greater focus on experiences, and enable a better understanding of ways in which adults can facilitate youth agency in a variety of spaces. Larkins (2014) echoes Wood by arguing that if children's citizenship is conceived of as a practice, then children can be seen as citizens in that they are social actors, negotiating and contributing to relationships of social interdependence. Youth researchers in this area challenge formal political understandings of citizenship, arguing that activities of caring and doing education are contributions by child citizens (Lister 2007; Qvortrup, 1994). Larkins argues that play is associated with social benefit as it contributes to health and wellbeing, whilst building relationships of interdependence, helping to equip young people with skills for the future.

Following her study which explores how children enact themselves as citizens, Larkins proposes a framework consisting of four ways in which children's agency is seen in practices of citizenship:

- Negotiation of rules and creating selves
- Contribution to social good
- Contribution to the achievement of individual rights
- Transgressing existing boundaries of citizenship to dispute balances of rights, responsibilities and status, enacting activist citizens answerable to justice

(2014, pp.17-18)

This perspective recognises children's activities of social contribution as citizenship practices. It values current rather than future contributions and can be used to explore how citizenship is experienced in different places. Wood (2014) explores how young people define and practice 'social action' (a term used in the New Zealand curriculum to convey active citizenship). Participants demonstrated that they were more confident in discussing their everyday actions where social experiences and interactions became part of their politics. This allowed participants to articulate the nature of their participation more clearly. These findings reflect research that shows more young people participating in issue-based politics as opposed to formal political processes such as trade union and political party membership. Wood's definition of everyday citizenship acts includes political discussions, protesting, community activities (including taking the bus, recycling and picking up litter), and forming relationships with people in special places such as the corner shop. Whereas Larkins highlights that everyday youth citizenship can involve making other children feel included, taking care of their own health, and that things that might be acts seeking the extension of citizenship rights might also be considered as misbehaving:

'[children] disturbed the established order at school, and drank water during class. They asked permission but it was not given, even though the teacher herself was drinking. They then drank anyway. In this instance, the dispute is articulated through secretly drinking, a performance not normally associated with being political. It was political because it involved a range of actors, the pupils, the teacher and the school rules' (Larkins, 2014, p.16).

These two perspectives demonstrate the ways in which research can broaden its conceptions of citizenship to be more inclusive of the ways in which young people learn to communicate and negotiate their rights, freedoms and responsibilities. While some might argue that these actions are primarily local or individual actions and experiences, Lister indicates that 'the key determinant of whether or not an action constitutes citizenship should be what a person does and with what

public consequences, rather than where they do it' (2007, p.57). Young people's access to formal participation is constrained and, by recognising localised, informal practices, we are able to recognise young people's citizenship in more inclusive ways.

Citizenship conceptualised as an outcome reflects an adult-centred experience, presenting young people as not-yet-citizens (Lister, 2003; Biesta et al., 2009). This chapter has argued that citizenship learning is a situated experience, impacted by social, political, and economic contexts which allow for a variety of opportunities to be made available for young people. The relationships within these contexts are also significant in the learning process. Citizenship learning can be argued to take place in a variety of settings, not just through formal education or training. Biesta et al. (2009) argue that everyday citizenship is 'not one-dimensional but consists of a wide range of different experiences, which not only provide different opportunities for acting and being but, in relation to this, also provide a range of opportunities for citizenship learning.' (2009, pp. 16-17). Their study highlights the importance of context in citizenship learning and demonstrates how different environments and experiences provide opportunities for participation and exercising agency at different times, in different places, according to familial and school circumstances. Biesta et al. (2009, p.20) argue that 'young people's learning is intimately connected to young people's individual life-trajectories' and should therefore be analysed in accordance to their current lived experiences rather than something that is achieved in the future. Young people's citizenship learning is vastly impacted by them feeling supported in expressing their opinions and having that opinion valued. Farthing (2010) also critiques the adult-centric citizenship criteria arguing that young people's rejection of traditional politics is in itself political. By identifying young people as simply 'disengaged' overlooks the overall decline in electoral participation in both older and younger people. One issue with conceptualising citizenship as a binary concept – either engaged and active, or disengaged – is that the ability to accurately describe and support young people's participation becomes limited. Farthing argues that both engagement and disengagement are simultaneously occurring while young people navigate the world. A 'lack of participation' that is identified in young people using an adult-centric citizenship model fails to recognise new forms of politics which young people participate in. Instead, 'politics' should be seen as a broader set of concerns 'from identity politics to community activism, [making] young people's political participation evident' (Farthing, 2010, p.185).

2.5.1 The theory of the Everyday and its relevance to youth citizenship

This study will attend to the everyday and its value in understanding young people's experiences of citizenship. It is important here to acknowledge an old and established tradition of writing about the ordinary and lived aspects of citizenship. This thesis is not an exercise in the theorisation of the everyday but is informed by an awareness of its relevance to the subject of youth citizenship in light of scholarly efforts to conceptualise a version of citizenship which values everyday practices. It is not my intention to advance this field of research but understanding its contribution to the understanding of youth citizenship is a necessary step of the research. If it is insufficiently theorised, the term everyday can become vague, seemingly referring to everything, and in the same instance nothing. Highmore points out that 'situating the everyday is less about designating places and times of the everyday, and more about an orientation towards the social world' (p.37). In this sense it is the attention to, and interpretation of, the social world that allows us as researchers to situate the everyday. Therefore, it does not exist in a natural form but requires interpretation. Furthermore, the everyday should be viewed as problematic 'where meanings are not found ready-made' (p.1). This follows a social constructionist methodological perspective which is adopted in this research and discussed in further detail in Chapter Three. To avoid viewing the mundane and everyday as unproblematic requires critical analysis so as to understand their significance for young people's citizenship. There is the danger, if academic scrutiny is not applied, that with the everyday 'its contours might be so vague as to encompass almost everything (or certain aspects of everything)' (Highmore, 2002, p.4). Therefore, the 'everyday' requires parameters, it cannot be synonymous with 'everything'.

In regard to citizenship, the everyday relates to the issues that individuals view as meaningful. It also refers to the ways we attempt to claim or extend our rights and the bonds we form in different communities. While traditional concepts of citizenship hold voting and employment as integral aspects of one's membership, for children and young people (as for many other groups in society) this civic right is not available to them. If we are to regard young people as citizens, it is the everyday and mundane aspects of this that we must account for (Biesta et al., 2009; Lister, 2007; Wood, 2014). If we consider wider social issues such as the climate emergency or gender inequality, for example, these might at first appear as abstract. However, it is the everyday experiences of these issues that highlight their nuances and the ways in which they relate to people's everyday lives. In the case of gender inequality, a growing proportion of movements

focus on the lived experiences of women, illustrated in the 'Me Too' and 'Everyday Sexism' campaigns, which highlight the everydayness of gender inequality. The important aspect of this theoretical approach is that what is routinely viewed as ordinary and mundane is consequently overlooked as insignificant. For environmental activists, larger issues, including that of plastic pollution, melting ice caps and rising sea levels have been in many ways detached from the everyday lives of ordinary people. Critics have argued that this detachment from everyday life has led to delayed public and government reactions (Pipher, 2013). However, with the development of technology, information and images are more widely circulated, environmental policies impact people's daily routines and a growing number of companies account for environmental issues by providing sustainable products as alternatives to single use. For many people, environmental issues are increasingly part of their everyday lives. As plastic bags are no longer free, and reusable cups and straws are more frequently used, people are finding ways to participate in civic and political issues in everyday and mundane ways. Theorists of the everyday such as Lefebvre (1991) encourage us to consider how individual, more localised experiences of everyday life also have wider, transnational and global implications which further highlight the cultural significance of everyday life. These examples serve to demonstrate how theorising of the everyday can seek to dismantle normative assumptions about societal issues. As I have argued here, the study of everyday life is not a 'reality readily available for scrutiny' (Highmore, 2002, p.1), it involves making the invisible visible; bringing a shared everyday experience to light which has previously been overlooked in favour of more dominant and normative accounts of social life. In many instances of cultural movements such as feminism, it is the very act of problematising an issue that was previously considered unproblematic. Throughout this research we will see several of these instances of young people raising issues which, for many, might be considered unproblematic or ordinary because of the belief that children are not decision makers; their role, similarly to other groups seeking the extension or acknowledgement of their citizenship rights, is historically subordinate. Accounting for the everyday also works to uncover the diverse and contextual elements that make up one's identity which are often overlooked by normative and homogenous epistemological assumptions. Accounting for the lived and contextual experiences of everyday life allows for the recognition that one person might relate to or find meaning in more than one identity. As Mort (1989) argues:

'We are not in any simple sense 'black' or 'gay' or 'upwardly mobile'. Rather we carry a bewildering range of different, and at times conflicting, identities around with us in our heads at the same time. There is a continual smudging of personas and lifestyles,

depending where we are (at work, on the high street) and the spaces we are moving between' (Mort, 1989, p.169).

Identity is therefore impacted by geographical and spatial contexts of our daily lives which are overlapping in nature. This chapter has explored how lived and contextual experiences of both youth and citizenship are inextricably linked to one's identity, if citizenship is to be viewed as a process. It is within this process that identity is formed and continually reshaped and in turn informs the actions which take place within this process. Goffman's (1959) research of the everyday life pays particular attention to micro-sociology to better understand how the performativity of the self in the everyday is able to inform us, as researchers, about the cultural and spatial contexts of social life. Adopting this perspective in the exploration of youth citizenship opens up opportunities to consider what wider social meaning young people's everyday experiences have. Furthermore, this also offers ways to explore how young people's citizenship can be better supported and valued. This links back to the previous section of this chapter discussing the broadening of parameters for how citizenship is conceptualised. Acknowledging the significance of everyday practices allows for a more processual and contextual understanding of what citizenship means to young people (Larkins, 2014; Weller, 2007; Wood, 2015). As Williams (1958) reminds us, 'culture is ordinary' and, in acknowledging so, room is made for an understanding of youth citizenship in ways that value their lived experiences and ordinary practices. Kallio et al. also argue that 'the acknowledgement of practices of *lived citizenship* as significant political agency is a step towards developing more proficient participatory policies and practices' (2015, p.102). Valuing young people's everyday experiences of citizenship supports the implementation of youth voices in policy making that seeks to understand youth issues from a youth perspective.

To reiterate and conclude this discussion of the everyday, it is not my intention here to fully present the work of the likes of de Certeau or Lefebvre; this is not a field I aim to contribute to with this research. However, everyday life theorists can offer some useful ways of accounting for the everyday in youth citizenship, not least supporting an argument that presents everyday life as meaningful and sociological. For the purpose of empirical research, the everyday allows us to uncover and bring to light the parts of people's lives which would ordinarily be overlooked. In regard to citizenship, as has been argued in this chapter, an adult perspective is routinely adopted in education policy to teach young people how to be 'citizens' defined as economically independent and eligible voters. Accounting for everyday citizenship would thus allow for more

ordinary, lived experiences of citizenship (that do not adhere to normative understandings). This enables researchers to observe and analyse the seemingly mundane features of youth citizenship in the context of their everyday lives as opposed to that of an adult.

2.5.2 Internet and new media

The development of the internet and new technology has had a profound impact on the way in which people engage with civic issues. We turn now to consider what implications this has for young people's citizenship, particularly for a generation who has grown up using such technology. Digital platforms are increasingly being used to promote and raise awareness of social, political and economic issues as online communities are able to reach a global audience when discussing their cause. The internet serves as a forum of information, communication, deliberation and reflection. There has been a shift away from the use of newspapers and more traditional sources of information to the new media technologies influencing citizenship practices (Lee et al., 2013; Hermes, 2006). Online participation can provide 'opportunities to become actively involved in a range of aspects of society [...] where television permits its audience to 'sit back' and relax' (Livingstone et al., 2004, p.305). While the internet can provide young people with information through websites and apps which they already use, it also offers opportunities to connect with one another, sharing opinions and deliberating various issues (Kim and Yang, 2016). Lee et al. (2013) argue that this stimulates discussions and boosts civic and political participation, thus having a strong influence on one's civic engagement. Digital citizenship research also argues the need for broad definitions of citizenship (Livingstone et al., 2004; Hargittai and Shaw, 2013) presenting similar arguments discussed in the previous section in this chapter. Broad definitions allow for 'a great variety of knowledges and activities [including] emotion, sensitisation and experience' (Hermes, 2006, p.304). These can be beneficial in cultivating youth citizenship, allowing flexibility in the types of participation available. As the previous section of this chapter argues, broadening conceptions of citizenship creates the possibility for a more inclusive definition and membership of citizenship. For a generation of digital natives, 'the internet is a potential space for facilitating alternative modes of political engagement for young people because it is integrated into their everyday life experiences' (Vromen, 2008, p.80). The internet offers new possibilities for understanding youth citizenship as we begin to recognise that young people participate in civic and political issues differently to previous generations, whose participation involved more traditional forms of political civic engagement (Smith et al., 2005, O'Toole et al 2003, Henn and Foard, 2011). In this sense, exploring everyday spaces which young

people find familiar and relatable, including the internet, allows for the greater involvement of young people in citizenship research.

2.5.3 Youth studies and citizenship studies: bridging the gap

This section of the literature review draws together the preceding arguments from this chapter, highlighting ways to approach young people's citizenship that can better support young people through their transitions to adulthood. Citizenship studies and youth studies have developed as separate fields of academic tradition. Consequently, Wood (2017) suggests that this has 'reduced opportunities for enriched holistic understandings of youth' (p.1177). A handful of studies have integrated citizenship with youth studies (see Hall, Williamson and Coffey, 1998; Smith et al., 2005; Hall, Coffey and Lashua, 2009; Harris, 2009, 2015), however, Wood argues that there are greater opportunities for the intersection of youth transitions and citizenship studies since both traditions have become increasingly dissatisfied with normative understandings.

Traditional approaches to youth transitions view a linear trajectory from childhood to adulthood, identifying key markers of progress including entry to employment, and becoming independent and successful adults. Te Riele argues that this gives a 'false impression of order' (2004, p.245) and overlooks the complexity of young people's lives. As highlighted in section 2.2.1, youth transitions have become extended as young people remain in education for longer and are delayed going into employment, getting married and becoming parents, which are considered common markers for adulthood. Moving forward with my own research, the focus will shift to account more for a complex range of interconnected transitions and interdependencies which young people negotiate, and less on a view of independence as the end product. As Wood argues, 'a key message that integrates *both* bodies of literature is that narrow, linear notions of citizenship and transition fixed on age, or markers of 'adulthood' inadequately capture the complexity and heterogeneity of what it means to be young today' (2017, p.1181).

Conceptualising youth as a linear transition is linked to a sequential development of citizenship in terms of capacity and entitlements (Harris, 2015). In this sense, both research strands follow similar narratives with a different emphasis. Citizenship offers a particularly useful framework for researchers to consider how young people receive recognition and belonging and participation since traditional markers of adulthood are occurring later in life or not at all. While there has been some separation of the subfields in the past, both Harris (2015) and Wood (2017) suggest that a connected and integrated approach to studying youth citizenship and transitions is necessary.

Harris (2015) argues that framing a research agenda around issues of citizenship creates opportunities to include different cohorts of young people by looking at the civic nature of youth practices. Outdated markers of adulthood shift the focus of youth experiences to consider various achievements of competence gained through leisure, cultural and civic activities. Harris (2015) indicates that issue-based and localised youth-led processes are more culturally relevant for understanding the process of becoming an adult than traditional linear transitions. The spaces where young people build their social networks, deliberate and form a sense of belonging can often lead to collective activities and interest in public issues. These arguments are returned to in Chapter Six (section 6.3) which explores how participants draw on notions of place and identity to discuss their understandings of citizenship.

Larkins (2014) boldly states that 'children are citizens' (p.8). Recognising such a viewpoint is contentious since adults commonly argue that children lack the maturity, experience and voting rights to be acknowledged as 'full' citizens (Lyle, 2014). This also entails recognising the multitude of ways that young people experience responsibility and adversity at different points in their life-course and that self-sufficiency, which is often associated with adulthood, is an unachievable goal. Instead, social relationships are understood as interdependent between adults and children. The youth-adult transition and citizenship share some similarities in their scholarly approaches. The acquisition of rights is a defining characteristic of youth and, as I have discussed, neither term should be homogenised. Both arguments warrant a broad and inclusive approach to the experiences that are related to these processes and benefit from a practical and contextual framework of analysis.

By identifying a connection between citizenship and youth studies, Wood (2017) highlights that the ordinary and everyday has become a feature of research in both of these strands (see section 2.5.1). She suggests that 'if we see everyday life as a lived process within which citizenship acts are practiced and accumulated, and through which transition events are embedded, this situates a focus on the ways in which places and lives keep continuity through transition' (p.1185). Adopting a youth-centred approach to research with young people is outlined in further detail in the following chapter which sets out the methodological framework this research implements. By broadening conceptions of citizenship to include everyday spaces, young people are provided with more opportunities for their participation to be recognised.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of the historical and contextual academic literature outlining the changing and developing nature of youth citizenship in the UK. Divided into two overarching categories, although containing necessary overlaps, the chapter began by presenting critical arguments which are fundamental in understanding how 'youth' has been defined both academically and politically. It continued by exploring how adult perceptions of youth influence education policy, and concerns about how young people should be participating in society. It also reflected on how this influenced the way that young people are educated for citizenship in the classroom (Becker, 1998; Biesta and Lawy, 2009). New citizenship research has sought to unpack notions of the 'apathetic youth' and argues for a more inclusive understanding of young people's politics in relation to their everyday experiences (Vromen, 2008). This chapter has highlighted the benefits of conceptualising citizenship in broad and inclusive terms and how this can support young people through their youth transitions.

The research presented in the following chapters is concerned with how young people understand their own citizenship and aims to conceptualise youth citizenship from a person-centred perspective. While the historical context of citizenship is important in understanding the conditions in which youth citizenship has developed, youth and citizenship studies have established new research traditions which focus on lived, contextual experiences. Recognising aspects of children and young people's practices as citizenship is a challenge to dominant definitions of citizenship and illuminates the ways in which young people develop their citizenship skills over the course of their youth transitions. Normative transitions to adulthood are less useful for understanding young people's experiences of this life-course phase. The process of becoming an adult is no longer linear or predictable, it includes a variety of transition pathways compounded by numerous risks that young people must navigate their way through. The diverse patterns of current youth transitions are a defining characteristic of this generation's experiences of 'youth'. While the nature of youth transitions has changed from previous generations, this life-course phase is temporary and remains transitional as identities are formed and relationships developed. This chapter has aimed to provide a discussion of how youth and citizenship are inherently related and can provide insights into how young people experience, and are perceived, as citizens. Acknowledging broader aspects of children's agency in citizenship enables researchers to explore how young people navigate the youth phase of their life course in the context of an ever changing social and economic climate. The following chapter will describe the research design and methodology adopted in respect of the literature reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

The methods employed in this research were chosen to explore issues of the 'lived' citizenship experience; consisting of individual and collective meanings and understandings.

This chapter provides details of how the research was carried out and discusses how adopting the youth centred approach influenced the decision to assume a mixed qualitative approach. The chapter will begin by discussing the research methods chosen for the study, which investigated youth experiences of citizenship within the setting of Cardiff Youth Council, and aims to explore some of the methodological and ethical questions that arose.

A great deal of attention is afforded to the ethnographic fieldwork element of the data collection since this formed a large portion of the research design. It was integral in setting the foundations for further data collection where the concept of citizenship and how participants experienced and understood this was explored in interviews and focus groups. The use of photo elicitation was also introduced aiming to prompt discussions about the topic of citizenship allowing participants to draw on personal experiences. Using visual methods such as photo elicitation illustrated participants' views from their own perspectives, and reduced the introduction of etic categories of understanding from the researcher. Images allowed the young people to interpret and construct meaningful ideas in whatever ways they wanted. While there are many ways to research youth citizenship, voice and participation, this chapter will justify the methods and analysis approach chosen for this research project. It will also discuss some of the practical issues that arose throughout the study regarding access and gatekeeper relations, and specifically how participant observations were carried out and recorded. The chapter will conclude by discussing some of the limitations that are inevitable aspects of research and how this study recognised and addressed them respectively.

3.2 Research methodology and design

The research design adopted was a mixed qualitative and ethnographic approach to exploring the concept of citizenship. Research fields are not 'self-contained entities' (Atkinson 2015, p.26). As researchers we create them and draw boundaries around our research interest. This research is not a case study of the workings of a youth council, nor is it a collection of interviews with young people accessed through the youth council. However, there is a particular interest in how citizenship relates to the actions and activities within the youth council. The fact that participants

were members of the youth council is not inconsequential by any means and this was discussed further in relation to their own understandings of citizenship in interviews and focus groups. Data collection took place between 2017 and 2018, consisting of participant observation, 3 focus groups (two of these groups had 4 young people participating and one had 3 participants) and 9 interviews with 6 young people who attended the focus groups. Participants were self selected from Cardiff Youth Council and one interview and 1 focus group and 3 interviews were facilitated by the use of visual methods. Two participants chose to return for follow up interviews as they felt they had more to share and discuss that they felt was relevant to the research. The aim of this study was to explore how young people understand and experience citizenship in their everyday lives. While participation in a youth council is not an everyday experience, as a research site it allowed for a discussion of everyday experiences of citizenship that informed young people's participation in campaigning for youth issues. Significant care was taken to make room for discussions about participants' lives outside of the youth council so as not to create too narrow parameters for the discussion of young people's citizenship. This was in keeping with the broad and inclusive theorisation of citizenship within this research. As researchers, it is important '[not to] assume that *our* ways of understanding are necessarily any better' than our participants' (Burr 2003, p.4). A social constructionist perspective is adopted in this research which aims to further support the exploration of youth citizenship as lived and personal experience. Social constructionism derives from the perspective that 'the realities we study are social products' (Flick 2014, p.76) and is pivotal in viewing young people as the experts of their own lives. The research aims to address the following questions throughout the analysis chapters of this thesis:

1. How do civically engaged young people experience citizenship in their everyday lives?
2. What motivates young people to participate in civic society?
3. What role does politics have in young people's citizenship learning?

An ethnographic approach was adopted for researching citizenship in Cardiff Youth Council and this formed the foundation of data collection in this study. Fieldwork involved immersing myself in the activities of the youth council. This involved attending youth council meetings, events and activities, and my participation gradually increased as trust and rapport was established between myself and youth workers and members of the youth council. I considered it to be important for relationships to be built between myself and the members of the youth council before asking for their further participation in interviews and focus groups. Time spent in the field also allowed me to gain a better understanding of how the youth council was run and what issues seemed to be

important to the young people attending meetings. This then informed the development of the interview schedule. After attending several weeks of meetings an announcement was made in a general meeting held in City Hall about my research and my interest in young people's participation along with an invitation to discuss the research further with me and consider participating in future data collection. In total eight members of the youth council agreed to participate in interviews and focus groups. This study does not aim to provide a representative account of participating in Cardiff Youth Council. From observing meetings, debates and decision making, it is clear that everyone's experience of being a member of the youth council is different and individual. Although many members showed an interest in my research and agreed to participate, not all were able to take time out of their schedule to participate in the way they had initially indicated. I was sensitive when following up suggestions of interest as I was aware of the time commitments that some members of the youth council had including school priorities and other extracurricular activities. This posed some tensions for myself as a researcher as I attempted to find a balance between recruiting participants for my study whilst recognising and protecting young people's wellbeing. It was often the case that people who approached me with interest about the research were also taking on other responsibilities either within the youth council furthering their campaign or with school and exams.

Throughout the thesis I will refer to the experiences of the young people who participated in this study. However, it should not be assumed that these experiences are simply 'products' of data collection as they are actively constructed. As Atkinson (2015, p.102) argues, 'narratives are not the means for researchers to gain access to informants' personal experience. The task is rather to understand how experience is framed, constructed, shared and transmitted'. What people say and do are particular kinds of social action; they are not neutral and, as will be argued in the following section, require interpretation.

3.2.1 Methodology

This research will adopt a social constructionist epistemological stance with the aim of better understanding 'youth citizenship' experiences. Social constructionism argues that knowledge is constructed through interactions and experiences (Burr 2003). This epistemological stance is most appropriate for the exploration of youth citizenship because the focus of the study is on how young people conceive citizenship and how their experiences shape and reflect their understanding. While positivists assume that that reality is objective and the world can be

measured, interpretivists believe that constructions of reality are not fixed and can be altered over time as they are context dependent (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). This research aims to perceive all constructs as equally valid and important and this is reflected in the analysis of data which seeks to represent young people's voices and portray some of the issues which are perceived by participants to be most meaningful to them. This premise is maintained throughout this study and is considered particularly important in research with young people. As Burr (2003) argues, 'all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative [...] we should not assume that *our* ways of understanding are necessarily any better' (p.4). The research design is driven by the notion that young people are most knowledgeable about what happens in their own lives and aims to carry this notion throughout the research process.

Participant observation played a significant role in understanding how interview narratives were situated in the broader context of youth citizenship in participatory structures, however, my role as researcher was predominantly that of observer than participant in youth council activities. It is important to be careful not to misconstrue the level of my participation in the youth council. I did not participate or contribute to ideas in meetings or discussions. My participation in youth council activities would often involve setting up events and chatting to the members of the youth council between meetings. Matthews (2001) indicates that 'getting young people involved depends on using methodologies that are guided by sound ethical principles, appropriate and sensitive to their needs and which recognise their diversity of interests, backgrounds and experiences' (p.316). The methods selected for this research aimed to reflect this and sought to ensure that, wherever possible, young people were active participants within the research process (Emmison, 2012). The use of photo elicitation was a method aimed to actively involve young people in the research process as it required action to take the photo to reflect what they thought citizenship meant to them.

Chapter 2 explores how a broader, more inclusive notion of citizenship allows for children and young people to be recognised as citizens now rather than citizens of the future. James and Prout (1997) recognise that children and young people are active agents in constructing own life worlds. It is the temporality of childhood and youth that makes it all the more important for researchers to understand children and young people from the perspective of their own lived experiences. The research strategy adopted in this study has aimed to support this notion and assume that young people are the experts of their own life experiences. This is also achieved by identifying childhood as a social construction that is both time and place specific (see Holloway and

Valentine, 2000). While this research recognises children and young people as social actors in their own rights, it is important to remember that children's agency is, to a certain extent, controlled by external factors. Part of researching youth citizenship is being attentive to the constraints of citizenship that young people may experience. How young people construct their own notions of citizenship is both facilitated and limited by adult gatekeepers to spaces they inhabit such as home and school. This is explored further in the following analytical data chapters.

3.2.2 Why a Youth Council?

Youth citizenship could have been explored in a variety of settings where young people participate, engage in decision making and carry out identity work. When deciding on where to carry out this research a number of considerations were made before settling on Cardiff Youth Council. One advantage of researching citizenship in a setting such as this one is that participants have experience of discussing issues such as children's rights, youth participation and youth voice. This is not to say that youth citizenship cannot be studied in a setting which does not facilitate such discussions, but it would be a different research project illuminating different issues and experiences of those particular young people. This research does not aim to be generalisable as young people (as a group) are not homogenous, so the group of young people that appear in this study are not 'representative' of the experiences of *all* young people. Nonetheless, as Atkinson (2015) points out, 'ethnographic fieldwork does not merely generate descriptions of local settings, but also aims to the development of generic concepts that transcend the local and that can be applied across a range of social situations' (pp.36-57). Throughout the research process there was a continual reflection on what the local situated experiences portrayed by participants in this study can tell us about youth citizenship on a more general basis. This is a different kind of generalisation to that of a sample population found in the discipline of quantitative research, however is equally important. Chapters four, five and six engage with this type of generalisability by exploring notions of collective action, civic engagement and community and how these impinge upon youth citizenship. These notions can become useful for exploring other examples of youth citizenship, in different settings, different age groups, different countries, for example. In this sense, the contribution of this research can inform further empirical studies that seek to better understand and support young people's citizenship.

To reiterate, the participants in this study do not represent the whole of the youth council, only themselves. The youth council consists of a large and diverse group of young people ranging from

11 to 25 years old. It would be inappropriate to assume that all of its members understand citizenship in the same way or share the same experiences of participating in citizenship activities. The aim of this research was to understand youth citizenship by exploring their everyday experiences and deconstruct the dichotomy of arguments that focus on mainstream political citizenship. The youth council is not only a setting where mainstream, traditional understandings of citizenship and democracy are discussed, but also, and more predominantly, it is a setting that explores how civic issues affect individual lives. This study was interested in both formal and informal expressions of citizenship rather than focusing on one or the other. Instead, it aimed to give due consideration to all aspects of young people's lives. It was more conducive to spend extended amounts of time with a smaller group of participants who could articulate more about their experiences, understandings and local context, than to focus on achieving a larger sample at the expense of depth. For this reason, one setting was chosen to explore the phenomenon of youth citizenship.

3.2.3 Access and Gatekeepers

Initial access was achieved through contact with the lead youth worker who, when first approached, expressed a keen interest in the research and was the main point of contact for me to establish a position in Cardiff Youth Council. Contact with this key gatekeeper opened up several opportunities to scope out the research setting and volunteer in other events organised by this gatekeeper. Within the organisation of the youth council, there were three groups working on campaigns for issues that were identified in a survey conducted by the youth council two years prior. Each of the three gatekeepers discussed in this section worked alongside one of the three campaign groups. The campaign group that I observed more closely was the Curriculum for Life group who were the first group I was introduced to and it was seen best fitting to continue following this group throughout the research. The other workgroups campaigned for Race and Religious issues and First Aid. All three issues were identified by the young participants as the most important and neglected issues. The second most senior youth worker that worked closely alongside the lead youth worker organised the First Aid workgroup group, and through participation in First Aid group events, I was able to build a rapport with this youth worker and establish another point of access into the research site. The youth worker involved in the Curriculum for Life group worked part time and we were close in age which led to a different kind of relationship with this gatekeeper. In addition, this youth worker had fewer responsibilities and thus had more time to give to the research. All three gatekeepers provided a different type of

access and were beneficial in their individual capabilities. The lead youth worker kept me informed of the different events I could volunteer at. Once contact with the second youth worker had been established, I had a second port of call when the lead youth worker did not have time to reply to emails or keep in touch as actively. The third gatekeeper actively invited me to group forums and messages and this less formal relationship provided easier access to information regarding meetings and events within the Curriculum for Life workgroup.

Gatekeepers facilitate access to the settings in which fieldwork will take place and as O'Reilly (2005) indicates, 'access is not something you do once, and then you are in. It has to be negotiated all along to different groups, different people, different topics' (p.88). This was very much the case with gaining access to the setting for this study. There appeared to be a clear 'main' gatekeeper who provided initial access to meetings, events and other information. However, due to the nature of the organisation, in that it advocates youth voice, further access to settings must be negotiated with the young members leading activities and making key decisions. There are different tiers of participation with varying involvement from the young members. In smaller campaign meetings, the members had more control and direction of the overall meeting and the decisions made in regards to the campaign. In situations such as these, it is the young members whose trust must be gained in order for deeper immersion in the field. With the right balance, participants became more welcoming and accepting of me, opening further avenues for data collection. After attending several meetings as a reserved participant in the group I was asked by one of the members of the youth council if I would like to be added to the Facebook chat group. This immediately opened up a path of access to further meetings and conversations regarding the ongoing campaign that occurred outside of formal face to face meetings. It also meant that I could maintain regular contact with the participants whilst school exams and revision started to take up more of their time and face to face meetings temporarily declined. If regular contact was not maintained, the rapport that was built between the gatekeepers, participants and myself could have potentially broken down risking a growing unwillingness to participate or disinterest in the research project. For this reason, any opportunity to engage in activities related to, or organised by, Cardiff Youth Council was taken. Not only did these external activities and events provide a context to the organisation as a whole, but it also created a reciprocal, shared relationship between gatekeepers and myself.

3.2.4 Data Collection

The research implemented a mixed qualitative framework including participant observation, focus groups and individual interviews to explore experiences of citizenship, all supported by the use of photo elicitation. This section will discuss the process of data collection following the order in which the research methods are listed above. While the structure of this section of the chapter follows a somewhat logical order, in reality the research methods used in the data collection were overlapping and intertwined. For the sake of this discussion they will be presented separately, however it should be noted that participant observation continued alongside interviews and focus groups. The process of data collection was made necessarily flexible to accommodate the young people's participation in the research and allow them to decide the level of participation in which they felt most comfortable. For some, this included multiple interviews, for others, this involved participating in the focus groups. This approach was also in keeping with the view that children and young people should (under Article 12 of the UNCRC) be able to form their own views and express them freely (UNCRC, p.5). This included the ability to decide what kind of participation they wished to engage with and the extent of their involvement. Most of the participants who took part in interviews and focus groups had been members of the youth council for several years, however two out of the eight participants were new members. Recruitment of participants was not restrictive and was made open and available to any members of the youth council who wished to participate. However, the number of interviews carried out was limited to members of the youth council who felt they had time to participate further in the research while managing other commitments in their life such as school and extracurricular activities. While some members of the youth council took a particular interest in the study and were forthcoming in their participation in ongoing data collection, others showed interest but could not give more time outside of youth council meetings. The following section will explore this in further detail and consider the significance this has on young people's participation in research.

3.2.5 Power participation and the researcher

Compared to the number of members in the youth council, very few people chose to continue their participation into the focus group and interview stages. Although many members were interested in what I was doing and were keen to express their opinion, when trying to recruit young people to participate they found it difficult to commit to giving more time to the research outside of youth council hours. The reasons they gave for this were predominantly school and

exam commitments (particularly those members who were in sixth form) as well as other extracurricular activities.

For members of the youth council, it was common practice to be dealing with the political elites; people who they could envision creating change with the information they put forward. These are people they believe can make a difference to the issues that matter to young people. This can perhaps explain their reluctance to participate in this research as it is unclear how it can impact their lives. As it stands, the ability to influence change was already available to them through the supported communication with representatives from the Welsh Government and Assembly. The incentive to participate in this study was not high enough for many of the members of the youth council, particularly when they saw (more) immediate action through other avenues of participation. This also illustrates that while researchers of youth studies might start out with the best intentions, our methodological aims and decisions might not pan out the way we had originally thought. Gallagher (2008) explains how he experienced challenges with using participatory methods in his research with primary school children. Recognising issues of power between researcher and participant, adult and child, his research outlined ways in which such power and agency can be redistributed in the research process (Grover, 2004; Cahill, 2004; Morrow and Richards, 1996). Gallagher draws parallels between his experience with power and resistance and de Certeau's theory of strategy and tactics which outlines power relationships between individuals, groups and organisations (see de Certeau, 1988). Gallagher identifies his young participants as using 'tactical forms of power within the strategy of state schooling' (p.146) as their participation turned into more playing than engagement with research.

Gallagher highlights that it is not uncommon for researchers to experience tensions between their ideas for research and children and young people's ideas of participation. He goes on to explore how notions of power in research with young people are not straightforward (or top-bottom), but rather he describes power as multivalent. Drawing on Foucault's theory of power Gallagher (2008, p. 144) identifies power as 'a diverse, ambivalent web of relations'. Members of the youth council were made aware of my research and early on in the observation were asked to provide email addresses if they wished to participate in focus groups and interviews, which many did. However, when emailed or approached to organise data collection, many of the members who had initially shown interest no longer had time to commit to further involvement in the research despite the offer of flexibility in time and place. In this instance, members were demonstrating their power in choosing to change their mind in the level of their participation in the research. This is, of course,

protected in their ethical consent to participate in the first place. This is a useful example of how they used their agency in a situation where an adult is asking them for something. Increased agency is a value that participatory research methods aims to protect and uphold. Gallagher (2008, p.146) suggests that 'framing participatory techniques in terms of tactics and strategies thereby helps to make sense of my claim that, rather than needing to be 'given' power by participatory techniques, children may exercise power by resisting, redirecting or subverting those very techniques'.

As explored in the analysis chapters to follow, members of the youth council were frequently given opportunities by the youth workers to express their opinions, and to participate or not. The latter was given prominence in the ethos of the youth council and participants explained that no one was made to feel that they were required to attend any meetings or events organised by the youth council, or that they had to speak at such events either. Because of this, the members of the youth council felt confident in saying no (to me) when they felt that it was not necessarily a valuable use of their time or resources. While it may not be in favour of my research, this in itself is an example of young people exercising agency and tells us something about the young people participating in this space. As Gallagher reflects on his own study: 'perhaps, it was the participatory ethos of respecting the children's agency that prevented me from trying to curb Bobby's domination' (p.146). In many ways this resonates with my own experience of using a participatory approach in this research. I was acutely aware that many of the members of the youth council were concerned with upcoming exams in what they deemed as important school years (sitting their GCSEs or A Levels that year). Subsequently, I tried to be mindful of this in various stages of participant recruitment. One cannot force participants to engage with your project and in support of a youth centred, participatory approach to researching youth citizenship it is important to respect children and young people's right to abstain or change their minds. This opens up ways of thinking that reconceptualise power as being more complex than something that adults imposes onto children.

3.2.6 An Ethnographic approach to researching youth citizenship

This research began by carrying out participant observation as a preliminary step in the data collection by attending the Cardiff Youth Council and participating in workgroups, events and meetings. The purpose of this was to witness the details of these events and the conversations that took place within these settings. It focused on doing two things: 1) building a rapport with

participants and 2) gaining a better understanding of the context in which activities took place. The intention was for participant observation to also inform subsequent data collection methods within the study, such as photo elicitation, interviews and focus groups.

Participant observation is a method in which 'the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of the researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said and questioning people' (Becker and Geer, 1957, p.28). This method of data collection is most appropriate, according to Jorgensen (1989), when the research problem is concerned with human meanings and interactions that are viewed from an insider's perspective. This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of youth citizenship by exploring embodied, meaningful experiences of citizenship in the everyday lives of young people. Participant observation was considered the best method of data collection to begin with in this study as the phenomenon in question is that of youth citizenship. Ethnographic research engages with the social world and the complexity of everyday life (Atkinson, 2015). Particularly in the environment where youth council meetings were held, the use of participant observation enabled me to witness the variety of ways that participants discuss and interact with notions of citizenship. Such observations highlighted particular issues and themes that might require further investigation during interviews, focus groups and other forms of visual methods, such as photo elicitation and collages. This will help to explore the nuances of the lived experience of citizenship. Jorgensen (1989) argue that participant observation should be used when a 'phenomenon is observable within an everyday life setting and the phenomenon is limited in size and location' (p.11). Observations of Cardiff Youth Council activity followed the youth council as a whole which included meetings, demonstrations and other activities. However, it also involved working more closely with smaller sub groups within the council. This allowed for the opportunity to observe and participate on a more personal level with members of the youth council. Sub groups consisted of approximately ten people who meet and communicate on a regular basis to discuss their campaign strategies. Observing a small group not only meant that I was able to record interactions and discussions within the group more accurately, but also that the nature of the group was relatively informal. This allowed for more natural, less scripted discussions. Observing the members in small meetings also revealed issues of everyday life experiences of citizenship through informal discussion within the group and topics that arose from organising the campaign. In contrast, monthly meetings held by Cardiff Youth Council in City Hall usually discussed agendas and upcoming events, following a more formal style of discussion. Jorgensen's final point on participant observation is that the research problem can be addressed by the

gathering of qualitative data such as observation and interviewing. As Atkinson (2015) argues, interviewing alone can create a vacuum of data, void of context and meaning relevant to the wider social world, in this instance, Cardiff Youth Council as well as the phenomenon of citizenship. It was the aim of this study to incorporate observational research in order to provide a source of information about young people's citizenship that interviews alone would not be able to obtain.

3.2.7 Observation Fieldwork

My role as participant observer was dynamic and fluid throughout the research process. It seemed to change depending on the environment, activity or people I was with. This role was something I became increasingly aware of as I encountered different incidents which encouraged me to become more aware and reflexive of my responsibility in the youth council. An example of this was an occasion where I felt the need to inform the youth workers of some verbal conflict I witnessed in a campaign meeting where I was the only 'adult' present at the time. Arguments were a rare occurrence in youth council meetings. Discussions sometimes got heated and disagreements were common, but I only experienced shouting in one instance. It was clear that several members of the group were feeling agitated and others upset, however, when the argument was discussed further in a focus group I felt it necessary to inform someone that this had happened and had upset some members. Decisions such as this did not come lightly and made me consider how both members of Cardiff Youth Council viewed me as well as the youth workers and their combined expectations of me. In some events my participation took on the role of young person (attending events and talking to members) and at other times, youth worker (chaperoning groups of young people and helping set up events). Care must be taken during participant observation as these examples indicate. My presence as a researcher unavoidably impacts the setting and those within it and the balance between being a participant and an observer has its risks.

As I became immersed in fieldwork and built up relationships with participants and gatekeepers, my involvement and presence in meetings and events shifted from being mainly a passive observer, to a more interactive participant. At the beginning of data collection, I fell within the age boundary of eligible membership of the youth council. Although there were few members who were close to this age limit, other members of Cardiff Youth Council considered me to be a member despite being aware of my role as a researcher. This heavily influenced how participants

interacted with me. During interviews and focus groups participants often attempted to involve me in the conversation, asking my opinion and experiences of issues they were discussing, or what I thought citizenship meant in my experience. To maintain an appropriate distance, whilst continuing to build a rapport with participants, my role as researcher in meetings involved being mindful of the balance between facilitating and influencing decisions and opinions of the group. The aim of the research was to understand the experience of youth citizenship by exploring participants' actions and opinions, not by shaping them or leading participants in a certain direction. However, it is important to remember that meanings are co-produced between the researcher and participants since analysis of fieldwork data is interpretative.

One purpose of participant observations is to understand and explore issues that might be hidden from view. Atkinson (2015) argues that social researchers should 'develop a particular kind of ethnographic sensibility that is attentive to the various *forms* of social life' (p.31, emphasis in original). Incorporating an ethnographic approach in all qualitative research methods allows the researcher to be attentive to the social and cultural order of their participants' social world in which the phenomena in question is socially constructed. Denscombe (2010) argues that when entering the field for the first time, the researcher should begin with being relatively 'non-selective' in relation to what is observed to gain an 'overall feel' of the setting. This is to not only provide a background context to the setting but also as a 'prelude to more *focused observations*' (p.208). As the study developed, my attention throughout observation shifted to more specific areas of interest and relevance to the study. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) refers to this as a 'characteristic 'funnel' structure' (p.160) in ethnographic research wherein the research problem is developed, and in some cases redefined, as the researcher gleans a better understanding of the research problem through the process of inquiry. This was influenced by the interests of the participants and particular themes that arise in the data. I was also aware that as an individual researcher in this setting it would not be possible to observe everything, often participatory events had several areas of activities or several meetings running alongside one another.

When observing youth council activities, I aimed to gain an understanding of all of the activities as best I could. For example, I attended at least three meetings for every campaign subgroup in order to understand more about the campaign issue, the reasons why it was voted as a priority and how the campaign progressed. For campaigns involving demonstrations or other organised events, these were also observed to gain a better understanding of why these issues were important to young people, as well as what the members' involvement in the youth council

entailed. Since ethnographic research necessarily engages with the social world, it recognises that places and spaces are culturally shaped and are therefore socially constructed. This, in turn, reflects on the organised activity within that space (Atkinson, 2015). The meetings and events observed are not 'natural' environments, they have their own set of social conventions in which the young people within that space interact. My fieldwork set out to explore how citizenship was articulated and understood in these spaces. In doing so it is essential to engage analytically with the social world in which we are exploring.

The youth council had its own patterns of social interaction and order of events which informed and contextualised the narratives presented by participants. Atkinson argues that 'narratives are not the means for researchers to gain access to informants' personal experience. The task is rather to understand how experience is framed, constructed, shared and transmitted' (2015, p.102). Experiences are constructed through action and interaction. Cardiff Youth Council meetings and workgroups were specifically related to campaigns, youth activism and policy change. Meetings often had certain objectives, such as the campaign itself and website that had been designed to support it. This research was also interested in conversations that were not relevant to these specific objectives; conversations that occurred outside of meetings or diverge from a point that was originally made in regard to the campaign. These are all relevant to youth experience of citizenship and beliefs that are formed and expressed in discourse. Discussions and ideas related to these campaign activities were relevant to the research, that is, how the members got their opinions heard within the group; what ideas they had about the campaign and how it should be run; which members were more vocal and took initiative; and which members took more of a back seat (and whether these people ever become more vocal). Conversations that took place 'outside' of campaign discussions but can still be related to political issues. For example, body confidence, healthy eating and healthy relationships were all discussions that arose in informal conversations in these meetings. The small group working on the Curriculum for Life campaign often had discussions around their experiences and views on these everyday issues, both in relation to their relevance to the campaign and also in their personal experience. Discussions such as these not only highlighted the relevance of everyday issues in young people's lives, but also that such critical and reflective conversations took place in private, out of the public sphere. The following phase of the research aimed to explore whether participants are active in common spaces in regards to everyday issues by carrying out interviews and focus groups.

3.2.8 Fieldwork Sites

Observations took place in a variety of settings including City Hall and a youth club venue. The different settings offered different types of discussions and interactions and often varied in formality which, in turn, affected the kind of behaviour of the participants. This is significant because it provided a more contextual understanding of the involvement of the youth council members and their experiences of different settings and the connotations that inevitably accompany those settings. For example, behaviour and interactions are likely to be different in the youth club building compared to City Hall. Access was initially gained by attending a Curriculum for Life workgroup meeting, following that, through monthly youth council meetings and campaign events, and external youth work events, both of which the lead youth worker informed me of. The latter of the observations were predominantly determined by the communication between myself and the gatekeeper. Each setting provided a different angle to observe and indicated different roles within various areas of activity. The monthly meetings in City Hall gave a broad-brush overview of the council and how the members interacted within it, whilst the workgroup meetings offered a more detailed account of membership activity and discussions within the group. Campaign events demonstrated how members behave in more public setting and provided an insight into how discussions that took place in meetings were put into action.

Jorgensen (1989) suggests beginning your fieldnotes by making note of the 'mundane facts' in order to avoid taking for granted observations that might otherwise go unnoticed. This also allows the researcher to become conscious of what might be considered obvious inside the setting, but might hold some significance to the research questions. An important question posed by Jorgensen (1989) is 'what can you learn about this phenomenon by looking and listening?' (p.83). This question underpinned the observations of the youth council and allowed me to consider the significance of what was being observed in relation to youth citizenship; how members engaged with one another and with adults; how decisions were made and negotiated; and how different spaces facilitate different types of skills and communication. Participating in youth council activities gave me the opportunity to experience and observe first-hand the things that were important to young people in this setting. Listening to debates about youth issues such as education, public transport and youth voice illustrated the interests, commitment and passion felt about these issues that is not always easily conveyed in interviews. Over the time spent attending meetings and observing youth council activities, I was able to see how participants changed, becoming more vocal and more engaged. While fieldnotes began as broader observations of the

setting, they gradually became more focused, paying particular attention to how the members of the youth council engaged with youth issues that were brought to meetings for discussion:

In the meeting some people were audibly frustrated with the issue of transport, expressing that their public bus to school would either turn up late or sometimes not turn up at all and the service running across the city was expensive and unreliable. Whereas someone else claimed that they did not understand why transport was an issue as they had no problem getting to school and did not use the bus to get into town. The meetings seemed to be a place where members not only could express their opinion and raise concerns, but could also hear about other people's experiences and opinions and how they were different to their own. This was reflected in member's responses to one another as they stated how fortunate they were that they lived by the school, but realised that, for some people spread all over Cardiff, transport was a real issue that had a significant effect on their lives.

Fieldnotes (15/11/2017)

Taking fieldnotes is a critical and reflexive process that does not end once the researcher has left the setting. Initially starting as 'jottings' (Sanjek, 1990), shorthand notes that were taken at the research site were later developed and written in more detail. In this study a flexible approach was adopted in order to sufficiently record observational data. In some situations, it was inappropriate to take fieldnotes whilst observing and participating. Many of the meetings attended were small and informal, whereas in larger meetings, taking notes was considered to be less disruptive to the setting. Instead, in some circumstances, it was more appropriate to take fieldnotes on a mobile phone and type them up fully after leaving the research setting. This was far less distracting to participants as it was common for members to use their mobile phones in meetings, for example using search engines to find information for their campaign, writing a message to their group chat on Facebook, or even playing a game while the meeting has paused. Fieldnotes are necessary selective, it is not possible to record everything that takes place in a setting. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out, there is a 'trade-off between breadth of focus and detail' (p.132). Participant observation and fieldnote data provided a detailed understanding of youth council activities, as well as insights into broader debates and discussions about youth issues that took place outside of campaign agendas. It also provided a holistic understanding of what participatory structures like Cardiff Youth Council can provide young people in respect to the identity work that takes place through youth transitions.

3.2.9 Focus Groups

Four focus groups were organised with young people as part of the data collection for this research. Throughout participant observation, participants were recruited for focus groups and interviews for more in depth discussions about their participation with the youth council and their ideas of citizenship. Members of the youth council were not approached about participating in the second phase of the research until the initial phase of fieldwork had taken place, building a rapport with members and gaining a better understanding of what kind of issues were important to them from observing meetings and events. An announcement was made in a general meeting held in City Hall where I was able to address the whole youth council and give some more information about my research and the different ways in which they could participate. After three months of fieldwork I began to recruit participants for the second phase of the research. Initial focus group discussions were included in the research design to provide the opportunity to begin a discussion about what citizenship is. As Brinkman and Kvale indicate, 'the aim of the focus group is not to reach consensus about, or solutions to, the issues discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue' (2018, p.80). As discussed in Chapter 2, citizenship, particularly in education, has positioned children and young people as citizens in waiting. This philosophy has underpinned education policy, focusing on responsibilities and the labour market, and has sought to teach pupils how to become citizens. However, this contrasts with the rights based, participatory engagement approach which the youth council facilitated. It was important to allow participants the chance to deliberate on how they might begin to conceptualise citizenship and what notions of citizenship meant to them on their own terms. This was also a particularly significant stage in preparation for photo elicitation to focus on the 'broader questions to which the eventual photographs will play a part in answering' (Emmison, 2016, p. 301).

Citizenship can be perceived as an inherently abstract and contested concept since it not one that is commonly used in everyday conversation. As the Commission on Citizenship reports, one of the difficulties in defining citizenship 'is that in our society the term "citizenship" is an unfamiliar notion' (Speaker's Commission, 1990, p.3). Young people arguably have a better sense of how to go about talking about citizenship. This has been facilitated by the introduction of citizenship in education, notably through the Welsh Baccalaureate and Personal Social Education in Wales. It was still important to for the research project to provide participants with the space to explore citizenship as a concept before continuing with the next stage of the research- taking photographs of examples of citizenship in their everyday lives. Discussing citizenship with young people generates interesting and insightful discussions, as Lister et al. (2003) recognise in their study:

'The topic of citizenship appeared to provide a framework for discussion of issues of great relevance to their lives and experiences. Even though the language of citizenship was foreign to them, its essence resonated with their own attempts to make sense of their position in society' (p. 237).

Focus groups were organised around two activities designed to open up discussion about what it means to be a citizen. The first acted as an introduction to the concept of citizenship - the session comprised of a cookie cutter outline of a person to represent a 'citizen' or person, and participants were given post-it notes to write down their ideas of what it means to be a citizen. Due to the size of the groups, discussions between participants started quite quickly shifting the focus beyond the sticky notes to more of a group discussion. The activities were used to springboard discussions about what participants thought citizenship was and how it existed in their lives, as opposed to recording or documenting these ideas all on paper. The data from these discussions comprised of audio recordings rather than visual analysis. The second activity involved creating a 'map' of where citizenship happened in young people's lives. This drew on narratives of space and place. Introducing the idea of 'where' citizenship happened. This research thread worked to account for how young people's use of space contributed to their understanding of citizenship. While the youth council acted as a research site in this study, it was important not to allow this to become too restrictive and so the research sought to include a variety of spaces in which young people used. This aimed to be consistent with the conceptual framework that positions citizenship as an everyday lived process. To facilitate such discussions an A3 piece of paper was provided for participants to draw a 'map' of their ideas of citizenship (as explored in the first half of the focus group). This activity worked well to open up discussions about where participants experienced, enacted or considered their citizenship, however participants were reluctant to engage with this element of creativity. As this was not well received, it resulted in me writing or drawing on the A3 paper to record the areas mentioned, which they felt more comfortable with.

3.2.10 Interviews

Nine in depth interviews took place with young people over the course of the data collection. Interview questions were loosely structured around topics that related to their involvement with the youth council, issues that they were interested in, and their thoughts on 'being a young

person'. Interview schedules served as a prompt rather than a strict guide and participants were able to determine which direction the interview went in, exploring how citizenship experiences are constructed in meaningful ways to them in their lives. Interviews using photographs to lead the discussion took a different approach and were entirely directed by the participant. Nonetheless, the researchers' role in interviews is to ask relevant and probing questions to ensure that 'relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced' (Mason, 2018, p. 110).

As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) indicate, 'the very production of data in the qualitative interview goes beyond a mechanical following of rules and rests on the interviewers' skills and situated personal judgment in the posing of questions' (p.71). While it was important to provide participants with the agency to decide what to discuss in our interviews, it was also important to recognise when the interview was moving away from discussions relevant to the research questions. This was a delicate matter when one of the fundamental aims of the research was the identification of meaningful understandings of youth citizenship as determined by the young participants. This issue was usually only encountered in focus groups when participants were able to engage with other participants and more opportunities arose for discussions to move away from that of citizenship experiences. As a result, a necessary question to ask oneself is when and how is it reasonable for the researcher to change or question the topic of conversation? One way this issue was addressed was by asking the group a question about how their discussion related to their experiences of citizenship (in a non-direct way). Either the discussion was then redirected back to the research topics, or it became clear that the focus group had reached a point of conclusion. Two hours was allocated for focus groups, however, this again was necessarily flexible. Sessions might run longer or reach a natural end sooner depending on how participants wanted to engage with the research and what they had to contribute. While these issues might appear trivial, they provide examples of ways in which research is carried out *with* young people, not *on* young people.

Out of the three focus groups that took place, 6 participants agreed to follow up interviews and two participants agreed to take part in follow up interviews. As previously mentioned, the research methods were intentionally flexible due to the nature of the youth council members' busy schedules. Interviews in youth council meetings were not a popular or practical approach since the purpose of each meeting was to discuss campaign issues and design a plan of action. Whilst early drafts of the research design included an initial focus group exploring and introducing

notions of citizenship with a follow up focus group focusing on photographs each participant had taken of citizenship in their everyday lives, unfortunately not all participants were able to engage in the research in this way. One focus group met for a second time to discuss their photos as a group, however the second group were unable to meet again and preferred to discuss their photos separately in interviews. Although initially I had intended for photo elicitation to support the group discussion, both arrangements provided interesting but different discussions. Individual interviews provided more in-depth discussions of each individual photograph and what it meant in the wider context of their lives. These interviews were detailed discussions, different to the focus groups as participants felt able to share more personal and sometimes private experiences which they felt were meaningful aspects of their citizenship. However, in focus groups, participants were often more reflective of their citizenship experiences as they deliberated about how their understandings of citizenship were similar or different to one another's. The work of the focus groups allowed for more collaborative meaning making and provided a valuable insight as to how young people make sense of citizenship collectively.

3.2.11 Picturing Citizenship: Using photographs with young people

The purpose of introducing photo elicitation into the data collection was to allow participants to create their own narratives of citizenship, introducing ideas and images of their own into the research. As discussed in Chapter 2, this research utilises a framework of young people's citizenship as being youth centred. Throughout the data collection the aim was to uphold this viewpoint wherever possible.

Introducing photographs into this research project allowed participants to give meaning and context to citizenship. It also gave participants agency and flexibility within the research process, as well as the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences of what 'counts' as citizenship after the focus group had ended. The main aim of this activity was to encourage participants to identify what was meaningful to them in conceptualising their own understanding of citizenship. The photographs produced by participants were not analysed separately to interviews, but rather facilitated discussions which were transcribed and analysed as interview data. Emmison (2016) cautions that 'children's photographs should not be seen simply as their 'view of the world' but as an important means for them to articulate their sense of identity' (p.303). Many of the photographs were intended to represent a feeling or experience that, to anyone else, might seem unrelated to the photograph itself and would have been interpreted differently by the researcher.

However, this activity allowed participants to direct interviews and focus groups to areas which might not have been identified without this activity. It provided participants with the agency to decide what was relevant to their experience of citizenship and how they wished to articulate it to the researcher. Participants were also given the opportunity to decide the way in which photographs were collected. I suggested that each participant was provided with a disposable camera so that pictures were taken between each focus group and once developed would exist as a tangible object in which the group could view and discuss. While this is a commonly used method in research (Emmison, 2016) participants considered this to have an unnecessary negative impact on the environment and had more experience using their mobile phones to take photographs. The methodological implications of these decisions go beyond simply providing participants with some flexibility within the research. Disposable cameras would have potentially provided interesting and different images in that, unlike with digital images, there are a finite number of pictures one is able to take and the photographer is unable to view the picture until it is developed. This has the potential to influence what photographs are taken and the selection of images might have required more consideration.

Individual interviews that were predominantly facilitated by photographs were participant led. The purpose of these interviews was for participants to direct the conversation using their photographs as prompts for discussion. This was intended to give participants agency and voice in how they conceptualised and experienced citizenship. The researcher does not adopt a passive role in this style of interviewing, they are engaged in active listening and must ask questions when what has been said raises interesting questions for the research aims. The kinds of photos that participants brought along to interviews varied. The pictures were intended to reflect their own experiences of 'citizenship' based on their own understandings of what that might entail in their everyday lives. Participants brought along photographs that they had taken specifically for the project, as well as pictures they already had on their phone that they felt reflected what they wanted to say about their own experiences of citizenship. Some photos were more 'obviously' related to citizenship than others, and in many ways, fell under more normative conceptualisations of citizenship, for example, pictures from a protest one participant had attended. Others were more abstract and, instead, represented an issue a participant wanted to discuss in relation to their citizenship. Brunsden and Goatcher (2007) argue that people inhabit a visual world and experience life as visual encounters. Accordingly, photovoice engages participants in the production of new images and puts the participant and the image they create at the centre of the research. This suggests that the process of individuals telling their story or

describing meaning behind the images they create provides a glimpse into their social realities and insights into their broader community (Foster-Fishman et al., 2005). The use of photo elicitation enables us to access cultural worlds otherwise inaccessible to the researcher, as Emmison argues, 'the presence of the visual material serves to facilitate the interview process and elicit verbal material which may not otherwise surfaced' (Emmison, 2016, p.302). Members of the youth council who participated in this aspect of the research brought in photographs from a variety of settings and spaces in their life, in fact, very few were from their time at the youth council. That is not to say that they did not recognise their participation in the youth council as a performance of their citizenship, it was a place they could freely express their opinions and influence decision making on matters that affected them. However, in their opinion, this was a relatively small example of the extent of their citizenship. Many of the photographs were of objects that prompted a particular narrative, representations of what they perceived their citizenship to be. Without the participant's insight, the connection between the photo and citizenship would have been difficult to identify. An example of this includes a photograph brought in by one participant of a robin. To the participant, this photograph transported her to her walk home from school after sitting an exam that, in her eyes, did not go well. The robin was not a symbol of citizenship, but rather a prompt in which she could talk about citizenship in relation to the perceived opportunities that are available on the basis of merit and school grades.

I took a picture of this robin, just after my maths exam... AAAND, it was probably my worst exam, like, I freaked out during the exam. And like [...] these days exams are like... can't think of the word... *defining* who you are and sometimes it can define who you are as a citizen. Cos say if you've had a bad few days and you didn't do so good on your maths and English exams and you come out with D's (pause) or maybe even C's sometimes you get put into a certain category and that's how we're all perceived by everyone else and sometimes your opportunity's taken away

Tara, 16



Experiences such as these were significant to the young people in this study as many of them felt an amounting pressure to 'do well' at school. They recognised the influence of school success on how they were perceived by others and their chances of a successful job when they were older. McNaughton and Smith (2009) argue that research should be done *with* children and young people as opposed to research *on* young people, suggesting that a universal approach to youth research can be seen as patronising and tokenistic. Instead they argue that research should be person-centred and methods should reflect this. An ongoing issue with citizenship policy, as discussed in Chapter 2, is that citizenship tends to be conceptualised from an adult-centred viewpoint. This was given careful consideration in the research design and the use of visual methods such as photo elicitation were implemented with the aim of addressing difficulties of researcher proximity. Reflecting on her own research, Mannay (2016a) found that 'asking participants to independently record their own visual impressions and interpretations of their own environment prior to the interview [...] was seen as less problematic than a conventional interview design where the researcher experience is near' (p. 32). In this sense, participants enter the interview with their own ideas about what citizenship means to them. It also encourages them to reflect on the focus group discussion in which the concept was initially raised and gave them time to more thoughtfully articulate how they felt about certain issues.

3.2.12 Ethical and Political Considerations

Ethical approval is a necessary feature of research, as indicated by the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC), and Cardiff University's Ethics Committee gave ethical approval for this research to take place which was essential to obtain before data collection could begin. The

following section will discuss a number of ethical and political issues that arose during this study. Research ethics is not straightforward and requires an ongoing dialogue throughout the research process. In this study, participants were ensured anonymity through the assignment of pseudonyms to protect their identity and assured confidentiality through necessary data protection steps such as password protected digital files. Photographs taken by participants throughout the research process were also protected by password and kept on university data bases. Although this group of young people were not considered to be a 'vulnerable' group, I was cautious not to cause any stress or anxiety to participants. These risks were taken into careful consideration as part of my role as an observer, and the impact that my presence and involvement might have on the wellbeing of participants. With this in mind, I had a duty as a researcher to protect participants from potential 'emotional' harm. Despite this being difficult to measure, should was essential to consider and to avoid distress.

It was considered important to be open and honest about my presence as a researcher throughout the fieldwork. I made my role as a researcher known in each setting, and participants took a keen interest in supporting this and on occasion stepped in to reiterate the purpose of my presence. This happened during a focus group that I was invited to observe where I announced my presence as a researcher at the beginning and obtained consent for observing their discussion. When more people arrived late as the discussion had already started, one member of the youth council who was particularly interested in the research project introduced me and my intentions to observe on their arrival. It was important that young people were active agents in the decision making throughout the data collection, as they are in their own lives. This entailed respecting their right to abstain from participating in the research whilst also providing them with sufficient information for them to make this decision.

Foremost, ethically, the study must consider the fact that participants were, for the most part, under the age of 18 and should be given sufficient information about the research in order for them to be able to give full consent. As previously mentioned, I had an ethical duty and moral responsibility to ensure that participants understand their rights within the research process and to cause them as little harm as possible (Silverman, 2010). This involved ensuring that participants were fully aware and informed of the context of their involvement in the research. Consent for young people under the age of 18 is widely discussed in regards to whom should have the final say. In the past, research with young people under the age of 18 sought parents' or guardians' consent to participation in research (France, 2004). However, this creates substantial difficulties

by denying young people the right to make their own decisions, passing control of their involvement in research to others. Under the ECHR, young people are legally supported to make their own informed decisions and have the opportunity to have their voices heard. France (2004) argues that 'if we are committed to young people's voice we need to give them detailed information about the research so that they can make an informed decision' (p.183). This also includes reiterating the point that participants have the right to withdraw at any point throughout the research process. In light of these considerations, the study provided several interactive workshops that discussed the nature of the research activity and the potential involvement of the participants. This also provided an opportunity for participants to ask further questions to reduce the risk of becoming misinformed. It also opened up discussions of what citizenship is and initial thoughts on how the young people in this study understand it.

I believed it to be of great importance to treat participants with trust and respect thus the research has been conducted openly with the potential to collect rich and meaningful data. Until the mid-1980s, young people were often treated as objects of study and research was focused *on* young people, rather than *with* young people (France, 2004). Throughout the research process it was deemed important that the young people in this study had a participatory role in establishing concepts and understandings of citizenship relevant to their own everyday life experiences. The view was that participants were the most competent people to explain their own social worlds, and so their contribution played a participatory role in the collection and production of data. Research with young people has to commit to honouring and acknowledging the complexities of young people's lives as they are social actors. Providing opportunities to steer the research in directions that support their own articulations of citizenship strengthened their ethical consent in the participation in the research as their roles moved away from passive towards more agentic participation.

Participants were accustomed to having adults present, not only youth workers but guest speakers, though for many members of the youth council I was considered a young person. Overt research sits upon four significant considerations: 'honesty, trust, privacy and transparency' (O'Reilly, 2005, p.60), particularly when researching a phenomenon like youth citizenship, the relationships between adults and young people should be treated delicately. Youth Studies acknowledges an imbalance of power between adults and young people often exists as a result of adult perceptions of children and young people reflected by societal attitudes. The language used to discuss young people can often be emotive, homogenised and underpinned by negative

connotations or presumptions. Thus, it is important to consider how to address and discuss 'young people' as both a group and as individuals. Pronouns such as 'kids' have the potential to be interpreted as negative or condescending to participants. As Lyle (2014) argues, young people should be seen as whole humans, avoiding language borrowed from disciplines such as psychology referring to biological stages and perceived competency. This research refers to participants as 'young people' where applicable, however, great care was taken to learn names throughout fieldwork and avoid unnecessary grouping of young people as a whole.

Many of the members of Cardiff Youth Council were sensitive to how information about their identity was collected. This observation was made while inquiring about the demographics of the youth council. These concerns were not of myself as a researcher, but by Cardiff Youth Council itself when reflecting upon the completion membership forms. Information about school attended were often left blank. When I asked the youth workers why this might be they responded explaining that some members did not include this information as they were attending the youth council independently as opposed to representing their school. This was articulated by the youth workers as members being 'there for themselves'. Motivations for participating in the youth council will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Four.

3.2.13 Analysing the data

Analysing qualitative data is an iterative process and begins almost immediately, particularly when writing fieldnotes and memos, as well as when transcribing interview and focus group data. This was done soon after data collection and was an important step for the analysis in this project where many of the initial findings are identified. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the fieldnote, focus group and interview data collected in this study. As previously mentioned, this does not include photographs produced by participants as their main purpose was to facilitate interview discussion.

Identification of themes throughout the process of analysis was guided by the participants, focusing on what participants expressed as meaningful aspects of citizenship and what they seemed to speak most emphatically about throughout interviews and focus groups. This is with the aim of continuing to take a youth centred approach to understanding citizenship. Although the researcher must interpret the data during analysis, the process is guided by themes that seemed pertinent to young people's lives as identified by the young people themselves.

Clarke and Braun have been leading scholars in the development of thematic analysis and their approach has shaped the way in which the data in this research project has been analysed. In their seminal article, Clarke and Braun (2006) identify the wide use of thematic analysis in research, yet the limited understanding of how thematic analysis should be applied as a tool for analysis in research by those who use it. Themes, they argue, do not 'emerge' from the data as this places the researcher in a passive role, but instead themes are identified in the process of analysis; produced by the researcher as the data is interpreted. In this sense, the researcher has an active role in selecting which of these themes are of interest and are included in the findings of the research. In more recent discussions Braun and Clarke outline a clearer and more structured process of thematic analysis:

'Codes are the smallest units of analysis that capture interesting features of the data (potentially) relevant to the research question. Codes are the building blocks for themes, (larger) patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organizing concept – a shared core idea. Themes provide a framework for organizing and reporting the researcher's analytic observations. The key aim of TA is not simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret, key, but not essentially all, features of the data, guided by the research question' (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p. 297).

While it is common to use a computer programmes such as NVivo to organise interview data, analysis is a creative and personal process and for many researchers coding by hand is more suitable. Coding by hand was the approach taken to the data analysis in this study. Transcripts were coded and analysed, producing areas of interest that informed more detailed, analytical memos which helped develop some of the key themes identified in the data. A variety of themes were identified as interesting and important to the research throughout the analysis process and it was challenging to decide which of these important issues became the main focus of the research. We return to the notion of what appeared to be most meaningful to the participants themselves whilst answering the research questions in chapters X, Y and Z.

As mentioned in section 3.2.11, the photographs presented by participants in interviews and focus groups were not analysed separately from interview transcript. Instead they were used as a means of elevating youth voice within the research. However, the physicality of the photographs did impact the process of data analysis and provided a visual representation for myself as the

researcher when participants were discussing the picture and how it related to their citizenship. The interview transcript relating to each photograph was viewed alongside each other in the analysis process and offered additional context to interview and focus group data. The analysis of each photograph and the ways in which it functioned as a visual representation of citizenship ultimately rested upon its creator (Rose 2001). While my own analysis of the picture might have offered another dimension to the research, fundamentally this would have overshadowed the voices of the young people who chose to participate in this study and share their ideas, experiences and images of citizenship. This created a sense of shared understanding that would have been absent had participants not collected photographs for discussion.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a reflexive account of the research process. It has discussed the methodological considerations that informed the way in which young people's narratives of citizenship were constructed, accounted for and analysed. The research strategy focused on the ways in which young people's voices can be brought to the forefront of the research, seeking to provide opportunities for participants to influence the research process where possible. Creative qualitative methods facilitated this intention and sought to engage participants more actively in the research. The focus of this research is youth citizenship, a concept that permeates a multitude of spaces. This became more apparent as participants engaged with photo elicitation to articulate their understanding and experiences of citizenship as a part of their everyday lives. Observations of youth council activities provided an insight into how young people engaged with the civic issues they experienced in their personal lives and provided a detailed understanding of how the youth council operated as a platform of young people's voices. The following chapter explores in depth the internal workings of Cardiff Youth Council and young people's engagement with it.

Chapter 4: Getting to Know Cardiff Youth Council

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three chapters that will unpack the findings from the research and explore young people's citizenship as portrayed by participants. The following three chapters provide a critical analysis of young people's participation in Cardiff Youth Council and what impact this has on their understanding of citizenship. The amount to a concluding argument and recommendations for conceptualising youth citizenship in a way that benefits young people and their wellbeing. The group of young people participating in this research are not representative of all young people. Their participation in Cardiff Youth Council demonstrates an interest in political issues and civic engagement. However, it is important to recognise young people as individuals rather than simply a homogenous group. This chapter details the context in which the fieldwork took place and provides informative portraits of the individuals who contributed their time participating in focus groups and interviews. The arguments presented in this chapter are formative and contextual to Chapters Five and Six which focus on two themes identified in the data which discuss young people's experiences of citizenship.

Throughout, this chapter will reflect on contributions made by previous research seeking to understand the function and benefits of youth councils and consider what aspects of Cardiff Youth Council contribute to the positive feedback provided by participants. Youth councils differ significantly from structure and organisation to user enjoyment. For this reason, it is essential that the details of Cardiff Youth Council, its aims, organisation and membership is critically examined. The relationship that the young people have with the youth workers and the extent of their involvement in youth council decision making prefaces the subsequent chapters that conceptualise young people's citizenship.

The aims of youth councils are organised are to broadly to enable 'groups of young people who come together in committees to discuss issues relating to their communities' (Matthews, 2001, p.330). Each youth council is characterised by its local context but also by the members and youth workers involved in its organisation. Section 4.4 will explore issues of power between young people and adult youth workers in Cardiff Youth Council and the affect this has on young people's ability to make decisions and influence change. Youth councils often involve a variety of social inclusion projects, encouraging young people to engage and discuss a range of issues relevant to their localised experiences. This sometimes includes meeting with decision makers and

representing other youth voices in the community, however, as is the case with Cardiff Youth Council, not all youth councils require elected membership.

Studies such as Hart, 1992; Hill et al., 2004 examine the impact of youth participatory platforms raise important questions around adultism and tokenism in youth services. This chapter will argue that while this undoubtedly is of great importance, youth councils (and other participatory programs) also provide young people with opportunities to develop key citizenship skills that enable them to engage in society in less formal ways. Sinclair (2004, p.115) highlights, although youth participation should not need to be justified or prove that it works, there is a need for evaluation since participation is part of a 'learning culture' to determine which processes young people find most meaningful in their participation. Similarly, Biesta and Lawy found that young people's citizenship learning takes place in the contexts of their every day lives (see Chapter Five). This chapter discusses young people's ability to effectively influence decisions and how this made them feel as citizens. Feringa and Tonkens (2017) identify that youth councils are commonly faced with issues of representation, accessibility, time and location and the ad hoc establishment of youth councils. They argue that these problems raise questions as to whether youth councils are suitable places for young people to discuss youth issues while advising their local government. This chapter will draw on young people's accounts of their participation with Cardiff Youth Council and consider the benefits and limitations of participatory spaces for youth voices.

4.2 Cardiff Youth Council: setting the scene

Between 2017 and 2018 Cardiff Youth Council had 76 registered members between the age of 11 and 25. However, it was rare that this many young people attended every meeting and consequently the general meetings consisted of between 30 and 50 members at any given time. The members of Cardiff Youth Council reflect the growing and diverse population of Cardiff. Between 2001 and 2011 the number of people living in Cardiff who identified as 'non-white' increased from 9% to 15% (ONS Census, 2011). General meetings took place on a monthly basis inside City Hall to discuss upcoming events, opportunities available to young people and provide an update on the progress of each of its campaigns.

When we sat down in the council chamber it was obvious which of the young people were returning members and which were new. The older members sat together in groups chatting and laughing until the Chair turned on his mic and told everyone to be quiet. The first ten minutes of the meeting was dedicated to outlining what the structure of CYC was

to new members since it was the first meeting of the academic year. The chair explained that they get lots of opportunities to get their voice heard by working with decision makers and organisations around young people. He also said that, as well as this it was a great opportunity to meet new people and make some friends, expand your CV and build up your confidence. I noticed that these last few comments made some of the older members of CYC nod and murmur in agreement.

Fieldnotes (27/11/2017)

Members associated Cardiff Youth Council with having fun and was often referred to as a social experience where they could meet their friends and 'have a laugh' and throughout the year time was allocated for social events including games and quizzes. Chapter Five will explore in more detail what kind of learning experiences members gained from their participation with Cardiff Youth Council, however membership also entailed more implicit social benefits that are important aspects of youth participation. Cardiff Youth Council therefore provided a political space as well as a social one which provided young people with opportunities to develop their political opinions and their social identities. Activities with Cardiff Youth Council were structured around campaigns for youth 'priority' issues that were established at the beginning of the academic year in a city wide survey called the 'Make Your Mark' ballot. However, members of Cardiff Youth Council also were able to take part in activities that promoted opportunities for young people involving other youth orientated activities.

Young people in this study viewed their membership to Cardiff Youth Council as an opportunity to promote positive change in Cardiff, and enjoyed voicing their opinions rather than being passive within the community. Several participants considered their engagement as 'making a difference' and 'improving stuff'. This was most clearly articulated in an event organised by a group of members who sought to discuss improvements to Cardiff Youth Council, calling themselves the 'Reformation Committee'. The group sent out an open invitation to the rest of Cardiff Youth Council to attend 'Reformation Day' what these improvements might entail. A key issue of this was what members considered the role and aims of Cardiff Youth Council to be:

Overall, it was decided that CYC aimed to improve the lives of young people through action plans. Next they discussed their values which included:

- making a change based on what young people think
- deciding what is necessary to change

- having consistency and
- changing the [negative] mindset of adults

Fieldnotes (21/4/2018)

These discussions were of great value to the research as they clearly set out the aims of Cardiff Youth Council in the words of the members themselves. Like other scholarly work with youth councils, members of Cardiff Youth Council found it more rewarding to engage with wider social and political issues which they were able to see how their participation has an impact on their community (Taft and Gordon, 2013). Their understanding of democratic engagement involved having an impact on issues that they personally viewed identified as important. This included the campaign issues which focused primarily on youth issues such mental health and education (see section 4.2.2), as well as projects that ran alongside campaign groups which sought to make positive changes in the community. An example of this was a music and arts festival organised by members of the youth council to encourage more young people to visit Castle Coch and other historical venues in Wales. Cardiff Youth Council was given creative licence to organise this event and members decided showcase the young talent in Cardiff, attracting different members of the community to come together and recognise the value and variety that young people had to offer in Cardiff. These are examples of the type of opportunities members of Cardiff Youth Council were presented to make decisions and suggestions for the benefit of other young people within their community; something that they believed was meaningful to their citizenship (see section 4.3 and 6.3). Being approached by organisations such as Cadw¹ for their insight and expertise provided young people with a space in which they could participate in a meaningful and purposeful way and enabled them to contribute to their community through a platform that they felt legitimised youth voice.

I feel as though *through* youth council I could kind of make, even if it was something small, I was changing something and it was influential

Barb, 17

Many participants felt that they were unable to influence decision making or bring about change on their own as young people and that in order to achieve these goals and to promote youth voice, they needed what they referred to as the 'legitimacy' of Cardiff Youth Council in order for

¹ Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service and works to maintain an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales.

their views to be taken seriously. The civic issues campaigned for by Cardiff Youth Council were identified as the main motivation for their participation (see section 4.3). This was accompanied with a keen interest in children's rights in general and a large proportion of Cardiff Youth Council activities involved advocating for children and young people to be listened to and taken seriously in spaces they share with adults. Participants felt that, as members of Cardiff Youth Council, they represented the interests of all young people in Cardiff. While they were not elected, the issues they campaign for were voted for by young people across Cardiff as the 'Make Your Mark' ballot. Participants felt a personal responsibility to ensure that the opinions and experiences of young people in Cardiff outside of Cardiff Youth Council were reflected in their campaigns and projects.

I don't feel like I'm representing myself when I'm in the Cardiff youth council. I represent everyone who's my age and under, younger than I know

Keith, 18

While Cardiff Youth Council was a place where young people could voice their own opinions and influence decision making on issues they were passionate about, participants also recognised that they held a position of advantage compared to those who did not come to Cardiff Youth Council. This is explored in more depth in Chapter Five which unpacks the dichotomy between the ability for youth voices to be heard in the youth council differs significantly to that in schools. Members of Cardiff Youth Council often investigated further into issues voted as a priority which involved much of what we do as social scientists. To ensure that other youth voices were appropriately represented, many of the subgroups in Cardiff Youth Council began their campaign by carrying out surveys to find out more about the issue voted for on the ballot. This enabled the youth councillors to focus their campaigns and gave their projects direction. Members were also involved in the analysis of the results and disseminated that information with goals to influence change or progress in that area. Section 4.2.2 provides a brief description of the issues voted as priorities during the fieldwork. Keith explained what kind of skills he gained from participating with the youth council (a theme revisited in Chapter Five). He also commented on how his campaign group were able to consider a variety of opinions to better understand young people's interest in mental health. Keith reflected on the importance of 'how you frame a question' when gathering data in order for 'everyone's views will be somewhat encapsulated'. Biesta and Lawy (2009) consider the need for young people's citizenship to be recognised as a range of experiences which are impacted by a variety of circumstances. Here Keith illustrated some of the

ways Cardiff Youth Council sought to recognise that young people's lives were not one-dimensional.

The consideration of other people's opinions (see section 4.3) was believed not only to create a more diverse and inclusive platform for Cardiff Youth Council, it also broadened their understanding of social issues by considering different view points. This created an inclusive environment where people could share their own opinions and the opinions of others were respected. As Chapters Five and Six will go on to argue, young people's experiences of citizenship are largely determined by the extent they feel able to influence decisions that affect them and be listened to by other adults. While these experiences did not make them feel more or less of a citizen, it did impact their frustrations with their restricted ability to participate as citizens. This consideration was maintained in meetings where members of the youth council were given the opportunity to share their views and opinions on various issues that affected young people in society.

4.2.1 The Young People: eight brief biographies

Many of the participants in this study had been part of the Curriculum for Life campaign group at some point or another. This was the first subgroup meeting I attended and had the most contact with throughout the fieldwork. The research draws on a wider set of interactions with members of the youth council, however at the core is a small group of young people who provide more in depth articulations of what citizenship means to them. Although initial interest in the research was split fairly equally between boys and girls, only two boys participated in interviews and focus groups compared to six girls. Some of these individuals were new to the youth council and although they had started to make friends with other young people in the group, they were not as well acquainted as some of the other youth council members who had been participating for several years. Nonetheless, a number of the young people who participated in the focus groups and interviews for this research had known each other for a year or two and had worked together on campaign issues. In some cases, participants attended school together and were particularly close friends. In regards to their participation in the research their contributions can be considered as individual, they did not form a clique within the youth council (although these did exist).

Benny

Benny had lived in Cardiff since he was three when he moved there from Portugal with his mother. He was doing his A Level qualifications at the time of our interview and hoping to apply to study Law at university. He was Headboy at his secondary school and applied for many of the opportunities made available to him through the youth council including work experience in a Law firm. He had worked on the Race and Religious Discrimination and the Curriculum for Life campaigns. When he first joined Cardiff Youth Council he recalled that, being black, he had a particular interest in participating in the Race and Religious Discrimination subgroup and was keen to influence change that he felt was influenced by his personal experiences of these issues. Benny was a particularly vocal member of the youth council. Throughout fieldwork I noticed that he regularly spoke in general meetings if there was an issue or debate he felt passionate about. He also had an active engagement in subgroup meetings and regularly contributed to discussions, offering his opinion on what type of action should be taken. He was a popular member of the youth council and while he got on well with other young people, there were two girls in particular that he got on well with whom he had brought along to youth council from his friendship group at school.

Keith

Keith grew up in Egypt and at the age of 14 moved from an international school in Egypt to Cardiff. He was confident and articulate and often chosen for speaking events. He had been Chair and also an MYP. He was keen to participate in the research and brought along many photographs and wanted to participate in multiple interviews. He often compared his experience living in Cardiff to Cairo and the opportunities he felt were available to him in the UK that weren't available when he was growing up. He also explained that when he was younger he was much quieter and shy, and that developing an interest in politics and economics helped him gain confidence and formed a significant part of his identity. Keith felt quite strongly that citizenship was as much about learning as it was about participating, arguing that ignorance to other cultures, beliefs and identities was detrimental to society. In school he described how he learnt from different experiences such as working with different people, having to work together and compromise on decisions, understand different points of views. He felt that these things were important to how one understands the world and the influence this has on civic engagement. Keith was part of the Curriculum for Life group when I first started fieldwork and he took an active role in the group's organisation. He took minutes and distributed them after each meeting and was often the person to contact relevant people relating to their campaign agenda as well as

meeting with policy makers such as Graham Donaldson to put forward the group's opinions. Keith was hoping to study Economics at LSE after finishing his A Levels and was highly motivated and was an active member of Cardiff Youth Council. He participated in most activities and events that were affiliated with CYC. Keith appeared to be a confident public speaker, although his role was vice chair of the youth council when I started my fieldwork, the chair rarely attended meetings and Keith's role as vice chair entailed stepping in to her place and leading the meetings in City Hall. The following year Keith was elected to be an MYP and spoke in the House of Commons to other Members of Youth Parliament and John Bercow who was Speaker of the House at the time. In our interview Keith reflected on how this was a pivotal moment in his life and recalled how supportive his friends, teachers and family were throughout his school life as he became increasingly involved in events that involved public speaking. Keith was aware that not all young people have a support network that challenges and encourages them like he did and believed that these kinds of experiences have a significant impact on a young person's development. However, Keith claimed that he was not always a naturally confident person and recalled how nervous he was the first time he spoke in front of any kind of audience.

Tara and Sammy

Tara and Sammy were also regular members of the youth council. They were friendly and sociable and although they had a core group of friends in the youth council, they were approachable and welcoming. Tara really valued spending time with her friends and this became more evident when she brought in photographs to our interview. She had several different friendship groups which she felt were representative of the communities she was part of. Amongst school and other social groups, her drama community and friendship group were particularly significant to her identity. The drama community was somewhere Tara felt that she could be herself whereas she felt pressure in school to fit in and that everyone was judging each other. This was another reason she enjoyed Cardiff Youth Council, explaining that 'no one really knows each other we just have the same interests' and that made Tara feel more comfortable. Tara felt that because social media was so accessible to young people it made it difficult to leave friendship feuds at school and she wished that her home life and school life could be more separate. Tara was given a great deal of freedom by her parents and was allowed to spend time in town and with her friends, very rarely did she spend time at home. When another participant suggested her parents would consider 6pm late, Tara's relationship with her parents was quite different. She explained that 'if my parents were like 'where have you been' and I got home at like six I'd be like...out? Its when I come home at like eleven and they're like 'where have you been' I'm like, yeah fair enough'.

Despite having this freedom, Tara felt that out of her and her older brother, she was the more responsible sibling. When her parents left them at home while they were away it would be Tara making sure that her brother returned home at a sensible time, encouraging him to be more responsible. Tara felt very strongly that citizenship should apply to everyone, if you lived in the UK, you should be a citizen – you should be accepted as someone who belongs to be there. Sammy was a fairly quiet girl who hung around with Tara, they had been friends for most of their childhood as they lived close by and also went to the same school. Tara and Sammy self identified as unlikely friends. Tara was a loud, confident and charismatic girl and Sammy's character was a quiet and meek. Tara and Sammy explained that in school they were not in the same friendship circle and if they saw each other in the hallway they would acknowledge each other, but had a very different surprising since they appeared to be close friends. They explained that outside of school when they were together they felt their most accurate selves. Sammy and her family regularly went to church and this was an important part of her identity, she enjoyed the community and support that she felt from the people in her church. For Sammy, the belonging and shared values she experienced in church was something she identified with her understanding of citizenship. She believed that, without some sort of sense of belonging, it would be difficult for someone to feel as though they were a citizen since without this sense of belonging they would be detached from society, and the two were interlinked. There was a collective sense of caring for one another and others in society which formed the foundations of our focus group discussion. Both Sammy and Tara sat on the Youth Advisor Board and had been involved in the youth council for several years. It was something they enjoyed being part of and felt that it offered them a good opportunity to ensure that young people's opinions and experiences were considered when making decisions that affected them.

Dita

Dita was a new member of Cardiff Youth Council and had heard about CYC through being in her school council. She and some of her friends from school joined together and were excited about sharing their opinions with me for the research. Dita was enthusiastic about youth voice and said that she wanted to make a difference in her community. She also enjoyed hockey and considered herself to be a sporty person. This was an important part of Dita's identity and she felt connected to other people who shared her interests. Dita was born in the UK but had Nepalese heritage and felt a disconnect between the two. She celebrated traditional holidays with her family their community but since she had never lived in Nepal, she felt a stronger sense of belonging to the UK. She had aspirations of being a lawyer when she was older and was passionate about human

rights. She wanted to make a difference to society and have a positive impact which was why she joined the youth council. Dita's mum worked during the day and her father did night shifts, she says that this had a big impact on how she viewed herself within the family and saw herself as filling a 'mum' role to her younger brother. This caused a certain degree of tension within her family as she had her own views on how he should be raised and felt that, because she spent much of her time being responsible for him, she should have a say in this. Dita was quite a reserved girl but had strong opinions that she wanted to convey through her participation in the youth council. Being part of the Curriculum for Life subgroup, Dita felt that the curriculum should reflect something more useful and engaging for young people.

Denise

Over the course of the research Denise changed from a quiet and withdrawn girl to a more confident and vocal member of the youth council. She felt more comfortable participating in group discussions in youth council meetings and as she participated in more youth council events, she began to approach various decision makers to promote their campaign. When I met Denise she rarely contributed to group discussions and preferred listening to what other people had to say. Over the summer of 2017 she was awarded a gliding scholarship with British Airways, a programme which had been advertised through CYC. This had a significant impact on her confidence and ability to voice her own opinions to other people in the youth council. This was something that a number of people in Cardiff Youth Council indicated to me, including Denise herself. Towards the end of the research Denise reflected on her journey over the past two years and commented on how much she had changed since joining the youth council. She now felt more comfortable talking to people in most situations, whereas before she would have chosen to read a book on her own in lunch breaks at school. Denise had chosen not to join her school council on the basis that she would have to be elected by her classmates and did not feel that she was charismatic enough for people to vote for her and labelled it as a 'popularity contest'. Denise was looking for something to fill her spare time and thought that CYC looked like fun, as well as somewhere she could access a variety of opportunities made for young people in Cardiff. Despite identifying as a shy and reserved person, Denise was active in a variety of voluntary groups. She volunteered for a charity shop in her spare time and was also a Young Leader for her local Beavers club. Denise also sat on a panel of young people allocating grants to various schemes to encourage youth volunteering opportunities, one of which was the CYC music and arts festival, Folli Fest. She enjoyed volunteering and learning new skills, all of which helped Denise 'come out of her shell'. Denise was also passionate about ICT, gaming and coding and ran a computer

science club at her school to help Key Stage 3 pupils to learn how to code. This was important to Denise because she recognised her ability in computer science and coding and it made her feel valued.

Kejal

Kejal was a Kurdish girl born in Wales and had lived in Cardiff for most of her life. Kejal joined Cardiff Youth Council in the second year of fieldwork and had attended the least meetings out of all the focus group and interview participants. However, this by no means meant that I knew her the least well. She was enthusiastic and outspoken and was keen to participate in the research and contribute to discussions. Kejal attended a secondary school with a high number of refugee pupils, she was very proud of this and felt strongly that children's rights were of high importance, this included ensuring that all children have access to free education. Kejal recounted her experiences with the refugee children at school and explained that when they spoke to her they focused heavily on which country everyone was from, and if someone was born in the UK and was a native English speaker, they were deemed as 'superior' by the refugee pupils. This upset Kejal and felt that if someone was contributing to society, they should be viewed as an equal citizen. Children's human rights regularly came up in conversation with Kejal and she spoke passionately about equality. This passion was sometimes mistaken as forceful by people she did not know very well, both children and adults, however this was an integral aspect of Kejal's identity and when her teachers recognised this about her, she felt understood and appreciated. Kejal believed that cultural identity should be acknowledged as an important aspect of someone's citizenship. Kejal's Kurdish heritage and culture was also integral to her identity and it was important to her to continue engaging with her Kurdish culture. At home she spoke Kurdish, her mum cooked Kurdish food and watched Kurdish television and as a family they visited Kurdistan on an annual basis. Kejal knew people who had moved to Wales from Kurdistan who did not engage with the cultural traditions in the same way that she and her family did, in fact, they avoided many aspects of the Kurdish culture choosing to speak predominantly English, eat Western food and reject the traditional Kurdish wedding. This was upsetting to Kejal, from her perspective these people were embarrassed of their culture, whereas she celebrated it. Kejal recognised that the negative portrayals of Kurdistan and Iraq in the news and media most likely influenced their negative assumptions about their own culture.

Barb

Barb came from what she referred to as a 'blended family' her parents had separated and her mum had recently had another child with a new partner. Barb felt a lot of responsibility for her younger siblings, particularly the newest edition to the family. As her mum was separating from her partner, Barb felt that it was even more important for her to babysit while her mum was having to be out the house more often. This level of responsibility lead to feelings of parental care. In one of our interviews Barb reflected on her role, commenting: 'I feel as though, like I'm sort of bringing her up in a way, I feel like I'm having a massive influence over *her* and how she develops *as a citizen* in the world.' It was important to Barb that children and young people's rights are recognised and supported by adults. She was outspoken and passionate about youth participation and felt that young people's opinions should be considered as equally important as others in society. Barb had been working on the Curriculum for Life campaign for four years and had heavily invested her time and energy into building a website for students, teachers and policy makers to refer to in order to better understand what it is that young people want to learn and feel are missing from their PSE lessons. Barb came from quite a political family and her mum worked for Cardiff Council. Politics was freely discussed at home and this is where Barb initially develops her interest in political issues. Before becoming a member of CYC, Barb was part of the Young Commissioners programme ran by one of the youth workers at Cardiff Youth Council. The young commissioners were told that if they enjoyed this kind of youth engagement there were similar opportunities with Cardiff Youth Council. This is how Barb first became aware of the opportunities that were available to young people through CYC, and part of her involvement consisted of brainstorming ways in which CYC could promote itself and the opportunities available to young people in Cardiff. In our interviews, Barb expressed her difficulties in college, she felt that her school did not provide the structure of type of teaching that she required as a student. Her year group were being taught a new syllabus which she felt placed additional pressure on her already over worked and understaffed school teachers. Despite complaining to the school, Barb felt unprepared for exams since the majority of her teachers were supply teachers as opposed to regular members of staff. As a result, she became frustrated with the system that was no longer working for her and started an apprenticeship with Cardiff Youth Council which gave her paid work experience and was far more rewarding to her.

4.2.2 Place and Structure of Cardiff Youth Council

This section outlines the organisation of Cardiff Youth Council and provide an overview of membership, the different settings participation took place and the kinds of activities that members were engaged in. It also looks at the origins of the youth council and its relationships with other youth organisations. Prior to 2011, Cardiff Youth Council was known as Cardiff Youth Forum. Cardiff Youth Forum (along with several other youth forums across the UK) were approached by the British Youth Council (BYC) and invited to become members and receive numerous benefits. Most notably, the benefit of joining a wider network of young people who have access to decision makers through events, meetings and consultations organised by the BYC. Benefits also include promoting the voices of local youth councils and forums through BYC blogs and social media channels which provide a platform for youth voices on a national rather than local level. Another valuable resource made available to Cardiff Youth Council through their membership to the British Youth Council were discounts on training programmes which supported activities that promoted youth voices. Cardiff Youth Council worked in partnership with Children in Wales who organised the British Youth Council activities in Wales, connecting all local authorities in Wales with one another. While Cardiff Youth Council operated as a separate organisation to the British Youth Council, the campaign issues were selected through the Make Your Mark Ballot. The British Youth Council approached local youth forums in Wales and asked if they wanted representation through an election process within Cardiff Youth Council. Its membership to the British Youth Council offered additional information and opportunities for young people in Cardiff as well as access and funding for more events such as residential weekends for Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs).

In general meetings in City Hall the Chair and Vice Chair lead the discussion and ensured that everything on the agenda had been accounted for. At certain points throughout general meetings the opportunity would be given for members of the campaign groups to update the youth council on their campaign projects, the progress they had made so far and what they were working towards achieving for the year. These meetings were also an opportunity for charities and organisations to consult the youth council on matters relating to youth issues outside of the campaign projects. Over the course of fieldwork representatives from Cadw came to talk about how the youth council could help encourage more young people to visit Castle Coch since this age group was largely absent from visiting the grounds. Cardiff Youth Council was also frequently approached by organisations such as Children in Wales, Welsh Assembly and Cardiff and the Vale Health Board regarding apprenticeship opportunities, how information on children's rights is

distributed (in visual materials) and ways in which members of the youth council are able to influence decision making in youth services. Sub group meetings were organised as smaller, more informal. They were held in a small room in the youth club, rather than City Hall, members helped themselves to tea, biscuits, crumpets and toast on arrival and overall had a relaxed feel to them. These meetings focused on progressing the campaign and working to achieve their goals for the year as well as organising which steps need to be taken in order to do so.

Throughout the course of the fieldwork there were three full time youth workers on the Active Involvement team Cardiff Youth Council developing projects with members of Cardiff Youth Council, assisting them with relevant training and opportunities available to them in their area. In addition to this, some youth workers were employed through apprenticeship schemes on temporary posts. I was told by youth workers that it was relatively common for to have had some involvement with youth councils as a young member before returning as an employee as this was where their interest in youth work derived from. Cardiff Youth Council received a core budget from the Welsh Government allocated to the Youth Services. This funded the youth worker's salaries, membership to the British Youth Council, the use of City Hall as venue for meetings and the individual projects organised by campaign groups. One youth worker was funded separately by Families First which created a strong partnership with Cardiff Youth council and the programmes run by Families First. Children in Wales was described as the 'linchpin' for all local authorities in Wales and worked closely with Cardiff Youth Council. Youth workers also described their working relationship with the Children's Commissioner as 'positive and supportive', explaining that she would often attend events to talk about children's rights and relay information about what Cardiff Youth Council was working on which included their priorities and concerns.

Matthews and Limb (2003) argue that many youth councils take the form of replicating adult decision making using adult spaces as opposed to supporting decision making in youth orientated spaces. They found that young people in their study were put off by the meetings held in City Hall and did not feel that the space was accessible to young people. Using adult spaces for youth decision making has connotations of tradition, hierarchy and establishment linked to a model of democracy that favours more formal processes of political decision making. However, participants felt that these were aspects of Cardiff Youth Council that gave them legitimacy to take up space in adult arenas such as the Senedd or on advisory boards. The use of City Hall denoted the seriousness of their causes. Participants felt that their involvement in adult spaces gave them more opportunities to be involved in ongoing decision making in Cardiff. However, this raises

questions regarding the accessibility that young people have to influence decision making (or be considered in decision making processes). Is it necessary to attend a youth council or be consulted on a youth advisory board in order to have their interests and opinions included? Rather than being integrated in spaces already shared with adults, some argue that the separation of young people creates the illusion that they are being given a voice, whereas they are still marginalised from meaningful decision making in their day to day lives (Taft and Gordon, 2013). Is it only decision making in policy processes that holds value? This chapter will consider the different types of decision making that young people engaged with in the youth council. This issue will be returned to throughout the dissertation as it goes on to consider the impact of youth voices and agency in different spaces (section 4.3.1).

City Hall was regarded as a place of civic and political importance; a place of decision making. Participants (and youth workers) felt that this further legitimised their roles as youth councillors. The Chair and Vice Chair ran the meetings which were organised by the executive team of youth councillors before hand. To participate in discussions, the microphones had a built in queuing system which also meant that the Chair was able to ensure that the meeting did not run over the two-hour time slot between 5pm and 7pm. This was another aspect that was considered very important and was mentioned every meeting. Time keeping was a high priority because, although members of Cardiff Youth Council were often committed to the goals of their campaigns, their free time, family time and (at certain points of the year) revision time was considered to be equally as important in supporting the wellbeing of its members. Unlike the structures of other youth and school councils, Cardiff Youth Council was open to anyone that wanted to join within the 11-25 age bracket. There were, however, elections held for Chair and Vice Chair (who ran the general council meetings) and two Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) positions. Being MYP involved attending Youth Parliament events held in Westminster. The issues for the Make Your Mark ballot were also decided in these meetings. This ballot was sent to every school in Cardiff on an annual basis and the top three youth issues were then chosen as priorities for Cardiff Youth Council to campaign for each year. In previous years this has included:

- A Curriculum [that prepares you] For Life
- Mental Health
- First Aid
- Race and Religious Discrimination

Matthews (2001, p. 301) argues that 'the initiation of youth participation has implications for *training*. In order for young people to fully participate in youth councils, it is important that they are equipped with the generic skills of communication and versed in the debates about citizenship'. While this may be true to a certain extent and training in specific areas such as interviewing or first aid which were relevant to the issues being campaigned for were provided, formal training was not necessary for young people to attend meetings and contribute their own ideas. Furthermore, training was not mandatory to participate in the youth council or to have their voice heard. However, various skills were acquired by the very process of participating in Cardiff Youth Council. Participation in Cardiff Youth Council and an engagement with the issues routinely discussed in meetings enabled young people to develop important skills in an environment supported by youth workers and where the right to abstain from involvement was protected. A prominent aspect of Cardiff Youth Council was to offer opportunities to its members to develop skills (much like the ones outlined by Matthews (2001) above) including formal training for interviewing, designing questionnaires and public speaking. These skills are also developed through participation in the youth council itself. Meetings, debates, networking and presenting all contribute to improving communication and problem solving skills which participants felt were valuable to their learning. This is explored in greater detail in Chapter Five which develops the argument that learning and development is an important aspect of young people's citizenship and also relate to the informal and everyday learning in young people's lives.

The following section provides an overview of the campaign subgroups which featured over the course of the research. It outlines some of the issues which featured in the research and highlights a number of the outcomes of each campaign. The purpose of these descriptions is to provide an insight into the issues that young people were interested in who participated in this study, and what kind of action was taken to campaign for these issues in Cardiff Youth Council. The curriculum for life working group campaigned for changes to the school curriculum in Wales to be more reflective and relevant to young people's experiences. Specifically, they called for a more consistent teaching of Physical Social Education (PSE) that was made part of the curriculum. It was felt that the usefulness of PSE differed between schools and did not inform or prepare young people for 'adult' life. Curriculum for Life was voted as a top priority for three years consecutively. Over the course of their campaigns, the youth council carried out a survey to understand what issues young people in Cardiff had with the curriculum. They found that respondents felt that PSE did not provide them with 'basic skills' such as housing, parenting, money management or independent living and felt that lessons were irrelevant to their everyday

lives. From these results the campaign group created a website designed for teachers to use as a resource in PSE lessons as an indication of what young people in Cardiff wanted to learn. The website was also used as part of their campaign to raise awareness of this issue more broadly, to teachers, policy makers and others working within Youth Services in Wales who were able to raise the youth council's concerns with Education Cabinet Secretary Kirsty Williams. The group also held meetings with Professor Donaldson who produced a report commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2014 to review the curriculum and assessments in Schools in Wales.

Cardiff Youth Council also campaigned for First Aid to be made part of the school curriculum, arguing that children and young people should be equipped with the skills to save someone's life if needs be. This came alongside the argument that every school should have a defibrillator accessible to its students. Youth council members contacted British Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance to organise free first aid awareness courses in schools across Cardiff as part of their campaign. They also received support from the Health Minister Vaughan Gethin and Assembly Member Julie Davies who spent time speaking to the working group and helped promote their campaign through social media. The belief was that children and young people should be provided with the tools to save someone's life and not have to wait for an adult to arrive to give first aid. They argued that every young person should be trusted with this responsibility and it was their right to be prepared for such situations.

Like with many of the issues raised as priorities in the Make Your Mark Ballot, the race and religious discrimination working group started with a survey sent round all the schools in Cardiff to determine 'what the issues are' and how members can 'confront them'. The survey asked questions regarding experiences of racism, how it was dealt with in schools and how it made them feel. The results showed that older year groups were increasingly desensitised to racism as one member of the working group explained:

'the older you grow up the less it became an issue to you. You gradually get [de]sensitised to it, and people don't [...] cos it's always there and we thought that was an issue so, that's part of the way that we're trying to target younger groups to kill it off while it's still fresh. Cos otherwise you get desensitised and you're just like, uh whatever, and that shouldn't be the case'

Benny, 17

The survey also indicated that pupils were not satisfied with how teachers were dealing with issues of racism in school. Cardiff Youth Council partnered with Show Racism the Red Card and received £10,000 of government funding to deliver training workshops for teachers and students, firstly raising awareness of the issue and also training on appropriate ways to respond to racism encountered in school. Alongside this, the working group aimed to raise as much awareness of the issue throughout the year by attending rallies, marches and parades. Flyers were also made by the youth council to promote tolerance and inclusion which were distributed at community events.

The final issue that members campaigned for during my time with Cardiff Youth Council was Mental Health – an additional sub group created after the decision was made by members that it was too important not to campaign for despite getting fewer votes than some of the other issues. A survey designed and distributed by the mental health campaign group found that young people in Cardiff had difficulty gaining access to information regarding support services. In response to these findings the group applied for funding from Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board to create a website providing easy access and child friendly information about where to seek help for different mental health issues. The working group also managed to obtain funding to commission 'Change Grow Live' for three years, providing mental health support for school children in Cardiff. Mental Health was identified as a priority for several years in Cardiff Youth Council and members were able to carry out a review of how well Change Grow Live was working with the aim of writing a report on their findings back to young people. If mental health was identified for another year, there was the potential to use this report in a campaign for continued funding of the organisation.

During their meetings the aims and role of Cardiff Youth Council were made clear by the members. They explained that it was a democratic group of young people who represent young people in Cardiff and set objectives and targets for their campaign subgroups. They achieved this by meeting with influential people as members believe that they are unable to change things on their own without people in power. The aim of Cardiff Youth Council was therefore to take what is discussed in meetings and act to implement those ideas from tasks and goals. Cardiff Youth Council members aimed to consider what was going to make an impact and use organisations to facilitate that. Overall, it was decided that CYC aimed to improve the lives of young people through action plans.

4.3 Motivations for Participating

The campaign issues were an important feature that attracted many members to Cardiff Youth Council. Participants explained in interviews that they could see the impact that the actions of youth council had on the local community and were motivated by the idea of their participation making a difference. Taft and Gordon's study (2013) found that a broader form of participatory engagement that focused on collective engagement was more rewarding than small projects designed for young people by adults such as fundraising events. Members of Cardiff Youth Council were also motivated by the prospect that their participation would have some kind of meaningful impact on their community where they could see that they were making a difference. When asked why he chose to campaign for a Curriculum for Life as opposed to any other issue, Benny explained that it was an issue that he had his own experiences with, but that 'it impacts a lot of other people as well'. For Benny, engaging with broader social issues and being able to see the impact his actions had on his community were important factors in his enjoyment and the fulfilment he got from any civic engagement. Similarly, to Taft and Gordon's participants, Benny also articulated his frustrations with small projects organised by adults with narrow and prescribed aims outcomes and goals, of which he wished to determine for himself. Reflecting on an Enterprise programme implemented by his school, Benny was set with the task of designing a 'billion dollar idea' to raise money for a charity. His project involved cracking a glowstick and taking some glitter to make a decoration that could be sold for profit. While organisations like Enterprise aim to equip young people with skills and knowledge that might be found in the workplace, young people often struggle to see the ways in which small projects such have any meaningful impact on their community or having some kind of political or social influence as a result. Benny was dissatisfied with his involvement in small projects which he could not relate to his own life experiences and sought to influence social change and make a difference to his community. The issues that young people were interested in related to the contexts of their lived experiences (Lister, 2007) which were not reflected in Benny's project. Young people in this study consistently argued for more opportunities to express their opinions in more spaces, not only those carved out for them by adults in the shape of youth councils or forums, but embedded into their daily lives. While they are grateful for platforms like Cardiff Youth Council, this cannot replace the feeling of being listened to in other areas of their lives. Being able to draw on their own experiences was appealing to participants and a significant aspect of their participation in Cardiff Youth Council. As Checkoway (2011, p.342) suggests 'when young people identify their own issues [...] it can awaken their spirit and move them into action'. Members were frequently

introduced to wider participation in other opportunities presented to them through Cardiff Youth Council and the issues they encountered in their everyday lives were a key motivation.

Another motivating factor for young people to join Cardiff Youth Council was the opportunity to debate current political issues that were impacting young people, however were not necessarily related to the campaign issues each group worked on individually. This was a popular format for meetings and requests were made by members to increase the time spent debating such issues. Topics that were raised for discussion included a Labour policy proposal to allocate free use of transport for young people. The discussion involved sharing their opinions on this policy and while one might assume that all young people would perceive this as a beneficial to young people. The group raised issues about the feasibility of the transport policy, considered whether there were areas that were in greater need of this money (a suggestion made by one young person was the NHS) and whether this was a political tactic to gain more young voters. Some members believed that free transport would benefit young people in general, however, overall, it received scepticism from the members of Cardiff Youth Council. Although discussions like these rarely led to any action, it was still considered a valuable exercise.

Sometimes I enjoy when we have the debates [...] some people come out with things that I don't agree with and I'm like, huh, that's a bit different, wow, that's another way of looking at it. Like, I think it makes me more of a *rounded* person, whereas my friends see it as one way and that's their way and nothing's gonna change that.

Tara, 16

Debating as a group provided members of Cardiff Youth Council with opportunities to broaden their understanding of different issues, perspectives and experiences that might not have occurred outside the youth council. As Tara pointed out, these opportunities to share and discuss opinions with each other allows young people to be open minded and understanding of different opinions. Attributes which Biesta and Lawy (2006) argue contribute to one's citizenship development. While these debates are valued by members of Cardiff Youth Council and argued to be of some benefit to citizenship development, Matthews argues that 'there is the danger that youth councils, if not carefully constituted, become little more than sounding boxes capable of making considerable clamour but without the means to bring about change' (2001, p. 313). However, for members of Cardiff Youth Council, the change instigated by their actions was specifically something that lead to their continued membership. Moving beyond meeting to

simply discuss civic issues with one another, participants felt that their involvement in Cardiff Youth Council was rewarding since they were able to see changes as a result of their own voices and actions. This in turn reinforced the feeling of being listened to and their opinions valued in spaces curated by the youth service. School in particular was used by several participants as a comparison (and contrast) to the feeling of being listened to in Cardiff Youth Council. A significant portion of Chapter Five discusses the extent of young people's frustrations with their experiences in school compared to Cardiff Youth Council, exploring how participants used their everyday experiences to reflect on their development as citizens. The next section briefly introduces this dichotomy and looks more closely at the relationship between young people's voices and their level of influence in school settings. Checkoway (2011) indicates that 'young people especially care about schools and education' since a considerable amount of young people's time is invested in school and they have strong stake in it (p.342). When considering what motivated them to participate in Cardiff Youth Council, being able to 'use their voice' in a space where they felt heard was essential to their involvement.

4.3.1 Youth Voice

The notion of 'youth voice' was frequently drawn on by both members of Cardiff Youth Council and also youth workers alike. For many members of CYC, 'youth voice' formed the foundations of their participation with the intention to promote young people's opinions and 'have their voice heard'. It is often assumed that voice *is* influence, however there is a difference between giving young people the opportunity to speak and the impact their voice has on decision making, as well as their ability to make their own decisions. As one participant commented, 'it's how young people see what they say matters' and in order for young people to feel 'heard' there must be some form of action in response to what they are saying. Taft and Gordon (2013) suggest that young people are not always confident that their voices will be heard and are frustrated when there is no action following their voiced concerns, which was also expressed by members of Cardiff Youth Council. These negative experiences of not being listened to were intensified by the positive experiences members had participating with Cardiff Youth Council; if they were listened to and given opportunities to express their views and make decisions at CYC then why was this not the case in other areas of their life?

It's really easy to sort of get your opinion across [...] can feel that you're making an impact in what you're doing

Denise, 16

The overwhelming opinion in Cardiff Youth Council was that it was a positive space where members felt they could use their voice and, importantly, feel like someone is listening with intentions to support their ambitions to make changes. The aims of youth councils in the UK, supported by the UNCRC, is to make an explicit commitment to giving children and young people a voice in matters that affect them (Forde and Martin, 2016).

I guess it was almost like I knew that my opinion mattered and that someone was actually listening and cared about what I was saying [...] just feeling as though I was just making a difference and that people cared. I don't feel as though when you go through school, no one really cares, you're just a robot being taught things and if you don't get them, you fail if you do, you pass and that's it. That's what school ever was to me. I feel as though *through* youth council I could kind of make... even if it was something small, I was changing something and it was influential.

Barb, 17

I feel as though *this* is the only place and the only time that young people *actually* get listened to, because no one cares in college, no one cares if you tell Cardiff Bus that they're not being good enough, no one cares if... unless you *do it* through something like this. So I feel as though that- it's children's right to be listened to and have their voices heard on matters that affect them (pause) and no one seems to be implementing that outside of this building and city hall

Barb, 17

The feelings of frustration and exclusion that Barb expresses in these excerpts are not uncommon. They also emulate the type for teaching that views young people as not-yet-citizens who are able to contribute appropriately to decisions that affect them (Birsta and Lawy, 2009). Lyle (2014) argues, youth voices have frequently not been taken seriously and their maturity questioned when it comes to presenting their opinions and seeking agency. The position commonly adopted by adults, as portrayed in Lyle's study, is that young people simply do not 'know enough' and are therefore ill equipped to make decisions. It is therefore important to recognise the different

issues young people find meaningful and important in their lives, such as issues such as reforming sex education to include same sex and healthy relationships or first aid training being made available to all school children. Campaigning for such issues are not just acts of empowerment, they are also integral to young people's physical, emotional and mental health. These considerations extend beyond notions of training and educating and reframes the discussion to contemplate what kind of capabilities and responsibilities do young people have within society. Do young people need to join a youth council in order for their views to be taken seriously? Spaces shared by both adults and young people, such as at school and in the home, are opportunities for young people to speak their mind, discuss issues important to them and develop skills in the same way Cardiff Youth Council does. However, as the young people in this research indicate, these opportunities are not always made available to young people. Instead they are expected to conform to normative behaviours that imitate the adult experience (see section 2.2.1). The proposed changes to the Welsh curriculum, as discussed in Chapter Two, have the potential to address the issues that Barb raises in her interview. Particularly if children's human rights are embedded in such a way that supports young people's voices and decision making in schools as the Children's Commissioner for Wales argues should be the case.

Crowley (2013) observes that Article 12 in the UNCRC - 'the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously' - is instrumental in achieving all the other rights of the UNCRC. And as Freeman (1996, p.37 cited in Lundy, 2007, p.928) points out, 'it recognises the child as a full human being with integrity and personality and the ability to participate freely in society'. In her assessment, Lundy (2007) identifies that a barrier to the implementation of Article 12 is the widespread lack of awareness of its scope. In respect to this, it is also worth noting that Article 42 of the UNCRC requires State Parties to 'make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike'. Throughout fieldwork, youth workers commented on the importance of making the UNCRC known to both young people and adults throughout their activities and engagement. In regards to young people's efforts to instigate meaningful change, an integral part of the role youth workers played in Cardiff Youth Council often entailed facilitating consultations between young people and adult decision makers. While the young people in this study were able to provide many examples of opportunities for them to 'have a say' in various decisions, as Barb expresses in her interview (see page 92), these opportunities were not as attainable in places like school. Lundy proposes that when implementing Article 12 decision makers and practitioners must take into account: space, voice, audience and influence to ensure that children and young people are provided with

sufficient opportunity to express their views. In this model, 'space' involves adults actively asking young people about matters that affect them and listening to how they wish to impact them and ensuring that action is taken in response to these views. Taking into account youth 'voice' is dependent on the capabilities of each young person and will require varying degrees of assistance in communicating these needs and opinions. Being mindful of the 'audience' recognises that not all young people express their views in a verbal form of communication and adult decision makers should provide a variety of opportunities for young people to do so and be prepared to listen. The final strand of Lundy's model refers specifically to the 'due weight and accordance with their age and capacity' stated in Article 12. Adults remain the gatekeepers to the level of 'influence' that young people have on decision making by determining the 'appropriateness' of the age and maturity of young people. It is important for adult gatekeepers to acknowledge this distinction and avoid the assumption that adults instinctively know what is best for children and young people (Lyle, 2014). This model emphasises that supporting children's rights and youth voice requires action, it is not a passive activity. The four strands of this model reflect the frustrations participants felt when their efforts to instigate meaningful change were unsuccessful. The remainder of this section will consider an example selected from an interview with Kejal regarding refurbishments to the toilets at her school. The request was made by a number of pupils in her school who used a digital platform introduced by the school to increase young people's civic engagement, encouraging pupils to suggest improvements to their local community. The conditions of the toilets were the most voted issue in Kejal's school and had potentially serious consequences to the health of the pupils, as Kejal states in her interview that some people would refuse to use them while at school. Despite the appropriate space being made available for young people to voice their opinions no action was taken in response to these concerns. Kejal was an editor on the website for her school which entailed deleting any inappropriate posts and then presenting the most popular ideas to the head teacher. She was discouraged by the lack of action in response to the young people who had participated, particularly as their involvement in the project had been encouraged by teachers.

'so we have informed the people in charge that we want this idea but they haven't really done anything about it [...] And I would like, try and get everyone to use it. And I put so much like, *effort* into it trying to get everyone to use it, trying to get everyone to log in. And then I *made* a presentation for them and I told the senior management team, I told the teachers in charge of the school, look these ideas are really popular on the website and they're all voted by children and put forward by children in this school. And they just

didn't listen, they just didn't take any...like, one of them was refurbish the toilets, toilets are horrific, it's disgusting, it's so unhygienic, it's really old, the flushes don't work, the locks don't work, it's broken, there's no mirrors, the sink like, it blocks, it's horrific. It's below the line, it's just, it's too far. Like, it's unusable, some people, and there's only one toilet, no two toilets in the entire school and they lock the other one so there's only one toilet in the entire school. So some people just don't go to the toilet all day'

Kejal, 16

While Kejal explains that she understood the lack of funding available for improving the quality of the school facilities, she felt that it is unfair that her teachers had failed to reciprocate her efforts to find a suitable solution. In this instance she did not believe that her voice was sufficiently heard. Lundy (2007) argues that Article 12 cannot be upheld by only one of the four elements of her proposed model. While a lack of funding is common obstacle faced by many organisations, an alternative response might have involved a plan as to how funds might be raised. Instead, the suggestions made by the young people who chose to voice their opinions felt dismissed and discouraged. Whereas the experiences young people had in Cardiff Youth Council were positive, often increasing young people's participation in civic activities. This example illustrates the impact that restricting young people's voices and meaningful participation can have. While the promise for a new toilet block is unrealistic, there is the potential for continued meaningful engagement with pupils that are missed opportunities when young people are simply told 'no'. What young people experience in Cardiff Youth Council does not have to be unique or restricted to only this platform. Nevertheless, as section 2.5 argues, this requires reconceptualisation of citizenship as broad and inclusive. The problem of funding thus presents itself as an opportunity to engage young people in the solution through the organisation of a long term project: finding out how much the refurbishment might cost, brainstorming different ideas for fundraising, advertising the need for the changes amongst their community. Listening to young people's voices requires adults to take what they say seriously and take action wherever possible in response to their concerns (Lundy, 2007). Members of Cardiff Youth Council regularly voiced their concerns to youth workers and consequently sought to make changes in order to address these. For example, meeting agendas were printed and placed on each desk in the council chamber ahead of meetings. However, members argued that this was a waste of material and resources that requires unnecessary use of energy and paper, negatively impacting the environment. Members suggested that the agenda should be emailed should be sent ahead of time. This environmental consciousness was a recurring theme in the research and affected the research design when

participants agreed that disposable cameras created unnecessary waste and that digital photographs would be more environmentally friendly. These examples illustrate the ways that young people were able to demonstrate their agency within Cardiff Youth Council, but also the everyday contexts that civic issues arise.

Adults act as the gatekeepers to youth voices; without the appropriate space and reciprocated efforts from adults, young people's voices are at risk of being ignored and undermined. This chapter argues that it is within processes of participation and engagement that citizenship develops. Supporting young people's citizenship development requires that adults recognise the value and significance of seemingly mundane interactions similar to the examples provided in this chapter. The following section will explore the relationship between the young people and the youth workers in Cardiff Youth Council in more depth and discuss how these interactions facilitated young people's civic engagement and what impact this had on their experiences of citizenship.

4.4 Adult/Youth Dynamic

The previous section explored how adults often act as gatekeepers to youth participation by enabling to obstructing young people's abilities to influence decision making. The following discussion considers the relationship between adults and young people and issues of power that impact young people's agency as citizens. Wyness (2009) notes that there a number of potentially conflicting interests of power in spaces occupied by adults and young people. Campaign groups organised by Cardiff Youth Council were co-produced with adults and young people working together. However, meetings were predominantly organised and lead by the young people, and the youth workers would contribute ideas secondary to other members of Cardiff Youth Council. For details of how meetings were organised in Cardiff Youth Council see section 4.2.2. The overall aims of campaign meetings were to discuss and plan ways that each campaign group could impact or raise awareness for each youth issue. The role of the youth workers was to assist the young people and facilitate the actions that members chose to take.

In spaces where adults and young people co-exist and particularly in instances where adults are facilitating youth voices, the consideration of what is in the 'best interest' for young people can become a contentious issue. The UNCRC outlines that States Parties are encouraged to consider the child's 'best interests' in Articles 3, 9, 18, 20 and 21. While children and young people have the right to express their views in any given situation, these views are 'given weight proportionate

with the child's maturity, age, and understanding of the issues' (Archard and Skiveness, 2001, p.1). Therefore, it is left to the adult's discretion to make a final decision, and to what extent the child or young person is able to influence the outcome. Archard (2015) suggests that the potential for adult's views of young people's 'best interests' to supersede young people's voices. This becomes increasingly problematic if young people's citizenship is viewed in a narrow and restrictive way as many experiences of citizenship are overlooked. During fieldwork with Cardiff Youth Council, youth workers were talked about in high regard by the young people and regularly expressed feelings of being listened to in their meetings and at other events connected with CYC. This was exemplified by the development of an additional campaign group to accommodate for Mental Health to be introduced as a campaign issue, despite it receiving fewer votes than the top three priorities in the Make Your Mark Ballot². In this instance a small number of members of Cardiff Youth Council approached the youth workers presenting reasons for why a fourth campaign group should be introduced in order to address the issue of youth mental health. This was accompanied by a longer list of issues with Cardiff Youth Council that members felt needed to change or improve. This included who was allowed to vote during elections (this changed to a requirement for pre-existing membership to avoid people's friends coming to one meeting to vote for them) as well as ways in which meetings can be organised to run more smoothly. In response to these issues being raised, members and youth workers took the opportunity to investigate how well Cardiff Youth Council was operating and helped members form the 'Reformation Committee' to identify areas for improvement. This involved additional meetings, some taking place on a weekend, and creating a framework to gather information on how the rest of Cardiff Youth Council felt about these issues. The initial group of young people who instigated the project worked alongside youth workers and highlighted key areas they believed needed improvement or consultation with the rest of Cardiff Youth Council. Youth workers also designed and formatted questions into a structure that could facilitate discussions that would lead to the questions being answered. These encounters are important within the youth citizenship argument because they demonstrate the changes that young people were able to make within Cardiff Youth Council and highlighted areas in need of improvement. An important distinction between the experiences that participants identified as positive in Cardiff Youth Council and between those that were viewed as negative in school is that the action taken in response to young people's attempts to influence meaningful change. Consequently, the relationship between adults and young people is significantly different in these two spaces.

² The Make Your Mark ballot orders the top five priorities that young people vote for in their local authorities. Distributed by the British Youth Council, it is the responsibility of the local authorities to ensure that the most popular youth issues are campaigned for.

Adults hold the position of gatekeepers to the public sphere of decision making and 'children's collective interests have to find an expression within the public realm, hence the importance of 'voice', the means by which these interests are expressed' (Wyness, 2009, p.540). It is important to recognise the potential imbalance of power in participatory spaces to ensure that young people are fully supported in their ability to form and express their opinions, influence decisions in their lives and create meaningful changes. Matthews (2001) views the role of a youth worker as one that should young people to make decisions for themselves, arguing that this should include clear aims and appropriate information about the options available to them. He explains that 'for the brief to be enabling, it cannot be prescriptive, and this balance is not an easy one to achieve' (p.311). There were occasions during observations of Cardiff Youth Council where youth workers had to temper young people's expectations as to what they could achieve in their campaign groups based on their limited resources. However, discussions involved a dialogue between the members of Cardiff Youth Council and the youth workers to find an alternative solution, rather than dismissing the suggestions made by the young people. For example, the Curriculum for Life campaign group considered creating an award scheme and qualification to encourage schools and pupils to include their PSE syllabus from their Tools for Life website. Youth workers pointed out that it was unlikely that teachers would support this idea since schools were heavily driven by GCSE and A Level grades. They also explained that the level of work necessary would likely extend beyond the time frame for each campaign before new priorities were voted for.

The balance that Matthews (2001) indicates is complex and the roles adopted by members of the youth council and roles adopted by the youth workers were necessarily dynamic and fluid to accommodate young people's participation wherever possible. This might include contacting caterers for an event, for example. Of which the food would be chosen by the members of the youth council. Throughout fieldwork, youth workers emphasised the importance of providing young people with the opportunities to make decisions wherever possible and the youth workers would aim to enable them to do so. Youth workers also managed the budget and administrative work and during council meetings they supported and guided the plans made by the youth councillors. This often involved youth workers making notes in meetings (and distributing or following up plans outside of meetings), contacting individuals and organisations to provide connections for the young people to further their campaigns as well as helping to organise events. Youth workers essentially offered support and expertise where necessary and in meetings they provided structure for brainstorming sessions and mediated debates. In an area such as youth

participation, the balance between support and intervention can be tentative (Matthews, 2001). It is important for youth workers to manage young people's expectations of what is feasible and achievable as well as allowing for young people to be ambitious and creative. As Matthews (2001, p.314) indicates, 'resources of staff time for community development may be limited, yet knowing how to use them effectively, with realistic and achievable objectives, is key to a successful strategy'. In this sense the assistance of adults is integral to young people's goals for the year. The following excerpt is selected from fieldnotes observing a subgroup meeting and is illustrative of the resources that youth workers made available to members of Cardiff Youth Council:

Pete moved the whiteboard aside and revealed another board behind it with all the faces of the councillors on and which would be most helpful in relation to their campaign to improve transport for young people in Cardiff. He explained that, if they wished to do so as a group, they could approach various people regarding the questions they had about who owned and ran the different bus companies in Cardiff and whether there were any issues they could collaborate on to tackle the issue. The group decided that, amongst their other plans for the year, this would prove to be useful to them and asked for Pete to put them in touch with the necessary people.

Fieldnotes (15/11/2017)

The most significant support youth workers were able to give members of Cardiff Youth Council were the connections they made with different companies, organisations, politicians and charities which had been developed over a number of years. These relationships were utilised by the campaign groups to disseminate information about youth issues to decision makers. For example, members of Cardiff Youth Council gained access through these contacts to the head teachers conference in Cardiff to disseminate information gathered regarding young people's concerns with the curriculum. Youth workers informed members of the relevant contacts for each campaign group and the options available as a result. Youth workers consistently reiterated that Cardiff Youth Council was run 'by the young people and supported by the youth workers'. Members of Cardiff Youth Council were heavily involved in the process of organising meetings and event and were regularly consulted on matters relating to youth issues. Organisations, charities and local councillors would regularly contact Cardiff Youth Council to ensure that young people were aware of their services, promote opportunities available to them and consult them on ways they could improve their services for young people. Members of Cardiff Youth Council who were part of the executive committee made decisions regarding which of these inquiries was included

on the agenda for each meeting and which organisations would be invited to speak. Youth workers stated that 'we give them the list of people who have contacted us that month and they decide which ones they're interested in.' When youth councillors and youth workers work together to organise events decisions are coproduced and while suggestions can be made by the young people, the ability to organise more complex events falls upon the youth worker who has more time and resources. As one member reflected on suggestions made by young people to the youth workers, 'it's never a no, it's always I'll see what I can do'. This was exemplified by a suggestion for a 'puppy corner' (an increasingly popular event held in schools and universities to promote stress relief) at the Grand Council³ event that the Mental Health campaign group were organising. Members of the youth council felt encouraged when their suggestions were met with enthusiasm rather than obstacles and during fieldwork, suggestions made by young people appeared to be taken seriously and no one was made to feel that their ideas were unreasonable. Other research has found that in formal participation structures such as youth councils, young people are often reported to feel frustrated with their perceived lack of agency and control. Participants in my own study felt quite the opposite, as has been reiterated throughout this dissertation; participants felt that the youth council provided a space where their agency was protected, rather than diminished. Cockburn (1998) argues that 'if children are encouraged to make decisions, including wrong decisions, in their families, schools, streets and so on, then they will become less 'irresponsible' or incompetent' (p.108) which he points out is a common perception of children and young people made by adults. In Cardiff Youth Council, members were encouraged to make decisions wherever possible, this included deciding how, when and where to campaign for youth issues, who to contact and to incorporate the ideas suggested to them by youth workers. Throughout the fieldwork, participants reflected on the impact that their participation had on their confidence and consequently the impact this had on their ability and confidence to participate in society more generally. While Bessant (2004) argues that youth participation programmes pretend to give young people decision making power, this did not appear to be the case in Cardiff Youth Council. Members of Cardiff Youth Council felt that they had agency over decisions that were made in campaigns and other youth council activities. This was often characterised by participants as 'having their voice heard' and 'feeling listened to'. Nonetheless, the relationship between young people and adults in Cardiff Youth Council was built upon an understanding of trust that the youth workers would support the members of the youth council in their campaign objectives. The mutual understanding of the different roles young

³ Grand council events were held four times a year and gathered data from young people to inform current policy development. Invitations to attend grand councils and contribute to the production of data in chosen policy areas were sent out to schools across Cardiff to send representatives from each school.

people and youth workers had in Cardiff Youth Council relied on the youth workers to ensure that young people felt able to participate by contributing their ideas to discussions without the fear that they would be dismissed for being ambitious or unrealistic.

Issues of power in participatory platforms such as youth councils are embedded into the framework of the organisation; youth workers are often a constant variable in Cardiff Youth Council whereas young people join as members are entering a space created by adults and often invited by adults to participate. Matthews (2001) questions whether youth councils can be considered successful in providing appropriate opportunities for young people if the organisations were established by adults rather than by demand from young people. In Cardiff Youth Council, participants described their life before joining the youth council as something 'missing' from it. As discussed in section 4.3, members expressed a variety of motivations for joining Cardiff Youth Council. Very few participants indicated that they had actively sought out the youth council, but rather it was something they had heard about from a friend or teacher.

I just thought it looked fun. I'm not a very impulsive person, at that point I wasn't. And I wasn't really doing much in my spare time. I was just sort of doing school and home. And I, it was like, CYC just clicked with me

Denise, 16

The young people involved in Cardiff Youth Council might not have actually organised in such a way if such an institution did not already exist. Several members of Cardiff Youth Council had attended their first meeting on the recommendation of a teacher or a friend, rather than as the result of actively seeking a platform to voice their opinions. Crucially, their first meeting was one of exploration, for young people to organise a group or forum would require commitment and a set of skills that they might not yet have developed or restrict such opportunities to those who already have. Therefore, it is important to create spaces for young people to participate in civic society, as opposed for waiting for young people to request for such spaces to be made. While Matthews (2001) highlights an important consideration regarding the distribution of power, notably whether this can be achieved in a structure designed by adults. The Youth Work Strategy for Wales (2019) it is the role of youth services to support and provide opportunities for young people to improve their outcome and wellbeing. These platforms provided spaces for young people to explore, discover and develop as individuals without pressure or expectations through their voluntary participation. This was essential in building young people's confidence to

participate in citizenship activities. This thesis argues that participatory platforms for youth engagement provide far more than a 'voice' for young people, they also support young people on their journeys to develop their understanding of their own identity and interests, as well as gain confidence and enjoyment in their participation of such activities. The relationship between young people and the adults, particularly in participatory spaces such as the youth council, have a significant impact on the level of support young people receive in realising the qualities listed above. However, as the young people in this study raised, the question remains why this cannot be achieved outside of the youth services.

As discussed in section 4.3.1, participants often described how their voices were supported by the youth workers in Cardiff Youth Council and the impact that their participation had on their confidence and self-belief. These observations were also made by youth workers and identified as something to encourage and improve for those members who appear to be shy or lacked confidence. During fieldwork, youth workers would sometimes point out members who had 'come out of their shell' and become more confident and vocal in their participation with Cardiff Youth Council. Improving the confidence of young people was considered important to their role as youth workers and their ability to support members of Cardiff Youth Council in achieving their goals. Youth workers also demonstrated an awareness of the different needs and capabilities of the members and adapted the ways they engaged with different young people appropriately.

Adults have a key role in facilitating youth participation and ensuring that young people are provided with opportunities to express their opinions, develop key skills and space for important identity work (Lyle, 2014). While studies argue that meetings held amongst young people without adults present can improve confidence and create more open debates than when adults are present (Matthews, 2001), Cardiff Youth Council appeared to benefit from having youth workers present at meetings. This was likely related to the care that youth workers took in ensuring that young people were able to contribute equally and felt heard when expressing their opinions. On an evening that staff were unable to closely supervise a campaign meeting due to staff shortages and an increase in campaign groups, communication amongst the youth council members broke down into arguing without an adult to mediate. As the only adult present, I decided to inform a youth worker in another room and the youth worker was able to calm down the situation and help mediate the different opinions in the room. After speaking to several young people in that group, it was clear that such a disagreement was rarely encountered and the experience was quite upsetting as participants claimed that the majority of members valued and respected each

others opinions. However, this does highlight the important role that youth workers have in safeguarding and assisting young people in their participation in youth platforms. Providing that these spaces are supported rather than controlled by adults, the presence of youth workers ensure that young people have a positive and productive experience.

4.5 Discussion

What makes a youth council more than a sounding box? For Cardiff Youth Council, the main distinction is that action is taken as a result of discussions between young people and adults. Ideas do not merely reverberate within Cardiff Youth Council, they become actions. Members are able to see tangible results from what initially begins with voicing their opinions, sharing these thoughts with one another and other adults, services and organisations who are able to work with them to implement such changes. As a result, these positive experiences encourage young people to participate further and increase their self-confidence in their ability to create meaningful changes in society. Cardiff Youth Council was not a group of young people whose opinions were confined within their group discussions. Not only are these opinions expressed to adult decision makers, they also involve a degree of cooperation and collaboration. It would be a mistake to imply that every suggestion made by a young person in Cardiff Youth Council results in significant change, there are limitations to young people's participation, budget and influence. However, this did not deter the young people in this study, and members of Cardiff Youth Council were aware of these limitations. Instead, the value they saw in their participation was in the process; in discussions, negotiations and most importantly being listened to. This group of young people meet in a space where they *felt* heard, not only by each other but also by adults who did not share the same experience as them but took these experiences seriously. Unfortunately, participants expressed a strong feeling that this kind of recognition was not maintained in other spaces and their relationships with adults outside of Cardiff Youth Council made them feel ignored and unheard. Seeing the impact that they have made through their hard work in the youth council has been rewarding and empowering. As a result, members of Cardiff Youth Council felt able to participate in further activities and build on their positive experiences. This highlights the importance of upholding the UNCRC and ensuring that children and young people not only are able to influence decisions that affect them but have the opportunity to reasonably voice their opinions in the first place (Lundy, 2007). Listening to young people should not be a passive activity, it necessarily involves some form of action and response. The manner in which adults listen to children and young people should therefore also value the diverse ways in which young people contribute to society as citizens (Larkins, 2014).

The members of Cardiff Youth Council routinely asked for young people to be considered as a diverse, made up of individuals rather than a homogenous group. This is illustrated by their ongoing attempts to understand what other young people thought about issues that were voted for as campaign priorities. It was not assumed that as a group, their experiences were representative of all young people in Cardiff. When campaigning for the recognition of youth issues and advocating positive change, their arguments were informed by a collection of voices, ideas and experiences that were gathered by survey data. The young people in this study stressed that it was important to them that a diverse set of opinions and experiences informed how they approached each campaign and what changes they sought to make. For participants, these were noteworthy reasons for participating in Cardiff Youth Council and essential to making a difference and seeing a change influenced by their actions. It is the recognition of differing opinions to their own that is considered valuable to their engagement in civic issues and their own citizenship development. For a group of young people who are aware of their human rights, it was unsurprising that frustration arose when they felt unable to access the rights they felt entitled to. Narrow understandings of citizenship, and restricted access to decision making, impacts young people's ability to fully engage as citizens in such decision making processes that directly affect them. This is illustrated by interviews with participants featured throughout this dissertation who highlight the difficulties faced by young people in their attempts to voice their opinions or influence decisions outside of the parameters of Cardiff Youth Council. A broad and inclusive model of citizenship (see section 2.5) values the ways that young people participate as citizens *now* (Larkins, 2014). Although the activities of Cardiff Youth Council are not necessarily ordinary or part of the everyday lives of young people, the issues young people identify as meaningful and important are intrinsically related to their lived experiences of these issues. For the Race and Religious Discrimination campaign for example, research carried out by members of Cardiff Youth Council indicated that an important aspect of this issue for young people in Cardiff was the desensitisation of racism experienced by people of colour in their everyday lives.

An emphasis on a youth-centred understanding of citizenship increases the likelihood that young people's voices to be heard in spaces where young people's voices are not taken seriously. However, research such as Taft and Gordon (2013) argue that adults can be reluctant to include young people's ideas in decision making due to concerns that they are not mature or experienced enough to make informed decisions. This is noticeable in the obstacles that young people like Kejal encounter while trying to influence decision making in her school. The upcoming reforms to

the Welsh Curriculum offer opportunities to remedy this. As the Children's Commissioner for Wales argues, establishing the UNCRC within the curriculum ensures that children and young people's voices are placed at the centre of learning. Participants in this study make it clear that for young people to be able to fully participate as citizens, adults must acknowledge and facilitate their voices and opinions beyond a narrow and exclusive understanding of citizenship. The issues voted for as priorities by young people indicate the type of experiences that are meaningful to young people's citizenship. They offer an insight into the relevance of these issues in young people's lives and how they impact their ability to achieve their goals (Article 29, UNCRC).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the structure and activities of Cardiff Youth Council and provided the context for which fieldwork took place. It has introduced the key participants who took part in this study and whose participation focus groups and interviews shaped the research findings. Information about the campaign groups in Cardiff Youth Council were also detailed and their relevance to young people's experiences of citizenship in this setting was integral. They illustrate the achievements made by Cardiff Youth Council and its members and demonstrate ways that young people successfully influenced decision making and improved the lives of other young people in Cardiff. The issues outlined in this chapter are consistently drawn on throughout Chapters Five and Six and are important preliminary steps in the accounts that present the research findings. Although it was necessarily descriptive in parts, this initial analytical chapter has provided a critical commentary and discussion and considered how young people's voices were supported in some spaces and not others. This issue underpins the thesis that youth citizenship is restricted by narrow, adult-centred understandings of what citizenship entails. Chapter Six will consider how learning was an important aspect of young people's citizenship in this study, and how members reflected on their citizenship learning and development in relation to their participation with Cardiff Youth Council.

Chapter 5: Citizenship Learning and Participation

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided an overview of Cardiff Youth Council, introducing the reader to the participants, what kind of issues they considered important and their motivations for participating in the youth service. Chapter Five is the first of two chapters that unpack themes of meaningful aspects of young people's citizenship, initially identified by participants and further explored throughout the process of analysis outlined in chapter three. Throughout this study, young people continually highlighted the importance of learning and different ways that learning skills and information made them feel more confident and prepared for life. However, this positive experience was not reflected in all contexts and spaces of learning. This chapter will draw on observations made by the researcher throughout the fieldwork, and interview and focus group data which drew upon photo elicitation. Participants described in their interviews how school was a space where young people felt their ability to learn new skills (and have a say in what these might entail) was somewhat restricted. This chapter explores the different spaces where learning was identified as a meaningful aspect of young people's citizenship. It was often the case that where young people were able to have some agency over what they learned, and their views were taken into account, their learning experiences were recounted as positive and empowering. As Percy-Smith (2016) suggests, that there has been a shift in how youth participation is conceptualised and explored from a focus on voice and representation to everyday settings where issues of identity, agency and self-determination (also see Jans, 2004). This chapter will explore this more closely and discuss how young people engaged in different civic issues in relation to their own lived experience. This became more noticeable while observing youth council meetings. The opinions that young people articulated in the campaign subgroups (Mental Health, Curriculum for Life, Transport and Work Experience) were all informed by their personal experiences of the issues, and debates were often related to events in their daily lives. This was further explored in conversations with the young people in the youth council, as well as in interviews.

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the idea of 'learning' as an aspect of children and young people's citizenship and explore what characteristics of their participation in society young people in this study found meaningful. This derives from a perspective of citizenship-as-practice as opposed to citizenship-as-achievement; an argument made by Biesta and Lawy (2006) who contend learning is an integral part of citizenship for young people and, rather than something

that is achieved through a formal education alone, but is common in everyday situations. This, they argue, allows for a better understanding of the socio-political dynamics of young people's citizenship learning. Chapter Three argued that an approach to data analysis that prioritised young people's voices was both ethically and methodologically important to the research process. The themes discussed in the next two chapters were distinctive in how participants understood their own citizenship. When asked about their experiences of citizenship, participants drew upon examples of learning in different contexts. Such conversations often conveyed excitement and enthusiasm for learning. These experiences seemed to have significant impact on their confidence and identity, which was both highlighted by participants themselves and noticed by the researcher in fieldwork observations. What becomes clear is that participants found the practical application and usefulness of learning opportunities particularly important to their identity and imagined futures (which they felt anxious and uncertain about). The 'everydayness' of learning, and applying what is learnt, is continually referred to by participants as important to their own understanding of citizenship. In relation to their learning and participation, the young people in this study considered how is what they are doing useful, either to themselves, or to others. This will be further explored in relation to participants' expectations of what they should learn in school, the skills they acquire from Cardiff Youth Council and their after-school hobbies.

The participants made it clear that the youth council was only one aspect of their life. When asked to draw a map of their 'world', City Hall (where meetings and events often took place) was not at the centre of it. It was one of many places in which these young people spent time. It is important to keep in mind that, according to the broad and inclusive definition of citizenship outlined in Chapter Two, youth citizenship experiences occur in a variety of contexts which participants highlighted as part of this research. As Percy-Smith (2016) notes that, conceptually, citizenship becomes more tangible and meaningful for young people when viewed as a process rather than an outcome. This chapter will argue that learning is an integral part of this process and youth citizenship is thus a situated and contextual experience.

5.2 Participation and Everyday Life

A theme that runs through this chapter is how participants benefited from everyday learning experiences. Such learning experiences were not necessarily planned, structured or always objectively identified as 'learning'. Rather, they encompassed a type of learning that young people related to their lived experiences; lessons that they believed to have learnt through participation in everyday life. Namely, being able to relate this to their lived experiences and gain

practical knowledge that they found useful in some way. As Keith indicated in our interview, ‘the best way of learning, I suppose, is actually *doing* it’. Something that became increasingly evident to me as I attended youth council meetings, spoke to people in the breaks and observed organised events, was how learning permeated almost every aspect of the youth council and its members. Gaining information and learning new skills seemed to motivate many of the decisions made by its members and campaigns that young people voted for annually often had some association with learning. First Aid, Curriculum for Life, Race and Religious Discrimination, Work Experience, Mental Health; all of which involved learning new skills and obtaining information. The First Aid campaign aims to equip young people with the skills to help someone in the event of an accident and this stems from an argument that views young people as capable and responsible – children can operate defibrillators and administer first aid when taught how to. Curriculum for Life campaigns for more practical skill learning within the curriculum. The Mental Health campaign focuses on learning how to better manage and support mental health and ensuring that young people have the appropriate services available to them. Race and Religious Discrimination campaigns for racial and religious tolerance and respect, teaching educators and students about the issue and raising awareness. Throughout the fieldwork I noticed that this was an ongoing theme in young people’s involvement in the youth council. Not only by means of the campaign aims listed above, but to learn more about the issues themselves. Often, the initial tasks of the campaigns were designed to gain more information about young people’s experiences of the issues. Surveys and interviews were routinely used by members of Cardiff Youth Council to better understand young people’s experiences of transport or racial and religious discrimination for example. Participants discussed how their membership of the youth council directly related to them wanting to understand other people’s points of view about certain issues to broaden their own understanding of the world.

no matter what positions you’re in, no matter what, you know, whether it’s a leadership position or you’re just interacting with other people on a day to day basis, the fact that you understand (pause) *other people* and that other people are individuals in their own right um, and they have the right to be respected and... you know, just taking these little steps towards better society

Keith, 18

Some people come out with things that I don't agree with and I'm like, huh, that's a bit different, wow, that's another way of looking at it. Like, I think it makes me more of a *rounded* person

Tara, 16

This desire to hear more diverse opinions on youth issues was illustrated in the mounting pressure from members of the youth council towards including more time for debating. Although there was some time allocated to such discussions in general meetings (as opposed to subgroup meetings which focused on campaign work) members felt that these were valuable opportunities to understand the complexity of youth issues, as well as contribute their own opinions to the debate. As a result, a pressure group was formed by a small number of members that organised a 'Reformation Day' to discuss how the structure and organisation of Cardiff Youth Council could be improved. Here it was agreed that more time should be made for debating.

Debates and discussions were often passionate and sometimes heated. However, there appeared to be a mutual understanding between youth council members that views should be respected and discussions should be considerate. Throughout the fieldwork, it was often the more experienced members that entered into debates with one another. These were the members who had attended for several years, had familiarity with how the youth council was run and felt more comfortable participating in debates and discussions. There was no obligation to participate in debates and so new members, or those who were particularly shy (as Nina explained to me at an event), did not feel pressured to participate as vocally as some of the other members of the youth council. She explained to me that 'no one judges or discriminates. It's a discussion and then everyone goes away and thinks about it'. Listening to what other people had to say and sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions contributed to citizenship learning. Participants described how it broadened their knowledge and helped understand other people's points of view and experiences. Debating improved their conversation skills and ability to coherently put forward an argument. Moreover, participants were aware of the skills that they gained from these embedded and incremental events. There is, of course, an overlapping nature to these two areas of learning; often the training and skills learned are put into practice in the everyday. As the lines between formal and informal spaces are blurred, participants engage in more extracurricular activities and continue to acquire skills and knowledge that can be put into action. The following excerpt presents a conversation between participants discussing how interacting with each other and engaging in society leads to shared learning. After the group had spent some time talking about

the importance of people being aware of 'things' and being open to learning new information about the world, I asked whether they felt that learning was an important aspect of citizenship to them.

All: Yeah, definitely

Kejal: hundred percent

Benny: People learn every day whether they realise it or not

Kejal: Exactly

Benny: It's just so much going on and people are so *exposed* whether they'd like not to be, they've learnt something new every day. Some people don't care for it because they don't necessarily realise they're learning or they think it's just bad news, or others actively seek it out like I do. But, learning *helps* progress

Denise: And it's not always formal learning in a school environment, it's like outside of school as well, like socially and the diversity in Cardiff, learning about the different cultures and races first hand and like, I didn't know about the voting stuff, I've learnt *that*

Western approaches to education tend to be formal, curriculum based and, particularly in the UK, examined. However, as Cartwright (2012) argues, much of what we learn happens rather informally. She defines informal education as 'a dialogical practice that seeks to foster learning in everyday settings, on a voluntary basis' (p. 152). The group considered how they learnt valuable lessons and information from each other everyday and, to them, this was an important part of their citizenship. Being engaged and aware of one's surroundings and other people's experiences was seen as an important element of social progress. The group highlighted how this sharing of information impacts society. As Benny said, 'learning helps progress'. Benny told the group that he felt some tensions when thinking about citizenship. Having grown up in Cardiff for the majority of his life, he felt that he was a contributing member of his community and participated in society. To him, this meant contributing to social good through forums such as the youth council. However, due to his Portuguese passport, he is unable to vote in general elections which made him feel disconnected from decision makers. The following chapter will discuss Benny's conflicted

sense of belonging in greater detail. However, reflecting on the theme of learning which the young people in this focus group draw attention to, discussions between young people such as these are valuable practices for young people's citizenship. As Biesta and Lawy (2009) argue, 'young people learn at least as much about democracy and citizenship...through their participation in the range of different practices that make up their lives' (p.7). This includes discussing social and political issues. To sufficiently support young people's voices, young people must have opportunities and access to spaces where they are able to share, discuss and learn about issues that affect themselves and others around them. The young people in this study indicated it was their belief that these were fundamental facets of citizenship and ultimately led to a better, more equal society. Learning, in this sense, was not only an opportunity for their benefit, it was also a responsibility. These examples raise similar issues to what Cullen et al. (2000) find in their study relating to the way in which informal learning can improve social skills and the way in which young people engage with citizenship activities. Participants in the youth council highlighted how listening to opinions and experiences different to their own was beneficial to their understanding of the world. Working in their subgroups was also seen as a space where they learn to work in a group, set objectives for their campaign and work towards achieving their collective goal. This was integral to their roles as representatives of other young people in Cardiff, whose experiences, they acknowledged, they could attempt to understand and whom they could try to include in their decision making. This was evident in the reforms that the youth council were proposing to undertake, with a large motive being to extend outreach and engage with more young people, hence hearing more views.

This study highlights how valuable peer to peer learning can be for young people. Participants were asked in their interview to bring in photographs of meaningful citizenship experiences, including examples of what citizenship meant to them. One of Denise's photographs was of her group in Scout Leaders on a night walk. She felt that this was a meaningful aspect of her citizenship; the night walk required the group to work together and support one another. A key element of this walk was learning different skills from more experienced members of the group. She described her experience of doing night walks as part of this support and, despite it being daunting to begin with (leading a night walk for the first time), someone with more experience always took you 'under their wing' and shared their knowledge and skills with the newcomer. She explains that the hike was 'somewhere we had no idea where we were, we were just given a map and a compass' and that each person gets a turn leading the group.

Denise: usually when you go on the night hike with explorers they'll start off with someone and then every half an hour or 20 minutes that'll change. So everyone gets a chance to be in that leading role and to experience it to know what they're doing. So it's not just always the same person saying we need to go this way or that way, it's like everyone gets the opportunity to learn from it

Interviewer: So how did you find taking that role?

Denise: Erm, daunting at first. But it's sort of the sense that, if you don't know the skills initially, someone else in that group will know it and they can help and teach you along the way. And so it's really useful in that sense as well

Together, the group communicate and support each newcomer to the leadership role. From this, each has a turn at learning the skills to navigate an unknown area in the dark, and learning how to do so from their peers. Denise goes on to explain that, despite being a daunting prospect, the skills acquired are valuable learning opportunities. The individual learning how to lead the hike for the first time is gaining a skill, such as learning how to read a map, and thereby gaining the confidence to lead the group. However, it is not only the person learning to read the map and compass who gains something from this experience. The person teaching their peer also learns how to communicate and explain information to other people. Denise's confidence improved over the time that I knew her in the youth council and as she explained in our interview, a number of experiences led to this. Learning from one another, sharing information and support made her feel capable to do things herself, and in turn pass on information, knowledge, or skills to other people. As Larkins (2014, p.8) points out, 'dominant contractual and universal definitions of citizenship exclude children from the status of citizenship on the basis that, as not-yet-citizens, they do not have the competences associated with citizenship, such as rationality and independence'. Leading a night walk, debating an issue, and being prepared to listen to other people even if their opinion conflicts with yours are all examples of how young people enact their citizenship by demonstrating independence. What is demonstrated here is that, in their own view, how young people felt they can learn skills and competency through participation in everyday life offered them opportunities to acquire skills of active citizenship *through* social practice (Percy-Smith, 2016).

Learning new skills, personal development and broadening their understanding of the world were all considered important aspects of being a citizen by participants in this study. Lave and Wenger argue that 'learning (and therefore participation) is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived in world' (1991, p.35). Young people in this study seemed to share this attitude and were aware that what they learnt in their formative years would enable them to participate in society, both now and in the future. A running theme in this research was the practical element of learning. This involved considering what use can be made from what is being learnt, and that learning something in a practical way could help understand the relevance and meaning it had.

Larkins (2014) draws upon ideas of social contributions to relationships of interdependence in her research on how children enact themselves as citizens. She identifies play as a means of social benefit in which children contribute to their own social health whilst becoming equipped with skills useful for future economic contribution. Part of what participants found so appealing in the youth council was how much fun they had while participating there. The youth council was often seen as a break from school, somewhere they could be themselves and have fun. In interviews, participants discussed their experiences of learning in relation to citizenship. They demonstrated a willingness and desire for learning that not only involves having fun and being sociable, but an attitude that is also transferred into other areas of life. The key element to this is being inquisitive. Youth was considered the best time to be learning, not only skills but about yourself, your interests, what you want to do. But most importantly, the best time to be experimenting with each of these ideas. Youth in this sense is not static and it is not timeless. For Keith, your youth is for learning, while there are fewer opportunities to do so in adulthood. He argues 'if you don't learn now you're going to have to learn later and I don't know whether that's the most efficient use of your time in your older years.' This thesis conceptualises citizenship as a process rather than an outcome, identifying learning a meaningful aspect of citizenship suggests that there is also no end point to learning either. What is highlighted by Keith, and many other young people in this research, is that they feel a need to prepare for their adult lives and that learning acts as a way in which they can have some control over the uncertain. Young people in this study were particularly concerned with how they prepare for their adult futures and their next life stages, be it employment or further education. This preparation for 'adult responsibilities' is reflected in educational settings and has an established political narrative attached to it (Beck, 1998; Crick, 1998). It is not a new phenomenon; as highlighted in chapter two, and research illustrates that, in an increasingly neo-liberal society, many young people share concerns

regarding the stability of their future, seeking ways to ensure security (Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Ikonen and Nikunen, 2019).

In many ways these concerns are reflective of how young people are taught through formal educational institutions; that the work they do at school is in preparation for life after school, namely employment and independent living. While their engagement with participatory structures encouraged young people to be aware of their rights, one of which involves influencing decision making that affects them (UNCRC Article 12), tension arose when these two things align but are in conflict with one another. Young people learned to communicate their needs in Cardiff Youth Council. Their experience is that they are listened to and are therefore able to be part of the decision making processes involved in the organisation. Whereas, at school, their experiences, as related to me in interviews and focus groups, reflect a more passive role of absorbing information with few opportunities to influence the process in the way they want to. This research advocates for a broader understanding of citizenship that acknowledges its relevance in young people's lives. One way of achieving this is by recognising the ways in which young people exercise their agency in, for example, directing the trajectory of their own lives. Larkins (2014) inquires whether activities of personal benefit can be citizenship actions. In the case of the young people in this study, it might appear that many of the activities, actions and events do not strictly fall under simply one of two categories that Larkins outlines: personal gain or social benefit. In the youth council the two are intrinsically interlinked. While having fun and developing their personal skillset, they also encounter a number of opportunities to contribute to social causes. One way that this research does not line up with Larkins' study is that the young people in this research are engaged in formal participatory processes. Whereas Larkins (2014) highlights the importance of considering how 'children do not participate in the citizenship they are offered, but enact citizenship of a different kind' (p.19). Although the young people in this research undoubtedly participate within formal participatory and political processes, the point that Larkins makes should still apply and be considered when exploring children and young people's citizenship. The formal processes in which members participate should not undermine the multiplicity of their citizenship practices in other spaces. As participants pointed out, the youth council only captures a small part of their lives. In the rest of their time, are they still enacting citizenship? Or is it only when they enter 'adult' political spaces such as City Hall or the Senedd?

Although personal development and merit were key motivations for many young people to take part in the youth council, they were not the sole reason for joining. While the Youth Council was

seen as a hub for opportunities to learn new skills through formal training (young commissioners etc.) smaller, incremental actions were also rewarding. This included speaking to audiences, either in the council chamber or in other meetings and events, where members could discuss different opinions and argue their points of view on particular issues. The day to day running of the youth council was seen as a key opportunity to improve these skills, however, it was only on reflection that participants recognised this, rather than being motivated to participate in order to 'improve' and develop as citizens. The primary motivation for their participation in the youth council (as discussed in chapter four) was to make a difference in their local community. However, acquiring these skills made their further civic engagement possible, as their access to additional opportunities were expanded. This resonates with the findings of Luping (2011) who identifies three categories into which motivations for youth volunteer participation fall: responsibility, personal development and pleasure. McGuire et al. (2016) also found that young people participated in voluntary activities that allowed them to meet their own personal goals, develop skills and network with other young people and adults. They argue that participation programs should focus on strategies for engagement that promote personal goals to draw young people in, and that retention is predominantly influenced by positive social interactions once they are there. Experiences in the youth council also reflect McGuire et al's observation that 'through their participation in youth programs, young people have access to opportunities to learn and build important skills' (2016, p.8). It is from these opportunities presented to them by the youth council that participants felt they gained their ability to engage (as citizens) in their communities. They identified this most clearly as citizenship, particularly since these opportunities enabled them to share their skills and information with other young people in Cardiff. Furthermore, the young people in this study argued that these experiences gave them confidence to voice their opinions on issues that mattered to them, thus presenting more opportunities for them to participate civically. Here we can see the benefits in conceptualising citizenship in broad terms, as it allows us to recognise the ways in which young people make contributions to society outside of the narrow parameters of voting or working.

5.2.1 Expectations of School

Participation in events and activities within the school setting can provide essential learning experiences for young people. These often involve working in groups, solving problems and learning to manage their time and workload. Citizenship policy has, until recently, been predominantly implemented through education, thus, aimed at children and young people. In this

respect, 'youth citizenship' is frequently associated with the idea of learning, or teaching citizenship. What participants viewed as valuable citizenship learning often was not always reflected in their experiences in school. It is not uncommon for informal learning locations to be set against a school setting. As Cartwright (2012) argues, the main difference between formal and informal education is the level of control that one has over the physical environment. Schools have a high degree of control over how learning is organised whereas informal educators seek to foster learning through relationships. Cartwright indicates that this means that informal learning is often difficult to see and measure. The young people in this study felt quite strongly that they benefited from their informal learning, however, Lave and Wenger (1991) caution against sharp dichotomies arguing that education is, instead, a continuum. While discussing differences in their experiences of learning in both formal educational settings and informal voluntary settings, participants argued that having a greater say in the former would improve their ability to learn.

This was most evident in discussions involved in the Curriculum for Life campaign. Part of the frustration felt by this campaign group was that young people were often spoon-fed useless information in regard to citizenship. They sought changes to the curriculum that would incorporate more engaging and relatable material and activities that would help them learn about their citizenship. Specific areas that were highlighted in meetings as an issue include PSE, Welsh Baccalaureate and other development schemes that the school ran, such as Enterprise. It is important to recognise that not all participants shared such a negative opinion of school. Keith felt very able to influence decisions in school and voice his opinions. However, as a member of the Curriculum for Life campaign group, he also felt that school (in particular, PSE) did not prepare its pupils for practical life skills. While many participants expressed feeling a lack of agency within their schools, Keith's experience was very different. In our interview he explained how tasks such as Prom Committee, Head Boy and Eisteddfod gave him experiences of responsibility and opportunities to influence decision making.

Keith: And we kind of insist our teachers that we work independently of them, like to a certain extent. We have one person really, who manages our finances, which is something quite important. But otherwise we really do insist that ... they leave us to it and we don't want to have to ... students have a life outside school as much as in it and we want to be in charge of that part outside.

Interviewer: Were they on board with that?

Keith: Uhh we didn't give them much of a choice really (both laugh) Uhh, yeah, to a certain extent we were like, look just listen, if there's certain things within the school body that you need us to do. If you need us to give a speech during parents evening, if you need us tooo- uhh help out with U-Christ, cos we have Christian school, a faith school, um yeah we'd be happy to sort that out but to a certain extent again just, things that are outside of school just leave it to us. We really don't want you interfering.

It was important to Keith that he and his classmates had some control over issues that affected them outside school hours. He characterised this responsibility as particularly important to this stage of their teenage lives as 'ultimately year thirteen prom is something err no one tends to forget'. Keith enjoys this responsibility and feels proud of how well he has managed to organise his events.

just knowing that I'm held accountable for everyone else's good time and I kind of like that and I kind of like that we were able to book the Tramshed which is a really popular venue. So yeah there's a great sense of achievement in that

Keith, 18

As Trel and van Hoven (2016) explain, responsibilities such as these are 'relevant for young people for feeling appreciated and in control which in turn can facilitate young people's move into independent membership of society' (p.436). Organising an event like Prom might easily be overlooked as significant to Keith's citizenship learning. Yet there are signs of negotiating agency with teachers, making decisions, influencing an important life event and practical skills of learning how to plan events. While citizenship education traditionally takes place within a classroom setting, less formal activities such as these indicate how citizenship learning can happen in the everyday setting (Biesta and Lawy, 2006). This type of citizenship learning offers more tangible and practical engagement with civic skills and experiences, as identified by the participants in this study, that transpire into other citizenship practices.

Youth experiences in power relations differ between schools and pupils. Keith talked about the independence he and his peers had when organising events within the school. He also discussed how he learned to work in a team of people he would not usually find himself working with. When asked about this he said that they 'didn't give [the teachers] much of a choice'. Whereas

whilst in a meeting about approaching schools to promote their website, one girl sat next to me quietly said that her school wouldn't listen anyway. This disparity between schools in Cardiff is highlighted by the North/South economic divide reported by the Child Friendly City initiative (2018). Keith's case seemed to be uncommon. While identifying spaces where participants felt able to voice their opinions, they often conflated their arguments with examples of spaces where they did not feel this happened. School was frequently referred to as a place where citizenship learning was not sufficient.

[in Cardiff Youth Council] it was almost like I knew that my opinion mattered and that someone was actually listening and cared about what I was saying [...] just feeling as though I was just making a difference and that people cared. I don't feel as though ... when you go through school, no one really cares, you're just a robot being taught things and if you don't get them, you fail, if you do, you pass and that's it. That's what school ever was to me. I feel as though *through* youth council I could kind of make, even if it was something small, I was changing something and it was influential.

Barb, 17

Well you see, City Hall is somewhere I feel like I get my voice heard. That's one place I definitely feel like that, I definitely feel like I get it heard way more than at school.

Tara, 16

Where given the opportunity to express their opinions and influence decisions that affected them, participants felt valued and able to make changes in their communities and personal lives. It was within their everyday lives that young people found citizenship experiences meaningful, and school topics that did not seem relevant left many participants feeling frustrated. In this study many young people did not feel as though what they were being taught in school was relevant to their everyday experience of life. In our interview, Benny described how his experience of school had changed from GCSE level to A Level and that he found lessons more meaningful once he was given more responsibility and freedom over school projects. Learning was believed to be more meaningful when the information was not only relevant to young people's lives, and therefore more interesting, but also when it presented a challenge. Being 'spoon fed' information was repeatedly discussed in Curriculum for Life meetings as Welsh Baccalaureate's effectiveness was debated. Young people did not engage with the method of learning information and reciting it for

an assessment. They enjoyed being able to apply it to their lives and make use of it. Participants frequently brought up specific examples of what they wish they were taught in school:

we're not *taught* how to like look news either which is like urgh. Erm, you read someone's opinion, that's their *opinion* and they have lived their life and that's what's led to their opinion but that's... we actually talked about this in Oxbridge enrichment which is – *statisticians* who people do *maths*. They tend to get *really* really high salaries umm and I think that's because they're *taught* to look at data as opposed to just quantitative and they know how to analyse it and their degree is based on drawing conclusions from that which is (pause) *such* an underappreciated skill in our education system

Keith, 18

I don't even *know* how to take out a loan, or buy a house, or *anything* like that, I have *no* clue

Denise, 16

There are two things to note here. The first is that young people share concerns about the perceived uncertainty of their future, and they are acutely aware of the things they do not know which they believe to be important. These were precisely the issues members campaigned for through the Curriculum for Life campaign, which was voted for four years in a row by children all over Cardiff. The opinion that what is being taught in school is not relevant to young people's lives or preparing them (practically) for the future is not isolated (Brown et al., 2003). While youth transitions are changing under social, economic and political circumstances (Danziger and Ratner, 2010) young people in this study did not feel that these changes are reflected in their education at school. Participating in Cardiff Youth Council reveals many opportunities for its members, from various activities and trips to general communication skills gained from debating or organisation skills gained from event planning. Since their participation is on a voluntary basis, their engagement with such activities is driven by their interests. Their frustration with a lack of agency in decision making in school is amplified by their experiences of being able to influence decision making on many levels in Cardiff Youth Council.

The second point to note is that young people in Cardiff Youth Council have made these concerns known for four years, through various channels of discussions, and feel that they are still not listened to on an issue that directly affects them and is shared by a significant number of young

people in Cardiff. Participants conveyed a greater sense of agency, independence and identity through activities outside of formal education. Within these community contexts they felt they were able to exert some control over issues that affected them which made them feel valued and that they were active, contributing members of society. Biesta and Lawy (2006) called for an approach to citizenship education that is founded on 'the actual learning that occurs in the real lives of young people' (p.63). This was an important issue highlighted by members of the youth council, as illustrated by Keith and Denise above. A significant feature of the Curriculum for Life campaign was to include information and resources that were, by member's accounts, relevant to the lives of young people. School was not disregarded as entirely useless, however. Although participants in this study felt unprepared for certain decisions they were expecting to make in their lives, they believed that these were issues that should be addressed in school – a designated place of learning. The next section will discuss aspects of the youth council that young people did feel gave them practical experience and opportunities for democratic learning.

5.2.2 Opportunities in the Youth Council

Members of the youth council viewed themselves as representatives of young people in Cardiff. This was frequently referred to in meetings and careful considerations of others' opinions were made when making decisions. The youth council was seen both as a forum for discussion and decision making and a 'hub for opportunities' in which members could learn and gain skills. Participants highlighted several ways in which they felt they learnt through their participation in the youth council including, for example, formal training for Young Interviewers and Young Commissioners.

Keith talked about how skills and training are part of the membership of the youth council. Working on different campaigns involved learning a variety of skills such as writing a survey, interpreting that information, interviewing people about the issue their campaign addresses, and designing websites, posters and videos. Keith found these skills particularly valuable and explained that creating a survey was only one example of which skills he has learnt whilst being a member of CYC.

And you, you know, *how* you frame a question? How you make sure that everyone's views will be somewhat encapsulated in the survey. But also having the survey sent out

and getting stuff back and getting your results and going to people and saying this is what's going on

Keith, 18

The points that Keith makes here are precisely the ones that were made when designing my own study: the considerations he has to make in designing his own survey and gaining a better understanding of the issue his group is interested in and deciding what to do with that information, how to disseminate it, and evaluating what influence can they have with their findings. These questions (and skills) are certainly useful beyond the parameters of the youth council, and as Keith indicates in our interview, he can carry these skills forward in other areas of his life. These views were not only expressed to me in interviews, they were shared by many of the youth council members during my fieldwork observations:

Young interviewers helped on Families First, Nurse interviews. The people involved saw this as a "useful opportunity" to understand what is involved in interviewing. They could "get a view of what it's like before we go to uni or work" and explained it was less stressful than you might expect. "The person who interviews you wants you to succeed, they don't want to pick apart what you say"

Fieldnotes (15/3/2018)

Experiences gained through membership of Cardiff Youth Council were often seen as practical and applicable to everyday life. This, in turn, was part of what members of the youth council found so rewarding and enjoyable. Denise was contacted by one of the Youth Workers and given the chance to apply for a gliding scholarship. In our interview she talked about how intimidating the experience had been, travelling to London on her own and meeting new people. The experience gave her a sense of independence as she had never travelled alone before and characterised herself as a relatively shy, introverted person. While reflecting on the experience, Denise said that she had learnt lots of practical skills, from going through an interview process to using public transport over long distances on her own. She described how in her first driving lesson she felt more capable than she would have otherwise since she had already had some experience operating a machine with pedals.

my driving instructor said it was the first time he's ever had a first time driver who hasn't stalled *once* on their first driving experience. And it's because in the glider you have

pedals which control the wings so you have to be really delicate with them and sometimes really strong. Right, so I had the pressure control, so it's things like that, it's the little things, I didn't even *think* about at the time

Denise, 16

Denise laughed and smiled while recounting the story in our interview. She appeared proud of her achievements, not least for beginning to put herself forward more often and speaking up in meetings. Discussions in the youth council also presented themselves as opportunities for members to learn and develop their skills. Participants expressed that a beneficial element of being a member of the youth council was that it opened up opportunities to attend various events, courses and work experience. Although it was not considered the primary reason for joining, these activities, such as the gliding experience, contributed to their ongoing learning and a sense of growing independence. Both were believed to be highly important, not only for higher education or future employment, but also in developing a sense of identity and belonging to a place and a group of people. This in turn was articulated as growing in confidence which was described as an important by product of attending youth council (Matthews, 2001).

Keith said that being a member of CYC helped you understand how to work with other people to and other "basic skills" such as speaking to a crowd or "the person next to me".

He saw these as "consequences of being part of it" which helped to build character.

Lauran said that CYC "opens your eyes" to social issues and brings perspective so that they can take it to schools.

Fieldnotes (15/3/2018)

Participants gained much more than merits and qualifications in the youth council, they gained life skills and the confidence to speak to people. They gained a broader understanding of the world which could influence the decisions they made in other areas of their lives. Cutler and Frost (2001) found that initiatives focusing on social participation strengthen young people's bond to their community whilst equipping them with skills needed for effective citizenship. Participation in spaces such as the youth council reassure and reaffirm young people's capabilities and leads to participation in other social and political spaces.

Toby explained that he would get to the end of the year and think “I’ve just done so much”. He listed off managing an event and giving presentations as examples and went on to say that if he found himself in a situation in the future, he would think to himself, “Oh, I’ve done that before”

Fieldnotes (15/3/2018)

It was common for members of the youth council to consider the usefulness of their participation in activities and how each experience might help in preparation for future experiences. These narratives are seemingly used to help settle youth anxiety about the future once they leave school, home and the youth council where they have the support of their teachers, parents and youth workers and begin to lead a more independent life. As Ryan suggests, such activities evoke feelings of reassurance that he has gained skills to support himself in this imagined independence: “Oh, I’ve done this before” – I know what to expect and managed it the first time, so can manage it again. It is as if each person is developing a repertoire of skills to carry throughout their lives.

5.2.3 Not Just ‘Good Grades’ – Expectations and anticipations of adulthood

Learning life skills was something that members in Cardiff Youth Council were very passionate about, speaking emphatically on the subject both during interviews and throughout their contributions to youth council meetings. Consequently, what was referred to as ‘life skills’ by members of the youth council became the focus of a large portion of their involvement in the youth council. Several of the youth council campaigns related to the learning of life skills or learning to manage challenging experiences that young people face in today’s society. Campaigns such as First Aid, Curriculum for Life and Mental Health all advocated for the right to be educated and ‘prepared for life’. In this case ‘prepared for life’ was understood in more practical and general terms ranging from the ability to manage money, staying safe online, finding your first home and information around healthy relationships. Discussions amongst participants also often led to them identifying need for further support and education relating to their everyday life experiences. This included accessing information, reading the news and coping with the stress and anxiety that comes with an increased workload and high educational standards. Along with the rhetoric that university was not only the ‘gold standard’ in the UK but the expected trajectory for many, participants also discussed the negative impact this has on young people and applauded the government’s attempt to accommodate ‘non-academic’ students through B-Tec qualifications and apprenticeships. Despite this, most participants fell into the category of university applicants.

and I guess when you read the news about people or especially young people who are suffering from you know, *worrying* amounts of mental illness (pause) *yes* we are- we do have a lot of pressure put on us and I think we are in a very competitive world and you know, getting into university, or even the *top* university is *so* difficult these days. So obviously the pressure is building. But, and I think it's ok to have pressure built on you (pause) you know, it's a different world ... but we're not taught how to appreciate down time and sometimes you don't have to be everything to everyone and if you upset someone it's not the end of the world because you can't please everyone

Keith, 18

Here, Keith understands the need for examination and academic subjects. However, what he argues for is a more supportive intervention from schools to ensure that the pressure that students feel is properly managed. Returning to the idea of situated learning, a more practical approach to issues such as mental health would have a greater chance of equipping pupils with the skills to ultimately support themselves. It was argued in some of the youth council meetings that mental health was not given priority in schools. It was believed that in cases where young people were flagged as at risk of mental health issues, the necessary support was not always provided due to potential interference with upcoming exams. It was believed that exam results and league tables were a contributor in these decisions. Young people frequently reported that greater involvement in *what* they were learning at school could make the pressure of achieving good grades more manageable. Tensions between what is taught in school and which of these lessons are believed to be of importance to its pupils are not new. Brown (1987) highlights that what is taught in formal education settings is not applicable to many of the pupils attending, particularly in the case of working class students. Qualifications have become indications of moral value for those looking to enter the labour market and what becomes pertinent is the inability for comprehensive schools to accommodate the variety of educational needs of its pupils. This concern is, in many ways, the foundation of youth issues campaigned for by the youth council. Even in the late 1980s, it was being noted that employers no longer relied solely on academic achievements but were also looking for soft skills and experience, something that members of the youth council were increasingly aware of. Heath (2007) identifies attributes which are becoming increasingly attractive to young people who are seeking self-development including 'communication skills, organisational skills and team working skills' (p. 94). Participants from the

youth council also identified these as important aspects of their transition to adulthood as they work their way toward entering the labour market.

It's not all about *grades* and *academics* it's about experience as well - what you do. Cos universities want to see *how* you manage your work life *with* like, your spare time. They wanna see like, awh I can get 15 A* if I try harder. Because in the end people quit because they can't cope with it. And that's what I learnt. And I think if the pupils had more of a voice about what they wanted to learn, it would be *much* more, like, effective on us

Dita, 16

There seems to be an understanding of why students are encouraged to achieve high grades in school, however, what is taught to students does not appear to always have a practical application to young people. Brown argues that a more vocational education is necessary to ensure that the future workforce meets the social and economic needs of a society. Also of growing importance is the 'personality package' and the increase of 'upskilling' amongst young people as a consequence of societal shifts to a knowledge economy (Brown et al., 2003). It is this practical application to everyday life that seems to enable our participants to engage with the material in a way that they can relate to personally. This, along with the concerns about being prepared for 'the future' were the main motives for the Curriculum for Life campaign. As this chapter has argued, it is these concerns along with an awareness of the temporality of youth that makes young people want to learn. For Dita, academic knowledge alone is not enough, in her opinion,

I feel like, obviously curriculum for life and work experience – they *really* affect us now. Cos like, you know, universities and sixth forms, they want us to do things. If you don't have work experience, then what have you done? Yeah you've got good grades or whatever, but what experience have you got to be able to *do* this job? Cos I mean (pause) there's this meme I saw, there's this girl who got 15 A stars and she was like, I've got 15 A stars but I still don't know how to ride a bike. It's kind of like those things. We can have extremely bright people but if they can't apply that to like everyday working things then it's kind of pointless isn't it? I feel like that's why we need to change stuff in the curriculum. So um, if we can like learn all these things, how are we going to apply it?

Dita, 16

Both Keith and Dita demonstrate concerns about the uncertainty of their future and the perceived difficulties they expect to face; getting into the 'top' university and facing competition in the process. Dita argues that the learning she and her peers do in school is not sufficient. Getting 'good grades' alone is not enough. It is not a new concept that children find it difficult to relate to everyday life what is often taught in school, such as algebra. However, what is concerning is how long this issue has existed and the lack of development the UK education system seems to have made. What seems to be at issue here is the lack of involvement that young people have with what they learn in school, and how they learn it. It is adults who invariably decide what it is that children and young people should know (and learn in school) based on their own understandings of the world. As Percy-Smith (2016) argues, participation is often interpreted as children's views inputting to an adult agenda as opposed to collaborative action. While their opinions in the youth council are listened to and encouraged, the lack of opportunities to influence decisions that directly affect them in school leave young people feeling disconnected.

Young people in this study reported that they experience more pressures and higher expectations – 'it's not just about academics'. They felt the need to be able to show that they are practically capable as well as academically capable in this competitive, meritocratic society. The informal citizenship learning that this study advocates for can, then, also become a burden of sorts to the young person aspiring to a particular career or university admission. Such additional pressures on young people shift notions of everyday learning and skill development towards an oppressive expectation of universities and employers who require 'more than just grades' and more of the 'soft' skills and experience (Beck, 1998). However, young people's participation in activities that contribute to their advancement in education, training or employment are not the sole motivation for their participation, as identified in chapter four. Certainly, it is an element of their participation, a benefit of sorts. However, without other motivating factors, such as making a difference and, possibly most importantly, having fun, the 'self development' element of this participation would not be enough. This a core finding for the thesis; young people have to *want* to participate, however it has to add value to their lives in one way or another. This is particularly evident in the number of young people who displayed an interest in the research compared to the number of people who continued to participate further and contribute their time and energy to interviews and focus groups. Even further, to go away and take photographs for the purpose of research. Comparably few members of the youth council chose to partake in this phase of the research. Something that is under remarked is the importance of what is often considered to be mundane choices that are made by young people everyday. The choice to participate in

someone's research, or to spend their time doing something else, for example. The acquisition of skills and additional merit might very well be perceived as oppressive to young people if it were for the sole purpose to enter employment or to attend university. But the reality is that there are a multitude of (valid) reasons for young people's participation in everyday citizenship learning which are attributed to their decision making. This contribution offers room for more formal educational settings such as schools to consider these motivations and their impact on the learning experiences of their students. This study suggests that young people are at least happier and more motivated to learn and participate if it is perceived as valuable and meaningful to themselves.

5.3 Recognising Youth Citizenship

Young people in this study recognised that part of their everyday lives was to prepare for adulthood which comes with increasing responsibilities. For them, learning was an integral part of the transitional life stage of 'youth'. It was a time for learning things about the world and learning things about yourself, your identity; shaping who you are and who you want to be. Making decisions that will impact your future. For the young people in this study, learning and self development was an important and meaningful aspect of their identity and it provided them with a sense of security for their uncertain futures. However, this was not captured by notions of being 'taught' citizenship. Rather, learning was part of their citizenship in that it involved actions and contributions. There were many instances where participants found learning experiences useful to their lives now, for example, gaining confidence, development of the CV, establishing friendships and identities. However, a large proportion of learning was considered useful and important for their futures. As already mentioned, learning and self development were often conflated with school and formal spaces and structures of learning. This was particularly clear in the discussions that took place in the Curriculum for Life group, which I spent a large portion of my fieldwork shadowing. It is interesting to consider that the focus of citizenship policy is to educate young people in preparation for 'full' citizenship. With a fear of apathy, policy initiatives have sought to encourage electoral participation and 'good' citizenship behaviour. The concept of the 'good citizen' can be linked back to Biesta and Lawy's (2006) argument against a citizenship-as-achievement approach which is commonly adopted in education settings and tend to emphasise notions of duty and responsibility over rights. In their study Smith et al. (2005) found that young people identified notions of 'good citizenship' as participating constructively in the community, from being polite and considerate to more actively helping vulnerable members of the community. These types of discourse can be problematic for conceptualising citizenship and

create exclusionary boundaries for young people whose citizenship practices are not so easily defined. Under the notion of the 'good citizen' would only the active and more vocal members of the youth council be considered so? Although the participants in this study might be perceived (by some) as 'good citizens', participating in ways that fit normative understandings of citizenship, for young people, citizenship is far more nuanced than merely the 'traditional' pathways of civic engagement that involve meeting with government officials and policy makers for example. For the young people in this study, citizenship goes beyond this and encapsulates a diverse set of ways someone might make contributions to society, that the parameters of 'good citizenship' would overlook, as has been discussed in this thesis.

Participants in this study saw learning as a way to gain control over their own transitions to adulthood. It was a form of empowerment in which they could use their agency to achieve their goals for the future. Where usually teaching and learning would be something that is administrated in a formal setting, to ensure that young people are prepared for entering the 'adult world' of employment and voting, young people have identified learning as something that occurs in their everyday lives in almost all situations. Uprichard (2008) argues that viewing young people as both 'being' and 'becoming' acknowledges their competency *now*, as a condition of the social context in which a person is situated, as well as their ability to make conscious and subconscious decisions about their identity and future. This appears to be true insofar that young people in this study very much saw most of their efforts and activities as either preparation for the future (both further education and employment) as well as working towards and achieving things through their efforts right now. This is not to say that they did not enjoy these activities and experiences for what they were in the present. They provide social opportunities, play and down time. In her study, Larkins (2014) points out an element of self-reliance of the children in her study that highlights the interdependence between children and adults, particularly in adults' dependence on children's contributions of caring. An example of this was when Denise and her brother found themselves caring for their parents and taking a more responsible role in the family home when their mother became hospitalised. Due to the seriousness of her father's disabilities, Denise took over her mother's role as carer while also keeping the house running by cleaning, cooking and doing the food shop. This is an example of how young people can often take on responsibilities within private spaces. Larkins' argues acknowledging children's contributions of social good wherever present is particularly important for valuing young people's citizenship practices that are often overlooked. Young people are often considered as care receivers, however, as in Denise's case, many of them can be care providers. In this sense, the young

people's role within the family and their contributions in the wider community are complex and diverse. Despite the difficulties that come with added (and unexpected) responsibilities and, of course, the worries of having a sick parent, Denise described how the experience had made her more independent. In some ways, combined with her hobbies, the increasing responsibility and independence had given her more confidence.

Viewing young people as both being and becoming allows us to consider the idea that learning is not only a part of childhood, but also, in terms of citizenship, something that prepares them for adulthood, which can sometimes be a more meaningful marker than citizenship. To many, the concept of citizenship remains an abstract and removed term, despite efforts to reconceptualise it as a contextual, more meaningful phenomenon. The concept of becoming, in particular, can be used to understand how young people's actions are influenced by the idea that 'youth' is a transitional and temporal life stage leading to the unknown and uncertainty of adulthood. As milestones are passed such as exams, prom, turning 18 and 'going out' for the first time, participants reflected on their growing independence. As Weller argues (2007) youth discourses have tended to focus on 'incompetence, dependence, vulnerability and incompleteness' (p.9), overlooking the significance of the private spaces in which children and young people participate (Lister, 2007). As changes in education, employment and housing have impacted the pathways to adulthood, it is important to recognise the different ways in which young people accrue various rights and levels of independence. This necessarily impacts on the way in which young people also achieve recognition, belonging and participation (Harris, 2015).

5.4 Discussion

The focus of this chapter is how citizenship learning is situated and contextual, grounded in the experiences of 'being a citizen' that occur in the everyday lives of young people. Collectively, this thesis aims to provide a holistic understanding of what citizenship 'looks like' in the everyday lives of young people and the spaces in which young people encounter such experiences. This chapter contributes to that by attending to the ways in which learning was a key component to the ways young people accounted for their citizenship. Smith (2016) calls for a rethinking of citizenship beyond institutional structures that views participation as social learning and empowering. Citizenship is often preoccupied with the 'end' result of being a full citizen – engaged and active – which has been reinforced by prescriptive citizenship education focusing on a citizenship deficit in young people (Beck, 1998; Biesta et al., 2009). However, this can place young people on the periphery of membership. For members of the youth council, learning was an integral part of

being a citizen. Not only did it engage them in society, and provide them with skills for the present and the future, but they also had fun whilst doing it. For them, this was integral to their ability to learn something. Participants argued that this was not necessarily through ‘formal’ learning, but everyday learning, often through each other.

Participants argued that their experiences in school failed to satisfy their learning needs and ease their anxieties about their future or life outside of school. Despite policy initiatives aiming to do so, young people do not feel that the formal education system provides them with the knowledge, information, or skills that they require to operate, socialise and participate in society. The youth council seemed to be a place where young people felt they could engage in these issues, learning skills as well as learning about themselves and their place in society. In this sense, the youth council can be seen as a space for ‘*creating* citizenship, where through learning to participate citizens cut their political teeth and acquire skills that can be transferred to other spheres’ (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007, p.8). At many times, participants felt that the youth council was the only space that they felt heard and able to participate. Even when entering other political spheres, they believed that their voices were only listened to due to the reputation of the youth council as a participatory structure.

Children and young people appear to participate more actively and consciously in the public sphere in order to be considered engaged citizens. Whereas voting and employment are more easily measurable yardsticks for citizenship, they are not easily attainable for people under the age of 18. For the young people in this study, their primary concern appears to be education (and preparation for the future). However, they have themselves identified the issues with the growing expectations of young people to supersede the academic qualifications that they acquire in school and to show that they are more rounded individuals with a variety of practical and applicable skills. Their frustration understandably lies with the belief that, despite universities and employers expecting ‘more than just good grades’, they are not being properly equipped for these other life skills. One might argue that these life skills are, as Percy-Smith (2016) suggests, accumulated through life *experiences*, including work placements, hobbies and after school activities. The issue therefore lies with school-based education and citizenship policies that aim to provide a holistic citizenship education that falls short due to the detachment from young people’s lives.

A focus on responsabilising young people and the preparation for ‘full’ citizenship, lead by the idea of undemocratic, disengaged young people, overshadows how children and young people are

citizens *now*. Deformalising citizenship as an everyday act has been argued to reconceptualise citizenship as more progressive and inclusive for young people. Informal, everyday learning made young people in this study feel valued and active contributors in their communities. They also reflected on the skills and knowledge they acquired as not only personal benefits but as something that connected them to the rest of society and further enabled them to participate in it. Young people in this study, as illustrated in this chapter, appeared to discuss their experiences of citizenship as positively supported by their involvement in Cardiff Youth Council. This was often conflated with negative experiences of school, which they described as a place that does not reflect their understandings of citizenship or provide them with the means of support and learning to prepare them for their next life stage (which they highlighted as an important aspect of their citizenship). Interestingly, Trell and van Hoven's study (2016) focuses on three aspects of citizenship to explore the everyday experiences of young people in Estonia. These include opportunities for meaningful participation, including instances and places where young people are given responsibility, as well as instances where young people are treated equally, and their achievements recognised. These aspects of citizenship were reflected in the accounts of young people in this study. Where given the opportunity to have more responsibility, agency and voice, they felt recognised and valued as citizens. Participants in this study were also able to reflect on how democratic learning through everyday life could be relevant to other settings such as work. This study, therefore, can be observed as further contribution to the empirical evidence leading to the understanding of how these aspects of citizenship reverberate between different spaces. An awareness of how adults can facilitate (or inhibit) these aspects of citizenship and impact a young person's ability to participate and exert agency, has the opportunity to enhance youth citizenship.

What was different between school and the youth council, with the exception of Keith's experience, was that there was a dialogue between adults and young people. Decisions were coproduced and spearheaded by the young people. The everyday contexts discussed in this chapter provide spaces for participation and democratic learning and, although school can be a place of citizenship learning, it is often felt to be restrictive. Through these activities, participants learned more broadly about the world, interacting with the people in it, and learning how to negotiate the obstacles and barriers that they face. Whether that be people they do not agree with, applying for a job or university, dealing with failure (or the potential for failure), or managing stress, nervousness and disappointment. As Biesta et al. (2009) and my own study propose, citizenship as a practice inherently involves learning within the real lives of young people and this deserves full recognition in policy making.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored young people's citizenship in the context of learning and participation. It offers a view of citizenship as an everyday experience in which young people (the subject of this research) are considered as active contributors to society when citizenship is understood in broad and inclusive terms. This is illustrated in this chapter by recognising and valuing the experiences that young people identify as meaningful to their citizenship. Chapters Five and Six aim to support this notion by focusing on two aspects of citizenship that young people identified as meaningful; learning and community. The chapter began by highlighting the everyday nature of the issues campaigned for by Cardiff Youth Council and the diversity in young people's experiences of such issues. A key feature of these issues is that the changes that members campaign for are predominantly founded on education and learning skills. This was something that participants believed was neglected in their education at school. The chapter went on to discuss how participants felt that Cardiff Youth Council offered them opportunities to access these rights to informal education and skills development, whereas their school education did not support them through their youth transition in the way they would have liked. By acknowledging changes in employment expectations and requirements, members of the youth council actively seek what they deem as more appropriate support to move through education towards employment and independence. The activity of learning was viewed as integral to this and was thus an increasingly important aspect of their understanding of what made them citizens.

Chapter 6: Community and Cardiff Youth Council

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss several aspects of community that arose in discussions about citizenship with young people in this research. 'Community' will be explored here as a meaningful aspect of citizenship (as identified by participants) and will discuss how the concept of community played a vital role in young people's participation in the youth council. This chapter explores how young people in this study mobilise community through various forms of civic engagement connected with their interests in campaigning for youth issues; and the ways in which members of the youth council worked to engage other members of their community to further their participation and learning aspirations.

This chapter also considers how learning becomes the vehicle through which young people perform community. Community stands as a conceptually challenging starting point. It was, nonetheless, identified by participants as their starting point. In many ways, community proved challenging for the young people in this study to explain clearly what they meant by community. However, for them, it provided the foundations for citizenship. Rather than being a set of predetermined concepts, young people's understanding of community in this study was produced through a variety of interactions and thus was far more fluid in nature. The discussion of community in this chapter will be directed primarily by the young people who took part in this study. While the assembly of this written chapter requires a structure through which ideas of community can be presented to the reader in reality the data reflects a non-linear approach to notions of community, since the term used by participants permeated many aspects of youth citizenship experiences.

At times in the research, community was denoted as something rather implicit, referred to as a way in which members of the youth council support and befriend one another and felt connected to society. It also manifested in their motivations for joining a campaign subgroup, issues that they could relate to and consider the needs of other young people who share those experiences. While some participants felt little attachment to their local neighbourhood communities, they were able to draw on other spaces where they felt a stronger sense of community, which was used to further articulate their understandings of citizenship. Where young people feel excluded from spaces and communities, they sought out and formed their own (Henn and Foard, 2014). Joining the youth council was often as a result of members looking to fill their free time outside of

school and home. Participants reflected that when they discovered the youth council they felt ‘a part of something’. However, the youth council also acted as a way for young people to feel better connected to their wider community in Cardiff, since this was where their activities and impact was. For some, this encouraged them to connect with more social groups and different communities and participants felt a sense of belonging and purpose. They felt a sense of direction, when before they had not. However, as our discussions shifted focus to the different spaces in which participants spent time in, more complex notions of communities were foregrounded. Participants made clear that while the youth council was an important part of their civic engagement, citizenship (and community) existed in many different aspects of their lives.

6.2 Conceptualising Community

As Bell and Newby (1972, p. xliiv) point out: ‘everyone, it seems, wishes to live in a community’ and participants drew upon ideas of collective interests and belonging. In focus group discussions, young people identified ‘community’ as a key aspect of their understanding of citizenship. They felt that without communities, a tie to other people and a sense of belonging, you were simply an individual. From their perspective, it was the connection to other people, be it in your local neighbourhood, country or with others who share an aspect of your identity or beliefs, which enabled one to participate in civic life. On the whole, it was agreed amongst participants that the idea of belonging to a community was meaningful and important to their understanding of citizenship. However, when asked for more detail as to what ‘community’ meant, young peoples’ explanations were vague.

Someone who belongs to a place which they consider their own

Dita, 16

Lister et al. (2003) found that young people in their study understood citizenship as a ‘universal status’ (p. 237). Resonating with the community narratives outlined in this chapter, their participants also conceived of citizenship as someone living in a certain place or country, drawing on notions of belonging and seeking out a feeling of being a part of something. To members of the youth council, citizenship was enacted and experienced within communities, engaging with different social and political issues. It was possible, and common, for participants to identify their membership to a variety of communities. This was illustrated in discussions about where they felt their citizenship experiences occurred and took place.

Cos like, school, in town, say if I was down the fields... say if we're in City Hall, at home, like you're all part of diff...it's different communities

Tara, 16

Participants related civic participation to a feeling of commitment to others in their community. This was something that influenced their decision to become a member of the youth council as well as their involvement in community activities, which enabled them to act on their desire to care for the community. Many of their discussions portrayed moral overtones to the concept of community and one's civic obligations. Participants' understanding of citizenship also had a strong association with the idea that people in society should want to help one another (Smith et al., 2007).

Tara: Err, yeah, but also ... I dunno, we're just *not* a community at all

Sammy: Everyone's focussed on their own thing and like, they don't want to be a community like...

Tara: They're too busy looking after themselves

Sammy: Yeah, when they should be like, to *be* a citizen, we should be helping each other. Just like, making it a nice place to live

It was acknowledged that it was not always the case that people wanted to help one another and many participants discussed how they felt excluded from their local neighbourhoods as their sense of belonging and connectedness became less related to their immediate neighbours and more in social groups they formed with others. Participants acknowledged a growing individualisation amongst members of their communities and believed that this did not create meaningful experiences of citizenship since their idea of citizenship related to feeling a connection to other people.

For many, their involvement in the youth council fulfilled the desire to belong to a community. Members of the youth council felt a sense of community amongst themselves, particularly as they met as a group with a shared interest. They considered issues that affect those who live in their local communities and also worked with people to achieve their goals. A significant part of their involvement with the youth council was deliberation and debating on civic issues. The detail of their campaign groups was discussed in Chapter Four – section 4.2.2, however it is worth mentioning here that the concept of community is an important aspect of these discussions. It is

in these communities which these discussions take place, not only with each other in youth council meetings but also with members of the community they meet outside of their closed meetings. Members of the youth council called on different communities for support and information as to how social action might be carried out through a variety of networks. As Delanty (2018, p.80) points out, a key aspect of social networks is the community is 'crucial in explaining their capacity to bring about social change is that they facilitate communication'.

Participants believed that sharing opinions and experiences would improve their ability to campaign for youth issues on behalf of all young people in Cardiff, not just themselves. For this reason, the deliberative nature of the youth council worked on dispelling assumptions that young people as a group are homogenous. Instead they described young people as representing a diverse range of identities and beliefs. Much like Habermas's (1989) sense of the Public Sphere, the youth council acted as a space for young people to debate and deliberate common concerns. While it was the experience of daily life that influence young peoples' understanding of citizenship, the meetings held by Cardiff Youth Council contributed to decisions regarding what action should be taken and reflected on broader implications on society. Young people in this study argued that the issues that young people face such as insufficient education and training or mental health are not isolated to young people themselves, but are broader social issues that adult decision makers should take interest in. In this sense, their personal troubles were presented as public issues (C. Wright. Mills, 1959); they had implications on policy issues such as education, employment, health and wellbeing.

Putnam (2000) states that conversations amongst citizens are important for problem solving and claims that 'without such face-to-face interaction, without immediate feedback, without being forced to examine our opinions under the light of other citizens' scrutiny, we find it easy to hawk quick fixes and to demonize anyone who disagrees' (pp. 341-342). Crucially, deliberation within the youth council followed various actions to confront the issues debated. One cannot influence changes in the education system without speaking to teachers, head teachers, councillors, politicians or parents for example. Consequently, young people become more involved and felt more attachment to the community in Cardiff. They worked on behalf of the young constituents, but are also made connections with other members of society, which they might otherwise felt have excluded from.

For many participants their membership to the youth council was a result of seeking out people with common interests in civic participation. Participants explained that their political and social interests were not always shared by their peers outside of the youth council. This left them feel isolated, until they meet people with a mutual understanding and interest in participation. In this sense community was something that participants sought out, and often found, in social groups like the youth council. In our interview, Dita shared how excited she felt meeting people with the same interests as her and the connections she made through these encounters in the youth council.

people that kind of go there have the same interests as me, they all have like, you know...sort of want to do something and I'm always like whaaat! You know, like someone who finally gets how I feel. We finally meet people who are passionate at getting your voice heard. You feel a bit like 'so it's not just me then!

Dita, 16

Sharing interests such as these and having things in common were seen as important aspects of participants' identity and their connections to other people. These experiences were thought to play a role in 'shaping who you are' which in turn reflected in what kind of citizen you were, what your interests were, how you acted on them, who you interacted with. The sense of inclusion that is felt when meeting someone with a shared interest and social ties that then forge a community were attributed to the idea of citizenship by participants. It was a group-ness and connectivity between people doing something together rather than alone that participants believed to be integral to feeling like a citizen. This resonates with Day (2006), who cautions the reader to not fall into a trap of conceptualising community as something 'vague and ill defined' arguing that one should think carefully about what it is people within a community have in common.

In the case of the youth council, two elements key are highlighted in this chapter. One is the interest in participation and political issues, specifically those which affect young people. The second is the seeking of like-minded people, certainly those, as mentioned, who shared interests in politics, but also a general interest in meeting people similar to one's self. While youth councils have been criticised as being organised by adults and not the demands of young people (Matthews and Limb, 1998) in the case of the Cardiff Youth Council it would appear that many of its members were seeking what it seemed to provide.

Throughout our discussions of citizenship, participants frequently brought up the feeling of belonging. Sharing experiences with other people was an element of this, similar to Dita (on page 134), comfort was found in knowing that 'you are not alone'. Denise, for example, predominantly drew on these experiences while she showed me photographs of her experiences of citizenship. Many of the photographs involved communal and group activities. When Denise talked about citizenship, one of the most important things for her she said was feeling connected to other people and many of the photos she brought along to our interview conveyed this rationality. For Denise, being connected to other people resonated with her idea of citizenship. She used her explorer's unit⁴ as an example of this. The night hikes that they did in a group required a 'coming together' to work as a group.

we're all going out of our way to do this and to be part of this group and be like together and connected

Denise, 16

While communities are primarily formed on the basis of solidarity, it is important to note here that political communities require commitment and rest on action (Delanty, 2018). The common good, as discussed in Chapter Five, was the driving motivation and initial interest that attracted young people to the youth council – a general desire to improve their community. Community, is then not only the means by which collective action is achieved, it is part of the reason that young people do things; for the benefit of *other people*. This activity was thought to be a key element of citizenship and while many participants enjoyed participating in their community, it was also seen as a condition of citizenship.

So like if you're a citizen, I think you have the duty to *be active be* ... not like proactive and like changing as such, like, changing *things*. But, like I said, going back, not always *drastic* things but the little things like helping in the community and just being like a good member of society, like not being mean, not, you know, putting negativity out. Like, it's to be a good...human

Denise, 16

⁴ Explorers is a subsidiary branch for 14-18 year olds who are members of the Scout Association (a youth organisation).

As Denise indicates here, a condition of citizenship is the duty or obligation a person feels to contribute something positive to society. Participants felt that people should care about where they live and take care of that place as well as the people who live in it. Community theorists argue that the concept of citizenship is often vague and ill-defined (Day, 2006). However, participants' accounts defined elements of citizenship as small, incremental actions within the community as an element of citizenship. In short, part of citizenship, for the young people, was being kind and conscientious within your community. Despite the high level of engagement of the members of the youth council, this level of participation was not expected of other people in order to be considered a citizen. This ethos was held very strongly throughout that participation was not mandatory or expected. However, contributing on some level within the community was both a responsibility as well as a positive connection to the wider society one lives in.

Benny acknowledged that while many people might not consider their actions as having an impact on society or the environment, individual actions amount to a 'bigger picture'. This applied to both positive and negative actions and relates to the rhetoric that many participants shared in that big changes are achieved by a collection of smaller actions. In Benny's focus group we discussed whose responsibility it was to do certain things within the community. After the group had decided that collective action was meaningful to people's experiences of citizenship, Benny argued that not enough consideration was made for the environment and that people have a duty to be mindful of the impact that their actions have, such as driving a car unnecessarily. These were actions that, collectively, make a big impact. However, if people continued to think and behave individually this would have a negative impact on individuals and the lives of other people. In this sense, participants often presented an argument for communitarian views as moral values and civic responsibility is in that many of the motivations for engaging in such activities are through the concern for the 'generalised other'.

An emphasis was placed on the importance of social connectedness and civic action through deliberation (Putnam, 2000, p.340). However, the youth council (and its members) adopted a predominantly rights-based approach to citizenship, whereas communitarians might focus more on civic responsibilities that shift a reliance on the state to communities to provide support for one another. These kind of approaches have been adopted by various UK governments from Labour's push for volunteering, charity work and self-organised (Lewis, 2005) care to the Conservative's Big Society (Powell, 2013). There were moral overtones in the young people's accounts and the expectations of other members of the community to contribute to the good of

society, the 'bigger picture', through small, incremental actions. However, the main function of their involvement in the youth council was to influence decision makers to provide greater support for young people in their community. The next section explores how the geographic location impacted young people's experiences of community and how different places can play a significant role in notions of belonging.

6.2.1 Sense of place and wider community

Participants discussed community as an aspect of their lives across local, national and global levels. As discussed in section 6.2, community is not a singular entity and can exist in a variety of contexts allowing for someone to be a member of several different communities. This was what participants conveyed in their discussions about community in focus groups: community was seen as fluid and multidimensional. In an increasingly digital society (and popular among younger generations) communities can manifest in a variety of spaces. This section discusses fluidity in further detail and explores how participants used notions of community to discuss their citizenship in relation to place and identity.

I feel like community has a lot of different levels. There's community that you are physically in, there's the community that you identify yourself with in terms of like race or gender, anything that you're like *part* of that's a community essentially
Benny, 17

Benny's conceptualisation of community raises questions of locale and identity. These two concepts will feature heavily for the remainder of the chapter as we consider how they impact the way in which young people enact their citizenship. Yuval-Davis (1999) argues that citizenship should be understood as multi-layered; something that is constructed across different spatial boundaries including local, national and global in which historical context and identity are crucial. Communities allow for such shared experiences to be communicated and acted on. Participating in different spaces enables young people to learn from everyday experiences and develop their citizenship be it physically or through digital forums. In this respect, communities are fundamental in shaping youth identities as they share experiences with other people (Weller, 2007).

Community engagement further develops young people's citizenship as they form networks and social bonds which allow for the sharing of opinions and information. These levels of community

were often conveyed in terms of a 'wider community', which was important to one's sense of belonging and citizenship. It was used as a way in which participants could differentiate from being an individual in isolation to living collectively amongst other citizens which, as previously discussed, was considered very important to them. Notions of the 'wider community' were made in reference to the geographical sense of community and were embedded in a feeling of solidarity in relation to the place they lived.

being like, in the crowd and being a citizen *body* rather than like an individual

Barb, 17

I feel like citizenship is the big picture, then citizens are just a small puzzle piece. They all put in their part and make their contributions

Benny, 17

Participants referred to this connection to society as 'something bigger' and considered how individuals in their community contributed to wider societal issues and development. During our interviews, a number of activities were discussed in relation to this concept such as not littering, being informed about political issues and generally being considerate of those living around you. Examples of such contributions were deliberately broad and participants claimed that not every citizen needed to make a grand gesture as a contribution. Instead everyday, small scale contributions within the community were considered to be the foundations of social citizenship. Positively impacting their wider community in Cardiff was seen as rewarding and reinforced their sense of connection and belonging to the city.

Young people contended that any level of community engagement was embedded in how citizenship was experienced and that individualisation did not allow for people to experience the feeling of citizenship. Participation in the youth council provided young people with the opportunity to speak to people, and share experiences and information. It was seen as a place in which those involved share some sense of belonging and affiliation, and therefore young people had a mutual interest in its development. Without these connections, participants questioned how happy someone could be feeling isolated and disconnected from any kind of community. For this reason, the notion of community, and one's engagement with it, was thought to be an important feature of one's experience of citizenship.

Location is embedded in the way identity is constructed, that is to say that where someone is from or where they live impacts on the ways in which people understand and convey their identity to others. This is a salient point as participation with the youth council was primarily concerned with local issues relating to Cardiff as a community. For participants in this study, physical surroundings were drawn on when constructing their own citizenship and what this meant for their identity; and Hall et al. (1999, p.509) argue that 'issues of belongingness and shared identity are ones that young people find themselves having to negotiate for themselves as they approach adulthood'. This section introduced how notions of community were conceptualised across different spaces and platforms and what this meant for young peoples' citizenship. The next section outlines how place and belonging influenced how participants made sense of who they were and the values they shared with others and how members of the youth council identify and address the issues encountered by young people in their everyday lives (Relph, 1976). As Scourfield et al. (2006, p.15) note 'our daily embodied experience of our home locality as well as 'away' or 'abroad' inevitably shapes how we relate to constructs such as the city, town or nation'. The data from this study shows that place plays a significant role in how participants shaped and reshape their identity.

6.3 Place, Culture and Identity

Mannay (2016b) argues that definitions of Welshness are never static and are also associated with the lived experience. Many of the discussions that took place in youth council meetings, focus groups and interviews centred around the Welsh identity and participants' feelings of belonging to Wales as a country. These discussions proved to be interesting and insightful to how young people living in a multicultural city construct their identity. Scourfield et al. (2006) argue that 'national consciousness is regarded by many as a key foundation of a modern person's identity' (p.1). This appeared to be true for the participants in this study as the Welsh identity culture was drawn upon as a reference point for a number of things. This included notions of belonging and cultural identity which was often more prevalent when participants left their local environment and cultural and societal differences became more apparent. People living outside that place also illustrated their cultural differences within the national boundaries of Wales in discussions of identity and place occur then. For example, in our interview Denise recalled that when attending a gliding scholarship, she became more aware of the cultural differences between herself and those who were attending from England. She recalled how this made her feel like a Welsh representative since she was the only person from Wales.

I was the only Welsh person there it was sort of like I was representing in a sense, like representing my community and my background

Denise, 16

In our interview we discussed her heightened feeling of a Welsh identity as she introduced her peers to the Welsh language and other facts about Wales. Denise, in particular, expressed a deep connection to her Welshness and many of the photographs she brought to our interview were used to discuss this aspect of her identity. Geraint (2016) found that pupils in Wales strongly identified with being Welsh, as opposed to British. Young people in his study were annoyed by the lack of representation of Wales in British identity, such as the Union Jack arguing that Wales was rarely acknowledged as a separate nation. Although Denise did not express negativity in the same way, her Welsh identity featured prominently in her interviews and was meaningful to her experiences of citizenship. Various cultural markers that she encountered on her travels brought her back to Wales and she felt a sense of belonging and community when encountering these markers. A sense of connection to others who share her identity. This was illustrated in a trip she made to Germany with the youth council and the city had a Welsh flag amongst other flags of their sister cities. She explained that these symbols of Wales gave her a feeling of belonging. This sense of belonging was also articulated by Geraint's participants who closely associated their Welsh identity with the Welsh dragon.

And it was a sense that even though it's not where I'm from, I've never been there before, I sort of had that connection to where I'm from and that connection to home in a sense

Denise, 17

Denise went on to list a number of places where she felt this sense of belonging due to ties with the Welsh culture. When she visited Disneyland for St. David's Day⁵(celebrated in March) the characters wore traditional Welsh dress and there was a statue of the Welsh dragon. Although these might appear trivial to some, for Denise they were indicators that related to her identity and gave her a sense of belonging that relates to a more local sense of place whilst travelling in another country. Scourfield et al. (2006, p.9) point out that 'such cultural markers, though in many cases clichéd, contradictory and seemingly trivial, are important in the sense that they help define the identity of a nation in the public eye'.

⁵ St. David's Day celebrates the patron Saint of Wales and involves traditional festivities recognising the history and origins of Welsh culture.

For Denise, these links to her home community make her feel as though her community extends further than the place that she lives in. The symbols that she associated with her cultural identity thus reinforced her sense of belonging to that community. Denise expressed a strong connection with her Welsh identity and appeared to have some clarity as to how she feels about this. However, not all participants had such a straightforward relationship with their cultural identity and feelings of belonging. If place had a significant impact on how participants understood their own citizenship, then for some this served to highlight tensions between places they felt some sense of divided belonging. In Dita's case, her family were very much embedded in the Nepalese community in Cardiff and she celebrated traditional holidays and carried out cultural practices. She discussed her identity consisted of a balance between feeling Welsh and Nepalese. Her photographs presented a combination of places in Cardiff that represented her citizenship such as her home, her school and places in the town centre. She also brought photographs of her and her family celebrating her Nepalese culture and this was something that was important to her identity. Dita felt a strong sense of belonging to Wales and found it challenging when she returned to Nepal.

obviously when I go back home I feel I'm a citizen of Nepal but I'm not *really*. Do you know what I mean? It has this sort of *impact* on you that makes you feel like you're part of a place

Dita, 16

Benny, expressed some tensions between his Welsh and Portuguese identity. Benny was a very vocal member of the youth council and regularly attended meetings throughout my fieldwork. He was also an active member and took part in many of the activities and campaign events. During our interviews he held civic engagement at high regard in terms of belonging to a political community and was an advocate for youth involvement to bring about change. He argued that to feel a part of a community, to be a citizen, it was important to do something, be it on a small or large scale, to improve the lives of those around you, rather than yourself as an individual. This, for Benny, included picking up litter or paying your taxes to using your voice and protesting or campaigning for issues you might feel passionate about. However, in the focus group, he expressed some difficulty in placing himself in terms of fully belonging to a political community when another participant, Kejal, asked him 'does it make you feel *less* of a citizen the fact that you can't vote'. He responded:

I think it's always weighing on my head when something like that comes up. Because, like I'm as political as the next person, I always have my opinions on the floor [inaudible] but it is limiting because I can't do anything about it. Just because I don't *have* that, I say privilege, I'll use that word. But, it does, it's kind of like, I won't go into a career in politics because I realise I can't do anything unless I get a British passport and I really like being Portuguese, that's my family, that's the way I grew up, I was *raised* and so I don't want to give that up. But. At the same time, if I want to make a difference in *this* country, I'm going to have to do that and it just, for people who *are* aspiring in a political career but they just aren't born in the UK that's always like a barrier holding them back in not getting the potential that they could. And in terms of citizenship, that links to how much you're actually changing your society because there's people with potential who can do so much and contribute so much to the country or the city or whatever and they're probably holding themselves back a bit more than they would if they did have proper legal citizenship if that makes sense.

Benny, 17

In one sense Benny identifies himself as being politically engaged and motivated to contribute to society in a positive way. However, his inability to vote marginalises him from being able to participate in electoral politics, which he feels restricts him from making influencing decisions. It is important to remember that no one in the group was of voting age at the time of the data production, yet still Benny felt further excluded from meaningful political participation than the rest of the group, who in fact reflect these sentiments and were upset by the disadvantage they perceived Benny to have.

In relation to youth council campaigns, Benny discussed their successes with great pride and accomplishment. Whereas in this excerpt, Benny suggests that significant change can only be made through a political career, otherwise change is not achievable. A large proportion of the conversation leading up to this statement revolved around the belief that, in order for someone to be a citizen and engaged in their community, it was not necessary to demonstrate grand acts of engagement through protests or visible political actions. It just had to positively impact your community. One might interpret Benny's contesting statements as feelings of exclusion or restriction to more fully engage as a member of society seeking to influence change, making full use of what he considers to be his potential based on his political interests. In his discussion he

highlights several tensions between his British and Portuguese identity. While he feels a connection to his local community and would consider himself an 'active citizen', he would not legally consider himself to be a British citizen. Despite this, he explains that to doing a lot for his city and local neighbourhood strengthens connection of solidarity with those he shares his local experiences with (for example transport, education and race and religious discrimination) and this feeds into his motivations to participate in forums such as the youth council.

Another interesting aspect of Benny's statement is his description of voting as a privilege. He reiterates this notion by saying 'I'll use that word' acknowledging that while objectively voting might seem like a political right, his legal status denies him this and instead he experiences exclusion to this element of citizenship. To Benny, his Portuguese passport is an important aspect of his identity. His reluctance to apply for a UK passport might be due to concerns that having a British passport will in some way deter his Portuguese heritage and culture since, after moving to Cardiff at the age of three, he has become otherwise detached from his place of birth and its culture. This connection to his cultural heritage is a meaningful element of what he considers to be his identity, crystallised in the values he was 'raised' with. While he feels that his active civic engagement should be recognised with the right to a full membership to citizenship, the cost would be to at least partially sacrifice the ties to his Portuguese cultural identity. Benny also talks about people 'holding themselves back' and 'barriers' to participation that has the potential to impact change in that society. This dichotomy highlights the tension between where Benny feels a sense of belonging to the communal ties of his native country and the place he most considers 'home'. In other words, his connection to Portugal, in turn, results in a feeling of disconnection with Cardiff, or the UK. This relates to what Benny identifies as barriers; the feeling of exclusion from the membership of a group that provides one with the legitimacy to participate and influence decision making. While Benny attributes part of his Portuguese culture to place, his passport holds the greatest significance to his sense of belonging there.

Belonging to a variety of places and cultures was a common experience amongst members of the youth council and raises questions as to how young people navigate and negotiate their identity. In an interview with Keith he refers to himself as a 'third culture kid': 'I don't identify as an Egyptian because I currently *live* and have lived in the UK for a while but I *don't* consider myself *British* because I was born and raised somewhere else so I'm in this third Venn diagram type thing'. While his cultural identity is not a simple matter, he uses his bicultural experiences to discuss issues of culture in bringing society together and also forming divisive communities.

In our interview Keith acknowledged how the celebration of culture, like the Welsh tradition of Eisteddfod which celebrates the tradition of Welsh literature and music, can bring communities together and strengthen their bond (Geraint, 2016). However, he expressed concern that societies can become insular and ignorant if they do not engage in cultures outside their own. He argues that 'people just *aren't* seeing other people's perspective in things'. Keith's argument is not so dissimilar to that of the national and global concerns of immigration, free movement and discussions of inclusiveness. Keith believed that these issues emanate from a political climate where issues such as BREXIT and the election of Donald Trump construct a fear of difference. How immigrants are depicted in the media lead to a creation of divisions (Parker, 2015) in what could otherwise, in Keith's mind, could be celebrated and invested in as we move into a more globalised society.

Keith openly blamed the 'rise of extremist groups' that promote separateness. He asked: 'how do we include other people. And, how much do we gain from drawing these boundaries saying you're here and I'm here and you're there and we're just going to stay like that as opposed to let's find some common ground and let's work together'. This relates to what Benny said in his interview in regard to people feeling unable to participate on account of such feelings of exclusion and separateness. What Keith argues for is a different perspective on culture and identity, one that is more fluid and broader. While Benny had concerns that if he accepted his British identity he would be, by default, be rejecting his Portuguese identity in some way, Keith endorsed a more cohesive global society that values its citizens equally. When asked where he considers home, Keith explains that his room is his home. While he may not have a strong sense of belonging to Wales or Egypt, his perspective on the importance and celebration of cultures was informed by his bicultural upbringing.

When you go abroad it shouldn't just be 'I'm going to be a British person abroad' it should be how much do you integrate in culture in your holidays, er, which [pause] you know, if we're so reliant on people to translate to order our food and you know, just sit on the beach and not communicate to anyone, you know, to a certain extent you are entitled to that I'm not gonna intrude on that but how much are you actively trying to (pause) not just pour money into an economy by going there on holiday but trying to *widen* your horizons

Keith, 18

Essentially, throughout Keith's discussion, he links the everyday experiences - holidays, cultural celebrations - to important and meaningful ways in which culture should create a global social cohesiveness that goes beyond acceptance and tolerance and takes an active interest and appreciation in diverse cultural experiences. Opportunities to 'widen your horizons' are thus found in the everyday. Keith also highlights the risk of becoming an exclusive social group when communities too closely focus on their own cultural values and ignore cultural diversity. It is not about accepting one account of an event based simply on your immediate local experience, but rather having an open and accepting perspective of different identities and culture. Throughout our discussion, Keith becomes progressively more upset with what he believes to be issues caused by cultural divides.

I don't talk to my friends in Egypt anymore because I live here and my schedule is here and I can't...with time zone differences...so you *can't*, you almost feel like you're a tree that's growing without roots really. It's quite hard

Keith, 18

It was common for participants who belonged to more than one culture to compare their experiences in Wales to their experiences in their native countries. Keith talked about how experiences more freedom in the UK, where he has found youth platforms to voice his opinions, as opposed to Egypt. The biggest difference in freedom, he said was while his sister required a chaperone to leave the house in Egypt, in the UK this was not an issue. Kejal also discussed issues of freedom;

Being a citizen means that I'm able to express my identity freely, without threat. Especially when it comes to like sexuality, um the LGBT or people who aren't, I dunno, *different* according to society's *norms*. They're able to express freely. And speaking on behalf of people out there who are considered different to the normal perception of people, erm, they are able to walk around town and not feel threatened. Whereas if you go somewhere, let's say a less economically developed country or somewhere where you're somewhere that's got strict religious rules such as Afghanistan. Or even my country Iraq, if you walk around, I don't know, wearing provocative clothing with funky hair colours, piercing, tattoos, you could potentially face, you know, some sort of abuse or even sometimes death. But here, there is no such thing as that. *Everyone's* free to walk

around as who they are. Even, you know, in some countries for example *France*, they've banned women wearing the burka. *That's* part of their identity, and to remove that doesn't really give them the sense of citizenship

Kejal, 15

The freedom to express one's identity is considered a fundamental right of citizenship in Western societies. Kejal's experiences as a Muslim teenager girl living in Cardiff are those of openness and inclusivity. She attended a culturally diverse school as opposed to a predominantly white school certainly affects her experience. She states that in the UK people can 'walk around town and not feel threatened'. This statement is somewhat complex and might be refuted by someone living under different circumstances or with different experiences within Cardiff, Wales or the UK.

While Kejal considers herself as culturally aware (due to the number of refugees in her school) she seems to overlook or not be aware of the danger that some people in the UK might encounter due to their cultural or sexual identity. While we still see identity movements across the UK as well as internationally, it is common understanding that communities such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion experience exclusion, discrimination and abuse. For example, in 2016, following the vote for the UK to leave the European Union, it was reported that racial harassment significantly increased and letters reading 'Leave the EU, no more Polish vermin' were posted through people's letter boxes (Agerholm, 2016). This indicates a somewhat different view of cultural freedom 'without threat' than Kejal's own experience. We see this most clearly in Benny's discussion about his involvement in the Race and Religious Discrimination campaign group. Not only was this issue considered a priority for young people across Cardiff, surveys collected by Cardiff Youth Council indicated that children and young people regularly experienced such discrimination in their everyday life including at school.

Kejal used extreme examples to make her point, however, this should not be viewed as particularly unusual as, like others in this study, she uses her own experiences of different cultural norms (hers being life in Iraq) as a point of reference. As previously stated, participants in this study often compared their experiences in Wales, which were routinely inclusive, supportive and protected, to that of those in their native country which were often somewhat restricted or oppressed. Nonetheless, cultural identity and the freedom to express this was considered to be an important aspect of citizenship; both in making you feel included and accepted as a citizen, and also as a means of social cohesion and solidarity.

6.3.1 Globalisation and Community

Participants in this study suggested that globalisation has led to human movement and it was not uncommon for families and individuals to travel and live in multiple countries. Deleanty (2003, p.2) argues that ‘the popularity of [the idea of] community today can be seen as a response to the crisis in solidarity and belonging that has been exacerbated by globalization’. Many of the participants highlighted their longing for community and the feeling of belonging to a place, sharing a connection to the people who live there. Participants who were not native to Cardiff, or the UK, felt a detachment and displacement exacerbated by their parent’s travelling. However, there was also a sense from participants that they considered themselves as members of a global community and took some pride in this positioning. The way in which they spoke about global events depicted a shared identity and experience with people in a different country, of whom they had not met.

Youth council election speeches often referenced global events of which young people from all over the world inspired, encouraged and shocked members in Cardiff. There was a feeling of connection and association that impacted their sense of belonging to that community. Participants suggested a wider global outreach to identity and imagination than other researchers claim. For example, Scourfield et al. (2006) argue that children’s sense of place is fundamentally the local community due to restrictions to more global spaces. While this may be true to some extent since young people rarely have the economic freedom to travel very far, data from the youth council challenges this as participants suggest a wider, more global reach to identity and imagination than other researchers claim. As technology becomes increasingly accessible in children and young people’s lives, they are feeling a somewhat deeper connection to their global community. The internet provides a global platform for young people not only to gain information but also to communicate within those global communities and feel a shared identity with people all over the world. While discussing the use of Twitter as a platform for information, Benny reflected on his experience of watching the US presidential election.

(in a whisper) It was crazy cos, the Trump election, when the actual election was going on and all the votes were coming in, it was like five in the morning and I could see everything on twitter and I was just like breaking down in tears because these are *live* results and it’s gonna go...

Benny, 17

A lot of race related issues that I am involved in. Obviously as a person of colour it matters a lot to me. And it's obviously mainly in America but it's still very present here in places. And I try to share that as much as possible because race is such a taboo and I feel like the more people talk about it the more we can do about it and people feel comfortable talking about it

Benny, 17

Benny felt that he shared an aspect of his identity with people he has never met and through this feels a connection with them, a shared experience. As discussed in greater detail in chapter two, the internet allows young people to participate on a more global scale, offering opportunities to connect with people on the other side of the world. The other interesting aspect of this transcript is the role of the internet and widely accessible to not only information but a web of communications on social issues that people can relate to and interact with. More frequently young people are forming connections with a global community through a shared issue or experience (Kim and Yang, 2016). Social networks such as Twitter enable young people to engage with these issues on a global scale, the experiences they encounter at home are shared with those from a different country despite these experiences being part of Benny's everyday life (Vromen, 2008).

In Benny's case, his awareness of racial discrimination and access to information through the internet allowed him to follow these events in real time. While Benny may not be physically in America experiencing this event with other Americans, his digital access permitted him to share this experience with others who were there. He was placed within a global community of racial and ethnic minorities who, in this example, felt marginalised by the rhetoric that Donald Trump used. Benny discussed his involvement with the Race and Religious Discrimination campaign with Cardiff Youth Council. He and other young people in Cardiff marched in protest of this discrimination and to campaign for awareness of the issue. These acts of raising awareness, in his opinion, were fundamental to addressing the problem. For this reason, he shares articles, information and opinions of the issue on Twitter to spread awareness and invite people to discuss it. He was not alone in this. Many other participants expressed a feeling of connectedness with young people around the globe. They spoke of the inspiration they felt when youth movements overseas had significant impact and how this motivated them and helped them feel able to achieve their own aspirations. One example of this was in the youth council elections which

involved each candidate to give a speech presenting why they should be voted for each position they stand for. The following excerpt is from the fieldnotes taken from this meeting.

Layla stood in the middle of the room to address everyone beginning by stating that she did have a speech but she decided not to use it this morning when she saw students in America taking a stand against violence which reminded her of youth council. She said she wanted to draw power from that in her speech. She wanted to represent views that aren't necessarily heard such as tuition and the NHS. She talked about the way 'we view and engage in politics' and that the youth council and youth parliament was a catalyst to voice opinions.

Fieldnotes 14/3/2018

6.4 Discussion

This chapter explored how young people understand community as an aspect of their citizenship experiences. It considered how young people define community and how different spaces enable citizenship learning and develop youth identities. If citizenship is conceptualised as a process and for young people an aspect of their development, such experiences within the community are relevant and meaningful to their understanding of citizenship. Political action is often demonstrated collectively and for the young people in this study, this collectivity was part of their inclusion in society. While children and young people are often excluded from formal decision-making processes, it is important that they feel able to engage and participate where they can. Communities allow for support and collective participation; the feeling of belonging and shared interests and experiences arguably increase the wellbeing of young people and develop their abilities to have their opinions heard in a variety of spaces. Investigating the way in which young people participate in their communities and learn from shared experiences and identities allows for a more inclusive definition of youth citizenship. There was a general sense of care for the community within the youth council and members' objectives were not to merely improve their own lives but the lives of others.

While in many ways this group of young people were conscientious and did their best to openly consider the experiences of those who were not accounted for in the youth council, they were not a representative group. Throughout observation fieldwork, youth workers discussed their attempted to include young people from particular catchment areas in Cardiff but said that each year the 'same schools' did not respond to their outreach. Although invitations were sent to every

secondary school in Cardiff, the higher achieving schools would more routinely respond, whereas the schools in lower socio-economic areas would not. Participants in this study were aware that there is a large group of youth voices that do not make the platform of the youth council. More research into the reasons behind this is necessary if the diversity of Cardiff Youth Council is to improve. This is something that both the youth workers and youth councillors would like to see.

A key aspect of the youth council was the deliberation of youth issues that encouraged diverse opinions. This was something that participants identified as important to their ongoing life learning. Young people felt that the youth council would be strengthened in many ways if it was more representative of young people in Cardiff, not only in its aims and objectives in relation to the chosen campaign issues, but also the discussion amongst members would be strengthened by a wider variety of experiences and input from young people whose lives are different from their own. Community is often depicted as an ideal with a shared understanding of the 'common good'. But this can make communities somewhat exclusive. The members of the youth council often reported that they appreciated and valued different opinions that challenged their own point of view. Whether they agreed with the argument or not, it provided them with alternative perspectives on various issues that helped them better understand the social problem they were discussing.

This chapter has presented accounts from participants in this study which explore ideas of community as part of young people's meaningful experiences of citizenship. Notions of communities allowed young people to articulate their feelings of belonging and shared experiences with others. However, such notions also had a significant impact on their perceived identity and influenced the ways in which their opinions and beliefs were formed, and subsequently expressed in their engagement with the youth council. A crucial aspect of this was exposing themselves to opinions and experiences that did not match their own. While participants stated that they actively sought to be more inclusive and diverse, they felt this was a limitation of their roles as representative of young people in Cardiff since the members of Cardiff Youth Council were not reflective of all young people living in Cardiff. 'Community' is often exclusive existing on the basis that its members share interests and experiences.

Members of Cardiff Youth Council shared interests in youth issues, promoting young people's voices, politics, discussions and debates. Naturally, this kind of participation attracts interested and engaged young people, it does not always represent or include marginalised young people

and as a result, certain issues that affect young people in Cardiff are not sufficiently represented. In part this chapter aims to do more than represent the voices of the young people in this study and the ways in which they understood their own experiences of citizenship. These are voices that are as important as anyone else's. And, like anyone else's, is not the whole picture. Its analysis goes further to explore how such communities influence civic action. The issues that are experienced outside the youth council are then brought back into the youth council through deliberation and action. This can be seen in young people's engagement with wider forms of deliberation and engagement with the public sphere through online forums and social media. The information and debates that are encountered in these spaces impacts one's sense of identity and belonging to a group whom you share these experiences with. In this study young people reflected on their experiences in their everyday lives, as Benny illustrates in his discussion of race and ethnicity issues, which reflects on their participation in the youth council as their actions and discussions are informed by these experiences. Participants considered the different communities which impacted these lived experiences and were able to draw on their experiences of a more globalised membership of community.

Day (2006) raises concerns about a decline in local community in today's society. Increasing globalisation has led to the movement and dispersing of families and communities. Accordingly, communities are more likely to be formed around a common interest or shared identity. Day (2006) questions whether communities can exist in cities since many aspects of the community are shed in more urban situations. This chapter argues that in cases where young people feel excluded from their immediate neighbourhood communities, they are able to access alternative spaces and create their own communities. For Weller (2007), the community opens up spaces of citizenship for young people who are otherwise excluded from formal political institutions. This is evident from the events organised by the youth council which create bonds between its members and the wider community in which young people are able to participate and influence a variety of decision-making processes. Participation within the community provides young people with key developmental skills which crucially include feelings of worth and belonging.

Communities are not static entities which young people simply contribute to but rather they are a result of 'an ongoing dynamic and reflexive relationship between citizens and society' (Percy-Smith, 2016, p.410). They provide more meaningful experiences which feed into young people's identity work, values and beliefs. For young people in this study, community was not only something that provided a sense of belonging and connection, it was also an integral mechanism

in how they achieved their goals in the youth council. Different communities acted as networks which provide information, training, support, communication and promotion for the members of the youth council. The idea of citizenship rests on one's involvement and participation in civic life and expressions of citizenship cannot exist in isolation to the rest of society. Participants in this study drew on such ideas to articulate how their membership to different communities provided them with opportunities to develop their citizenship which was an intrinsic feature of notions of identity and belonging.

6.5 Conclusion

This final data chapter concludes the analysis section of this dissertation. It has explored the themes of community, belonging and identity which were identified as meaningful to young people's citizenship by the participants in this study. Community is an important element of realising young people's citizenship; not only a catalyst for participation in civil society, it is also a mechanism for young people to explore their identities together in safe, supportive environments. A concept that establishes the foundations of their participation in the youth council – to create positive changes in the community – the youth council itself provided a space where like-minded young people could gather and feel a sense of community and belonging amongst each other. The chapter began by unpacking how participants conceptualised community and how this related to their understanding of citizenship. It illustrated young people's relationship with issues of identity and culture that arose in the data and discussed ways in which participants perceived themselves as citizens in a national and global sense. The examples provided in this chapter have demonstrated the need for a more socially connected understanding of citizenship, particularly for education policy which participants felt was *disconnected* to their own understandings and experiences of citizenship.

This chapter argued that the globalised sense of belonging and citizenship that participants articulated in their interviews influenced their participation and civic engagement. Many participants in this study shared their identity with numerous cultures which evidently impacted their lived experiences and sense of citizenship. These differences highlight the need adults to view young people and their needs as diverse and multifaceted and for this to be reflected in youth and education policy which the young people in this study felt was inadequate. As this thesis argues throughout, citizenship cannot therefore be confined to narrow, normative frameworks that exclude varied and contextual experiences. This chapter also proposed that the internet and other digital communications have the potential to broaden young people's sense of

identity, particularly how they perceive themselves as citizens beyond national constructs. By viewing citizenship as a process rather than an outcome, young people are provided with more opportunities to explore and develop their own understandings of the world and their place within it. The arguments presented in this chapter offer useful insights for youth policy that seeks to improve the wellbeing and opportunities for young people in Wales. It illustrates the value in recognising that young people's notions of identity and civic values inform their actions on a day-to-day basis. Consequently, encouraging young people to explore their understandings of these issues further supports their development as citizens. The remainder of the dissertation will summarise and conclude the findings of this doctoral research, outlining the ways this study can inform youth policy in Wales.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising key findings and addressing the research questions that have been answered throughout the subsequent chapters. It goes on to reflect on the contribution these findings make to the ways adults can support young people in their citizenship development while recognising their current contributions to society. This was highlighted in the analysis of participants accounts of how their interest in civic issues derives from their everyday experiences of them. This thesis provided a reflexive account of how young people conceptualised and experienced citizenship in the context of their everyday lives. It set out a version of citizenship that sought to acknowledge children and young people as citizens now rather than citizens of the future (Larkins, 2014).

The activities of Cardiff Youth Council were an important aspect of young people's accounts of citizenship and demonstrated ways that young people could vocalise their views on youth issues. However, participants also discussed citizenship as an aspect of their lives outside of the youth council and illustrated citizenship as a fluid process. In many ways this illustrates that the youth council is only one element of their lives, and that experiences in school, at home and with their friends make up a significant portion of young people's lives. Cardiff Youth Council represented only a small portion of participants' lives, and while it was the setting for this research, it did not hold the same weight for young people. Throughout the research process it became evident that for many members their participation with Cardiff Youth Council did, however, contribute to significant and meaningful aspects of their lives. Experiences encountered outside of Cardiff Youth Council were fed back into debates, decisions and campaigns. Observations of Cardiff Youth Council meetings demonstrated how identities and opinions were discovered and developed through the youth transition as members decide what issues are meaningful in their lives. These were often articulated in the arena of Cardiff Youth Council and took shape in different forms of civic engagement including debates, protests and training.

7.2 Research Questions

Chapters Four, Five and Six draw on themes identified in the research findings and considered the following research questions which the research sought to answer:

1. How do civically engaged young people experience citizenship in their everyday lives
2. What motivates young people to participate in civic society?
3. What role does politics have in young people's citizenship learning?

The literature review in Chapter Two outlined some key texts that help conceptualise citizenship as a concept used in this thesis and presented the argument that youth citizenship is a lived and contextual process of learning experiences. Chapters Two and Three lay the foundations for the analysis outlined in Chapters Four, Five and Six which discussed the how young people in this study experienced and practiced citizenship in various spaces they occupy with adults. The study found that some of these spaces allowed for greater capacity to exercise agency and decision making than others. Although it could be argued that Cardiff Youth Council was not an 'everyday setting', the findings illustrated that young people drew on their own experiences from their everyday lives. This is an important contribution to the research of everyday citizenship as it demonstrates the relevance of everyday experiences in organised processes of civic actions.

Chapter Four provided a critical analysis of how the young people in this study initially became interested in Cardiff Youth Council to raise awareness to youth issues which they believe to be important. However, their continued participation was influenced by notions of belonging and community (discussed in Chapter Six), and crucially, the positive experiences associated with young people's participation as agentic individuals. The aims of Cardiff Youth Council were to give young people a voice in areas they felt that young people's needs were not appropriately represented. Chapter Four also introduced the issues that young people in Cardiff Youth Council campaigned for, arguing that it is not enough to provide a space for young people to speak, empowering young voices requires action (section 4.3.1).

Campaigning for youth issues with Cardiff Youth Council also supported young people's citizenship learning and development (see section 7.2.1). The opportunities offer through participation with Cardiff Youth Council were highlighted by participants as being absent in school; particularly in regards to young people's ability to influence decisions that affected them (a right protected by the UNCRC). There was a strong belief that young people did not 'get a voice' outside of participatory structures such as the youth council and for that reason it served as an important platform for young people. However, while the youth council represented the interests of young people across Cardiff, the issues that were raised in debates that took place in general meetings were not always identified as 'youth issues'. This section has briefly addressed the research questions that informed the design and implementation of research methods in this study. The following section will discuss in more depth how the themes discussed in Chapters Five and Six answered these questions and what they mean for young people's citizenship.

7.2.1 Key themes

Two themes were selected to present in this dissertation that conveyed meaningful aspects to youth citizenship. These themes feature predominantly in chapters five and six. However, chapter four provides the prelude before moving on to the exploration of these themes in young people's lives. Chapter Four introduces our participants and the setting for which the findings for this research are situated within. This first analysis chapter answers questions regarding the motivations for participation with the youth council; a space which facilitates civic engagement and political discussion. It also acknowledged the potential tension between young people's voices and their best interests as determined by adults (Wyness, 2009). It addressed this by providing examples of how Cardiff Youth Council offered young people with the opportunity to make decisions in section 5.2.2 (Chapter Five). Wyness (2009) also highlights the benefits of children and young people making their own decisions which is exemplified in this study by the ways that participants felt a greater ability to participate meaningfully with issues that relate to their lived experiences. Chapter Four also begins to unpack the more mundane activities such as debating and sharing ideas and opinions that contribute to young people's citizenship development. This is then discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five which addressed notions of citizenship and learning, explored the idea that learning was embedded in an understanding of citizenship as practice (Biesta and Lawy, 2006). For the young people in this study, learning was an integral characteristic of their participation with Cardiff Youth Council. This included opportunities for formal training as well as examples of everyday learning through conversations, debates or public speaking. The process of decision making amongst subgroups also equipped members with organisational skills through the management of their own projects. These experiences were identified as forms of empowerment and ways to improve their confidence to engage with social and political issues. However, this was juxtapositioned with how participants felt they were not learning in school which they could not relate to their own lived experiences or interests.

Chapter Six addressed the issue of community in young people's conceptualisations of citizenship. Notions of learning were performed and practiced through the mobilisation of community. According to participants in this study, citizenship would cease to exist without a community (section 6.2). Young people related this argument to the need for community in order to circulate information and ability support people through various networks within that community. Cardiff Youth Council was identified as a community where young people felt a sense of belonging with a group of people with shared the same interests as them. The facilitation of learning through activities involving communication (such as debates and meetings) was a distinctive feature of the

findings of this research which related to young people's engagement in different communities by sharing skills and information with one another. This demonstrated the significance of citizenship learning in everyday settings, supporting arguments presented in section 2.3.3 that identify the issues with citizenship education. Another significant aspect of young people's citizenship was their identity (section 6.3). The young people in this study associated their experiences of citizenship with that of community and belonging; the issues they felt strongly about and campaigned for with Cardiff Youth Council was motivated by their relationship with the place they lived and the people within it. Importantly, this involved how young people identified with their culture, which this study demonstrated is diverse and nuanced. Such implications for young people's identity and belonging fed into their participation with Cardiff Youth Council.

Sinclair (2004) argues that children and young people's participation needs to be firmly embedded in structures of decision making and '[should] offer genuine participation to children that is not an add-on but an integral part of the way adults and organisations relate to children' (p.116). It was common for members of the youth council to only become more vocal in meetings as time went on and they became more confident and comfortable in that space. Fieldwork revealed that through activities that young people identified as social or 'fun' (such as the organisation of the art festival 'Folli Fest') were important contributions to the development of their identities and opinions while improving their communication skills and further participation. Being listened to and valued made young people in this study feel as though they were capable of developing their ideas and creating something as a result. The agency that members of Cardiff Youth Council were given to develop campaign agendas was instrumental in their ongoing develop as citizens. These are things that any youth group, school, class room and family can adopt. Participants in this study reflected on what they considered to be meaningful experiences of citizenship by collecting photographs and engaging in discussions through interviews and focus groups. They considered the places where they felt able to participate as citizens, where their opinions were listened to and where they were able to make the most difference. Despite education being the main focus of UK citizenship policy, young people continuously highlight school as a place where they do not feel they are fully able to develop as citizens. Places where they are able to develop what they consider to be key life skills and where they feel adults are prepared to listen and support their ideas provided young people with a greater feeling of agency in decision making.

This study contributes to an area of research that argues that citizenship is learned through everyday life experiences. Members of Cardiff Youth Council were encouraged to think freely and

creatively by youth workers (see Chapter Four) and young people in this study associated feelings of confidence with having this freedom. As Taft and Gordon (2013, p.97) argue, youth councils should 'stand in relationship to youth social movements' in order to more effectively represent collective youth concerns as opposed to those of the elite. This enables young people to draw on their lived experiences to make sense of different ways they can engage with civic issues and create meaningful changes in society.

7.2.2 Why 'Youth' Citizenship?

Why is it important to differentiate between youth citizenship and adult citizenship? This thesis argued that citizenship should be conceptualised in broad and inclusive terms that account for the lived experiences of different groups. The research explored the experiences of young people; a group marginalised from normative understandings of citizenship that equate one's membership with employment, voting and other markers that are associated with being an adult. For young people, this places them in a deficit of citizenship and positions their citizenship in the future tense which fails to recognise the many ways they act as citizens and contribute to society in the present tense. However, adopting this perspective signifies a commitment to tolerance and understanding of different experiences that relate to citizenship. It does not propose that one notion of citizenship exists for people to be taught, it acknowledges the complexities and contexts in which citizenship is experienced within. The benefits of viewing citizenship in this way has the potential to empower marginalised voices.

7.2.3 Contribution to research

This research illustrates the everydayness of citizenship that drawing on examples that young people identified as meaningful and offered an insight as to how young people understand and experience citizenship. Nonetheless, citizenship, as illustrated in the literature review (Chapter Two), is continuously redefined by social, political and economic processes as it is reshaped and reformed by different groups of society seek the extension of their rights. The subsequent chapters have shown how young people's civic engagement relates to their everyday experiences as young people and argues that acknowledging the importance of lived experiences supports citizenship learning and development. The findings from this research suggest that young people's citizenship was not fully recognised in school compared to Cardiff Youth Council where participants felt listened to and felt able to contribute to decisions making processes.

Spaces such as Cardiff Youth Council which offer platforms for young people to voice their concerns with the wider community are useful sites for the inquiry of citizenship development. This study aimed to develop a holistic understanding of youth citizenship that acknowledged different aspects of young people's lives. One of which was people's civic engagement in the setting of Cardiff Youth Council which provided opportunities to understand the issues that young people felt were meaningful in their everyday lives.

The research makes an important contribution to the growing body of research advocating for the inclusion of young people's involvement in decision making that impacts their own lives, as indicated in Article 12 (UNCRC). Namely, opportunities to do so in school settings which were highlighted in the findings as creating barriers to youth agency. At the beginning of this research journey I set out to better understand the nuances of youth citizenship and found that there were some significant challenges in recruiting participants for more in depth interviews outside of ethnographic fieldwork. Compared to the people they are used to speaking to, my research as a doctoral student did not match the importance of Assembly Members or other issue stakeholders. Consequently, interviews and focus groups provided a more detailed understanding of how participants articulated their citizenship experiences by drawing on examples from their own lived experiences. Not only did these highlight the ways that young people engaged with civic issues, it also indicated ways that youth citizenship would be better supported. This would inevitably avoid expectations of young people to conform to a concept that does not relate to their own experiences of citizenship. The development of the new curriculum in Wales has the potential to provide young people to deliberate and discuss social and political issues as part of their citizenship development.

Although not a new method, the use of photo elicitation in this research offered innovative insights into young people's citizenship and provided participants with agency and control over their own narratives. Not only did it offer a different dimension to young people's citizenship, it was a useful communication tool that shifted the focus from the individual to the photograph. Chapter Three outlined the methodological position that underlines this thesis, supporting more creative and participatory approach to research with young people helping them to articulate their experience of contentious and abstract concepts. The findings from this research suggest that further inquiry into participatory visual methods would develop more holistic and visually informed research with young people. It a creative way for young people to express their views,

and participants in this study enjoyed this aspect of the research and, as a result, produced more detailed and thoughtful data.

Researching youth issues, and actively involving young people in the research process, is an important ongoing endeavour that can positively impact young people's lives. This study illustrated the variety of ways that young people benefit from having agency in decision making, regardless of how big or small that decision may appear. It contributes to a field of research which argues that listening to young people is important to their own well-being and development, but also has significant social value. Being able to express their opinion (and have that opinion taken seriously by an adult) equips young people with essential skills that improves their confidence, ability to communicate and further participate in other civic activities. The participants in this study demonstrated that these are valuable experiences for young people's social and educational development. They clearly articulated the benefits they receive from engaging in youth work compared to other spaces they interact with adults in, most notably school. The findings from this research offer valuable insights as to how policy makers, educators and other adults can improve the lives of children and young people. As indicated in section 2.4, youth policy making in Wales has demonstrated a loyalty to children's rights, recognising the importance of youth work, promoting spaces for children and young people's voices to influence decision making and that respect is central to children and young people's well-being. Within Cardiff Youth Council, and other settings associated with the Youth Service, participants felt supported, motivated and able to make or influence decisions that affected them. These experiences were identified as improving their personal lives and future opportunities, in addition to improving the lives of other young people within their community.

An important finding from this research was that voluntary participation in Cardiff Youth Council played a significant role in the ongoing engagement of young people in civic activities. It was continually reinforced by youth workers that young people's participation in Cardiff Youth Council was exclusively on their (young people's) terms. It fostered a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere to participate in and was an important element of the overall ethos of the youth council. This finding is particularly significant because it establishes that giving children and young people agency in the level and extent of their participation does not necessarily lead to withdrawal or disengagement. It demonstrates that there is value in giving young people choice. In reducing pressure or expectations of participation by removing the elected membership, young people are allowed to determine the level of their engagement. Which is empowering in itself. Not having to

produce anything, contribute to discussions or even attend meetings regularly gives young people the space and opportunity to decide their way and extent of their participation. Participants in this study were concerned a number of issues in their lives such as family, friends, school and exams, in addition to a number of responsibilities they experienced on a daily basis. They were also increasingly aware of the economic and social pressure that awaited them post-education that they felt the need to prepare for. The findings from this research demonstrated ways that approaching youth issues in a holistic and respectful way can support young people through these challenges by accommodating them. An example of this is the way that youth workers responded to the drop in attendance to youth council during exam and revision periods. Instead of insisting attendance as elected youth councils might do, meetings and activities were postponed for the duration of the exam period, including the weeks running up to this time when members of the youth council spent time revising.

The findings from this study help to better understand why some young people engage in political institutions, and others do not. Two key features of this were that young people thrived when they were:

- provided with the opportunity to make positive changes to their own lives and the lives of others on issues that mattered to them;
- felt listened to and their opinion was taken seriously

Embedding the UNCRC into policy making in Wales has clearly had a significant impact on the lives of young people in Cardiff Youth Council. However, this type of engagement is not of interest to all young people, and so the positive experiences that members of Cardiff Youth Council will not be shared by all young people in Cardiff or Wales. Within the context of Wales, the new Welsh Curriculum offers a good opportunity to integrate an ethos of children's rights, encouraging children and young people to be actively involved in decision making on all levels where possible. The relevance of these findings also extend beyond the context of Wales and make an important contribution to knowledge relevant to policy making and youth issues. Institutions require a level of structure, however recognising and valuing the voices and opinions of young people in everyday environments such as schools has the opportunity to engage, motivate and encourage young people to achieve their aspirations and goals. As demonstrated in the research, incorporating decision making and listening to youth voices requires mutual respect and an element of flexibility. The approach to youth issues as a person-centred and contextual experience is of international value and this study offers relevant insights to youth policy making outside of the UK. Further research is necessary to better understand the ways this approach can

be implemented across other settings, particularly school since this was consistently raised as an issue experienced by participants. It would be interesting and informative to explore the opportunities pupils are provided to influence decision making or express their opinions at school in light of this research. Another area that is under developed in research is the ways that access to spaces such as Cardiff Youth Council can be widened to include young people who are not engaged or interested in civic activities. This was an issue that the members of Cardiff Youth Council were seeking to address and continued research in this area would be of value to the development of youth services. Moving forward, a comparative study in less formal voluntary settings would offer an interesting insight into young people's civic engagement and their ability to articulate their understanding citizenship in a variety of spaces. This would provide the opportunity to better understand the complexity of incorporating and prioritising young people's voices and decision making in everyday life.

As with any piece of research, there are a number of directions of inquiry and analysis that could have steered the project. While it was necessary to develop a selective number of themes to explore more fully in this thesis, the following are some examples of different directions research might have taken providing there were more time and resources available. A theme that did not get the opportunity to be further developed but would have been interesting to explore was the role of family and friendships in young people's citizenship. The idea that one's connection to family and friends as a form of community, support and development of identity arose during the data collection involving photo elicitation. Although significant, this theme was not included in the final thesis given the repetitive nature of the themes presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six in the data. However, this is an area I look forward to returning to in future research opportunities. The research could have also focused more closely on young people's experiences of different levels of responsibility; in the youth council, in their personal lives, at school. This might also consider different caring responsibilities as well as how responsibility can impact different aspects of young people's lives, as well as their ability and decisions to engage in civic participation. Alternatively, the research could have also chosen to better understand the structural organisation of Cardiff Youth Council, its ability to influence policy making and its relationship with the British Youth Council. These examples are not intended to undermine the decisions taken in this research, but rather illustrate the alternative lines of inquiry that might be addressed in future research on youth citizenship.

7.3 Conclusions

By acknowledging 'youth' as a diverse group, rather than a homogenous one, the value of youth voices in different spaces becomes clearer. Further research is needed in a variety of settings, such as youth groups in different areas, capturing different experiences of young people from a variety of backgrounds and opportunities are needed to better understand how youth policies and adult facilitators can support young people in their citizenship development. Adopting a youth centred citizenship model that values the practices that young people are already engaged in is paramount. This study has illustrated that everyday encounters with decision making, opinion forming and information sharing are considered important to young people's lived experiences of citizenship. Exploring the different ways that young people are able to articulate their needs and express their opinions as well as the barriers to access such opportunities are important in understanding how adults can facilitate agency and build young people's confidence to participate in society. With the ongoing development of the new Curriculum for Wales it would be interesting to see whether teachers are able to facilitate student voices inside the classroom, particularly since Lyle (2007) raises concerns about teacher's perceptions of young people create barriers to this. This research argues that citizenship is a dynamic and ongoing process. Education policies that equate citizenship with adulthood render citizenship as unattainable to young people until a certain level of knowledge, rights and skills are obtained. Participants in this study have illustrated that young people will struggle to feel like their opinions are valuable if their agency is restricted in everyday spaces.

Reconceptualising youth citizenship to bring value and recognition to young people's citizenship practices creates more opportunities to listen to young people's voices in everyday contexts. The young people in this study articulated their frustrations with their lack of agency within spaces like school which they felt was not relatable or relevant to their own lives. The voices portrayed in this thesis support the argument that young people's citizenship development is not confined to the classroom, but instead flourishes when provided with the opportunity to make decisions and voice their opinion. Positive experiences engaging with meaningful issues, feeling listened to and making a difference in the community resulted in participants feeling more confidence in their ability to engage further in civil society. As Biesta et al. (2009) argue, citizenship learning more often occurs outside of formal teaching. Helping children and young people develop their sense of citizenship can be done in part by providing young people with the opportunity to voice their opinions with the reassurance that they will be listened to. While there is a clear importance to ensure that young people's voices are sufficiently represented in policy making, there is a

tendency for adults to overlook that the ordinary settings of our everyday lives can provide opportunities for critical and constructive conversations that further develop young people as citizens. This study illustrates that young people benefit from the the feeling of being able to articulate their needs and engage in about issues that affect their lives. This should not be reserved for spaces created for youth voices, but rather such approaches should be adopted in all spaces where young people exist. As highlighted in the literature review, education policies aim to prepare students for the entering the employment market as well as encourage them to become active members of the electorate. Participants in this study showed a particular concern with their future, illustrating different ideas of what it means to be successful. Many of their concerns centered on a longing for sufficient skills to achieve both of these things as well as where and how they were able to develop such skills. Their perceived ability to engage as citizens was enhanced by the number of people they felt were willing to listen to what they had to say. The research setting lends itself to the involvement of young people showing interest in civic engagement as their primary objectives were involved in campaigning for youth issues.

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Appendices

A. Consent form: Young People



Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

This research is for my doctoral degree at Cardiff University (Cardiff School of Social Sciences). This will involve speaking to young people about citizenship and political issues that participants might be interested in. This research follows the ethical guidelines of Cardiff University.

My name is Zoë Clegg and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University – you might have already seen me attending CYC events over the past few months. I am interested in understanding how young people in Cardiff Youth Council experience citizenship in their everyday lives and what it means to be a young citizen in Cardiff. What does citizenship mean to you? How do you experience citizenship? I don't *just* mean the things you do within or related to CYC, but also outside of CYC, at home, school or hanging out with your mates. My research is trying to understand how you experience citizenship while trying to avoid any preconceptions about what those experiences might be.

What will I be doing/how am I collecting data?

- Observing and participating.

I've wanted to get you know you all before asking to interview you. From observing and taking part in your meetings and activities I get a general idea of what you do in CYC and how citizenship fits into your lives.

- Individual and group 'interviews'.

These are more like conversations where we talk about the idea of citizenship and how you can relate it to experiences in your daily lives. This is where we get to talk a bit more in depth about your beliefs, opinions and experiences. What issues (political/social) are you interested in? There are no wrong answers and there are no tests!

- Photo collage.

This aims to bring in a visual element to the research. By using camera phones to take pictures of anything you think is relevant to how you experience citizenship in your daily lives. If you do not want your image to be included in the research please make sure that you have specified this in the last section of this form called 'participants consent'.

Recording

I sometimes will ask if I can record an interview/conversation. This is not to share with anybody else but so that I remember the issues/topics that we've talked about more accurately and can listen back in my own time after.

Anonymity, confidentiality and consent to participate in the research

I can't carry out this study without your permission – if you do decide to take part in my research, you will be completely anonymised in my thesis. I will use pseudonyms instead of your real names and will avoid using any information that will give away your identity. As I already said, you will be able to withdraw from the study at any time if you wish no matter how far into the project. If at any point someone has a question, don't hesitate to ask.

What am I interested in?

1. What are young people's experiences of citizenship in their everyday lives?
2. Are there any political issues that are you particularly interested in? – how do they fit into your life?
3. What motivates you to participate in civil society; e.g. activities you do within your communities and with people you share common interests? – this isn't just in CYC, are there things you do outside CYC (signing petitions, posting on social media, buying local/boycotting certain shops, debates with friends etc.)

Participants consent

I understand that my participation in this project will involve questions about my opinions and life experiences as well as discussions about how I experience citizenship.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.

I understand that the information I provide will be shared with the research supervisor and may be used in subsequent publications.

I agree/disagree that notes and photos taken can be used in the research project.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually.

I understand that information I provide will be safely and anonymously stored.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Zoë Clegg School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University under the supervision of Professor Susan Baker.

Signed (researcher/student):

Signed (Participant):

If you are under the age of 16

Signed (Parent/Guardian):

Date:

Zoë Clegg, Cardiff University

cleggz@cardiff.ac.uk

B. Consent form: Youth Workers



Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

This research is for my doctoral degree at Cardiff University (Cardiff School of Social Sciences). This will involve speaking to young people about citizenship and political issues that participants might be interested in. This research follows the ethical guidelines of Cardiff University.

My name is Zoë Clegg and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University – you might have already seen me attending CYC events over the past few months. I am interested in understanding how young people in Cardiff Youth Council experience citizenship in their everyday lives and what it means to be a young citizen in Cardiff. What does citizenship mean to young people? How do young people experience citizenship? My research is trying to understand how young people experience citizenship while trying to avoid any preconceptions about what those experiences might be.

My reason for wanting to interview staff is to better understand how the Youth Council works and is organised. After following the Youth Council over the past two years I am interested in what the youth workers do in relation to both the administrative aspect of youth work and their experience of working in the Youth Council.

The Youth Council as a 'research site' will not be anonymised however names will be. With permission, interviews would allow me to accurately record the information you share with me in relation to the structure of the Youth Council, the funding it receives and your experience of working with young people.

Anonymity, confidentiality and consent to participate in the research

I can't carry out this study without your permission – if you do decide to take part in my research, you will be completely anonymised in my thesis. I will use pseudonyms instead of your real names and will avoid using any information that will give away your identity. As I already said, you will be able to withdraw from the study at any time if you wish no matter how far into the project. If at any point someone has a question, don't hesitate to ask.

Participants consent

I understand that my participation in this project will involve questions about my opinions, life experiences as well as discussions about questions about the Youth Council.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.

I understand that the information I provide will be shared with the research supervisor and may be used in subsequent publications.

I agree/disagree that notes and photos taken can be used in the research project.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually.

I understand that information I provide will be safely and anonymously stored.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Zoë Clegg School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University under the supervision of Professor Susan Baker.

Signed (researcher/student):

Signed (Participant):

Date:

Zoë Clegg, Cardiff University

cleggz@cardiff.ac.uk

