

**Engaging with art and learning democracy: A
study of democratic subjectivity, aesthetic
experience and arts practice amongst young
people**

**Submitted by Jane Louise McDonnell to the University of
Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
in September 2010**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the significance of art in the relationship between democracy and education, challenging the apolitical perspective that has often resulted from the application of instrumentalist approaches in the field. Rather than viewing arts practices as a neutral means of teaching democracy, I have built on Biesta and Lawy's concept of 'citizenship-as-practice' (2006) to investigate how the arts are implicated in the ways young people learn democracy across a variety of contexts. Specifically, the objectives for my empirical research were to add to existing knowledge about young people's democratic learning in arts contexts, and to explore the significance of young people's more general engagement with art and culture for their democratic learning. The terms of the study were conceptualised via a theorisation of the relationships amongst democracy, education and art based on the work of Mouffe (2005; 2007), Rancière (1999; 2004; 2006; 2007) and Biesta (2006; 2010). The research was conducted as an interpretative study with two sets of young people recently engaged in the arts, using an adapted version of Charmaz' (2006) approach to grounded theory. The findings of the research indicate that the young people's engagement with art contributed to their experiences of being able to act democratically or not in a number of contexts, and that it sometimes enabled them to make the imaginative leap necessary in order to learn from the experience of becoming democratically subject. The research suggests that the most fruitful way in which democratic education can 'make use' of the arts is not by teaching democratic citizenship, but rather by supporting young people as they reflect on and respond to their experiences in arts and other contexts, and by taking seriously the democratic potential of all aspects of their arts engagement.

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Table 1: Summary of research

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Appendix 1

Certificate of ethical research approval

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been made possible through an ESRC quota studentship (PTA-031-2006-00016). It has also been achieved with the participation of a number of individuals and institutions, and through the support of my supervisors, to all of whom I would like to offer my thanks.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the young people who took part in the research and who generously offered their time to talk to me. Thanks also go to the teachers, artists and gallery educators who helped to make my research possible. I am particularly grateful to Hannah, Maddy, Paul and Kate for their work in helping me to set up and complete the research.

I am also grateful to my supervisors, Gert and Rob, for their continued support and encouragement in completing the thesis. I am particularly grateful to Gert for offering both intellectual inspiration and attention to detail, and to Rob for his unfailing readiness to talk through all aspects of the project.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Pau for all his patience and support over the past four years, and all the family and friends (particularly Wendy, Richie, Andrew, Claire and Anna) who have supported me in undertaking this project.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Statement of the problem

1.1 Introduction

The aim of the research presented in this thesis has been to explore the relationships amongst democracy art and education, and in particular to address the role of art within the relationship *between* democracy and education. Central to the thesis therefore is an exploration of the ways in which art can be understood as a significant element in this relationship, and the implications of this for educational practice. This particular focus was developed partly as a result of a personal interest in the arts but also as a result of my prior involvement in a research project designed to explore the potential for democratic practice and democratic learning in gallery contexts. This project was conducted jointly with my supervisors and gallery educators in the South West of England as part of a larger, national research project into gallery education. The project – 'Enquire' – ran in a number of galleries between December 2006 and June 2007, and aimed to provide opportunities for young people to work democratically in their collaboration on art projects in gallery settings. My involvement in this project provided me with an insight into some important issues in the field, which – alongside an engagement with the literature – contributed to the development of the particular focus of the thesis.

Linked to a British Academy funded research project led by Professor Gert Biesta and Dr. Robert Lawy ('Citizenship learning in everyday life: The experiences of young people'), the thesis takes as its starting point their critique of citizenship education and their concept of democratic learning (Biesta and Lawy, 2006), applying and extending their insights to explore the role of art in this process. Key to their approach is a move away from the idea of education *for* democratic citizenship towards a focus on the actual condition of young people's citizenship, their experience of democracy, and the learning that follows *from* it (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Biesta, 2006; 2007; 2010). Rather than adding to the wealth of research that has investigated how arts contexts can be useful sites for promoting democracy therefore, I have built on their work to explore how art might be implicated in the ways in which young people learn democracy across the variety of contexts that make up their lives. The specific problem addressed in

the research then, has been how to understand the role of art in democratic learning, when this is understood as an ongoing process of learning from experiences of more and less democratic ways of being, rather than as a process of preparing young people for their future role in democracy by equipping them with the knowledge, skills and dispositions considered necessary for their citizenship. By addressing this problem, I intended to conduct research that would illuminate the broader question of the significance of art in the relationship between democracy and education, and to explore the implications of this for educational practice.

Building on a small body of literature that has addressed similar problems, the principle objective for the research has been to deepen understanding about the nature of young people's democratic learning, especially their learning in relation to experiences of democratic action in arts contexts that are specifically designed to foster democratic practice. Additionally, the research has aimed to investigate whether arts contexts without any explicitly democratic dimension can also offer opportunities for democratic action, and therefore for democratic learning. The final objective was to explore the ways in which the young people's more general engagement with art in the wider culture might also be relevant to their democratic learning both in terms of what they learn in arts contexts, but also in relation to other conditions, situations and contexts in their lives. Working with two groups of young people with recent and varied experiences of arts participation over a period of 18 months, the research questions were designed to ascertain the opportunities for acting democratically that the young people encountered in arts and other contexts; to establish what they learned from these experiences; and to understand the nature of this learning, including the role that their engagement with art played in this process.

The above objectives and questions are defined and conceptualised in greater detail – and with reference to existing research and theoretical concepts – in the following chapters. In the remainder of this chapter, I offer an extended definition of the research problem, based on a critical analysis of the instrumentalism that has dominated recent policy, practice and discourse in the field. I use the term instrumentalism here to refer to an approach in which education is seen primarily as a tool for achieving other ends – rather than as a

valuable activity in its own right – and which separates the ends and means of education rather than viewing them as intrinsic to each other. The specific manifestations of this logic that concern me involve the various trends within art and education that have resulted in a prominent view of art as a neutral and apolitical means of teaching people the right skills and dispositions for democratic citizenship. Following an analysis of these trends, I argue that in order to broaden our understanding of the relevance of art for democracy and education – and to do so in a way that recognises both the political and aesthetic dimensions of this relevance – it is necessary to conduct research from a different perspective. Specifically, instead of conducting research into how arts contexts can be used to teach democracy, I argue that it is necessary to look at young people's actual experiences of democracy in arts and other contexts in an effort to understand how such experiences impact on their learning.

1.2 Social and economic inclusion

1.2.1 Policy and practice

The promotion of social and economic inclusion through involvement in the arts has been a significant feature of policy in the UK over the past thirteen years (Sanderson, 2008; Buckingham & Jones, 2001; Karkou & Glasman, 2004). Under the previous government, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) stated that '[a]ccess to the arts can have a lasting and transforming effect on many aspects of people's lives as well as their neighbourhoods, communities, regions and even generations' (DCMS, 2009) and claimed that, 'social inclusion and the arts work together' (DCMS, 2009). Evidence of a social and economic inclusion agenda can also be noted in the previous government's stated commitment to providing a creative education for all young people (DCMS, 2009). Indeed, following the publication of the report, 'All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education' in 1999, creativity became an important focus of educational policy and practice. This agenda has often involved the provision of opportunities for arts participation and has been significantly linked to economic inclusion. In this way, creativity has been promoted as a means of ensuring an adequate skills supply for the creative industries, as well as

encouraging the kind of attributes needed within a knowledge based and creative economy more generally (DCMS, 2009).

The idea that the arts can be instrumental in the achievement of political, social and economic goals has therefore been a prominent feature of recent policy. In 2005, the DCMS commissioned a report by the Institute for Public Policy Research into 'the role that heritage and cultural policy can play in developing social capital, bridging diverse cultural communities and encouraging active citizenship - especially in poor, disadvantaged communities', (DCMS, 2009). In doing so, the department demonstrated its commitment to the use of art for promoting civil renewal, which they argued, 'involves more people being able to influence decisions about their communities and taking responsibility for tackling local problems rather than expecting others to' (DCMS, 2009). For the previous government then, the promotion of social and economic inclusion was also seen as a form of promoting the kind of participation in society that is often seen as central to democratic citizenship. It could also be argued that social and economic inclusion itself has been viewed as democratic within the recent policy agenda, in that a democratic society has been seen as one that is inclusive of all groups and individuals, and which encourages social and economic activity amongst them.

The realisation of this agenda in practice has been evident in the proliferation of initiatives, research agendas and professional activities within education and the arts designed to address issues of social and economic inclusion. Creative Partnerships is one such example. The Creative Partnerships programme was set up in schools in England in 2001 to provide opportunities for teachers and students to work on sustained projects with artists in schools. Hall and Thompson illustrate how the stated aims and priorities of the Creative Partnerships programme reflect, 'the economic importance attached to cultural activity and the emphasis on social inclusion' of the previous government's arts and educational policy (Hall & Thomson, 2007, p. 317). Other initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion through the arts have included Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), which was set up to help young people at risk of becoming socially excluded. The DCMS claimed that by involving such young people in the arts and cultural activity, this project was 'equipping them with new

skills and improving their self esteem' (DCMS, 2009). The formal provision of art education in schools in England has also been affected by the agenda, as art education has become charged with the task of promoting social inclusion (Karkou & Glasman, 2004; Kinder & Harland, 2004; Sanderson, 2008). As Karkou and Glasman note, 'government initiatives and policies, which perceive the arts as integral to a healthy and dynamic society, culture and economy', have been influential on the development of art in schools (Karkou & Glasman, 2004, p. 57).

Others (Brighton, 2002, 2003; Cultural Policy Collective, 2004; Houston, 2005) have described a similar trend in the work of arts institutions and organisations. Brighton (Brighton, 2002, 2003) has noted that museums and galleries have increasingly targeted their educational and outreach activities towards the goals of social and economic inclusion. He points to the increase in jobs within arts institutions in recent years created specifically for the purpose of promoting social inclusion, and to the impact of targets for the inclusion of particular social groups on the practices of museums and galleries (Brighton, 2003, p. 18). Houston (2005) on the other hand, has described how the social and economic inclusion agenda has affected the activity of some community arts organisations, with specific reference to community dance. She notes that there has been an increase in initiatives aimed at marginalised groups following a shift in funding criteria from 1997 onwards, and links this to the previous government's characterisation of the arts as an effective way of promoting social and economic inclusion (Houston, 2005, p. 169)

1.2.2 Discussion

Buckingham and Jones (2001) have offered one of the most detailed discussions of the social and economic inclusion agenda and its implications. They describe a 'cultural turn' in policy from 2000 onwards, during which time cultural activity came to be seen by the government as a social good, which, 'serves simultaneously as a means of job creation and of building job related skills, of developing a sense of identity and community, and a way of raising 'self esteem' and "changing people's perception of an area"' (Buckingham & Jones, 2001, p. 3). Buckingham and Jones locate this 'cultural turn' in the context of a political shift in the evaluation of culture and its place in society.

They argue that a re-appropriation of culture as an aid to creativity allowed the Labour government at the time to reconcile the interests of business, democracy and culture in a way that had been much more difficult for the previous Conservative government, for whom an association of culture with nationalistic notions of tradition and heritage had often been at odds with its commitment to a free market approach to the economy. As a result, the government were able to promote cultural and arts activity more enthusiastically while maintaining a focus on economic productivity and standards in education (Buckingham & Jones, 2001, pp. 5-6). As Hall and Thomson have put it,

policy makers effectively side stepped the bifurcations of right-wing cultural debate, which, in its cruder formulations, had polarised the contemporary and the traditional, national heritage and multiculturalism, and new with established technologies and forms. At the same time, Cool Britannia, with its focus on style, signified a purposeful distancing from stereotypes of 1970s-style progressive, liberal, anti-commercial arts policies that might be associated with the Labour Party by its political opponents. (Hall & Thomson, 2007, p. 316)

Implicit in these discussions of the social and economic inclusion agenda is the concern that in presenting culture as an aid to creativity, recent policy and practice has depoliticised art and culture, viewing them as an apolitical means to achieving social and economic ends. Buckingham and Jones have also highlighted some tensions within the key reports that informed the development of the social and economic inclusion agenda in arts and education policy. Specifically, they have warned of the dangers associated with the instrumentalist approach adopted within this agenda. They argue that the arts could be seen as too much of a 'quick fix' solution to wider societal problems, writing that, 'there is a danger that 'creativity' and 'culture' will come to be seen as the magic ingredients that will somehow automatically transform education, and bring about broader forms of social and economic regeneration, in and of themselves' (Buckingham & Jones, 2001, p. 13).

For others, the roots of the social and economic inclusion agenda in 'third way' politics have informed the basis of their critique of arts and education policy over the past 13 years. The Cultural Policy Collective (2004) refer to the emergence of a social exclusion discourse within this movement as a new way of addressing issues of poverty and disadvantage, which was enthusiastically taken up by New Labour in the 1990s. They argue that the concept of social exclusion as a multifaceted problem, encompassing issues of access to social and cultural (as well as economic) capital, led to an emphasis on the power of cultural activity and arts participation to promote social inclusion as a form of equality (Cultural Policy Collective, 2004, pp. 6-8). The authors have criticised this approach, arguing that it tends to distort and simplify the nature of the problems that art and culture are charged with addressing, sidestepping the issue of material poverty in favour of social and cultural capital, and stifling collective political struggle (Cultural Policy Collective, 2004, p. 5-7).

Still others have voiced more practical concerns about the impact of the social and economic inclusion agenda on arts provision. Brighton (2002), for example, has argued that instrumentalist arguments relating art to social and economic inclusion have had a negative effect on arts provision because of their narrow focus on the achievement of specific goals. Brighton argues that this can lead to dull and uninspiring practice in the arts as the breadth, variety and quality of arts provision is sacrificed in the pursuit of one overriding purpose. Writing in 2003, he argued, '[the] independent vivacity of cultural institutions is sacrificed in the name of the new labour agenda' (Brighton, 2003, p. 19).

1.3 Transformation and empowerment through the arts

The social and economic inclusion agenda is not the only way in which an instrumentalist view of the relationships amongst democracy, art and education has been expressed in recent approaches to arts practice. The idea that art can transform and empower people's lives – and that this can lead to the betterment of society – has been an important feature of the literature on art and art education, and has often been linked to ideas of democracy. This tradition operates within a different theoretical and political framework from the social and economic inclusion agenda. In particular, it is concerned with the expressive and transformational power of art for individual empowerment and

the improvement of society, rather than with the preparation of economically productive citizens. However, the approach to art that is taken from within this perspective has also involved an instrumentalist logic, in that art has been seen as valuable tool for achieving specific, non-artistic ends.

1.3.1 Discourses of transformation and empowerment

Houston has referred to, 'the long held European notion that the arts perform a service in developing civilization' (2005, p. 166) and argues that, '[t]he moral imperative of transforming individuals and communities has been a part of perceptions of the value of art over the last two hundred years' (Houston, 2005, p. 166). She refers to romantic ideas about the power of art to take people beyond themselves - and more recent, twentieth century claims about the ability of art to save the world - as important elements in this discourse (Houston, 2005, p. 167). She also cites the Arts Council's claims for the civilising influence of art, and the continued claims of the community arts movement about giving a voice to marginalised people, as evidence of the continued influence of such ideas on art practice. Houston argues that within this discourse there has been a continuing assumption not only that art can change and transform people's lives and the life of the community, but also that such transformation is inherently desirable in that it leads to the empowerment of individuals and the betterment of society. She concludes that, 'the main emphasis for artists and politicians has been and still is that social transformation is a morally good thing to happen to people and communities' (Houston, 2005, p. 68).

1.3.2 The community arts movement

One of the areas in which such a discourse has been particularly prominent is in community arts. The community arts movement has been one of the principal providers of informal opportunities for arts participation in the UK over the last forty years and has from its inception been concerned with issues of equality and democracy. When the movement was formed in the 1960s, one of its aims was to allow people from marginalised communities to participate in artistic creation. Based on a commitment to the redistribution of opportunity as well as wealth, the movement intended to empower people to greater activity in the public and political arena through participation (Everitt, 2001). The report of the

Community Arts Working Party in 1974, which was set up to respond to some of the issues surrounding the emergence of the new movement, demonstrates how community arts has always involved a commitment to social and political change. Describing the practice of community artists, the report states;

Their primary concern is their impact on a community and their relationship with it: by assisting those with whom they make contact to become more aware of their situation and of their own creative powers, and by providing them with the facilities to make use of their abilities, they hope to widen and deepen the sensibilities in which they work and so to enrich its existence. To a varying degree they see this as a means of change, whether psychological, social or political, within the community... because children are most easily involved they often work to a large extent with children and hope through this to involve adults as well. (Community Arts Working Party, 1974, p. 7)

The significance given to working with children here also highlights the educational implications of the movement's philosophy, as does the emphasis on youth work within community arts organisations. The working party describes how seminal community arts establishments such as the Arts Lab provided space for arts activities with an 'emphasis on experiment and innovation among the young' (Community Arts Working Party, 1974, p. 36).

Claims for the transformational and empowering capacity of art still feature significantly within the community arts movement today. Houston for example refers to two community dance projects which aimed at bringing empowerment and transformation to the lives of older people and male offenders (2005, pp. 171-5). She writes that in the former case, '[t]here was a distinct sense of trying to overpower the situation the participants were in, which the dance workers believed made them vulnerable to discrimination and insularity' (Houston, 2005, p. 172). In the case of the project with male offenders, she writes that, 'to develop feelings of empowerment was one of its aims when embarking on the project' (Houston, 2005, p. 174). Bennet (2000) also offers evidence of the continuing influence of a discourse of transformation within community arts work. Describing a project involving visual arts with a variety of communities in

one city, she writes, '[t]he project's intention is to foster understanding and identify common ground...to encourage inclusive and sustainable social change through art' (Bennett, 2000, p. 273).

1.3.3 The tradition of 'education through art'

The discourse of transformation and empowerment through art has also been influential on formal art education in schools, as is evident in the strength of a tradition of 'educating through art' in the UK (Adams, 2008, p. 162). This tradition has its roots in Read's *Education Through Art* (1943), which was influential on academic discussions of art education in the second half of the twentieth century (Allison & Hausman, 1998). Read's theory emphasised the value of art in providing a general education that would equip people for life. He argued for the revival of Plato's theory that art should be the basis of education. In doing so he claimed that, in a 'libertarian democracy' (Read, 1943, p. 5) 'the general purpose of education is to foster the growth of what is individual in each human being, at the same time harmonizing the individuality thus educed with the organic unity of the social group to which the individual belongs' and claims that, 'in this process aesthetic education is fundamental' (Read, 1943, p. 9). In this sense, Read saw art as a powerful tool in the provision of a general education which would bring out the best in individuals and advance the interests of a liberal democratic society.

Abbs (2003) has described the tradition of education-through-art as progressivist and modernist, illustrating its concern with the progress of individuals through their engagement with art. He argues that within this tradition, '[t]he teacher was essentially the releaser of the child's innate creativity through acts of self-expression and self-discovery' (Abbs, 2003, p. 46). This characterisation is borne out by Bell's (2000) argument for a reinvigorated application of Read's theory by 'educating through the arts curriculum' (2000, p.14). Bell also cites the value of the arts for individual progress, which he links to the idea of transformation. He claims that the arts have a special role to play in this area because they can develop imagination and promote cultural literacy. He writes, 'these [the skills of cultural literacy] are the competencies that liberate and enable individuals to transform their modes

of thinking, acting, and expressing themselves in ways that would otherwise impoverish and limit their lives' (Bell, 2000, p. 14).

Apart from their relevance to individual transformation, Bell also argues for the value of the arts in promoting social and political ends. Indeed, he argues for the importance of allying the arts to democratic projects and claims that education through art can be instrumental in promoting responsible citizenship. In doing so, he also offers a strongly instrumentalist view of art, claiming that, 'Creativity, aesthetics and the arts are no good in themselves; they are however very good if combined with the right sort of politics and used in training for responsible and intelligent citizenship' (Bell, 2000, p. 14). For Bell, the crucial question is not whether art can promote political ends, but which political ends art ought to promote. His reference to responsible and intelligent citizenship also refers back to the origins of the education-through-art tradition, in which the arts were seen as a way of making life better, both individually and collectively, via the promotion of a certain concept of democratic society.

The influence of the education-through-art tradition is evident in much art education literature, where the idea that the purpose of art education is to transform people's lives, and the life of society, can be found in various forms. Indeed, this philosophy has featured prominently in counter-arguments against the development of a standards agenda in art education following the introduction of the English National Curriculum, as a consequence of the Education Reform Act of 1988. In their critique of this development, for example, Allison and Hausman have noted the lack of any explicit reference in the English National Curriculum to, 'what it would mean to be "educated in art" in human and social terms or how it might contribute to, enrich or change people's lives' (Allison & Hausman, 1998, p. 125). Hughes (1997) has echoed the concern that this tradition has lost ground in current art education policy, suggesting instead that the purpose of art education should always be to empower individuals and promote critical thought, referring to the 'empowerment through creativity and the questioning of the status quo which has always been the *raison d'être* of art and by extension, art education' (Hughes, 1997, p. 125). Aguirre, tackling the emergence of a postmodern art education and arguing for a plurality of epistemological perspectives in the field,

also evidences the continued influence of transformational assumptions about the purpose of art education. He writes, '[it] seems that new epistemological perspectives are needed as well as new forms of expression to talk about art education, so that it can continue to develop and contribute to the progress of humankind' (Aguirre, 2004, p. 257). The idea that art education is about changing people and society for the better continues to be influential.

1.3.4 Discussion

As well as charting the history of such a discourse in the arts, Houston (2005) has argued against the often simplistic and over enthusiastic adoption of claims about the ability of art to transform people's lives and the lives of their communities. She questions both the validity of claims made on behalf of many community arts projects and the assumption that transformation is always good for individuals and society. In relation to the specific example of community dance, she cautions;

In trying to adhere to the Romantic notion of art as the means to self-discovery, there is a danger in formulating a transformation framework to create meaning about community dance that stifles the inherent fluidity of art and the transformative experience, as well as overlooking other experiences. (Houston, 2005, p. 172)

She also critiques the over enthusiastic and uncritical rush to claim that arts participation necessarily transforms and empowers lives, warning that, 'Participation may be a potential road to empowerment and transformation, but that road is far from straight and smooth' (Houston, 2005, p. 176).

In art education, Abbs (2003) has been critical of the education-through-art tradition for its emphasis on nature over culture, which he argues, risked, 'endless self-expression with little prospect of artistic advance.' (Abbs, 2003, p. 55). He describes how, theoretically at least, an alternative approach of education *in* the arts as opposed to education *through* art developed as a response to this in the 1980s. He characterises such an approach as one in which more attention is paid to culture and traditions of art making, with a recognition that '[a]t their best and most typical they [the arts] are cognitive to the very core' (Abbs, 2003, p. 56). However, Abbs argues that this approach

was never fully realised because of the emphasis on standards since the introduction of the National Curriculum in England. Critical of both the crude instrumentalism of the standards agenda and the naturalistic bias of the education-through-art tradition, Abbs has more sympathy with a holistic concept of art education in which the arts are seen as 'vehicles of human understanding' (2003, p. 56).

1.4 Justifying the arts in education

Another trend within which instrumentalist arguments about art and democracy have been expressed is the tendency to justify the place of art within education on the basis of its contribution to external ends. The justification of the arts within school curricula in terms of their contribution to democracy is only one manifestation of a broader history of justifying the arts via their extrinsic rather than intrinsic value. Indeed, arguments about the use of art education in promoting democratic citizenship can be seen as one element of a culture of justifying the arts on the basis of their contribution to a wide variety of goals, from academic achievement to emotional well being, creativity and transferable skills.

1.4.1 Extrinsic arguments for art education

Writers in the field have noted the prominence of extrinsic arguments for art, whereby the arts are seen to merit a place within education because they are instrumental to other objectives (Allison & Hausman, 1998; Koopman, 2005). Allison and Hausman (1998) argue that this pressure to justify the place of the arts in education intensified following the introduction of the National Curriculum in England. They note that from this time onwards, 'being able to put forward reasoned arguments to justify art education practices has been necessary to qualify the place of art in the curriculum' (Allison and Hausman, 1998, p. 122). Certainly, the sense that the very existence of art education is under threat from trends in policy and practice is evident in the literature (Hughes, 1997; MacDonald, 1998). This history of external justification is also evident in research, policy and practice over the past ten years. Simons and Hicks (2006) for example, have argued that the arts can engage and empower individuals who may have been excluded by more traditional educational methods that

value cognitive and verbal means of learning and assessment. Drawing on empirical research, and emphasising the relevance of their work to issues of inclusion, Simons and Hicks argue that, 'an opportunity exists to use the creative arts as a bridge to facilitate inclusion and open doors to those previously disenfranchised in the education system' (2006, p. 77). Claims about the ability of the arts to raise academic achievement and contribute to other external goals can also be found more generally in the approach to the arts pursued over the past thirteen years. Under the previous government, the DCMS claimed that 'involvement with the arts can increase the overall academic attainment of children, help change the behaviour of offenders and enhance community pride, amongst other positive outcomes' (DCMS, 2009). Claims about the value of art education for promoting citizenship in particular (see, for example, Spehler & Slattery, 1999; Arthur & Wright, 2001) can be seen as one part of this wider trend.

1.4.2 Discussion

Sanderson (2008) has challenged the dominance of extrinsic arguments for art education in schools and argues that the government's concern with social inclusion has been an extension of this. She writes that 'the government's interest in the arts and creativity as a means to social and educational inclusion does not seem to be based on a conviction of the intrinsic worth of creative arts experiences, but primarily as a means to other ends' (Sanderson, 2008, p. 483) and argues that 'artistic activity as valuable in its own right receives limited recognition' (Sanderson, 2008, p. 470). However, while critical of an overemphasis on the external values of art education, Sanderson also claims from her own research that the arts can indeed be valuable in the promotion of social inclusion and academic achievement. She argues that, 'increased provision for dance and the arts within the National Curriculum could make a real contribution to reducing social class inequalities and promoting social and educational inclusion' (Sanderson, 2008, p. 486), even going so far as to argue that 'the absence of a strong representation of the arts in general, and dance in particular within the National Curriculum may be contributing to the social and educational exclusion of some young people' (Sanderson, 2008, p. 482).

Scullion (2008) has written on the tensions between instrumental and aesthetic approaches to art education in the Scottish context. She argues that a utilitarian approach involving the use of art for social ends, and specifically for the promotion of citizenship, has led to a narrow and restricted approach to art education and art projects in Scottish schools. She devotes particular attention to drama, arguing that a bias towards participatory projects has meant that other, more aesthetic values intrinsic to drama have been neglected in favour of outcomes such as communication skills, confidence building, group learning and other transferable skills (Scullion, 2008, p. 382). Scullion argues that while such participatory projects can engage children and young people in creative learning, they underplay both the aesthetic qualities of drama and the political dimension of democracy, instead prioritising a focus on personal and social capital (Scullion, p. 390).

Koopman (2005) addresses the dominance of extrinsic arguments for the value of art education from a theoretical perspective. He refers to a plethora of claims made for art education as instrumental to academic performance, creativity, social skills and emotional well-being. Koopman views these arguments as misguided and unsupported. He argues that research has shown no convincing evidence that art improves academic performance (Koopman, 2005, p. 87) and that since other claims about well-being and social skills have not been thoroughly investigated, the case for the positive benefits of art education in these respects remains unproven. Koopman instead offers an intrinsic argument for the value of art, based on aesthetic experience and its ability to offer fulfilment. Rather than referring to what art can achieve outside of its own sphere, he contends that what the arts offer within their own field are justification enough for art education as a discipline;

proponents of arts education should resist the demand that the arts be justified in terms of its “benefits”. The question “what are the arts good for?” should be answered by the response: “They are good for life.” Or, better still, “They are good for nothing. They are good life itself.” (Koopman, 2005, p. 96).

1.5 Education for citizenship

Arguments about the value of art to democracy (often through education) have risen to prominence in parallel with similar arguments about democratic education, where education has often been seen as a means of engendering democratic citizenship or sustaining a democratic society. This characterisation of the relationship between education and democracy has been most prominently pursued via the implementation of a citizenship agenda in education over the past decade and a half. While implemented primarily under the previous government, the mandatory provision of citizenship education in schools had already been initiated under the Conservative government in the 1990s, and the current coalition government has currently not made any significant changes to the provision of education for citizenship in schools.

1.5.1 Origins

The government's commission of an Advisory Group on the Teaching of Citizenship and Democracy in 1997 and the publication of its final report in 1998 brought together a host of concerns about democracy and education and was to have a lasting impact on policy and discourse in the field. The final report, normally referred to as the Crick Report after its chair, Sir Bernard Crick, offered a definition of active citizenship and a view on how this might be taught and promoted in schools. Following the report, citizenship education became part of a non-statutory framework for primary schools and a statutory foundation subject for secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Kerr, 2005, pp. 30-2). The Crick report was also influential on Scottish education policy, although in this context, an 'education for citizenship' agenda was implemented via a set of curricular approaches rather than as a discrete subject. This occurred via the inclusion of 'values and citizenship' as one of five key priorities for education set out by the newly devolved Scottish parliament in 2000 (Scullion, 2008). More recently, a commitment to enabling young people to become responsible citizens is included as one of the four key capacities of the new Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland.

The commissioning of the Advisory Group occurred in the context of wider concern over perceived political apathy and ignorance amongst young people in established democracies. Print (2007) situates the introduction of citizenship

education in the UK within this wider context. He writes, '[o]ver the past two decades citizenship education has been introduced, reviewed or consolidated in most established democracies in regions such as Europe and Britain, North America and the Pacific, to engage citizens in their democracy' (Print, 2007, p. 326). While the introduction of citizenship education as a compulsory subject for secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the inclusion of citizenship as a key priority for education in Scotland, represent a new emphasis on citizenship in education policy, there had already been some formal provision of citizenship education in secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since the introduction of the National Curriculum, when citizenship was included as a 'cross curricular theme'.

1.5.2 Political and theoretical influences

There has been some debate over the political inspiration behind the introduction of citizenship education as a statutory subject. Writing in 2000, Faulks (2006), for example, saw the introduction of citizenship education as a positive step away from previously weak approaches to citizenship education, arguing that, 'Labour rightly sees the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in schools as an important element in a revitalization of the civic order' (2006, p. 126). Faulks contrasted this approach with the previous Conservative government's 'concession' to claims for citizenship education, via its inclusion as a cross curricular theme, which he claims was poorly implemented in schools (2006, p. 125). Others however have seen more continuity between the approaches of the two governments. Biesta and Lawy (2006) have situated the promotion of active citizenship through education in the UK within a historical trajectory of ideas about citizenship itself. They refer to the reappraisal of citizenship from a set of political, civic and social rights (as advocated by Marshall) to a focus on market rights in the context of rising neoliberalism. They see the emphasis on personal responsibility and self reliance as a continuation of the more individualistic and market driven approach to citizenship inaugurated under the Thatcher and Major governments of the 1980s and 1990s (Biesta and Lawy, 2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). They note that, 'with respect to citizenship, Labour mainly sought to ameliorate the New Right position by communitarian ideas to emphasise the importance of

social values and social responsibilities' (Biesta and Lawy, 2006, p. 70) and, writing in 2006, argue that this continuity has also been apparent in educational policy; 'recent developments in citizenship education have stayed quite close to the individualistic conception of citizenship that emerged in the 1980s' (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 70). Gillborn (2006) also sees more continuity between the approaches of the two governments. By emphasising the responsibilities and duties that come with citizenship, he argues, citizenship education policies have been used as a way of promoting stability and control by both Conservative and Labour governments (Gillborn, 2006, pp. 91-3). Gillborn therefore claims that citizenship education is rooted in a conservative approach, which, rather than promoting equality and empowering students, emphasises personal responsibility and duties towards others (2006, p. 92).

A tradition of emphasising responsibility and duty can certainly be detected in the Crick Report. The report's perspective on citizenship comes from a tradition of civic republicanism (Gillborn, 2006, p. 92; Faulks, 2006, pp. 126-7; Kiwan, 2007, p. 46) in which an emphasis is placed on the duty of citizens to involve themselves in the public and political affairs of the state. Crick (2002) has positioned his own thought on citizenship and democracy within this tradition, as well as citing civic republicanism as the 'underlying presupposition' of the Crick Report, which he traces back to the democratic traditions of ancient Greece and Rome (Crick, 2007, p. 235). He argues that, in keeping with this perspective, the main objective of the report was the promotion of 'active' citizenship which is to be distinguished from 'good' (or passive) citizenship. He defines active citizenship as 'combining together effectively to change or resist change' (Crick, 2007, p. 245) and describes the benefits to society of teaching such citizenship as, 'an active and politically-literate citizenry convinced that they can influence government and community affairs at all levels' (Crick, 2007, p. 245). Kiwan (2007, p.44) has argued that, in keeping with this civic republican tradition, a participatory conception of citizenship, emphasising the participation of young people in the representative systems of school and wider society, is given prominence in the report.

Finally, while the Advisory Group was initially commissioned to look at both citizenship and democracy in education, the report focuses exclusively on

citizenship. Crick (2007) has defended this position, arguing that when people refer to democracy, what they often mean is politics and citizenship. He argues for the importance of recognising a distinct meaning for democracy and adopts an Aristotelian view in which democracy is considered to be only one element in overall good government (Crick, 2007, p. 236). Biesta and Lawy have commented on the focus of the report on citizenship rather than democracy (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006), and Kiwan has noted that, while the report makes an implicit link between democracy and citizenship, it also assumes an understanding of democracy as only one element of politics and good government (Kiwan, 2007, p. 45).

1.5.3 The character of citizenship education

The development of citizenship education has been influenced by a number of political, theoretical and educational concerns. The historical synthesis of these in the commissioning and publication of the Crick Report has led to the development of a programme for citizenship education in schools in England that is focussed on teaching young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for participation within the democratic structures of society. In this sense, it is an instrumentalist project which aims at the promotion of active citizenship and the creation of active citizens. Citizenship education is also a project which emphasises the responsibilities and duties of citizens over their rights, and one which to some extent divorces the question of citizenship from democracy. Within the logic of the Crick Report and the citizenship education programme it helped to create, citizenship is the practice of living up to one's responsibilities as an active member of society. Democracy, when it is addressed in this framework, is mainly seen in static terms, as a quality of the overarching system of government or politics, in which every citizen has the responsibility to participate. As the first comprehensive approach to a compulsory programme of political education in England, citizenship education has been hugely influential. As a result, an instrumentalist, responsibility-based approach, concerned more with citizenship than democracy, has been a strong feature in discussions of the relevance of education to issues of politics, citizenship and democracy in recent years.

The implementation of a citizenship agenda via the introduction of education for citizenship has also been explicitly linked with art. Arthur and Wright (2001) for example have detailed the ways in which arts education – including art, music, drama and dance – can contribute to the aims and objectives of the citizenship education curriculum in England. They argue that aspects inherent in these subjects can contribute to the, 'shaping of good citizens' (Arthur & Wright, 2001, p. 25) by imparting knowledge about cultural diversity, offering opportunities to practise skills such as collaboration, and encouraging attitudes such as tolerance and understanding (Arthur & Wright, pp. 25-8). Others have investigated how arts participation in contexts beyond school can contribute to education for citizenship. From the perspective of arts participation, Ochu, Bond and Day have reported on action research in museum and gallery contexts with the explicit aim of encouraging young people to become active citizens, principally by supporting the curriculum objectives of the citizenship education programme for schools in England (2008, pp. 170-1).

1.5.4 Ongoing debates on citizenship education

A lively debate around the content and direction of citizenship education has arisen since its introduction. Much of this has centred on the effective implementation of citizenship education and definitions of active citizenship. In the early stages of the development of citizenship education, Osler and Starkey (1999), for example, focused on how best to implement a programme of study in citizenship education, reporting on European wide research into programmes of political education, which offered examples of, 'best practice in education for active citizenship' (Osler & Starkey, 1999, p. 199) that could be applied in any national context. Crick (2007) has argued that the implementation of citizenship education since its introduction has often tended toward the promotion of 'good' rather than 'active' citizenship, and has focussed more on knowledge and information transmission than it has on direct experience and citizenship practice. He therefore argues for an increased emphasis on learning active citizenship through direct participation (Crick, 2007, pp. 246-7).

Crick's criticisms point to what he sees as failings and inadequacies in the delivery of citizenship education but also to the more substantial question of how active citizenship should be defined. Kerr has noted that this issue has

been one of the major challenges facing citizenship education (2005, p. 40), as has McLaughlin (2000, p.550). This is also reflected in the variety of suggestions for a working definition of active citizenship that have been advanced. Many of these have focused on issues of identity and culture. Osler and Starkey (2003), for example, have drawn on Held's concept of cosmopolitan citizenship as a way to address issues of diversity and multiculturalism within citizenship education. Meanwhile, Ross (2007) has combined sociological arguments about identity with Marshall's view of citizenship as an expanding package of rights, to argue that active citizenship should be understood as the struggle to expand the rights pertaining to multiple constructions of identity. Kiwan has also argued for greater attention to identity-based conceptions of citizenship and advocates a participatory approach to citizenship education, combined with 'institutional' multiculturalism, which would promote the visibility of ethnic and religious identities in a diverse society (2007, pp. 53-4).

Others have combined identity issues with other concerns about the content and scope of citizenship education. Faulks, for example, suggests that radical approaches such as intimate citizenship (which recognises the importance of emotional intelligence in being able to participate as an active citizen) and multiple citizenship (in which allegiances beyond the state are recognised) could help to broaden and reinvigorate citizenship education (2006, pp. 134-9). Others still have tackled the relatively apolitical understanding of citizenship that is promoted in the Crick Report. Frazer (2007) has argued that the inherently conflictual nature of politics is often at odds with a liberal and humanistic view of education dominant in western societies and that as a result, citizenship education has been depoliticised. She argues for an engagement with politics within citizenship education but acknowledges that this would require a collective re-education in the positive aspects of politics.

While the above authors have differing opinions on the definition of citizenship, they remain broadly supportive of the provision of citizenship education in schools as a way of promoting active citizenship amongst young people. Others, however, have offered more radical critiques of the very idea of citizenship education. The work of Biesta and Lawy (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Lawy

& Biesta, 2006) is prominent in this respect since it questions the assumptions of citizenship education and suggests alternative ways of approaching the area of education and democratic citizenship. They argue that the current approach involves an individualistic, instrumentalist and limited understanding of the relationship between education and democratic citizenship because it focuses on the production of individual citizens through formal education in school. Biesta and Lawy argue that this is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, they argue, it individualises citizenship, which comes to be seen as the natural consequence of producing individual citizens. Secondly, it depoliticises citizenship, the meaning of which becomes taken for granted, rather than the subject of democratic discussion. Thirdly, it sees young people as a deficit category, who have not yet achieved their citizenship status, and cannot achieve it until they have reached the end of an educational trajectory. Finally, they argue that it fails to take into account the wider social, political, economic and cultural factors that affect the actual conditions under which young people are able (or not) and willing (or not) to participate as citizens (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006).

In contrast to the current approach, which they have also described as 'citizenship-as-achievement' (Lawy & Biesta, 2006), Biesta and Lawy have posited the concept of 'citizenship-as-practice', which, they argue, 'suggests that young people learn to be citizens as consequences of their participation in the actual practices that make up their lives' (Biesta & Lawy, p. 45). They have also argued for an emphasis on 'learning democracy' rather than teaching citizenship, a concept which takes into account the conditions and contexts in which people learn about democracy, and how this affects their dispositions and values (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 75). In their own empirical research, Biesta and Lawy have drawn on their findings to show that citizenship learning, or democratic learning – as they understand it – is a reflective and reflexive process in which contexts, relationships and dispositions play an important role (Biesta et al., 2009).

Others have questioned the logic of citizenship education from different perspectives. Gillborn, for example, has argued that citizenship education can be seen as a 'public policy placebo' (2006, p. 83), which has been promoted as

a way of addressing institutional racism, while in fact doing little to tackle the issue and in some cases making the situation worse (Gillborn, 2006, p. 92). Faulks on the other hand has raised the issue of equality in democracy and citizenship, arguing that there is a contradiction at the heart of an educational policy aimed at promoting equal, universal citizenship, whilst at the same time pursuing a market driven, selective and choice based approach to the provision of education more generally (Faulks, 2006, pp. 128-9). These authors have raised interesting questions about the political motivations of citizenship education and the validity of the claims made for it in public debate. In some ways, they have also questioned the instrumentalist logic of citizenship education. Gillborn's critique for example points to the problematic nature of the assumption that complex political and social problems can be addressed by teaching citizenship in schools.

Discussions about the problematic nature of instrumentalist arguments in citizenship education have also been noted by others in the field. Arthur and Croll (2007) have referred to the tension in recent literature between ideas of citizenship education as a set of learning outcomes, and other ideas of citizenship education as an ongoing process. They link this to the distinction between ideas of childhood as *being* or *becoming*, raising the important question of whether citizenship education should be considered as an instrumental process of preparing young people for citizenship or a process more situated in the present, aimed at encouraging the enactment of citizenship amongst young people in school and beyond (Arthur & Croll, 2007, p. 233).

1.6 Student voice

Another important way in which issues of democracy and education have been addressed in recent years is through student voice work, which has tackled the issue of democracy and education in terms of young people's participation in decision making processes that affect their own education. This kind of practice has its roots in a tradition of democratic schooling and differs from citizenship education in its emphasis on the enactment of democracy in young people's everyday lives. However, its informal implementation in schools in the UK over recent years has sometimes been supported by arguments more characteristic

of citizenship education, such as the need to prepare young people for their future participation in democratic society.

1.6.1 The rise in student voice practices

Rudduck and Fielding (2006) have charted an increase in research and practice concerning student voice in recent years, while others have reported on successful examples of recent student voice work in schools (Osler, 2000). Rudduck and Fielding have also situated student voice practices within the older tradition of democratic schooling, and offer some historical examples of successful attempts at creating democratic schools, all of which shared a commitment to 'the idea of the school as a community where students shared in its governance' (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 223). While student voice work is therefore rooted in a different tradition to citizenship education, some concerns about preparing people for their future citizenship are also evident in student voice literature. Some student voice work, such as the establishment of student councils, has coincided with the aims of citizenship education in providing young people with experiential ways of learning about citizenship and democracy. Indeed, Rudduck and Fielding note that support for student voice and participation has often come from a position of preparing students for their role as future citizens (2006, p. 223). They also draw attention to, 'the contribution that student voice can make to the development of students' identities and to the skills of confident discussion and negotiation' (2006, p. 220). The idea of developing students' communication skills so that they will be prepared for the kind of deliberative discussion that takes place in the public spaces of society is an important element of the citizenship education curriculum. Indeed, in the standards set out for Citizenship Education by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, objectives include that students should learn, 'that having discussions and forming opinions about issues and current events are central to citizenship.' (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007).

1.6.2 Discussion

While student voice has recently risen in popularity, writers in the field have also raised questions about its adoption in schools, which, they have argued, often

occurs in an uncritical manner. Fielding (2004), for example, has pointed to a lack of theoretical perspective in student voice practice and research and specifically challenges research into student voice work that claims to speak on behalf of students. He questions the theoretical consistency of such an approach in its claims both to give voice to others and also to speak *for* them (Fielding, 2004, p. 297). Taylor (2007) has responded to Fielding's call for more theoretical engagement in the field of student voice, offering an overview of the theoretical ideas that have been most influential on student voice practice, and suggesting how postmodern theories might make a contribution to the field. She identifies a dominant instrumentalist approach to democracy and education in the student voice literature. She notes the emphasis of much student voice work on its ability to effect change (Taylor, 2007, p. 5) and refers to government support for student voice based on its contribution to citizenship education (Taylor, 2007, p. 2). Taylor identifies the theoretical roots of student voice work as, 'a conflation of humanist/ progressivist philosophies and radical pedagogy' (Taylor, 2007, p. 5) and argues that an instrumentalist approach, whereby student voice practices are aimed at achieving the empowerment and transformation of individuals and communities, is problematic. She contends that these approaches understand power as something that can be possessed and wielded over others, which is problematic in practice, and suggests that postmodern understandings of power as manifold, local and contextual might offer a more fruitful approach to the question of power in student voice work (Taylor, 2007, p. 7).

1.7 Overview of the field

As demonstrated above, there are a number of prominent trends in the arts and education that have taken an instrumentalist approach to the relationship between education and democracy, and particularly to the role of art in this relationship. In terms of art, the social and economic inclusion agenda of recent government policy has been an important vehicle for arguments about the utility of art for achieving political ends. The connection with democracy here has often been implicit, with policies and practices being aimed at fostering social cohesion, economic productivity and community involvement. A discourse of empowerment and transformation in the arts – and art education – has also

been important in the presentation of art as a useful tool for achieving social and political ends. Because this discourse has often focused on the civilizing effects of the arts – and or its contribution to ends such as equality, justice, citizenship, and critical thought – it has also implicitly involved the promotion of democracy. Finally, the justification of art education via external goals has been significant, both in terms of contributing to a discourse which privileges the extrinsic value of art generally, but also in specific claims made about the usefulness of art for promoting democratic citizenship.

In terms of education, the most significant trends via which instrumentalist arguments in the field have been promoted are the citizenship agenda – and particularly the introduction of citizenship education as a compulsory element of state education in England – and the growth in student voice practices, which build on an older tradition of democratic schooling. The influence of the citizenship agenda in education has been felt via an emphasis on the preparation of children and young people for their future participation in democracy by equipping them with the relevant skills, knowledge and dispositions for democratic citizenship. The influence of student voice work has been more diffuse, and has emphasised democratic participation in the running of schools to a greater degree. However, the idea that such participation is also worthwhile because of what it teaches young people about their future democratic citizenship has been given significant weight within student voice practice.

While the above trends tend to fall into two categories – involving the view that either art or education can be instrumental in the promotion of democracy - arguments from each of these perspectives often overlap in the specific claims to be found in the literature. One example of this is the focus on both education and art within the social and economic inclusion agenda. In this case, arts participation in schools (and educational activities in arts institutions) have been seen as important contexts for the promotion of political ends consistent with the creation and maintenance of democratic society. Similarly, literature concerned with citizenship education has sometimes referred to the arts as vehicles through which the objectives of citizenship education can also be pursued. Within art education, the tradition of education through art, in which

arguments about the civilising effects of art in general have been put to use in the educational sphere. Equally, the impact of the citizenship agenda can be detected in claims that art education can help to promote active and responsible citizenship. An instrumentalist logic has therefore been prominent in the ways in which the connections amongst democracy, art and education have recently been conceived and implemented in arts and educational practice.

The value of instrumentalist approaches in education can be argued in various ways. Some have claimed that there is a case to be made for such arguments on the basis of economic and societal value of education. Carr (2003) has claimed that instrumentalist conceptions of education are justifiable insofar as they pertain to schooling, arguing that schools must be answerable to the social and political concerns of the public bodies that fund them, as well as serving the more intrinsic educational goal of human development (2003, p. 16). Similar arguments have also been made in relation to the arts, with the case being made that art has to demonstrate its value to society in order to justify the portion of public spending it receives. By extension, the provision of activities involving both education and art could be seen as justifiably subject to demands concerning their value to society and the economy. While it could be argued that this approach involves a narrow interpretation of their value, it nevertheless represents one way of making sense of the way in which art and education relate to wider societal concerns including democracy.

It is also worth noting that the prominence of instrumentalist arguments has contributed to the increased provision of opportunities for arts participation in formal and informal educational settings in recent years. Accompanying the promotion of the arts for reasons of social and economic inclusion – mixed with ideas about their capacity to change people's lives and the life of society – there have been increased opportunities for people to become involved in the arts in educational and other settings. The wealth of partnership schemes between schools and artists, and the proliferation of projects aimed at social inclusion within arts institutions are testament to this. Such activities often also involve a commitment to pursuing political equality and broadening access to the arts. While the interpretation of equality that such approaches imply could be

questioned, this commitment can nevertheless be viewed as a positive aspect of instrumentalist arguments in the field.

Despite their positive contributions, however, a number of authors have also pointed to problems with instrumentalist approaches in this area. Some, for example, have expressed concern over exaggerated claims about the power of art to address complex social and political problems and have cautioned against the risk of characterising art as a 'magic bullet' in this respect (Buckingham and Jones, 2001; Houston, 2005). Implicit in Buckingham and Jones' critique is also the suggestion that an emphasis on the social and economic utility of art tends to depoliticise artistic and cultural activity. This concern is expressed explicitly in Scullion's critique of the emphasis on more participatory aspects of citizenship (such as social and personal capital) rather than its political dimension, in recent arts and education policy in Scotland (2008). Similarly, the Cultural Policy Collective (2004) have argued that by focusing on participation and inclusion, the social and economic inclusion agenda in the arts has ignored important questions such as economic inequality, and therefore has involved an apolitical approach to the cultural sphere.

Another significant problem identified with the way in which the relevance of art for politics and democracy has often been conceived is an emphasis on the extrinsic, rather than intrinsic, value of art. The work of Sanderson (2008), Scullion (2008) and Koopman (2005) all express concern over this problem. These arguments centre less on whether art can be relevant to social and political concerns at all, but rather to what extent this dimension of art should be privileged in policy and practice, and how the nature of the relationship between art and such wider concerns should be understood. Koopman's argument represents an extreme approach to this question, in that he advocates a solely intrinsic justification of the arts in education. Sanderson and Scullion, on the other hand, argue for an appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of the arts alongside their instrumental value, and for a more complex and subtle understanding of the ways in which art can be relevant to political and social questions. Brighton (2002; 2003) also argues for a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to this issue.

Problems have also been identified with prominent arguments about education and democracy. Here too, inflated claims about the capacity of education to achieve democratic ends have caused concern. Faulks (2006) and Gillborn (2006) have both expressed such concern in relation to citizenship education, as well as arguing that the official discourse of citizenship education is sometimes at odds with less democratic elements of government policy and educational practice. Biesta and Lawy (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Biesta, 2007) have argued that the instrumentalist and individualist logic of citizenship education depoliticises citizenship, because this is seen in terms of individuals' achievement of knowledge, skills and attitudes and is therefore divorced from the wider social, political, economic and cultural factors that affect the actual condition of young people's citizenship. Their argument also suggests that education for citizenship depoliticises education because, by limiting citizenship education to schools, and precluding democratic discussion over the meaning of citizenship within this setting, education is seen as an apolitical sphere for teaching citizenship rather than facilitating democracy and supporting democratic learning. Meanwhile, Taylor (2007, p. 7) has argued that support for student voice often emphasises the instrumental value of such practice in that it can help contribute to the creation of democratic citizens. In doing so, she has echoed the concerns of Biesta and Lawy that such an approach does not take into account the actual conditions under which democratic citizenship is practised (Taylor, 2007, p. 2).

1.8 The research problem

While there is a case to be made for arguments which relate art and education to democracy in instrumental ways, I would argue, with many of the above authors, that such arguments are also problematic. In the case of art, this is because instrumentalist arguments often overestimate the capacity of art for achieving democratic goals and underestimate the complexity of the social and political problems they aim to address. These arguments also tend to depoliticise both democracy and art, by emphasising the 'softer' or more participatory elements of democracy and characterising the arts as an apolitical means of achieving these. Finally, instrumentalist arguments about art and democracy tend to privilege the external contribution of art over its intrinsic

qualities, and often characterise this external value in simplistic and overly deterministic ways. In its extreme form, this approach involves the characterisation of art as something which can almost be 'contracted' to achieve specific social and political goals, the success or failure of which is then assessed in measurable outcomes. In terms of democratic education, instrumentalist arguments can be problematic because they too overemphasise the ability of education to tackle complex social and political problems. Such arguments also tend to depoliticise both democratic citizenship and education itself, and view the relationship between education and democracy in individualistic terms. This is because they tend to understand education as a neutral or apolitical sphere in which to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for citizenship, without fully taking into account the wider social and political contexts in which young people's actual citizenship unfolds.

In light of these issues, the problem addressed in the research for this thesis has been how to understand the role of art in young people's democratic learning, without viewing art and education as apolitical contexts in which to produce individuals who will guarantee the success of democracy. In order to do so, I chose to investigate the ways in which young people learn democracy through the variety of contexts and practices that make up their lives, with specific attention to the role of art within this process. The research for the thesis therefore addressed the actual quality of a variety of ways in which young people engage with art (including but not exclusively arts participation in educational settings) and how these practices might be related to the ways in which young people learn democracy. In the next chapter, I offer a review of empirical work that has addressed similar concerns, presenting what has already been shown in relation to the research problem and identifying areas for further investigation.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I defined the research problem as one of investigating the ways in which young people actually engage in the arts, and the relevance of this for their democratic learning, rather than focusing on how the arts can be used to teach democratic citizenship. In this chapter therefore, I present and discuss research that has addressed the actual nature and quality of young people's arts engagement and its relevance for democracy and learning. While the body of literature in this area is small, it offers a number of substantive findings, as well as some important insights into the ways in which this problem can be conceptualised and investigated through empirical research. In the chapter, I first offer an overview of this literature, followed by a discussion of the substantive, methodological and conceptual contributions this research has made to the field and the implications of these for further research. Based on this discussion, I further refine the focus of my study and identify the gap in knowledge and understanding that my research aims to address. I also acknowledge the methodological implications of existing research for my own work, and highlight the need for further engagement with theoretical work in order to conceptualise the key terms for my research.

2.2 Review of existing research

Recent empirical work focusing on the nature of arts engagement and its potential for democratic practice and learning is relatively scarce. However, some important findings have emerged from the small body of work addressing this question, which has been carried out in relation to a variety of arts practices. Significant work in this area includes research applying Biesta and Lawy's (2006) insights about citizenship education and democratic learning to the context of art galleries. Other examples include research into arts based work in schools and the relevance of this in terms of how children learn to participate in public spaces. Other work has been carried out on the potential of theatre and drama for young people's learning in relation to citizenship and democracy. Within this body of work, a variety of terms have been employed to refer to the relationship between democracy and education. In some cases, democratic learning is referred to, while in others, the terms citizenship learning

and democratic education are used. A common feature of all this work however, is that it takes as its starting point the actual situations in which young people engage with the arts and explore the potential of these contexts for democracy and learning.

2.2.1 Democratic learning in gallery contexts

Lawy, Biesta, McDonnell, Lawy and Reeves (2010) have reported on research undertaken as part of a national programme of research into learning in gallery contexts (Enquire). Their research focused on art projects in gallery settings that were specifically designed to foster democratic practice amongst young people. Reiterating the problems identified by Biesta and Lawy in relation to education for citizenship as it is currently implemented in schools, Lawy *et al* stress in particular the problem of casting young people as belonging to a deficit category, in which they are seen as people who are not yet citizens. In their view, this approach can have negative consequences; 'being a citizen is thus an adult identity which excludes young people, and in so doing it denies certain citizenship rights and responsibilities to young people who have yet to achieve full citizenship status' (2010, p.352). Instead, the concept of citizenship-as-practice is employed in their research to capture the ways in which young people already experience their citizenship across the various contexts that make up their lives. Within the research, citizenship-as-practice is understood as the complex process via which young people, 'learn the value of democratic and non democratic ways of action and interaction and about their own positions as citizens' (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 352). Lawy *et al.* (2010) refer to the findings of earlier work conducted from this perspective (Biesta *et al.*, 2009), which has highlighted the importance of contexts, relationships and dispositions in democratic learning. This framework was used within the research to explore artist led projects with young people in galleries.

Making reference to existing research into gallery education, Lawy *et al.* highlight the potential of such contexts for investigating democratic learning. In particular, they refer to the fact that research in this area has highlighted the, 'experimental, collaborative, dialogical and open-ended nature' (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 353) of learning in gallery contexts and the commitment to working with professional artists in these settings, which allows for risk taking, ambiguity and

uncertainty. Given these characteristics, Lawy *et al.* find it surprising that relatively little work has been done on the democratic potential of such contexts, indicating the fact that the open-ended, ambiguous and uncertain character of such settings are also important characteristics of democratic practices (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 353). As a consequence, their research focuses on this aspect of gallery education, employing a broad understanding of democracy as, 'inclusive ways of social and political action that allow for plurality and difference' (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 353), and view collective judgement and decision making as an important element of such action (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, pp. 353-4).

The research was conducted in the context of a number of artist led projects in the South West of England in 2006 and 2007. The projects involved artists working with groups of young people (aged 14 and 15 at the start of the project) from a number of schools and one pupil referral unit. Led by a number of artists, the projects were designed to facilitate democratic ways of working, in which the young people would be gradually encouraged to take ownership of the project and the decision making process to create and display their own art work. The projects involved the young people working with artists over periods ranging from two weeks to six months. The researchers' aims were to explore and understand the experiences of the participants, to document the dynamics of the projects – particularly any democratic practice that took place – and finally, to assess the impact of the project on the young people's democratic learning. The data collection consisted of semi-structured observation of the projects, group and individual interviews with the young people, and group interviews with the artists. Data analysis involved the identification of similarities and differences in the young people's understandings, the identification of themes in the data and the connection of the outcomes of this analysis with the theoretical framework that guided the research (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, pp. 354-5).

The findings of the research are presented in four stages, beginning with a discussion of the nature of working in the gallery context. The authors found this to be very different from school, with the young people characterising the gallery context as a more open and relaxed setting, in which freedom and experimentation were the norm. Secondly, they discuss the young people's experiences of decision making, which, they found, allowed the young people to

gain experience of the complex dynamics of inclusive and democratic forms of collective decision making. This is followed by a discussion of the factors affecting the possibility of democratic practice occurring in the projects, with factors such as space, time, relationships (both with the lead artists and with each other) and trust being found to play an important role. Finally, Lawy *et al.* discuss the contribution of the project experiences to the young people's learning, indicating evidence of the young people's reflection on their involvement in decision making processes within the projects (2010, pp. 355-62).

Lawy *et al.* conclude that, '[t]he projects provided an opportunity for young people to experience and play a part in a complex, conceptual, social and aesthetic world outside of their school environment' (2010, p. 362). They note that this provided opportunities for democratic action and learning but that realising these opportunities necessitated careful negotiation by both the artists and the young people themselves. One aspect of this negotiation involved the young people having to respond to the challenge of making a transition from school to the gallery context, which required learning and 'unlearning' certain behaviours in order to adapt to a new set of expectations in the gallery space. Lawy *et al.* (2010) also note that trust, relationships, space and time were important factors in making this transition possible. Another aspect of the negotiation necessary for facilitating democratic action and learning involved the artists' need to balance the facilitation of democratic practices within the projects against aesthetic and creative concerns. This required careful judgement on their behalf. In terms of the implications of their research, Lawy *et al.* argue that, 'artist-led work in gallery contexts can provide opportunities that are conducive to young people's democratic learning' (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 363) but that this is a complex process which requires further investigation. They conclude that more research is needed into democratic learning in other aspects of young people's lives and suggest that their categories could be augmented with a focus on areas such as risk-taking, identity and power in order to better explicate and understand the complexity of young people's democratic learning (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 363).

2.2.2 Learning to participate in public spaces

Working from a perspective of education and social justice, Griffiths, Berry, Holt, Naylor and Weekes (2006) report on empirical research undertaken with a number of Nottingham schools involved in a pilot stage of the Creative Partnerships scheme. As discussed in the previous chapter, Creative Partnerships is one of a number of initiatives launched by the previous government as part of their arts and educational policy. The specific aim of the Creative Partnerships scheme is to bring opportunities for artistic practice into the classroom and to create links between schools and arts practitioners. Building on their findings from this research, Griffiths *et al.* argue that arts-based activities in the classroom setting are one effective way of creating conditions that allow children to learn to participate in public space, whether or not they are comfortable with the 'usual settings for deliberative democracy' (2006, p.358).

Griffiths *et al.* discuss various definitions of public space and question how people can learn to participate within it. The researchers also indicate a lack of attention to this important question in much political thought, noting that;

Mainstream political philosophy tends to assume that rational discussion occurs in the civic space which is open to all, and that this is a place where deliberative democracy occurs. Further, it tends to assume that if there is a public space, all citizens are equally able to use it (Griffiths *et al.*, 2006, 368).

The researchers argue that these assumptions need to be questioned and call for recognition of the fact that the ability to participate in the public sphere is not a given, but rather something that has to be learned. Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) research brings together these theoretical concerns about public space and social justice with empirical work undertaken by practitioner researchers in three Nottingham schools. The empirical work consisted of three action research projects, which were initially set up to investigate the impact of the pilot stage of the Creative Partnerships scheme and specifically its application of the Nottingham Apprenticeship Model, which was designed as an open and democratic approach to working with creative practitioners in schools.

The research employed a methodology of action research combined with 'practical philosophy' and which, intended to 'investigate what could be learnt from linking conversations from specific practices of teaching with conversations from philosophy' (Griffiths *et al.*, 2006, p.367). Themes were developed by the action researchers in each of the three research settings and Griffiths' philosophical interests were combined with these to refine the focus of the study. The themes used to describe practices in the schools under study were; 'fertile ground', a term used to describe the readiness of the school to work democratically in the way encouraged by the apprenticeship model; 'children on the edge', which described how the arts were seen as a way in which children who normally excluded themselves from collective activity could be helped and encouraged to join in; and 'children's voices and choices', a theme which covered the ability of even very young children and those with special needs to express their wishes and have them realised through planning and carrying out arts projects (2006, pp. 363-5). Griffiths *et al.* (2006) note that all three of these themes were evident to a greater or lesser extent in each of the research settings and claim that each of the research themes also involved children learning how to participate in public spaces.

Based on this empirical work, the researchers argue that arts activities in schools and arts-based education can be one way of helping children and young people to learn how to participate in public spaces within the context of school. They write; '[a]rts based projects within schools are one way of creating spaces where children can learn to be and express themselves – and may then be able to extend that experience into other public spaces in the school' (Griffiths *et al.*, 2006, p. 369). They also argue that the decision to be silent within public spaces should be recognised as an important part of this learning, arguing that, 'Some pupils need to learn how to be present in a public space even before they make decisions about whether or not to participate' (Griffiths *et al.*, 2006, 368). For Griffiths *et al.*(2006), art-based work in schools can be one way of helping young people to learn how to exist and participate in public spaces, even if they are not already comfortable or confident with the rational discussion and deliberation that is often characteristic of participation in the public sphere.

2.2.3 Young people's citizenship and the theatre

Theatre is one of the art forms in relation to which a significant amount of theoretical attention has been given to questions of democratic citizenship and education. The work of Augusto Boal has been particularly significant in this area and has highlighted how the theatre can act as a disruptive space for radical political engagement that also has educational potential. With close links to the work of Freire (Flores, 2000), Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* approach has involved the creation of educational experiences that contribute to democratic struggles by providing a space in which people can challenge the oppressive forces that impact on their lives (Tuckett, 2009). Through the development of particular strategies and devices - such as the 'joker' technique (Boal, 2000, pp. 167-90), in which members of the audience become actively engaged in the performance - Boal's theatrical approach also creates a space for enacting democratic principles, such as freedom and equality. Boal's work has therefore been especially valuable in highlighting how the theatre can act as an arena for educational processes that also relate to democracy.

While Boal's work represents a very significant contribution to our understanding of the potential of theatre in relation to both democracy and education, it could be argued that it operates from within an approach that aims to *utilise* the arts for political ends. O'Sullivan (2001) has argued that, contrary to a Marxist approach - which aims at cultivating an awareness of the driving forces of oppression - Boal's methodology is more concerned with encouraging participants to acquire their own insights into problems that immediately affect them. Notwithstanding this, the emphasis on challenging oppression in Boal's work could be interpreted within an approach that aims to use the arts for political education. As discussed earlier, one of the aims of the research presented in this thesis was to work with an alternative to such approaches, focusing instead on the actual quality of artistic experience and how this impacts on what young people learn in relation to democracy and citizenship. Additionally, Boal's work has been conducted principally in relation to adult education outside the UK and represents a developed theoretical approach or methodology rather than a body of empirical research. The literature discussed in this section therefore pertains to existing empirical research conducted with

young people in the UK context, which also makes use of alternative theoretical approaches to the relevance of theatre for democracy and citizenship.

Both Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007) have conducted empirical work that approaches the question of young people's citizenship and the theatre via an engagement with such work. In particular, they both make use of Nicholson's (2005) work in their research, which involves an application of Mouffe's radical approach to democracy and citizenship to the context of drama practice (Holdsworth, 2007, p. 294; Deeney, 2007, p. 341). Both Deeney and Holdsworth address the problems associated with the current model of citizenship education and suggest that theatre can be an important site for the exploration of more radical approaches to citizenship and citizenship learning.

Deeney's (2007) research examines the National Theatre's 'Connections' project, which offers schools the opportunity to stage new plays by professional playwrights, specifically commissioned for the project each year. Deeney argues that young people's relation to citizenship is often seen as one in which they are passive recipients of the state's promotion of good citizenship, and views this in the context of New Labour's third way politics and the rise of interest in conceptions of citizenship that emphasise responsibilities over rights. He refers to the promotion of 'state-sanctioned citizenship' (2007, p.334), which he conceptualises via the work of Eagleton as, 'a kind of ethical pedagogy that will fit us for political citizenship' (Eagleton, as cited in Deeney, 2007, p. 335) and refers to citizenship education in schools as an important way in which young people have experienced this phenomenon (Deeney, 2007, p.340).

Deeney recognises that the Connections project is based on a tradition of state-subsidised and text-based theatre and that as such, it might be considered part of the state-sanctioned promotion of citizenship described above;

It might be said that as successful, and almost subversive, as the Connections project may have set out to be, it can only develop the relationship between citizenship and youth culture within what is substantially a coercive political and cultural framework. (Deeney, 2007, p. 334)

He also acknowledges the concerns of some in the field, such as Kershaw (1999), who has argued that the theatre itself is a 'disciplinary system' that logically precludes democratic citizenship, understood as 'equality and mutual exchange' or 'common critique' (Kershaw, as cited in Deeney, 2007, p.334). However, Deeney disagrees with Kershaw, arguing that conventional theatre practices can in fact be the site of more critical or democratic citizenship. In order to make this argument, Deeney refers to Nicholson's work on applied drama, and specifically her engagement with Mouffe's radical approach to democracy. He cites Nicholson's claim that because of the 'social, personal and political' impact of theatre, applied drama can contribute to 'the process of building democratic communities and encouraging active, participant citizenship' (as cited in Deeney, 2007, p. 336).

Deeney (2007) offers a close reading of two plays that were commissioned by Connections – Mark Ravenhill's *Totally Over You* and *Citizenship* – and argues that through their dramatic devices and collaborative development with young people, these plays led to the possibility of a critically engaged citizenship being enacted amongst audience and performers. He refers to the use of interruptions in the dialogue and 'linguistic oscillating' in both plays to argue that, far from imposing a message, they in fact invite the kind of 'equality and mutual exchange' or 'common critique' that Kershaw sees as vital to the practice of democratic citizenship (Deeney, 2007, p.340). Deeney argues that, because of this, the plays may have allowed the young people to redefine their relation to citizenship along more critical lines. He writes, 'both plays clearly permit, in terms of their dramaturgical strategies, the processes of rehearsal and performance, difficult and muddled questions of redefinition to be enacted' (Deeney, 2007, p. 340).

In order to interpret the significance of this aspect of the Connections project, Deeney again refers to Nicholson's argument that applied drama is 'apposite for the practice of participant citizenship', because it involves 'creative participation in performance practices that dislodge fixed and uneven boundaries between self and other' (Nicholson, as cited in Deeney, 2007, p. 341). In this way, Deeney engages with a relational rather than a static approach to subjectivity and argues that the two plays are good examples of how this kind of subjectivity

can be embodied in theatre practice. He argues, 'what is important here, and Ravenhill's *Totally Over You* and *Citizenship* clearly demonstrate this, is that agency is contingent, not a question of the formation of a subject position but of an inter-subjectivity' (Deeney, 2007, p. 341).

Deeney develops this argument with direct reference to Mouffe's work, and especially her conception of the political community, or '*respublica*', as a 'non-essentialist' public sphere of 'discursive surfaces' (Deeney, 2007, p.341). Deeney argues that theatre, as embodied action which is performed, rehearsed and adapted in interaction amongst writers, performers and audiences, can be a manifestation of the 'discursive surfaces' that are central to Mouffe's concept of a 'non essentialist' public realm (2007, p. 341). He further argues that Ravenhill's two plays are good examples of how theatre can operate in this way:

The “virtual” - the staged representation of narrative and the dramatic action – constantly stands in creative tension with the “actual” - the material and corporeal conditions of performance itself. Is it not within this tension, between the imaginary and the real that *respublica* reveals a critical presence? Indeed, the dramatic landscapes of Ravenhill's *Totally Over You* and *Citizenship* might well be seen to operate as Mouffe-ian “discursive surfaces”. (Deeney, 2007, p.341)

Finally, Deeney (2007) addresses the professional production of these plays at the National Theatre following their use in the Connections project. He acknowledges that this might be seen as a context in which the dynamic nature of the plays as sites of critical citizenship might be compromised and brought back within the realm of a state-sanctioned promotion of citizenship. However, Deeney adapts Said's concept of re-inscription as the 'reoccupation of cultural forms that are reserved for subordination' (Said, as cited in Deeney, 2007, p. 341) to argue that this was not the case. He notes that the professional productions involved lively and unruly participation amongst the audience of young people and argues that the performances, 'demonstrated how the rules of Kershaw's “disciplinary system” might be transgressed from within the system itself' (Deeney, 2007, p.342). For Deeney, far from prohibiting democratic

citizenship, the Connections project and its context within the National Theatre is – ironically – the 'precise location that has offered the potential to examine and redefine the particular and complex relationship between citizenship and young people' (2007, p. 342).

While Deeney investigates young people's citizenship in the context of current theatre activities, Holdsworth's (2007) work adopts a historical perspective to investigate the work of the theatre director, Joan Littlewood, in the local community around the Theatre Royal in London during the 1960s and 1970s. Holdsworth describes how Littlewood worked during this time to develop projects involving young people in the arts in ways which emphasised, 'cultural democracy, active citizenship and the creative animation of community-based activity and spaces' (2007, p. 294). Like Deeney, Holdsworth (2007) recognises the move in recent policy and theory towards constructions of citizenship that emphasise citizens' responsibilities. She also challenges this conception with reference to theoretical work from radical democracy. For example, she also refers to Nicholson's engagement with Mouffe's work, and specifically her concept of 'embodied citizenship', which, Holdsworth argues, 'takes steps beyond an abstract notion of individual social responsibility to a collective identification that results in social action' (2007, p.294). Holdsworth also challenges the assumption that citizenship is something which young people achieve when they become adults, preferring an approach which recognises young people as citizens in their own right. She argues, 'there is an assumption that people only become fully functioning citizens when they reach adulthood at 16 or 18. Yet, good citizens are not made by accident but through a process of learning and *exercising* citizenship rights and responsibilities' (Holdsworth, 2007, p.295, my emphasis). Holdsworth therefore adopts a view of citizenship learning as an experiential process in which young people can learn *through* the exercise of their actual citizenship. Drawing on arguments from human geography, environmental psychology and environmental planning, she argues that young people need to be able to engage in their physical and social environment in order to enact their citizenship and therefore engage in citizenship learning (Holdsworth, 2007, p.296).

Holdsworth (2007) argues that Joan Littlewood's work provides an example of how the enactment of young people's citizenship – and therefore their citizenship learning – can be supported through arts based activities. Describing Littlewood's work in the area around the Theatre Royal, Holdsworth notes that the director worked with local people to reclaim derelict sites after houses, schools and shops in the area were destroyed to make way for a new development. Holdsworth describes how Littlewood worked with young people in these spaces, setting up arts and craft workshops, team games and opportunities to gather informally. She argues that this work constituted a form of democratic, creative education, in which, 'young people were encouraged to view themselves and to be viewed as part of a community of location, a social network – not in terms of a romanticised conception of homogenised identity and unity but as citizens sharing the same social space' (Holdsworth, 2007, p.301).

The second element of Littlewood's work referred to by Holdsworth is the use of the Theatre Royal itself, as a space in which young people could use props and costumes to perform role plays about their experiences within the community. Holdsworth (2007) argues that the performance and adoption of other perspectives via role play involved the recognition of difference within society, and refers to Mouffe's work to argue for the importance of such recognition in a pragmatic approach to collective citizenship. She writes, 'In her discussions of community relations, Mouffe stresses the importance of difference embedded in social discourse and of the need to confront rather than ignore antagonistic relations' (Holdsworth, 2007, p.302). For Holdsworth, Littlewood's work provided an opportunity for young people to re-enact the antagonistic relations of community life within the safe environment of the theatre and thus to reflect on and learn from those experiences. She argues, 'Littlewood invited her young participants to narrate and assess their fractious community encounters in order to identify the origins, triggers and consequences of their own antagonistic relations and wider community tensions in a non-threatening and non-judgemental environment' (Holdsworth, 2007, p. 302). Finally, Holdsworth argues that this kind of activity was supportive of the young people's citizenship learning. Although she does not claim to offer evidence of such learning actually

taking place, she argues that it can be concluded that Littlewood's work at least offered the possibility of young people learning (in terms of their citizenship) through involvement in theatre activities; 'Littlewood invited young people to rehearse and reconfigure through imaginative and creative play their roles, interactions and responsibilities as emergent citizens. In this way, it is possible that the participants became more self-aware, reflexive and socially knowledgeable' (Holdsworth, 2007, p. 303).

2.3 Discussion

The empirical research presented here has made a number of important contributions to the field. These could be described as falling into three categories; substantive, methodological and conceptual. Below I discuss the nature and importance of these contributions, as well as some of the problems and limitations of the research. Following this discussion, I further refine the focus for my own research, by identifying the gap in knowledge and understanding that my empirical work aimed to address. I also indicate how this existing work has informed the conceptualisation of terms and the research design employed in my own study.

2.3.1 Substantive findings

Firstly, the existing research offers a number of substantive findings about young people's engagement with art, and the relation of this to issues of democracy and education. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the research in this respect is the demonstration that artistic activities can be an important site for enacting democracy, and that this has important implications for learning. By demonstrating the nature of young people's engagement in arts activities as a context for acting in ways that might be described as democratic (although in a variety of ways), and by illustrating the relevance of this for learning, all of the research papers reviewed here offer important findings about art and democratic learning. This contribution is evident in Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research in the finding that the young people in the study experienced democratic practice through their interaction in gallery contexts and that this sometimes impacted on the young people's learning. In this case, the research also illuminates the nature of such learning in relation to arts contexts. For

example, their research offers empirical evidence of democratic learning as a process of engaging in and reflecting on democratic practices – as well as reflection on how such practices are made possible – in everyday life. In particular, the research shows how the young people in their study reflected on experiences of democratic practice in arts contexts, and how these practices had an impact on their thoughts, behaviour and attitudes. Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research also illustrates the complexity of democratic learning in relation to arts contexts, and highlights the importance of a variety of external factors in this process. In particular, the research shows that learning democracy in the gallery settings under study was affected by factors such as trust, relationships, time and space, and that it required careful judgement and negotiation by all those involved in the contexts under study.

In the work of both Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007), important insights about art and democratic learning are offered via the demonstration that participation in theatre and drama activities can provide ways for young people to enact democratic citizenship, which may also have an impact on their learning. In both cases, the researchers focus on the *possibility* of such learning following from involvement in arts activities, rather than demonstrating how such learning has actually occurred. In Holdsworth's (2007) work, this involves showing how engagement in drama in one particular setting contributed to the possibility of young people enacting democratic citizenship in a way that could be relevant to their learning. In Deeney's (2007) work, the claim is made that the kinds of experiences encountered by young people in the context of drama and theatre work might constitute a radical form of democratic citizenship and that this could allow young people to renegotiate the terms of their citizenship in a way that differs from official discourse within education and politics. In both cases, the research relates to arts contexts without any explicitly democratic dimension.

Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) research also offers evidence of how arts activities constitute important contexts for democracy and learning. The focus of this research is slightly different from the other work reviewed in this chapter because it is concerned with the specific question of how children learn to participate in the public sphere. The import of the findings in this research is that

engagement in the arts is one way in which such learning can be facilitated. Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) work therefore shows a greater concern for engagement in the specific processes and practices that occur within the systems of democratic government. Specifically, this research demonstrates that learning how to participate in the public spaces of school through arts engagement might lead to learning about how to engage in other public spaces in the wider social and political sphere.

Despite making significant contributions to knowledge and understanding about the nature of arts contexts and their potential for democratic learning, there are also some limitations to the findings offered in the research. In particular, the findings are limited to a small set of studies and a fairly narrow set of research questions. For example, Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research is limited to art activities in gallery settings and specifically to arts projects with the explicit intention of fostering democratic practices. Similarly, both Holdsworth's (2007) and Deeney's (2007) research is limited to theatre and drama settings. Additionally, Holdsworth's research involves a historical case study and therefore offers little in the way of insights about contemporary drama practices. Also, as mentioned above, the work of both Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007) finds that learning about democracy and citizenship is a *possible* outcome of drama and theatre activities but does not offer evidence that such learning has *in fact* occurred. Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) work is limited to arts engagement in schools. Finally, all the research presented here was conducted in relation to participation in arts projects and activities, and therefore offers no evidence about the potential of other ways of engaging with the arts (for example as audiences, students and critics) for democracy and education.

As well as being limited in volume and scope, there are also issues in terms of how some of the research is presented, and in how the researchers conceptualise their problems and findings. A more detailed discussion of the methodological and conceptual approaches in the literature is offered below. However, some aspects of these approaches deserve attention here because it could be argued that, as a result of these issues, some of the substantive findings of the research are not adequately supported. For example, while conceptually sophisticated and well argued, Deeney's (2007) work offers

relatively little empirical data in support of the findings and claims made. Only the comments of one former teacher and informal observations about the behaviour of young people at the staging of a play are offered as empirical evidence for the argument advanced in this research. Additionally, the methodological approach taken in the empirical research is not fully documented. For this reason, it could be argued that Deeney's findings about the possibility of young people experiencing radical forms of citizenship and learning from these through engagement in theatre activities are not thoroughly supported.

In Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) work, there are some conceptual issues which, it could be argued, affect the validity of the findings offered in the research. In particular, there is some inconsistency in how the researchers understand the political and democratic nature of participation in arts based activities within schools. While at some points the researchers seem to view arts activities in schools as public spheres – in the genuinely political and democratic sense – in and of themselves, at others they argue that participation in such activities can act as a kind of training ground for participation in more political spaces such as school councils or other decision making bodies. However, even if the second interpretation is taken as the main content of their claim, the research does not expand on how the skills, experience and confidence gained in arts-based activities might be translated to other public spheres based on more mainstream political models of communication such as deliberative democracy. For this reason it could be argued that their reported finding – that arts activities can be one way of helping some children to learn how to be in public spaces – is not fully supported.

2.3.2 Methodological approaches

The literature also demonstrates how research into the nature of young people's engagement with art, and the complex question of its relevance for democracy and learning can be conducted in the empirical sphere. With the exception of Holdsworth, whose work involved the investigation of historical data, the existing research was conducted via direct interaction with young people engaged in arts activities. All of the researchers also worked from within interpretative approaches, gathering qualitative data to explore young people's

engagement in art and its implications for questions of democracy and education. The most common methods of data collection used in the research were observation and interviews. Many of the studies also share the common characteristic of employing research designs with a longitudinal element. Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research, for example, was conducted over the course of the projects concerned and involved ongoing observation, followed by interviews with participants towards the end of the research process. Because this is the case, the research charts the impact of participation over time and makes comparisons between data collected early on in the project and the participants' later reflections on their experiences. Similarly, Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) research followed entire projects over time, with data collection ongoing throughout. Although Deeney's (2007) work offers the least information about how the research that was conducted, this work also appears to have included a longitudinal dimension, as reference is made to observations and interview data gathered at different stages of the Connections programme. Working with longitudinal designs allowed the researchers in each case to document people's changing behaviour and attitudes over time, as well as participants' reflections on earlier experiences. This is most evident in the work of Griffiths *et al.* (2006) and Lawy *et al.* (2010).

In addition, some of the research employed methodological approaches involving a certain openness in relation to the changing dynamics of the research setting over time. For example, Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) work involved an action research approach, with researchers meeting to discuss emerging themes and to develop further strategies over the course of the project. Similarly, Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research involved a grounded theory approach, allowing themes to emerge from the data over the course of the project, rather than imposing existing themes onto the data. These studies demonstrate that flexible and open ended research methodologies can be suitable for capturing the nature of complicated processes of human interaction, such as learning and democracy because they allow researchers to remain responsive to the changing nature of the research setting and the object of study over time. The research discussed in this chapter therefore demonstrates the potential of interpretative approaches involving the collection of qualitative data and flexible,

longitudinal research designs that remain open to changes in the research setting over time.

However, owing to the nature of the way this research is presented – in the form of short articles – there remain some uncertainties over the precise use of methods in the work, which also have implications for my own research. For example, as mentioned above, Deeney's (2007) research offers little discussion of the methodology employed in the research, and it could be argued that the empirical evidence used to support his findings is too slight. In Griffiths *et al.*'s (2006) research, there are questions over power relations and the development of research themes. While Lyotard's concept of the differend is employed to bridge the gap between the theoretical ideas of the academic researcher and the everyday experiences of the practitioner researchers in the study, the application of this concept in the research setting is not fully explained. Because of this, the balance between the weight given to the practitioner researchers' interpretations and that given to the theoretical and philosophical concerns of the lead researcher is unclear. Finally, in Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research, the grounded theory approach adopted in the research is not fully discussed. While making reference to the development of themes from the data, there is relatively little detail given as to how this process unfolded or the extent to which this followed a grounded theory approach of coding, categorising etc. As a result, it could be argued that the themes used to present the data resemble to results of thematic analysis more than a recognisable approach to grounded theory. These uncertainties highlight some of the important issues that needed to be considered when formulating the design for my own research.

2.3.3 Conceptualisations of the field

The research discussed in this chapter also makes a number of contributions towards the way in which the relevance of art to democracy and education can be conceptualised. In particular, they all offer ways of thinking through the relationships amongst the three fields that avoid some of the problems associated with the instrumentalist approaches to this question discussed in the previous chapter. In each case, the research is able to make such contributions via an engagement with alternative approaches to democracy, art and education. In particular, they engage with radical approaches to democracy that

challenge the influential legacy of liberalism (Oldfield, 1990; Barber 1984), as well as deliberative approaches that have come to prominence in more recent years (Warren, 2002; Elster, 1998). Specifically, by working with theoretical approaches that trouble static understandings of democracy and re-frame the role of art in the relationship between democracy and education, the existing research retains a concern for the political dimension of both art and democracy, and highlights the intrinsic and aesthetic qualities of art.

All of the research studies reviewed in this chapter trouble the static understanding of democracy that often characterises instrumentalist accounts of its relationship with art and education. Rather than viewing democracy as a stable set of institutions or practices, into which children and young people must be inculcated, they question the grounds of such institutions and propose alternative conceptions of what democracy, citizenship and public space might mean. In the case of Griffiths *et al.*, this involves problematising the often taken for granted nature of public space as a universal sphere of rational, deliberative discussion, with reference to the political philosophy of authors such as Young and Arendt (Griffiths *et al.*, 2006, pp.357-9). Similarly, Deeney and Holdsworth have proposed alternative conceptions of the public sphere as a non-essentialist and contested realm, based on Mouffe's radical democracy and Nicholson's application of her work in the context of theatre (Deeney, 2007, p. 341; Holdsworth, 2007, p. 294). Meanwhile Lawy *et al.* conceptualise democratic practice via Biesta's concept of 'action-in-plurality' (itself based on the work of Arendt), which involves the kind of interaction in which anyone and everyone is free to take the initiative and respond to the initiatives of others (Lawy *et al.*, 2010, p. 353-4).

By taking this approach to democracy, Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) work also involves a re-framing of the relationship between democracy and learning in a way that prioritises being over becoming. Instead of focusing on what needs to be learnt in order for people to become citizens and practice democratic citizenship, they turn their attention to the ways in which young people learn from their actual experiences of citizenship and democracy across the variety of contexts that make up their lives, treating gallery settings as one of the contexts in which young people might experience and learn from democratic ways of being.

Similar questions have also been addressed by Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007). Both have focused on the actual possibilities for enacting citizenship that young people encounter, rather than on the process of teaching young people how to be citizens. Deeney for example has focused on theatre as an important factor in young people's ongoing negotiation of their relation to citizenship, and argues that this offers an alternative to the way in which citizenship is taught or promoted in government policy. Holdsworth on the other hand has argued that it is important to recognise and support the opportunities for enacting citizenship that young people encounter through theatre work – rather than seeing citizenship as a status achieved with adulthood – and has argued that citizenship learning can take place as a result of these opportunities.

In rethinking the relationship between democracy and learning in this way, these researchers also raise the interesting question of young people's subjectivity. In particular, they engage with inter-subjective and relational understandings of subjectivity to show that citizenship can be thought of as an ongoing process rather than the achievement of a stable identity. This is particularly clear in Deeney's work, where explicit reference to relational understandings of subjectivity is used to conceptualise citizenship and young people's agency (Deeney, 2007, p. 341). It is also evident in Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) concern for the actual practice of citizenship rather than the achievement of citizenship status through education, and in Holdsworth's claim that the work she describes, 'suggests a radical engagement with notions of self and other that acknowledges how both are generated through interaction and how these relations are not fixed, but open to scrutiny and reappraisal' (2007, p.302).

Because the researchers engage with these theoretical ideas about democracy, the relationship between democracy and learning, and the impact of different concepts of subjectivity on how this is understood, the research also illustrates how the relationship between art and democracy might be conceptualised in a way that regards both the aesthetic qualities of art and its political dimension as important. The work of both Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007), for example, implies an important connection between art and politics in that they see the theatre – or certain dramatic practices – as sites in which democratic

citizenship might be enacted. For Holdsworth, this involves viewing role play as a context in which the exchange of antagonistic views can be inhabited, rehearsed and understood. For Deeney, the theatre can be seen as a manifestation of the discursive surfaces that Mouffe refers to in relation to radical understandings of democracy. Meanwhile Lawy *et al.* (2010) draw on research from gallery education to argue that such arts based work shares some distinctive characteristics with democratic practice such as openness, ambiguity and experimentation. Griffiths *et al.* (2006) also raise some important philosophical questions about the relationship between art and the way people learn to participate in the usual settings for democracy. For example, they argue that there are qualities peculiar to art – specifically its attention to forms of communication other than rational argument, such as bodily and visual expression, as well as silence – which can help people learn to participate in the public sphere.

In the above ways, the researchers raise interesting questions about how young people's engagement with art and its relevance for questions of democracy and education can be conceptualised. However, there is also some uncertainty over the precise use of these concepts, given the necessarily brief nature of the way in which the research is presented in the form of articles. One example of this is the failure to fully demonstrate how theoretical ideas – such as Mouffe's approach to democracy – are relevant to the empirical sphere. Deeney's (2007) engagement with Mouffe's work allows him to offer a view of democracy as a relational, unstable sphere of confrontation and constant renegotiation, but he fails to demonstrate convincingly how these understandings of democracy and subjectivity are enacted through engagement in drama and the theatre. Similar problems are also evident in Deeney's approach to the political potential of art, and specifically the connections between theatre and democratic practice. While he argues that the theatre actually constitutes a democratic sphere of discursive surfaces, as imagined by Mouffe, he fails to demonstrate how this is the case in practice or to make a convincing argument for the specifically political quality of theatre.

Another problem in some of the research is a limited application of the theoretical ideas that inform the research approach. This is evident in

Holdsworth's (2007) treatment of the relationship between education and democracy. For example, while making a good case for focusing on young people's exercise of their actual citizenship, Holdsworth understands citizenship learning as a process of learning *through* such experiences and as the production of good citizens with appropriate skills (2007, p.303). In this way, she does not fully exploit the potential of an alternative conceptualisation of the relationship between democracy and education or the approach to subjectivity that informs this view. Similarly, while employing Mouffe's concept of 'agonistic' democracy, Holdsworth views theatrical practices as something which can provide not a manifestation of democracy itself, but rather a space in which to rehearse, re-enact and learn from encounters in the democratic sphere of real life. While this research therefore pushes the boundaries of what is understood by democracy - and how it relates to both art and education - as well as helping to think through the aesthetic and political dimensions of art in innovative ways, such conceptualisations are sometimes theoretically underdeveloped or not adequately translated to the empirical sphere.

2.4 Refining the research problem

In the research presented here, it has been shown that arts activities can be an important site for enacting democracy, and that this also has implications for democratic learning. In particular, the research has shown that young people have been able to enact democracy and learn from it within the contexts of arts activities specifically intended to foster democratic practice. Additionally, the research has demonstrated that arts practices without any explicitly democratic dimension can also offer opportunities for democratic practice. Finally, some of the research has illuminated the dynamics involved in the provision of opportunities for democratic practice in arts contexts, and has illustrated the ways in which young people learn from these experiences.

However, the above discussion also shows that there are a number of areas in which further research could add to what has already been shown. For example, in relation to arts contexts without any explicitly democratic dimension, the findings of the existing research remain at the level of potential for learning rather than actualisations of it. Similarly, all the research discussed here has been conducted in the contexts of arts participation, while other ways in which

young people engage with the arts (for example as consumers, audiences, students etc.) have not been explored. Also, while Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) work has illuminated the nature of democratic learning in terms of its reflexive quality and the importance of contextual and relational factors in making democratic practice possible, further work could be done to explore the ways in which young people learn democracy and the connections between this and their arts engagement. Finally, it is notable that very few studies into the quality of arts engagement and its potential for democracy and education have been conducted. My research therefore aimed to address these issues by adding to existing knowledge and understanding about the nature of democratic learning, specifically in relation to arts contexts – including those without any explicitly democratic dimension – and by exploring the relationship between democratic learning and more general forms of arts engagement.

The research discussed here also has implications for how such a study can be carried out. For example, the research literature shows that interpretative research, working with qualitative data, within a longitudinal design and an open approach to the emerging dynamics of the research process has the potential for capturing the complex process of democratic learning in relation to arts contexts. However, it is also possible to identify some additions to these methodologies that could be useful in the research. For example, little has been written on using methods that are particularly appropriate to arts contexts in the existing research. The above discussion also draws attention to the need for gathering rich and sufficient data and fully documenting the research process. These considerations were taken into account when developing the research design for my own empirical work.

Finally, the research also has implications for how a study of artistic engagement - and its potential for democratic learning - can be conceptualised. Firstly, it has been shown that theoretical ideas from radical democracy can be usefully employed to rethink what is meant by democracy in ways that allow for more broad understandings than have often been applied in the field. In particular they show that the work of authors such as Mouffe (1992; 2005), Arendt (1958) and Young (2000), offer valuable insights into the nature of democracy that are also useful for exploring questions around arts participation,

democracy and learning. However, it is also evident that careful work is needed in order to realise the potential of such theoretical work in the empirical sphere. Secondly, the literature has raised important questions about human subjectivity and highlighted how different understandings of subjectivity impact on the way the significance of artistic engagement for issues of democracy and education can be understood. Finally, by engaging with these ideas, the research highlights the political nature of the problem to be addressed in my study and shows that there are connections to be made between the intrinsic qualities of art and its significance for democracy. In the following chapter, I address these implications by engaging with some of the conceptual ideas highlighted in the existing research, in order to construct a theoretical framework for understanding the role of art in the relationship between democracy and education. Based on this theoretical framework, I offer a conceptualisation of the operative terms for the study that translates the significance of these theoretical ideas to the empirical sphere. In doing so, I provide a way of conceptualising the field that brings the political dimension of all three fields to the fore and which recognises the significance of the intrinsic and aesthetic qualities of art for democratic learning.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the work of researchers employing relational understandings of subjectivity, and ideas from radical democracy, had illustrated useful ways of addressing the relevance of young people's engagement with art for democracy and education. In particular, I argued that these approaches enabled the researchers to avoid some of the problems associated with an instrumentalist approach and indicated how – by applying such theoretical ideas in their work – they had highlighted the political dimension of the relevance of art for democratic learning, and had foregrounded the aesthetic and intrinsic qualities of art in this respect. In this chapter, I build on some of these conceptual ideas, and introduce others, to construct a theoretical framework for understanding the role of art in the relationship between democracy and education. Having established this framework at the theoretical level, I go on to consider the implications of this perspective for investigating young people's experiences of art and the way this relates to their democratic learning. In doing so, I also conceptualise the key terms for my study, defining how I understood democracy, democratic learning and the democratic significance of art in the research.

3.2 Democracy

In order to construct an alternative understanding of the relationships amongst democracy, art and education, I first offer a particular perspective on democracy based on the work of Mouffe and Rancière. This involves an examination of the political philosophy of each, following which, I argue that both offer an understanding of democracy not as a form of government or society (as it is often conceived) but as an active and disruptive movement, which is embodied in a specific understanding of political action. This understanding forms the basis of my argument about the relationships amongst democracy, art and education.

3.2.1 Conflict and contingency at the heart of politics – Mouffe's view of democracy

Mouffe's (2005) insistence on conflict at the heart of politics allows us to begin to construct an understanding of democracy as a disruptive movement, by highlighting the contingency of the foundations upon which it rests. For Mouffe, the inevitability of conflict over very different projects for the government of a community necessitates its positive inclusion within a democratic framework. Indeed, she advocates, 'the creation of a vibrant, "agonistic" public sphere of contestation, where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted' (2005, p. 3). Mouffe uses the term 'agonism' to re-frame – in positive terms – the antagonism and disagreement that is, in her view, an essential element of politics. She also claims that the suppression of this very real, political conflict is a dangerous element of neoliberalism and other political approaches based on consensus because it precludes the democratic expression of radically divergent views, forcing proponents of these to employ non democratic channels instead. Indeed, she has argued that an over emphasis on consensus has recently contributed to the resurgence of far right extremism in Europe (2005, p. 3). Mouffe stresses that an 'agonistic' politics – one which involves real contest over the grounds of politics rather than mere competition amongst various interest groups - should allow for dissent over the interpretation of the very concepts of liberty and equality that are central to democracy (2005, p. 121). However, Mouffe also insists that while the interpretations of liberty and equality are many and may vary legitimately from one cultural context to another (2005, p. 126), a commitment to these values remains essential to any practice of democratic politics. In one sense then, while Mouffe highlights the contingency at the heart of politics, she also Mouffe remains committed to a stable understanding of democratic politics as a practice around which boundaries are drawn. Indeed she claims that there is an institutional space which is constitutive of 'democratic political association', which no commitment to political conflict or 'agonism' should violate (Mouffe, 2005, p. 121).

This ambiguity may be explained by the fact that Mouffe is arguing for an 'agonistic' politics or public sphere (2005, p.3) and thus sets some ground rules for what would be acceptable within this context. These ground rules take the

form of a commitment to the values of liberty and equality, however various their interpretations. Mouffe claims that such a commitment is qualitatively different from the commitment of liberals to these values, who see in them a universal, rational morality. She states, 'I claim that the drawing of a frontier between the legitimate and the illegitimate is always a political decision, and that it should therefore always remain open to contestation.' (2005, p. 121). For Mouffe then, liberty and equality are not the universal and unchanging foundations of democracy that form the basis of liberal politics but are themselves subject to challenge and reinterpretation. In this way, Mouffe draws borders around the practice of politics, but because these borders are *political*, rather than moral or universal, they are also unstable and volatile, always subject to contestation and renegotiation. However, the question of how and where this contestation can take place remains complicated in Mouffe's work by that fact that a commitment to both liberty and equality are seen as a prerequisite for any involvement in the political sphere. Rancière allows us to address this question more openly by shifting our perspective on democracy from the practices that occur within the established political sphere to those that challenge it from without.

3.2.2 Rancière – politics as the embodiment of democracy

As the case in Mouffe's work, conflict and dissent are central to Rancière's understanding of democracy but he frames this dissensus in a way that allows for a more radical interpretation of the contingency and instability of democratic practice. In *Hatred of Democracy*, Rancière (2006) offers a critique of the hatred that democracy has inspired since its inception in ancient Greece. Here, Rancière describes democracy as the breaking of the link between an entitlement to govern and the 'natural' differences present in society. He argues that, in contrast to the timeless logic which bases a person's suitability to govern on the 'natural' attributes of birth and wealth, the logic of democracy insisted upon the entitlement of anyone and everyone to share in the government of a community. The hatred and fear that the appearance of this egalitarian logic inspired is captured by Rancière in a reference to Plato, and specifically, to the denunciation of democracy as the regime that:

overturns all the relations that structure human society: Its governors have the demeanour of the governed and the governed the demeanour of governors; women are the equals of men; fathers accustom themselves to treating their sons as equals; the foreigner and the immigrant are the equals of citizens; the schoolmaster fears and flatters the pupils who, in turn, make fun of him; the young are the equals of the old and the old imitate the young; even the beasts are free and the horses and asses, conscious of their dignity, knock over anyone who does not yield to them in the street. (Rancière, 2006, p. 36)

On Rancière's view, this assimilation of the equality between animals and humans, and between parents and their children, to the equality between governors and governed is part of an effort to represent the governmental relation as natural. According to such logic, the entitlement of some to rule over others is as natural and given as the rule of the old over the young and of masters over their animals (2006, p. 38). It is this logic of a 'natural' government based on social differences that democracy originally disrupted.

Rancière argues that this original democratic rupture opened up a public sphere, 'which is a sphere of encounters and conflicts between the two opposed logics of police and politics, of the natural government of social competences and the government of anyone and everyone.' (2006, p. 55). Rancière here writes of the conflict between democracy and the 'natural government of social competences' in a way that appears to use the terms synonymously with 'politics' and 'police' which feature both here and in his other works. Rancière applies a very specific meaning to these words, the distinction of which from their general use in English is not always apparent. An analysis of these terms and their relationship to the concepts of democracy and the 'natural' government of social competences makes it possible to reconstruct some of the most important elements in Rancière's philosophy.

The concept of the police – or as Rancière also sometimes refers to it – the 'police order' is, for Rancière, an all encompassing distribution of the places within a community based on an inegalitarian logic in which some are destined for participation in the public sphere of government while others are not. One

obvious historical example of this, referred to by Rancière, is the exclusion of women from public life, and their relegation to the private sphere of domesticity and reproduction, based on a 'natural' distinction (Rancière, 2006, p. 56). Furthermore, the police order rests on the idea that there is only one, pure principle of government, i.e. the principle of inequality based on differences within society, which determine who is entitled to govern and who is not. In this way it denies and suppresses the existence of equality which would contaminate its pure logic of government (2006, p. 48). It is important to note that for Rancière, there is not one police logic but rather many versions of it. Indeed, he indicates that a police logic has operated differently at different points in history and takes efforts to show that the dominance of an educated elite in representative democracies, the Marxist faith in an avant garde leading the way to revolution, and the neoliberal move towards a government of experts have all informed a police logic of inequality in different ways (2006, pp. 51-97; 1999, pp. 61-93).

Politics, by contrast, is, for Rancière, the practice that reveals – by affirming the existence of equality – that there is never a single, pure principle of government and that in the wake of the original democratic rupture, all systems of political government are contingent, based only on the paradoxical fact that there is no stable basis for the entitlement to govern (Rancière, 2006, p. 49). To put it another way, all systems of inequality rely on the reality of equality between all speaking beings (Rancière, 2006, p. 48). Politics is able to reveal this by playing on the contradictions between public and private identities, between real equalities and real inequalities. In this way it generates, via a process of subjectification, supplementary, political subjects which resist classification to the public or private sphere. Politics therefore stages a dissensus over the very distribution between these two spheres that the police order delimits and maintains (Rancière, 2006, p. 61). Indeed the very thing that makes these actions, and the subjects they generate, political is the fact that they bring into play a conflict over the distribution of places within a community upon which the logic of government rests. Rancière refers to the example of Rosa Parks' refusal to give up a seat on a bus, and the boycott which followed it as part of

the civil rights movement in the United States of America, to illustrate how this process has sometimes occurred:

The young black woman of Montgomery, Alabama, who, one day in December 1955, decided to remain in her seat on the bus, which was not hers, in this way decided that she had, as a citizen of the United States, the rights she did not have as an inhabitant of a state that banned the use of such seats to individuals with one-sixteenth or more parts of 'non-Caucasian' blood. And the Blacks of Montgomery who, a propos of this conflict between a private person and a transportation company, decided to boycott the company, really acted politically, *staging the double relation of exclusion and inclusion inscribed in the duality of the human being and the citizen.*' (Rancière 2006, p. 57, my emphasis)

The crucial point here is that for Rancière, the political subject cannot be reduced either to the equal citizen with rights enshrined in law, nor to the unequal human being stripped bare of those rights in daily experience. For Rancière, it is not a case of a real inequality being concealed behind a façade of equality, as a Marxist reading might conclude (2006, p. 58). Rather, the political subject is supplementary to these two identities and only becomes subject through the political action of staging the contradiction between them. For Rancière, politics is always about creating something new out of the tensions between two opposites which can never be reduced to the real and the imaginary, the true and the false. In his view, therefore, democracy does not involve a straightforward victory of equality over inequality. Rather, by taking equality seriously it stages the contradiction between the two in new and inventive ways (Rancière, 2006, p. 62). Finally, on Rancière's view, politics and its generation of new political subjects leave traces in a reconfigured distribution of places between the public and the private sphere. In the case above, the trace of this political action can be seen in the inclusion of African Americans in the public sphere of government. But, as political action demonstrates, the police order is contingent and its distribution of places will always be subject to the conflict between the egalitarian logic of democracy and the inegalitarian

logic of a government of social competences (Rancière, 2006, p. 55). The victories and defeats that leave their traces in the distribution of the community as a result of this conflict are never definitive.

A number of important points need to be drawn from this argument. The first is that for Rancière, politics is the activity which generates political subjects and makes political subjectivity possible. Rancière therefore holds a particular view of subjectivity that might be described as performative in that the political subject only exists, only becomes subject, through engaging in political action. Secondly, democracy is inseparable from this process. Indeed we might say that, for Rancière, the egalitarian logic of democracy is embodied in political action. For this reason democracy is an active and disruptive process, or as Rancière puts it, democracy has at its heart, 'the movement which ceaselessly disrupts the distribution of the public and private, the political and the social' (2006, p. 62). Finally, there is also an aesthetic dimension to democracy for Rancière, in that this disruptive movement is practised through a political action which is necessarily playful, inventive and dramatic. Rancière uses the metaphor of theatre, arguing that political action 'stages' the dissensus between two opposing logics and that 'the democratic process is a process of perpetual bringing into play, of invention of forms of subjectivities' (2006, p.62). Elsewhere, Rancière has argued that politics, and its disruption of police orders, always takes place within an aesthetic configuration and that the trace that politics leaves within those orders operates at the level of what it is able to make visible and possible (1999; 2004). This argument is taken up later in a discussion of the relationship between art and democracy. First however, I discuss the implications of both Mouffe and Rancière's work in terms of understanding democracy.

3.2.3 Discussion – democracy as an active and disruptive movement

Both Mouffe (2005) and Rancière (1999; 2006) help us to move beyond static understandings of democracy that have been influential in the West, whilst retaining some of its most familiar elements. While Mouffe insists on a commitment to liberty and equality, for Rancière it is equality alone which characterises the logic of democracy as it is embodied in political action. As well as this difference in emphasis, it can also be argued that there is a difference in

the way that Mouffe and Rancière understand the nature of equality and that this has implications for their respective views of democracy. May (2008) has made a distinction between the 'passive equality' that characterises what he describes distributive approaches to democracy (in which equality is seen something that is given to people – or achieved on their behalf – from a powerful centre) and the 'active equality' which animates Rancière's work. He argues that, rather than understanding equality as something that is achieved *for* people, *through* political institutions, Rancière posits the idea of equality as a presupposition which is enacted *by* people from outside those institutions. For May, this means that Rancière not only radically reinterprets the basis of democracy as an equality that is presupposed rather than given, but also that he rejects an institutional understanding of democratic politics (May, 2008, p. 41-72). This also has implications for understanding the differences and commonalities between the work of Mouffe and Rancière. While Mouffe bases her agonistic politics on a democratic sphere which is committed to liberty and equality, understood as values to be upheld, for Rancière, it is equality alone – understood as a presupposition – that is the essence of democratic politics. There therefore remains a tendency towards an institutional understanding of democracy in Mouffe's work that is not present in Rancière's philosophy. Both however, offer ways of thinking about democracy that move beyond the static, understanding implicit when we speak of 'democratic nations', 'democratic societies' or even simply 'democracies'. Instead, they make it possible to see democracy as an unstable and volatile element which deals in disruption and conflict rather than stability and consensus. It is this understanding of democracy as a disruptive movement which is taken up in the next section to examine its connection with artistic practices.

3.3 Democracy and art

In this section, I address the way in which the perspective on democracy outlined above can be related to art. In order to understand the connection between art and this view of democracy, I again engage with the work of both of Mouffe and Rancière, and specifically with their discussions of art and politics. Following an examination of their work in this area, I argue that while the contributions of both authors are important in understanding the relationship

between art and democracy as an intimate one – in which the functions and effects of both are inextricably bound up with each other – Rancière's argument is particularly pertinent because it is consistent with his own view of democracy as something that is based on a presupposition of equality, which can occur in any place, at any time, and can be affected by anyone at all. For this reason, I would argue that Rancière's view of the relationship between art and democracy works from within an approach that is more democratic, allowing for the unpredictability of people's actions and taking seriously their ability to shape the political communities in which they live.

3.3.1 Artistic activism and the agonistic struggle – Mouffe's view of democracy and art

Based on her particular understanding of politics and democracy, Mouffe (2007) has argued that what she describes as critical art can play an important role in democratic politics. Here, Mouffe reiterates her position that the suppression of antagonism in politics is largely the result of a liberal hegemony, and that conflict over the very bases of power and the public sphere is the essence of democratic politics. Mouffe claims that, '[w]hat is at stake in what I call the 'agonistic' struggle, which I see as the core of a vibrant democracy, is the very configuration of power relations, around which a given society is structured' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 3). In this way, Mouffe views public spaces as 'the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation' (2007, p. 3). Based on this view of democracy, politics and public space, Mouffe argues that artistic activities can be seen as valuable to the agonistic struggle central to democratic politics, because they disrupt the smooth presentation of politics in terms of consensus.

In arguing this position, Mouffe offers the view that art and politics are intimately bound up together, stating that she does not view the relationship between art and politics, 'in terms of two separately constituted fields, art on one side and politics on the other, between which a relation would need to be established' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 4) but rather as one in which art has a political dimension and politics has an aesthetic dimension. Mouffe understands this relationship as existing at the level of a 'symbolic order' that is essential to hegemony:

artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given order or in its challenging and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension. The political for its part, concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations...and this is where lies its aesthetic dimension. (Mouffe, 2007, p. 4)

Based on this view of the relationship between art and politics, Mouffe argues that the crucial question for *democratic* politics is whether and how artistic practices can contribute to challenging the dominant hegemony. Mouffe refers specifically to 'critical art' and argues that art can and should do this by creating new forms of subjectivity, which disrupt the smooth consensus of the public sphere, as presented by the liberal hegemony (Mouffe, 2007, p. 4).

Mouffe goes on to claim that, because of the capacity of art to disrupt the symbolic order, practices such as artistic activism can make an important contribution to democratic politics. She writes that such artistic activities, 'can still play an important role in the hegemonic struggle by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 5). However, Mouffe also argues that such activities cannot alone achieve such subversion and sees the need for artistic activism to be combined with more traditional political forms in order to disrupt the hegemonic consensus effectively:

a radical democratic politics calls for the articulation of different levels of struggles so as to create a chain of equivalence among them. For the "war of position" to be successful, linkage with traditional forms of political intervention like parties and trade unions cannot be avoided. (Mouffe, 2007, p. 5)

Mouffe then, sees the relationship between art and democracy as one in which art can contribute to the creation of new subjectivities which disrupt the symbolic order that supports the dominant hegemony. In this way, artistic activism can contribute to an agonistic struggle for a democratic politics based on conflict and disruption. Mouffe advocates the specific use of artistic activism alongside other forms of political action in support of an agonistic democratic politics, and in opposition to a liberal hegemony based on consensus.

3.3.2 Displacing the distribution of the sensible – Rancière's view of democracy and art

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière (2004) provides a response to current thinking in art and aesthetics which also offers an alternative way of thinking through the relationship between art and democracy. Central to Rancière's understanding of the relationship between politics and aesthetics is his concept of 'the distribution of the sensible' (2004, p. 12), which he defines as, 'the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience' (2004, p.13). This is the apportionment of the spaces, places and activities within a community which makes some things available to apprehension by the senses while at the same time excluding others. As such, it constitutes an aesthetic field of possibilities from among which any political distribution of the community finds its form. Rancière expresses this connection most clearly perhaps in his claim that, 'Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time' (2004, p. 13). Rancière argues that the question of the relationship between art and politics must therefore be addressed by examining the relation of both to the distribution of the sensible.

There are of course different ways in which the distribution of the sensible can be arranged and Rancière argues that these different ways of distributing the sensible have lent themselves to different political projects over time (2004, p. 19). To explain how artistic practices are related to these changing ways of distributing the sensible, Rancière takes an historical approach, introducing the idea of artistic regimes, which represent influential ways of thinking about artistic practices, the forms of thought that make them visible and ways of relating the two, that have operated through western history (Rancière 2004, p. 20). He identifies three regimes; the ethical regime of images (exemplified by Plato's distinction between true images and simulacra), the representative regime of the arts (elaborated by Aristotle in *The Poetics*) and the aesthetic regime of art (which took hold from the 18th century onwards via a variety of practices and discourses). The 'aesthetic revolution', a term which Rancière uses to mark the transition from the representative to the aesthetic regimes, is a

crucial event in his thought because it describes the process by which the very idea of 'art' as opposed to 'the arts', and the contemporary discourses and practices that surround it, were established. The 'aesthetic revolution' coincides historically with many of the events that characterise the onset of what is often described as modernity. Rancière introduces his own terminology because he feels that the term 'modernity' (and the discourses of modernism and postmodernism that depend upon it) obscures the complexity of the shifts in practices and ideas that it aims to define (2004, p. 10). Perhaps the crucial difference between Rancière's concept of an aesthetic regime of art and the idea of modernity is one of determination. Whereas the concept of modernity implies a definitive break with the past, and its correlates of modernism and postmodernism offer teleological responses to the direction of art in the wake of this rupture, the aesthetic regime of art implies a historically contingent rearrangement of the ways of relating art practices, other practices and the ideas that make them visible. This argument is expanded in Rancière's later work, where he offers a critique of the historically deterministic approach to representation and art found in the work of Lyotard (2007, pp. 130-8).

Key to understanding Rancière's view of the relationship between art and politics today is his genealogy of fiction. Rancière claims that as a result of this shift in ideas and practices, particularly those that occurred in the new realism of nineteenth century literature, both politics and art today construct 'fictions' that contribute to the formation of political subjectivity. Rancière illustrates this by referring to the perception – specific to the aesthetic age – that anyone and everyone can be involved in the making of history. In other words, the logic of storytelling shared by art and history has created a certain kind of channel or template for political subjectivity; as Rancière puts it, "the 'logic of stories' and the ability to act as historical agents go together" (Rancière, 2004, p. 39). According to Rancière then, artistic practices and political practices are now related because they share the same materials and logic.

Importantly, in terms of democracy, Rancière argues that this logic can be disruptive as well as unifying in that it can involve disincorporation from imaginary communities rather than incorporation within them. He argues, 'The channels for political subjectivization are not those of imaginary identification

but those of “literary” disincorporation’ (Rancière, 2004, p. 40) and claims that '[m]an is a political animal because he is a literary animal who lets himself be diverted from his “natural purpose” by the power of words' (Rancière, 2004, p. 39). However, Rancière is at pains to point out that art and literature do not in themselves constitute an enactment of democracy. As he puts it, 'neither art in books nor art in life is synonymous with democracy as a form for constructing dissensus over 'the given' of public life' (2004, p. 56). Of the significance of fiction in the aesthetic regime, he writes:

There is a limit at which the forms of novelistic micrology establish a mode of individuation that comes to challenge political subjectivization. There is also, however, an entire field of play where their modes of individuation and their means of linking sequences contribute to liberating political possibilities by undoing the formatting of reality produced by state controlled media, by undoing the relations between the visible, the sayable and the thinkable. (2004, p. 65)

For Rancière, artistic practices are related to politics because, through a particular form of 'aesthetic' equality (2004, p. 55), they create channels for subjectification that can disrupt and reconfigure the distribution of roles, places and occupations within a community. It is this ability to displace and reconfigure the distribution of the sensible – and the process of subjectification that this entails – that is the political quality of artistic practices. When they do this in a way that disrupts and displaces a distribution based on a ‘natural’ logic of inequality, they share a logic and common purpose with democracy, and when taken up by politics, can contribute to democracy being enacted.

3.3.3 Discussion – an intimate relationship between art and democracy

The contributions of both Mouffe (2007) and Rancière (2004; 2007) in this area offer ways of thinking through the relationship between art and politics in which the two are not seen as separate spheres, but rather as in some way constitutive of each other. They both also suggest that the relationship between art and politics exists at the level of subjectivity, in that art can be a factor in the disruption of political realities by providing new subjectivities, or new channels for subjectification and thus new ways of being which involve the disruption of a

given political and aesthetic order. However, their arguments also diverge in some important ways. One of the most important differences is the portion of decidability attached to the relationship between art and politics in each argument. Whereas Rancière maintains that the relationship between particular art works and their democratic effects is always unpredictable, and indeed that the political effects of art can play out in different ways, Mouffe argues that artistic activities can and should be allied to a particular kind of political activism. For Mouffe, art can play an important part in a wider programme of democratic politics, whereas for Rancière, no such programme is possible because the unpredictable and diffuse nature of both democracy itself, and of the relationship between art and democracy, prevents such a programme. Similarly, the respective concepts of hegemony and a 'distribution of the sensible' employed by Mouffe and Rancière indicate different approaches in their work. Because Mouffe understands politics as hegemony, she sees the disruption of the given order – through artistic and other means – as leading to the supplanting of this order with another (2007, p. 3) and argues for a form of democratic politics that might 'bring about the end of neo-liberal hegemony' (2007, p. 5). In Rancière's view, however, the disruption of the given order leads to reconfiguration rather than wholesale replacement.

It could be argued that these differences also illuminate the democratic content of each approach. I would argue that Rancière's argument about the relationship between art and democracy is more thoroughly *democratic*. This is because his view of the unpredictability of the relationship is in keeping with the unpredictability of his own view of democracy as a logic which can occur 'whenever a community with the capacity to argue and make metaphors is likely, at any time and through anyone's intervention, to crop up' (Rancière, 1995, p. 60). For Mouffe, there has to be a strategy for making artistic interventions, which should also be deliberately combined with strategic political actions in the pursuit of a determined purpose. For Rancière, the contribution of art to political subjectification is something that cannot be predicted, much less planned from within a political programme. Like democracy itself, such contributions can be created and taken up by anyone at any time, without knowing in advance where they might lead. For this reason, I employ Rancière's

argument in particular as one of the key elements in relating democracy, art and education at the theoretical level.

3.4 Democracy and education

As noted in chapter 1, the relationship between democracy and education has often been understood in instrumentalist terms, such that education has been charged with the task of preparing children and young people for their future participation in democracy. Here, I refer to Biesta's educational philosophy, and particularly his reading of Arendt, in the formulation of an alternative approach to the relationship between democracy and education and on which I base the theoretical framework for understanding the significance of art in the relationship between democracy and education. The reason for drawing particularly on Biesta's reading of Arendt here (rather than the original work) is that his interpretation offers a specific way of understanding the relevance of Arendt's philosophy for education. As will be shown, Biesta's work demonstrates how Arendt's concept of political existence can be shown to have purchase in educational contexts as well as in society more generally. Rather than seeing political existence as something that can only occur beyond the educational sphere, once a child has reached psychological maturity, Biesta's reading illustrates the potential for genuinely political and democratic experience in educational settings.

3.4.1 From the democratic subject to democratic subjectivity

In *Beyond Learning*, Biesta (2006) refers to the impact of discussions of human subjectivity on education generally, and on prevailing views of the relationship between democracy and education in particular. He argues that Kant's definition of education as the means through which to produce rational individuals capable of exercising independent judgement has been particularly influential on education. On such a view, subjectivity – and specifically the way in which the human subject is conceived – becomes an integral part of understanding the aims and processes of education. Moreover, he argues that such a view presents education as a deeply individualistic and instrumentalist endeavour in that it is concerned with producing individual subjects (2006, p. 33-6).

Biesta acknowledges the influence on education of more social understandings of human subjectivity in the twentieth century through the work of philosophers and sociologists such as Dewey, Mead, Wittgenstein and Habermas. In such work, the approach to subjectivity might be described as inter subjective in that social interaction is seen as integral to the way in which human subjects develop and human subjectivity emerges. However, he argues that these approaches remain concerned with the attempt to qualify the essence of humanity and with the question of how human subjects are produced (2006, p. 34-7). Instead, he argues for a view of subjectivity which would prompt questions not about the definition of what it means to be human but about how and where individual human beings can 'come into presence' (Biesta, 2006, p. 53). Following Arendt, Biesta argues that this process of coming into presence can only happen when people can act or 'begin' something in a plural space made up of other 'beginners' who will respond to the initiatives of others in unpredictable ways (2006, p. 53).

Biesta addresses the specific question of democratic education with reference to these approaches to subjectivity and the different conceptions of the democratic person that each entails. He illustrates how Kant's individualistic conception, and Dewey's social conception, of this correspond to two of the most prominent approaches to democratic education, i.e. the concepts of 'education *for* democracy' and 'education *through* democracy' (Biesta, 2006, pp. 135-7). He also argues that in Kant's view, the operative dynamic in the relationship between democracy and education is one of preparation, in which 'it is the task of democratic education to release the rational potential of the human subject' (2006, p. 127). In that it sees education as a process of preparing people for democracy by releasing their rational potential, Kant's view corresponds to the idea of education *for* democracy. Biesta refers to Dewey's view as a more social understanding of the democratic person based on the idea that the human subject is produced through interaction and communication. Biesta notes that, 'for Dewey we only become who we are through our participation in a social medium' (Biesta, 2006, p. 130). He argues that Dewey's understanding of what makes a democratic person therefore exemplifies the idea of education *through* democracy because Dewey, 'sees

participation in democracy as the way in which the socially intelligent person is created or produced' (2006, p. 132). While overcoming the individualism of Kant's approach to some extent, Dewey's continues to view the relationship between democracy and education in instrumental terms, where education is charged with the production of democratic subjects, albeit through social and experiential means. Biesta argues that both of these approaches to democratic education are problematic because they view democracy as a problem for education, i.e. as a problem that educators need to solve (2006, p. 126).

In contrast to the above approaches, Biesta argues that a political understanding of the democratic person (or, to be more precise, of democratic subjectivity) based on the work of Arendt, can offer a way of thinking through the relationship between democracy and education differently. He finds in Arendt's philosophy a political approach which conceives of democratic subjectivity not as an attribute of individuals but rather as a quality of human interaction. Biesta explains that for Arendt, subjectivity is something that is enacted through a specific kind of public and political interaction, in a situation of plurality and difference. Based on this approach, Biesta argues that democratic education can be understood as a process of creating and supporting opportunities for democratic subjectivity, as well as offering the chance to reflect on those opportunities *and* on the times when such subjectivity has not been possible (2006, p. 137-45).

3.4.2 Learning from political existence

Elsewhere, Biesta (2010) has expanded on how Arendt's philosophy might support such a view of democratic education. Here, Biesta describes approaches to the relationship between democracy and education that concentrate on the production of democratic subjects as 'psychological' in that they lead to the view that democratic education is a moral project of creating people with the right personal qualities and dispositions for democracy (in 2010, p. 557). Biesta argues that this view is problematic because it depoliticises education and simplifies the question of democracy (2010, p. 557-8). While he maintains that Arendt's work can help to think through the relationship between democracy and education differently, he also claims that in order to do so, it is necessary to overcome Arendt's own 'developmentalist' or psychological

approach to education as something which has to happen before democracy can occur (2010, p. 558). Biesta employs Arendt's own argument about action, freedom and politics to argue this position, because in it she sees the basis for democratic politics as itself political rather than psychological (2010, p. 558).

Biesta explains that for Arendt, humans are active beings, i.e. 'beings whose humanity is not simply defined by their capacity to think and reflect but where being human has everything to do with what one *does*' (2010, p. 559). In Arendt's view, he argues, the pinnacle of human activity is political action in the public sphere because this is the activity that offers the possibility of freedom, understood as the freedom to create something entirely new and thus become subject. Biesta refers to Arendt's distinction between three modes of activity in her concept of the *vita activa*, or active life, to demonstrate this quality of action. He writes, 'while labor and work have to do with aims and ends that are external to the activity, action, the third mode of the *vita activa*, is an end in itself and its defining quality is *freedom*' (Biesta, 2010, p. 559). For Arendt, action is possible because human beings 'bring new beginnings into the world through what we do and say' (Biesta, 2010, p. 559). However, bringing beginnings into the world is itself not enough for action to occur. Action can only happen when people act upon the beginnings of others in unpredictable ways. As Biesta notes, 'the agent is not an author or a producer, but a subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely one who began an action and the one who suffers from and is subjected to its consequences' (2010, p. 560). Action for Arendt therefore depends on a situation of plurality and unpredictability. Any attempt to erase these qualities of the public realm would preclude the possibility of action and freedom. Biesta argues that Arendt is therefore 'committed to a world in which everyone has the opportunity to act, appear and be free' (2010, p. 561).

However, Biesta also argues that realising the potential of this commitment is complicated by Arendt's view of education. This is because, as he puts it, 'Arendt argues that the proper location of education is not to be found in the public realm and that in this sense education should not be understood politically' (2010, p. 562). Instead, he argues, Arendt sees the school as a kind of 'halfway' institution between the public and the private sphere (Biesta, 2010, p. 563), so that the role of education is one of gradually introducing the child

into the world in order to protect both the emergent individual from the world, but also to protect the world from the onslaught of newness that comes with each new generation (Biesta, 2010, p.563). In Arendt's view, Biesta explains, children should not be set free from the authority of adults because this would mean subjecting them to the tyranny of the majority, which they are simply incapable enduring and which would deny them the possibility of action and freedom (2010, p. 564).

Biesta points out that this argument implies a fundamental distinction between childhood and adulthood drawn along temporal lines, in which the child must be prepared, through a process of education, for the world of politics (Biesta, 2010, p. 565). However, Biesta argues that the 'tyranny of the majority', from which Arendt aims to protect children, is not a feature of childhood. Equally, the fact that action and freedom may occur amongst adults does not mean that they are necessarily features of the adult world (2010, p. 565-7). Biesta claims that Arendt's view of education suggests an understanding of the conditions for politics in psychological terms, in the sense that people need to be made ready for politics. However, he argues that Arendt's own work in fact offers a strong critique of such a view, making it possible to think of the conditions for politics and democracy in *political* rather than moral or psychological terms.

Because Arendt claims that action and freedom are only possible in a public realm of plurality, Biesta argues that the crucial question for Arendt's view of political existence is what makes it possible for people to live in plurality with others (2010, p. 567). While a common response to this question might involve the cultivation of moral qualities such as tolerance and respect, Biesta finds in Arendt's work a very different approach. He argues that for Arendt, social values based on morality and custom cannot guarantee political existence because in fact they rest on completely different foundations and claims that, '[i]nstead of thinking that it is morality that makes politics possible, Arendt suggests that it is political existence that makes morality possible' (2010, p. 568). For this reason, Biesta argues that the most important question to be addressed is the nature of political existence. For Arendt, he explains, political existence is possible when imagination is used to arrive at a multi-perspective understanding that incorporates both plurality and judgement (Biesta, 2010, p.

569). Crucially, he argues, this kind of multi-perspective understanding is not about collapsing different viewpoints into each other, but about maintaining the distance between them while understanding each (Biesta, in press, p. 570). This means that '[e]xisting politically...is not about a common *ground* but a common world' and that the basis of such existence is not moral or psychological but itself *political* (Biesta, 2010, pp.570-1).

Based on this reading of Arendt's work, Biesta argues that political existence is not something that children can be made ready for but rather something that it is a constant possibility of being together with others, which can happen amongst children as well as adults and in educational contexts as much as in any other (2010, p. 571). This implies an alternative understanding of the relationship between democracy and education because political existence can be seen as something that we cannot learn *for*, but which we might be able to learn *from* (2010, p. 571). This has important implications for education in that educational processes can offer opportunities in which to reflect on and learn from attempts to exist politically, which 'might help us in building up our repertoire of ways of existing politically' and which 'will definitely affect our desire for political existence, either positively or negatively' (Biesta, 2010, p. 571). Equally, there are implications for society, in that appreciating the educational dimension of political existence is necessary in order to continue recreating the possibility of political existence, now and in the future (Biesta, 2010, pp. 572).

3.4.3 Discussion – learning *from* democratic subjectivity

Biesta's (2006; 2010) work offers a way of thinking about the relationship between democracy and education that is based on a political understanding of democratic subjectivity. In doing so, he challenges the prevalent understanding of democratic education as a process of producing democratic individuals and turns his attention instead to what can be learnt from the experience of becoming politically and democratically subject. His work also questions an important consequence of the former view, i.e. the idea that educational processes can act as a training ground for democracy but can never afford opportunities for democratic experience itself, in the truly political sense. Biesta's view of the relationship between democracy and education is important

because it means that political existence – and the possibility it affords for democratic subjectivity – can be experienced in educational settings, but educational processes can also help to support learning from the experience of such subjectivity in other contexts. The centrality of democratic and political subjectivity in Biesta's view of the relationship between education and democracy is discussed in the following section. There I also discuss the approach to subjectivity found in the understandings of democracy – and its relation to art – that have been developed in this chapter from the work of Mouffe and, to a greater extent, Rancière.

3.5 Subjectivity

Subjectivity plays a crucial role in the understandings of democracy – and its relationship with both art and education – that I have discussed in this chapter. Rancière's view of democracy as a process of political subjectification, his view of the relationship between art and democracy in terms of what art can contribute to this process, and Biesta's view of the relationship between democracy and education as one of learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity, all rest on certain understandings of subjectivity. In this section, I argue that these understandings of subjectivity are related and that they entail elements of both performativity and collectivity, thus allowing for a view of the relationships amongst democracy, art and education which are based on a view of democratic subjectivity that is both enacted in singular performances, and yet also concerned with the collective political community.

3.5.1 Subjectivity as performance

The work of Butler (1990; 1993; 1997) on language, identity and gender has been crucial in the development of a performative understanding of subjectivity, whereby the subject is understood not as an entity which exists prior to action but as something which comes into being and is sustained through action itself. Her theory of performativity expresses the idea that people become subject through the adoption of norms and subject positions already available in their discursive environment and that becoming subject is an ongoing and reiterative process (Butler, 1993, p. 2). Because subjectivity has continually to be performed, it involves the repetition or citation of places within discourse.

However, for Butler, it is precisely through this repetition that gaps and slippages occur which can result in the occurrence of new possibilities for subjectivity (Butler, 1993, p. 10). Butler (1997) has emphasised the discursive nature of performativity, which Hey has summarised as the argument that people 'learn to identify with places in discourse' as they become subjects (2006, p. 446). However, this focus on discourse does not imply an exclusive concern with language. Discursive practices can also include bodily gestures and actions (Butler, 2004, p. 345). For Butler, these discursive practices can both support and subvert existing subject positions.

Butler's outlook is also deeply political and she is committed to the kind of radical democracy that is also found in the work of Mouffe and Rancière (Salih, 2004, p. 6). Butler has explicitly aligned her work with Mouffe in the understanding of universality as an open-ended project, always subject to political change (2004, p. 340) and she understands the process of subverting and expanding existing subject positions as one of '*disidentification*', which is 'crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation' (1993, p. 4). Furthermore, Butler is concerned with the political possibilities inherent in the 'conditions of sayability, of speakability, of visibility' available in the discursive environment (2004, p. 337). It could be said that for Butler, people are performing their subjectivity all the time in ways that are both democratic and non democratic, in the sense that these performances sometimes open up new possibilities for political subjectivity but more often reinforce already established subject positions. Butler therefore offers a developed view of subjectivity as performative in the sense that it is continually rehearsed and performed from the existing subject positions available in discourse. Through her interest in the way that subject positions can be subtly and gradually subverted through repetition, she also emphasises the political importance of subjectivity thus understood. I would argue that the approaches discussed in this chapter rest on an understanding of subjectivity which shares some features of this view but which is also distinctive in its understanding of democratic subjectivity as both a performative and a collective phenomenon.

3.5.2 A performative view of democratic subjectivity

An understanding of subjectivity as something which is performed rather than possessed, or simply given, animates the understandings of democracy, democracy and art, and democracy and education advanced in this chapter. The understanding of democracy as a disruptive movement enacted through politics, based on the work of Rancière (1999; 2006) and – to a lesser extent Mouffe (2005) – may be described as a performative, or action based, view of subjectivity in that the subject of the action is constituted in, and only in, the action itself. This is evident in Rancière's claim that democracy 'is only ever entrusted to the constancy of its specific acts', which are 'singular and precarious' (2006, p. 74) and which generate political subjects. This element of his thought has also been noted by May, who contrasts Rancière's position with distributive theories of democracy that dominate western political thought. He argues that, 'For Rancière, the democracy lies in the action itself. Democratic politics lies in what one does rather than in what one receives or is entitled to' (2008, p. 52). This performative understanding of subjectivity in Rancière's work also extends to his view of the relationship between democracy and art. For Rancière, this relationship consists in what art can contribute to the process of political subjectification central to democracy, which is a process in which subjectivity becomes a possibility through the action or performance of politics.

A performative or action based approach is also central to Biesta's (2006; 2010) understanding of democratic subjectivity, and to his suggestions for an alternative approach to the relationship between democracy and education. Biesta emphasises Arendt's understanding of subjectivity as something which occurs only in the moment of action itself, 'neither before nor after' (Arendt, as cited in Biesta, 2006, p. 134) and cites Arendt's reference to the performing arts as a point of comparison with her own concept of action:

[S]he suggests that we should compare action and subjectivity with the performing arts...The crucial point is that the work of art of the performing artist only exists in the performance – not before, not after. The script for a play may have endurance just as a painting; but it is only in the performance of the play that the play as a work of art exists. (Biesta, 2006, pp. 134-5)

The idea of political subjectivity, drawn from Arendt and related to the sphere of education by Biesta, is one in which performance is key. On this view, it is only through the performance of action – which itself is only possible under certain political circumstances – that political and democratic subjectivity become possible.

3.5.3 A collective view of democratic subjectivity

The performative understanding of democratic subjectivity described above might imply that, in the arguments presented in this chapter, becoming politically and democratically subject is an individualistic process, in that it has to do with specific and singular acts. However, each of these arguments also involves a concern for the collective dimension of democratic subjectivity. May (2008) has discussed the precise nature of collectivity in Rancière's understanding of democracy as enacted in a process of political subjectification. Reference to this secondary work is relevant here because it offers a specific interpretation of Rancière's work that highlights the collective dimension involved in his understanding of political subjectification. This is significant because it illustrates how Rancière's theory addresses dimensions of democracy - such as collectivity - that are central to other theorisations. He explains that Rancière's use of the term *demos* – 'the people' who are the crucial element of democracy – relates to 'the part that has no part' (Rancière, as cited by May, 2008, p. 45), i.e. those that have been assigned a place in the police order that prevents them from participating in the decisions that order their lives (May, 2008, p. 45). What May terms 'democratic politics' or the embodiment of democracy through politics, involves the appearance of the *demos*. As May puts it, 'democratic politics manifests a people' (May, 2008, p. 49). In this sense, while political subjectification is a singular process, enacted on specific occasions by particular people, the political subjects constituted by politics are always collective subjects, they are always a manifestation of 'the people'. May emphasises this dimension of Rancière's work when he writes that, 'We are all born to police orders. And if we resist those orders by engaging in a democratic politics, it is not as a collection of individual subjects, but rather through the formation of a collective subject' (May, 2008, p. 60). This point can also be illustrated with reference to Rancière's (2006) example of politics cited

earlier in the chapter. For Rancière, it was not only Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat, but also the collective action of those who participated in the ensuing boycott as part of the civil rights movement, that constituted political action. Additionally, the supplementary, political subject that emerged from this action – African Americans with full civil and political rights – can be understood as a collective and claim to equality, based on an idea of universality.

Rancière's concept of politics as a process of subjectification, then, is collective but the idea of collectivity that animates his thought is also very different from the understandings of community on which many approaches to politics are based. For Rancière, the political subjects that politics generates are not individuals but neither are they concrete groups, based around a particular identity. Crucial to understanding this is Rancière's idea of 'dis-identification' or declassification. For Rancière, politics is always about a dissensus from a given order, but the consequences of this cannot be known in advance. Illustrating the difference between Rancière's position and identity politics, May writes:

identity politics does not declassify, it reclassifies. To demonstrate equality is not to impose a new order, as though the old order had simply been mistaken in its categorization. It is, as Rancière says, to show the contingency of any order. (2008, p. 70)

It is for this reason, that while May emphasises the collective nature of political subjects in Rancière's thought, and the centrality of community in his idea of politics, he also stresses Rancière's characterisation of such community as 'insubstantial' (Rancière, as cited in May, 2008, p. 71) based on nothing other than the presupposition of equality through singular acts.

This understanding of the collective dimension of democratic subjectivity through uncertain and insubstantial expressions of community is also crucial to Rancière's view of the relationship between democracy and art. This can be seen in his explanation of the way in which art can contribute to political subjectification. Here, Rancière writes that artistic – and specifically – literary articulations can form, 'uncertain communities that contribute to the formation of enunciative collectives that call into question the distribution of roles, territories and languages' and insists that '[a] political collective is not, in actual fact, an

organism or a communal body' (2004, p. 40). In terms of its relationship with art too, therefore, Rancière sees democratic subjectivity as a collective matter but not in a way which implies a stable identity or vision of the community. The communities of democratic politics are, for Rancière, 'enunciative', 'uncertain' and based on a process of 'disincorporation' (2004, p. 40).

The collective and political nature of subjectivity is also stressed in Biesta's approach to democracy and education. Biesta emphasises that, in Arendt's view, democratic subjectivity is only possible through a certain kind of political existence, which is a collective existence in the public sphere and which necessarily involves plurality. Similarly, the subjectivity that is made possible through such action is not to be understood as an attribute that those involved gain through action, but rather as a quality that exists in the moment of interaction and not beyond it. For this reason, subjectivity can never occur in solitude, as an individual act. As Biesta points out; 'action, as distinguished from production (work) is never possible in isolation...we need others, others who respond to our initiatives, who take up our beginnings, in order to be able to act and hence to be a subject' (2006, p. 134). However, as with Rancière, Biesta's reading of Arendt also avoids identity based understandings of collectivity:

[A]ction is never possible without plurality. As soon as we erase plurality, as soon as we erase the otherness of others by attempting to control how they respond to our initiatives, we not only deprive others of their actions, but at the same time, we deprive ourselves of our possibility to act, to come into the world and to be a subject. (Biesta, 2006. p. 134)

For Biesta then, the collective nature of political subjectivity lies in its occurrence in a situation of plurality and unpredictability, not its alignment with a particular vision of community.

3.5.4 Discussion – a collective and performative understanding of democratic subjectivity

The views of democracy and its relationship with both art and education advanced here rest on understandings of democratic subjectivity as both performative and collective. Each also involves an understanding of such

collectivity not in terms of identity, but in more relational and ephemeral terms. In Rancière's political philosophy, democratic subjectivity is performative because it occurs through a process of subjectification in which a political subject comes into being through the practice of politics. It is collective because it generates collective political subjects, manifestations of 'people', and because it is enacted in community. The basis of this community however, is nothing other than the presupposition of equality that is embodied in specific acts. Similarly, in Rancière's view, the relationship between democracy and art exists in what art can contribute to the performative process of political subjectification and its generation of collective political subjects. In Biesta's view of the relationship between democracy and education, political subjectivity is performative because, following Arendt, it is a quality of interaction rather than an attribute of individuals, which exists only in the performance of that action and not beyond it. It is collective in the sense that subjectivity can only occur with others in a situation of plurality and unpredictability. In each of these arguments, subjectivity is seen as crucial to political and democratic existence in a way that emphasises the basis of such subjectivity in action, and its collective dimension in terms of political contingency rather than stable identity.

3.6 The role of art in the relationship between democracy and education

Given the above arguments, it is possible to construct a view of the significance of art in the relationship between democracy and education via an understanding of democratic subjectivity as something that is both performed in specific acts and yet, which is also a collective and political matter. It is worth summarising the arguments presented in this chapter to illustrate how this is the case. Firstly, I have argued that, based on the work of Mouffe (2005) and Rancière (1999; 2006), democracy can be seen as a disruptive element which has more to do with conflict and disagreement than it does with the stability and consensus of political institutions. This is a particularly strong element in the work of Rancière, for whom democracy operates as an interruption in the existing order, in the name of equality. While Mouffe advocates the creation of an agonistic public sphere in which the very bases of democracy and government can be contested, Rancière's historical approach allows us to see democracy as an active, disruptive movement that is embodied in the practice

of politics. For Rancière, democracy involves a process of political subjectification which occurs through a certain kind of political action. This process also has an aesthetic dimension which Rancière expresses in artistic terms relating to creativity, playfulness and theatricality. Particularly significant here is the fact that, in Rancière's view, the process of subjectification itself - of inaugurating supplementary political subjects – has an aesthetic dimension. This is illustrated in May's claim that in Rancière's view, '[t]he declassification of democratic politics is an aesthetic phenomenon; it makes something appear that had been there before' (2008, p. 71) and in Rancière's argument that, 'the aesthetic configuration in which the speaking being leaves its marks has always been the very stakes of the dispute that politics enlists in the police order' (1999, p. 57).

Secondly, based on Rancière's (2004; 2007) work, I have also argued that it is possible to see an intimate connection between art and politics, in terms of the channels for subjectification that art can create. While Mouffe's (2007) view of the relationship between art and democratic politics also envisages an intimate connection between art and politics at the level of subjectivity, I have suggested that Rancière's view is more thoroughly democratic because it leaves open the question of the origins and consequences of art and its significance for politics. In Rancière's view, the connection between art and democracy occurs via a 'distribution of the sensible' which delineates the possibilities for a variety of practices, including artistic practices, within any community. This distribution is both political and aesthetic because it has to do with what is visible, audible and possible within the arrangement of places, spaces and activities that makes up a community. For Rancière, contemporary artistic practices work with the same material as political articulations and share with those articulations a certain logic. When this logic contributes to the formation of political subjects which disrupt and displace the distribution of spaces and occupations in a society, they may be described as contributing to democratisation. Following Rancière then, it is possible to see a two way connection existing between art and democracy, in that democracy itself is an aesthetic matter and art is also able to contribute to the enactment of democracy. In both directions, this connection exists at the level of subjectivity – it is the process of political subjectification

essential to democracy that is aesthetic just as it is the creation of channels for subjectification that makes art democratically significant.

Thirdly, I have argued that, following Biesta (2006; 2010), it is possible to view the relationship between democracy and education not as a process of producing democratic subjects but rather as one of learning from democratic subjectivity. This view is based on a reading of Arendt's concept of action as the activity that makes democratic subjectivity possible and which can only happen in the context of a certain kind of political existence. In Biesta's (2006; 2010) work, this view of democratic subjectivity plays a crucial role in linking democracy and education. Specifically, Biesta argues that democratic subjectivity provides opportunities for learning because it can add to people's strategies for existing with others politically and democratically, and it can affect people's attitudes towards democracy, both positively and negatively. Similarly, educational settings can facilitate and support the kind of political existence necessary for democratic subjectivity. It is also worth highlighting that Biesta sees the experience of situations in which democratic subjectivity has been impossible as providing important opportunities for learning because they too can affect how people feel about democracy and where they see themselves in the political fabric of society.

Based on these three views, I would argue that if democratic subjectivity is seen as the crucial element in the relationship between democracy and education, then the fact that such subjectivity can also have an aesthetic dimension means that art can also be an important factor in this relationship. Specifically, people can learn not only from the times when democratic subjectivity has been made possible through action in a situation of plurality and unpredictability but also from the process of political subjectification, which itself has an aesthetic dimension and which sometimes occurs through channels created by art. These types of experience of democratic subjectivity are related in that they both involve the enactment of democracy in specific circumstances and in a collective, but politically contingent, relationship with others. This in turn means that art itself can be considered an important factor in the process of learning from experiences of democratic subjectivity and from times when such

subjectivity is not possible. It is in this way that I want to suggest that democracy, art and education can be seen as related on a theoretical level.

3.7 Conceptualisation of terms

The theoretical perspective argued above had important implications for my study. As stated earlier, I chose to focus the research on young people's democratic learning and the way in which this relates to their engagement with art. Below, I outline my understanding of the key elements involved in the empirical research, conceptualising the terms 'democratic learning', 'democratic action' and 'the democratic significance of art' as processes and phenomena which can be observed in every day life. In doing so I make reference not only to the theorists whose work has been used to construct the theoretical framework presented in this chapter but also to secondary authors whose work illustrates how their theory can be translated to the empirical sphere. Specifically, I draw on May's (2008) work, which illustrates how Rancière's theory can be related to the everyday experiences of large numbers of people. While Rancière refers to real life situations to illustrate his philosophy, his empirical examples tend to relate to important historical events involving particular individuals (as for example in the case of Rosa Parks and the Alabama bus boycott). As will be seen, May's (2008) work demonstrates how what may seem like an esoteric theory actually relates to the everyday experiences of ordinary people around the globe. Similarly, I draw on Hey's (2006) work to illustrate how Butler's theory can help to develop a particular understanding of learning that includes a performative approach to subjectivity and identity.

3.7.1 Democratic learning

Based on the theoretical perspective argued here, I understand democratic learning as a process of learning from the experience of being able to act democratically – or perform democratic subjectivity – as well as from experiencing circumstances in which this has not been possible. Following Biesta (2006; 2010), I would argue that both kinds of experience are important to democratic learning because they have an impact on people's attitudes towards democracy, their ability to act democratically in other circumstances,

and their understanding of themselves as part of the political fabric of the communities in which they live. These experiences can occur in educational settings and educational activity can also help people to reflect on and learn from these experiences in other areas of life. Democratic learning therefore can be observed in the ways in which past experiences of democracy – as well as its impossibility – affect people's knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and understanding over time. This means that, empirically speaking, the important processes for democratic learning can be seen in terms of experience, reflection, and action; the way in which people experience democracy and the lack of it, the way in which they reflect on these experiences and the way in which this reflection affects their subsequent attitudes and behaviour could be seen as the principle elements of democratic learning.

However, while reflection is an important part of this process, it is not the only way in which democratic subjectivity might provide opportunities for learning. It is also possible to extend the performative view of subjectivity argued for here to learning itself, and therefore to see the enactment of subjectivity over time as an important element of learning. In this sense, I therefore understand democratic learning as both a reflective and embodied process. Rather than occurring purely in cognitive terms, learning can also be understood to involve the enactment of new behaviours and actions across contexts and time. This view is also to be found in Biesta's understanding of learning from democratic subjectivity in terms of how this experience can add to people's 'repertoire' of ways of acting democratically (2010, p. 571). Finally, following Butler (1993; 1997; 2004) – and the translation of her work to the field of education – I theorise learning also to involve changes and developments in people's sense of self, as they negotiate the subject positions that are available to them in the discursive environment in which they live and act. Hey's interpretation of Butler's work provides a concise expression of this as a process whereby people, 'learn to identify with places in discourse' as they perform their subjectivity (2006, p. 446). In the research, I was particularly interested how the young people learned to identify with places in discourse in relation to politics and democracy, as they performed their *democratic* subjectivity.

3.7.2 Democratic action and democratic subjectivity

Based on the discussion offered in this chapter, I would argue that the best way to understand democracy in the study is via the concept of democratic action, itself understood in terms of subjectivity. This in turn can be understood in two distinct but related ways. Firstly, democratic action can be understood in the way that Biesta (2006; 2010), following Arendt, has described it, i.e. as the process of performing democratic subjectivity – or allowing for its emergence – by beginning something and having one's beginnings taken up in unexpected ways by people who are unlike one's self. Since the key elements necessary for the occurrence of such action are plurality and unpredictability, this kind of democratic action – and therefore democratic subjectivity – could be seen to occur in empirical contexts that involve people existing together in a situation where everyone has the freedom both to take initiative and to act on the initiatives of others. Conversely, on this understanding, the impossibility of democratic action could be experienced in situations where one is not free to take initiatives or freely act on the initiatives of others; or where there is no plurality, so that the way in which people's initiatives will be taken up is already known in advance. Situations characterised by a high degree of control or homogeneity might therefore be seen as circumstances under which democratic action is made impossible. Because people live in community with others, it is possible to see the experience of both situations as occurring commonly in everyday life.

Secondly, democratic action can be understood via Rancière's (1999; 2006) concept of political subjectification. In this case democratic action – and therefore democratic subjectivity – can be understood in terms of the presupposition of equality and the creation of political subjects. While this kind of action must be seen as a rare occurrence it is nevertheless always a possibility and could therefore be observed empirically. May's (2008) work is particularly helpful here because he offers suggestions for how Rancière's view of democracy can be seen at work in contemporary politics. May refers to Rancière's later work to argue that contemporary politics is dominated by a humanitarian approach in which the most powerful weapons for political action are seen as military intervention and humanitarian aid (May, 2008, pp. 146-52).

He argues that this approach also distorts the concept of human rights, conferring these rights not on individuals, or any manifestation of 'the people', but on states which declare their right to intervene on behalf of victims. May illustrates how this approach precludes the possibility of democracy because it presupposes inequality – those who suffer political domination are seen as victims rather than equals (2008, p. 152). However, May also argues that democratic politics does occur today when people act locally and spontaneously to presuppose their own equality with those who have a part in political decision making and force something new into view. Crucially, he also argues that acting in solidarity with those people when they take such action is also an important element of democratic politics and insists that 'we must think of those alongside whom struggle occurs as equals and participants rather than victims' (May, 2008, p. 172). May sees another strategy for democratic politics against the dominance of a humanitarian strategy in the re appropriation of human rights by those who are denied their equality. He writes, 'The invocation of rights, then, can be an invocation of universal equality...it is in their [those denied equality] expression of their rights, through their "public action" that rights become elements in a political strategy of equality' (2008, p. 173).

May (2008) therefore offers ways of thinking about how democracy, in Rancière's sense of the term, might occur in contemporary contexts. While this primarily involves the actions of those who have no part in the decisions which affect their lives presupposing their equality with those who do, it can also involve acting in solidarity with people who take such action. May also makes it possible to see how democratic action – in these senses of the term – is often an impossibility, and illustrates how this impossibility might be experienced empirically as the domination of a political approach in which the equality of others is made invisible and unthinkable. It is also worth noting that the later work of Butler (2004) touches on some of the practices that May has identified as important elements of democratic action. Specifically, she has expressed concern for the democratically interesting situation that can occur when people claim the universal rights they are in practice denied, which Butler sees as part of the performative appropriation and subversion of subject positions (2004, p. 340). What is particularly interesting about Butler's work is that her insights

have been applied widely in empirical research to observe how processes of subjectification, identification and subversion can occur in practice. Such work indicates how everyday words and acts might be considered important elements of the kind of democratic action May argues for on a reading of Rancière's work.

I have argued that democratic action can be understood via an adaptation of the theoretical positions found in both Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt and in Rancière's (1999; 2006) political philosophy. While these two approaches are distinct, they both rely on a view of democratic subjectivity as something which can be enacted through specific instances but which also involves an element of collectivity, either in terms of occurring in plurality with other people, or in terms of creating collective democratic subjects, or both. Equally, they both entail an element of unpredictability in that the consequences of democratic action and of becoming democratically subject are, in both cases, unknown and unknowable. This is not a coincidence but is in fact integral to both approaches which share a common commitment to the unpredictable nature of democracy itself – if the consequences of people's actions were known in advance then they would cease to be democratic and would instead become another kind of endeavour entirely. In Biesta's terms, such activity would enter into the realm of 'labor' or 'work' (in Arendt's sense of the words) and for Rancière, they would become part of, 'a trick, a school, or a military unit' (Rancière, as cited in May, 2008, p. 177). For this reason, it is possible to see the two understandings of democratic action I have outlined here as closely related.

3.7.3 The significance of art for democracy and democratic learning

Finally, based on the views of the relationships between democracy and art, and between democracy and education argued above, I understand the democratic significance of art principally in two ways. Firstly, opportunities for participating in the arts with others may afford opportunities for democratic action and, therefore for becoming democratically subject. This can be understood in the sense that they may provide opportunities for the kind of plural and unpredictable political situation that can lead to democratic action – as conceptualised via Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt. The nature of much arts participation as unpredictable and open ended could mean that such

activities are particularly well placed to provide opportunities for democratic action when they involve diverse groups of people working together in open ended projects. These settings might also have the potential to provide the kinds of opportunities for creativity and inventiveness that is, for Rancière, a necessary element of political subjectification (2006). Also, engaging in the arts might involve the creation of channels for subjectification that can be taken up by others in political ways. While it cannot be assumed that the arts are necessarily a generator of opportunities for political subjectification, and the creation of the channels that make it possible, or that such opportunities are happening in artistic contexts all the time, the occurrence of such processes through arts participation nevertheless remains a possibility.

Secondly, working with Rancière's (2004; 2007) concept of a distribution of the sensible, the democratic significance of art can be understood in more diffuse terms, as the way in which art can impact on both the possibility and impossibility of democracy. If, following Rancière, democratic subjectivity is understood as aesthetic as well as political – in that it occurs within and against a distribution of the sensible which delineates what is visible, audible, sayable, and thinkable within the community – then it is possible to see this as related to art. The ways in which people engage with art – both through direct participation but also via encounters with wider ideas about art and aesthetics as consumers, students, interested amateurs, observers and critics – also becomes relevant. Any learning that follows from the experience of democracy and its impossibility might therefore also be related to such engagement with art.

3.8 Conclusion

The above conceptualisation of the key terms for the research indicates a variety of ways in which they might be observed empirically. However, I also understand these as processes and phenomena that are likely to interact with each other in everyday life. Experiencing democratic subjectivity through collective participation in the arts and reflecting on such experiences could also be related to the ways in which people encounter democratic and non democratic experiences in other aspects of their lives. In turn, these experiences could also have an aesthetic dimension and be related to the ways in which art is practised and discussed in their society. All of these suggestions

derive from the theoretical position that the possibility or impossibility of acting democratically takes place against an aesthetic and political background that shapes the ways in which we can think, act and behave. While this background is not of our individual making, it is also not immune to changes wrought by artistic practices and political action. This is not insignificant when it is also understood that we can learn from our experiences of democracy, or the lack of it, in ways that may affect our future behaviour and thus the configuration of aesthetic and political possibilities itself. The research conducted for the thesis was intended to investigate the nature of young people's democratic learning as theorised in this chapter and to gain new insights into how this learning might be related to their actual experiences of engaging with art. In the following chapter, therefore, I discuss how this theorisation of democratic learning and its relationship with art was used to formulate the specific research questions, approach and design for my study.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I offer a rationale for the research design used in the study, and discuss its implementation in the field. The chapter begins with a reiteration of the aims and objectives for the research and a statement of the research questions addressed in the study. I then go on to discuss the approach, design and methods used in the research, with justifications for how and why I conducted the empirical work in the way I did. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the research design and its implementation, in which I discuss the strengths and limitations of the methodology and the extent to which it allowed me to address the research objectives and questions.

4.2 Aims, objectives and questions

While the broader aim of the research was to explore the role of art in the relationship between education and democracy, the specific research problem to be addressed was how to understand the role of art in democratic learning, when such learning is understood as an ongoing process of learning from experiences of more and less democratic ways of being, rather than as a process of preparing young people for their future role in democracy. In order to achieve this, I identified a number of objectives for the study, based on the gap in knowledge and understanding highlighted in the literature review. There, it was noted that previous research had offered insights into how arts contexts with the expressed intention of fostering democratic practice could offer opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning – and into the potential of other arts participation contexts in this respect. However, it was also noted that little evidence had been given about instances in which these latter contexts had *in fact* led to democratic learning. Likewise, relatively little work had been done exploring the role of young people's more general engagement with art in their democratic learning. The objectives for the research were therefore as follows:

1. To deepen understanding of the nature of young people's democratic learning, especially their learning in relation to experiences of democratic action in arts contexts;

2. To show the ways in which arts contexts not specifically designed to foster democratic practice can also offer opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning;
3. To explore the role of young people's more general engagement with art in their democratic learning both from their experiences in arts contexts and from other situations, conditions and contexts.

The empirical research was conducted with two groups of young people who had recently been involved in arts participation in a variety of ways. One group had been involved in an art project specifically aimed at encouraging democratic practice, while the other group had experiences of arts participation in contexts without any explicitly democratic dimension. Working with the conceptualisation of terms outlined in the previous chapter, the research questions were as follows:-

1. What opportunities for democratic action were encountered by the young people through their participation in arts contexts – both those with an explicitly democratic dimension and those without?
2. What opportunities for democratic action were encountered by the young people in other contexts?
3. What did the young people learn from these opportunities or the lack of them?
4. What was the nature of the young people's learning in relation to these experiences?
5. How did this learning relate to the young people's engagement with art – both through arts participation and through their engagement with art in the wider culture?

4.3 Approach

4.3.1 Research stance

The research worked with the epistemological assumption that the reality of the young people's experiences and learning could be accessed via their

constructions and interpretations of their experiences. This understanding called for an approach which would allow access to the young people's subjective experiences, their articulation of these through language and their efforts to make sense of – and use – these experiences as they negotiated their relationships and interactions across the variety of contexts that made up their lives. I therefore conducted the research from within an interpretative stance, which focused on the participants' own understandings and interpretations of their experiences, as articulated through their words and actions. However, I was interested in more than the individual participants' feelings and perspectives. Instead, I sought to access these as a way of understanding the processes involved in the young people's democratic learning and its relationship with art. As well as looking for the individual meanings and intentions behind the participants' words and actions, therefore, I also looked for the shared meanings and interpretations that the participants made use of in their unique articulations of their experiences, attitudes and behaviour.

An important part of the conceptualisation of democratic action outlined in the previous chapter was based on the argument for an understanding of democracy as an unpredictable and volatile element that can be enacted by anyone at any moment in unpredictable ways, through acts that are performative as well as collective. This also impacted on my approach to the nature and purpose of the study. In particular, my research did not presume to be able to change people's lives on their behalf nor indeed to know in advance what kind of change would be desirable for my research participants or for society at large. For these reasons, I did not adopt a classically critical approach in which research is conducted with the aim of bringing about a certain kind of social change (Crotty, 2003, pp.157-9). Rather, I worked with ideas and concepts from poststructuralist traditions – particularly concerning the relational and performative nature of subjectivity – to explore how the young people made use of discursive and other resources to enact performances of democratic subjectivity and learn from them.

However, this does not mean that my research was politically neutral. Rather, my theoretical approach for the thesis implies not a lack of political engagement but a different kind of political engagement than is usually found in critical

inquiry. Atkinson (2002) has argued that, far from negating the possibility of social change (as some researchers from within critical inquiry have argued), the use of post modern and post structuralist theory in educational research can contribute to social change and critique through the questioning of assumptions and common sense arguments that inform policy and practice. She argues that it is in this sense, rather than in terms of uniting around an established sense of social justice, that educational research informed by such theories can have a political impact (Atkinson, 2002, pp.74-9). Meanwhile, Schostak (2002, pp.209-10) has drawn on post structuralist theories to argue that in its re articulation and re interpretation of routinised language, educational research can be a political and educative act. To the extent that my research can be considered as a political project, it is in this sense of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and opening up possibilities for understanding young people's learning in relation to democracy. While concerned with the political conditions of people's lives and the creative possibilities of democratic action, my study was not intended to change the conditions of participants' lives on their behalf, nor to empower them to change their own worlds, nor even to give voice to their experiences in the hope that others might change the conditions of their lives in response. Rather, my research was intended to illuminate the ways in which people are continually creating and changing their own realities, and constructing their own lives, from amongst the discursive and aesthetic resources available to them.

4.3.2 Interpretative strategies and the use of qualitative data

Many have pointed to the particular strengths of qualitative methods for use in interpretative research, such as their capacity to offer in depth, thick description, and holistic representations of people and settings, which allow researchers to access the meanings that people bring to their actions (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.272; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Based on these arguments, I used qualitative data in the study as a way of capturing the participants' articulations and interpretations of their experiences. The use of individual interviews was particularly important in the implementation of an interpretative approach to research in the study. This is because it offered the scope for collecting in-depth data, for responding flexibly to the participants' articulations and for exploring

the wider social and cultural context in which the young people were engaged in a process of making sense of their experiences. I was also aware of arguments about the relational quality of the interview setting and the epistemological status of data gathered in interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, as cited in Silverman, 2005, p. 45; Byrne, 2004, pp.182-3). I therefore did not view the young people's articulations of their experiences in these settings as uncomplicated reports of an underlying reality. Rather, I understood these articulations as important constructions in an ongoing process of making sense of experience. While the interview data were therefore not viewed naively, as straightforward representations of reality, they were seen as important ways of understanding the young people's own interpretations of their experiences and their learning. I also made use of data gathered via participant observation and group interview in the research to access evidence of the participants' interaction and collective behaviour. This was important because I was interested not only in the participants' subjective feelings and perspectives but also in their action in the world and how this could help to understand their democratic learning.

By using the above strategies, I employed what might be described as a classically interpretative approach to gathering data. However, within this approach, I also tried to incorporate more creative methods of data collection including the use of art works within interviews and the creation of art work amongst the participants as another way of accessing their thoughts, feelings and understandings. Davis (2000) has written on the use of storytelling as a strategy for conducting research with children and young people. She argues that inviting young people to respond in creative ways in research can transform power relations, give value of a variety of communicative forms, and help to access the cultural discourses that are important to young people. Based partly on this argument, I decided to employ creative and artistic strategies for data collection within the research. Specifically, I reasoned that this creative approach would allow for the generation of a greater variety of data and would enable the young people to articulate their experiences and interpretations through artistic means. Given the focus of the study on engagement with the arts, this was seen as a relevant way of gathering data within the research.

4.3.3 Performativity, discourse and language

One of the particular challenges of the research was to capture performances of democratic subjectivity, understood as instances in which people experience the emergence of democratic subjectivity through a certain kind of interaction with others or experience a process of democratic subjectification through more overtly political forms of engagement. The adoption of a classically interpretative approach, and the collection of qualitative data, was useful in this respect because it yielded evidence of moments in which the participants understood themselves to have experienced such instances, as articulated in their own terms. However, the work of other researchers who have employed performative understandings of subjectivity has shown that more specialised approaches to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data can provide another approach to understanding such performances, by capturing these instances as they occur through language. This is significant because of the way I have conceptualised both democratic action and democratic learning, with reference in part to Butler's work on the performative dimensions of language and discourse. The work of these researchers was therefore also taken into account when making choices about the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, which is discussed below.

A number of researchers have applied Butler's work on subjectivity to empirical research in education (see for example Nayak & Kehily, 2006; Rasmussen, 2006; Renold, 2006; Youdell, 2006; Hey, 2006; Davis, 2006) and have demonstrated how, 'Butler's philosophy can be used to frame theoretical and empirical research questions and how it can be employed in the analysis of data' (David *et al.*, 2006, p. 422). In particular these researchers have argued that careful attention to the use of language and gestures in the research setting can help to illuminate performances of subjectivity. These approaches share some common features with Foucauldian discourse analysis in that they involve an attention to the effects of discourses on people's everyday experiences (Wooffitt, 2008). However, these researchers apply a specifically Butlerian perspective on the analysis and interpretation of data, and – to greater and lesser degrees – take account of individual agency within the discursive frameworks that shape people's lives. One illustration of such approaches is the

work of Hey, who has referred to her own use of Butler's theory for conducting research in schools. She writes, 'I picked up on the performative language of gender and class found in the girls' vernacular, terms such as "boffin", "hippies" and "slags", because I theorised these as forming part of the much wider, contested distribution of cultural and thus material resources' (Hey, 2006, p. 450). She argues that such an approach is worthwhile in research because, '[t]his level of insight offers an important pay-off, the result of scrupulous attention to the mundane performances of gender and social difference that take place under our eyes' (p. 450). Paying close attention to language, then, has been seen as an important way of accessing performances of subjectivity.

Youdell (2006) has gone further to offer a specific methodology for conducting research from within a performative understanding of subjectivity. Youdell explains that while she makes use of conventional methods of data collection in her own research, her treatment of these differs from a conventional interpretative stance. She argues that her research involves 'looking for moments in which subjects are constituted and in which constituted subjects act' (Youdell, 2006, p. 513). Youdell also discusses the problem of attributing agency to participants within a study whilst at the same time employing a performative understanding of subjectivity as something that is constituted in relation to discourse. Her approach to this problem is to replace, 'sovereign agency with the notion of discursive agency' (Youdell, 2006, p.514), which she draws from Butler and which, she argues, 'goes some way to illuminate and relieve these tensions, offering an ethnography that retains agency and intent in the context of discursive constraint without implicitly casting this subject as sovereign' (2006, p.514).

Butler (2006) has commented on the use of her work by these authors, condoning the close attention to words and gestures that they advocate. She writes:

What a child or young adult says might well bring into visibility the predicament of exclusion as well as the difficulty of living that predicament or paradox. To understand this, we have to listen carefully to what is said through verbal utterance, but also what the body says

and does (or does not say and do) as well as to how the body appears (or fails to appear, sometimes seeking to cancel its own appearance). (Butler, 2006, p. 534)

However, Butler has also cautioned against the risk – inherent in such approaches – of emphasising the constrictive power by discourse over its creative and enabling potential (Butler, 2006, p. 533). She argues instead for attention to the ways in which discourse can be taken up creatively, in ways that lead to new possibilities. As she points out:

There are, after all, other things to do with rules than simply conforming to them. They can be displayed. They can be recrafted. Conformity itself may permit for a hyperbolic instantiation of the norm that exposes its fantastic character. In this sense, then, a certain errancy within expertise, a certain *poesis* that shows what else a set of rules might yield offers us options that exceed the binary framework of coercion, on the one side, and escape, on the other. (Butler, 2006 p. 533)

This idea of the creative potential of 'errancy' has been taken up by researchers in other areas of the social sciences. Gregson and Rose (2000), for example, have used their field work to explore the subversion of 'the consumer' as a subject position (2000, p. 444) and the 'processual identities of study participants' in community arts projects (2000, p. 441). In their work, capturing the complex process of subjectification involved close attention to participants' ambiguous use of language. Rose, for example, describes how the arts workers in her study distanced themselves from powerful discourses through the use of language, while at the same time reciting them. It was in this uneasy adoption of discourse that Rose saw the emergence of 'slippages' that allowed for the subversion and disruption of subject positions (Gregson & Rose, p.444).

Others have echoed this focus on the processes of 'errancy' or 'slippage' found in Butler's theory, with reference to the work of other post structuralists. In educational research, Schostak (2002) has described a process of 'speculative action', which occurs through practices such as 'stumbling, stuttering, making ironies, puns' (2002, p.209) and through which new possibilities can emerge from the adoption of established linguistic forms. Referring to the work of

Heidegger, Lacan and others, he argues that such speculative action is a creative way of operating in a situation where, 'It is not that language is the problem but that language when it becomes routinised becomes the problem' (2002, p. 209). Schostak further argues that such speculative action can be an important part of empirical research. He refers to the, 'careful recordings and analyses of interview and observational records', which can act as, 'a re-punctuating which throws into light alternative readings or hearings of that which is so familiar it generally passes without notice.' (2002, p.210). Schostak sees the import of this in the status of the research process itself as political and educative. However, it also serves to demonstrate that a close attention to the use of language through interpretative research strategies can illuminate how people employ discourse in creative ways in their everyday lives.

Based on the above arguments and approaches, I paid attention to the young people's use of language in the interview data, and specifically to the ways in which they made use of familiar discourses. In particular, I tried to look not only for the ways in which the participants were limited by discourse or managed to escape it, but also for instances of the kind of 'errancy', 'slippage' or 're-punctuation' that could lead to new possibilities via the creative adoption of familiar discourses. However, because my research was concerned primarily with opportunities for democratic subjectivity that the young people encountered in arts contexts and other everyday settings, I limited this to a consideration of the ways in which the young people engaged with discourses that were overtly related to politics and art. I therefore did not treat the interview setting as the primary site for performances of democratic subjectivity. To do so would have been beyond the scope of the study. Rather, I aimed to use an interpretative approach to interviews as a way of accessing the young people's own understandings of their experiences of democratic subjectivity in the variety of contexts they engaged in outside of the research setting. I only paid attention to their particular adoption of discursive subject positions in the interview setting where appropriate to this broader concern. Equally, while aware that the use of gestures could also be important in such performances, the consideration of these was not practicable in the research. Therefore, when I did consider the

young people's adoption of discourses this was only through their verbal use of language.

4.3.4 Use of grounded theory

Another important element of the research approach involved the use of methods and strategies adopted from Charmaz' version of grounded theory (2003; 2006). This was appropriate because, while addressing specific objectives and questions, the research was not designed as a deductive study with the intention of testing out a hypothesis. Rather, by working with a specific conceptualisation of democracy, democratic learning and the democratic significance of art, I intended to explore the actual experiences of the participants in a way that might illuminate the nature of these processes and phenomena as they operate in the empirical sphere. A grounded theory approach, in which interpretations and theories are built up from an engagement with the data, was therefore appropriate for the study, as it allowed me to take an open view of what the young people's experiences and articulations could reveal in this respect. However, adopting a traditional interpretation of grounded theory in which the research process is seen as a purely inductive process, would have been inappropriate for the study. Rather than building findings solely from an engagement with the data, my research started out with a set of objectives and questions based on an engagement with existing literature and theory in the field. For this reason, I adopted a particular approach to grounded theory that would allow more flexibility and fit with the premises of this research.

I chose to adapt Charmaz' (2003; 2006) version of grounded theory because she works from within an interpretative stance and takes account of the impact of broader theoretical perspectives on research. Hodkinson (2008, pp.91-9) has situated Charmaz' work within a shift away from the purely inductive approach to grounded theory found in Glaser and Strauss' original model. He argues that by re-framing grounded theory as a process of 'constructing' rather than 'discovering' findings, Charmaz' approach avoids the implication - present in Glaser and Strauss' work - that by rigidly applying a set of neutral procedures, researchers can eliminate the influence of pre existing theoretical ideas and prejudices to arrive at the generation of entirely new theory. Indeed, Charmaz

(2006) rejects the possibility of coming to research completely devoid of knowledge or expectations and acknowledges the impact of broader theoretical perspectives on research. On the influence of symbolic interactionism in her own work, Charmaz has argued that this perspective 'remains in the background', offering 'symbolic interactionist sensibilities' that help to shape the codes and categories that emerge from her data (2006, p.65). In addition, Charmaz has argued that grounded theory methods can be seen as a set of 'principles and practices' that can be used as flexible guidelines rather than rigid procedures (Charmaz, 2006, p. 11). Her approach can therefore be differentiated from the highly prescriptive model found in the work of Strauss and Corbin (Hodkinson, 2008, pp.80-1). Finally, Charmaz has argued that, following a linguistic turn in social research, close attention to language and discourse could represent a valuable addition to interpretative approaches to grounded theory (2003, p. 281).

Working with Charmaz' (2003; 2006) approach, my study incorporated a number of principles and procedures drawn from her work and which are also classically associated with grounded theory. For example, the gradual construction of categories through increasingly more analytic phases of coding, and the integration of categories in order to arrive at interpretations of the data were integral to the research process taken in the study. In addition, many of the features of the grounded theory process – including theoretical sampling, the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, the use of memos to construct analytic categories, and the constant comparative method of data analysis – were all employed within the research. However, I also made some significant adaptations to Charmaz' (2003; 2006) approach within the research design. These relate in particular to the role of existing theory within the research and the incorporation of strategies designed to take account of the significance of the participants' use of language, and are outlined below.

Firstly, the research objectives were derived from an engagement with existing literature and the questions were developed following a conceptualisation of terms based on a particular theoretical framework. Additionally, the theoretical framework was used to help interpret the analysed data in order to see what new insights they could offer about the way in which democratic learning and its

relationship with art operated in the empirical sphere. This represents a more explicit relation to existing theory than is found in Charmaz' (2003; 2006) work and the development of theory through the research therefore involved the modification and illumination of existing ideas rather than the development of entirely new theory. This also had implications for the use of terminology in the research. Specifically, I considered some of the terms from grounded theory to be inappropriate to the way in which my research was conducted. Instead of referring to 'substantive theory' (as found in both Charmaz' work and grounded theory more generally), I refer to the way I made sense of the findings simply in terms of 'interpretation'. Likewise, instead of referring to 'generic theory', I have used the term 'indications' to discuss the significance of my findings and interpretations at a more general level. Secondly, Charmaz' (2003; 2006) approach was adapted in the research by the addition of an explicit attention to the use of language when interpreting the broader significance of the categories that emerged from the data. While Charmaz already points to the importance of not taking people's words for granted (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55-7), in this study, I looked specifically for evidence of the ways in which the young people engaged with existing discourses about politics and art in order to make sense of their experiences and articulate their views.

By adapting Charmaz' approach in this way, I was also able to address some of the problems associated with grounded theory, such as those identified by Hodkinson (2008, pp. 92-5). These include the accusation that, by relegating the engagement with existing theoretical ideas and wider literature to a secondary role, grounded theory research can remain focused on the micro level of participants' lives and therefore fail to offer findings that have a broader relevance beyond the research setting. In particular, he refers to Layder's argument that a focus on concepts that emerge exclusively from data can limit the capacity of grounded theory to offer explanations and interpretations that take account of broader social and political factors (2008, p. 93). While this argument refers specifically to sociological explanations for social processes and phenomena, the logic of this criticism could also be extended to other kinds of study because it highlights how a lack of engagement with broader literature and theoretical perspectives can weaken and limit the findings of research.

Additionally, Hodkinson points out that the coding process involved in grounded theory can result in pieces of data being seen primarily as exemplars of categories and therefore being taken out of context. In this way, their broader meaning and significance can be lost.

Using the adaptations of Charmaz' (2003; 2006) version of grounded theory outlined above allowed me to avoid these problems to some extent. Specifically, by taking account of broader theoretical perspectives and existing literature in a more explicit and developed way, I was able to avoid an over emphasis on the micro-level of the participants' experiences, instead viewing these in the context of broader ideas about democracy, art and education. In terms of the use of existing theory and literature therefore, my approach was closer to that of Hammersley and Atkinson (as cited in Hodkinson, 2008, p.96) who argue that these can have significant value in terms of the identification of areas of focus for the research. While their argument refers to the development of theory through research more generally – rather than to the use of grounded theory in particular – it is relevant here insofar as it illustrates the way in which I viewed the relationship between the data and the theoretical framework. Also, by taking account of the young people's use of language and their engagement with existing discourses when interpreting the data, I was able to compensate for any de-contextualisation of the data that may have resulted from the process of coding and categorisation. Rather than viewing individual pieces of data only in terms of their relation to categories, this stage of interpretation brought the data back into context as they were interpreted more holistically as part of the conversations that occurred in the interview setting.

The use of grounded theory in the research therefore did not involve a straight forward application of a classical grounded theory approach based on the work of Glaser and Strauss. Rather, I worked with an adaptation of Charmaz' (2003; 2006) approach that allowed me to use grounded theory methods within a design appropriate for this research. By adapting Charmaz' (2003; 2006) approach, I aimed to apply grounded theory methods flexibly within a research design that worked from an interpretative stance, addressed questions and objectives derived from an engagement with the wider literature (including existing theoretical ideas), and which involved close attention to participants'

use of language and engagement with discourses. Additionally, this approach allowed me to highlight the broader significance of the findings and treat the data in context, thus avoiding some of the problems that have been associated with grounded theory.

4.3.5 Ethical approach

In relation to the ethics of research, Ali and Kelly (2004, p. 116) have warned against the reliance on procedural approaches, in which ethical research is seen as a kind of professional practice involving the implementation of a 'correct' set of guidelines. In developing an ethical approach for the study, I therefore drew on philosophical discussions of ethics and research to develop my own approach for implementation in the field. In particular, I drew on Pring's (2004) work, which provides an insight into the complex questions and assumptions that underlie ethical practice in research. Pring takes the view that ethical conduct is a kind of practical judgement, which always involves deliberation based on principles, values and dispositions that are often in competition with each other. Based on the argument that the primary purpose of educational research is the generation of new knowledge, Pring argues that the overriding principle for such research is the pursuit of truth. However, he also acknowledges that, in practice, this principle is often in competition with other considerations such as the consequences of the research for those involved, the question of confidentiality, and the need to review findings in the light of new evidence and alternative interpretations. While arguing that there can never be a set of rules that would replace the need for judgement and deliberation, he proposes a set of ethical principles that would balance these competing considerations, which could be applied on a case by case basis. These principles include the need to inform participants of the purposes of the research and the nature of the knowledge the researcher aims to achieve, the need to preserve anonymity, and the need to be open to criticism and alternative interpretations of data (2004, pp. 142-57).

In agreement with Pring that ethical conduct in research is a matter of normative choices rather than neutral guidelines, deliberation based on principles and values was at the heart of my ethical approach in the study. While working within the code of good practice on ethical research of the Graduate School of

Education at Exeter, and making use of the guidelines published by the British Educational Research Association (2004), I also made judgements on a case by case basis, deliberating amongst the principles I chose to guide the conduct of the research. In deciding which of these to prioritise, I found Pring's (2004) list useful, particularly in so far as his basic principles represent a democratic approach to research. However, I also aimed to achieve consistency between the theoretical perspective of the thesis and its practical implementation. For these reasons, along with Pring's (2004) list of basic principles, I chose to prioritise equality as an important principle when conducting the research. Therefore, while balancing the need to generate knowledge with a concern for the consequences of my research, I was also guided by the need to treat participants both as equal partners in the generation of knowledge and as equal human beings whose choices, opinions and interpretations merited respect.

4.3.6 Approach to validity and reliability

The epistemological assumptions behind the research, and the interpretative stance I adopted, had implications for the validity and reliability of the study and its findings. Because I understood there to be no possibility of stepping back from the process of constructing meaningful reality to observe it objectively, I also understood the research to be part of this interpretative process. This means that the research findings could only be understood as an interpretation of reality, and one that resulted from an interaction between my own subjective understandings and those of the participants in the research. The questions that this raises about validity and reliability are all the more pertinent when it is considered that my presence as a researcher is likely to have had an impact on the reality I was trying to investigate. The impact of the researcher on the field of study, and the implications of this for the status of findings – particularly in interpretative research, where the researcher and the methods of research are difficult to separate – have been well documented (see, for example, Wellington, 2000, p.41; Robson, 2002, p.172; Manion, Cohen & Morrison, 2007, p.134). Important considerations here include the ways in which the researcher can affect the nature and quality of the data gathered, and the measure of consistency with which the data are collected, analysed and interpreted.

Because of the above considerations, some have rejected validity and reliability as meaningful concepts for interpretative research, referring instead to other considerations such as ethical, political and aesthetic criteria for judging the quality of research (Buchanan, as cited in Silverman, 2005, p. 237; Smith & Hodkinson, 2008). Kvale (2002) offers a discussion of these arguments, situating them within what he sees as the most recent formulations of the 'social construction of validity' (2002, p. 299-35). Others, however, have claimed that validity and reliability remain essential criteria for any research project and argue for the adoption of strategies and procedures that are specific to interpretative research when addressing these (Silverman, 2005, pp. 209-10; Hammersley, as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 135; Lincoln, 2002). I agree with these latter authors that to base judgements about the quality of research on aesthetic, ethical or political criteria would fail to address the nature of research as the generation of knowledge and that considered approaches to validity and reliability in interpretative research are necessary. There are many accounts of people's lives that resonate, offer beautiful depictions and move people to political action. However, unless it is clear that they in some way offer a valid and reliable picture of reality, it would be very difficult to describe them as research. For this reason, I applied a number of strategies – specific to interpretative approaches – that were designed to increase the validity and reliability of the research. These are described in greater detail below in a discussion of the precise research design and methods used.

4.4 Design and methods

The research was conducted as a longitudinal study involving the collection of data via observations and interviews over a total of 18 months. Following observation of an art project designed to foster democratic practice between December 2006 and June 2007, I interviewed five of the participants involved in the project between July 2007 and December 2008. A further set of participants with more general experiences of arts participation were interviewed between October 2007 and January 2009. Each of the participants were interviewed a total of three times. Table 1 below offers a summary of the research design and implementation.

| | Observations Dec 2006 - June 2007 | Group interviews June 2007 | Exit interviews July 2007 | Individual interviews | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| Group 1 (South West) | 30 hours of observations over 6 full days of the Enquire project. | One hour group interview with all participants in the Enquire project group. | Interviews of approximately 20 minutes with: Claire Emma Jacob | Interview 1 Nov 2007 | Interview 2 Apr 2008 | Interview 3 Oct 2008 |
| | | | | Interviews of approximately 30 minutes with: Emma Jacob Craig Tommy | Interviews of approximately 30 minutes with: Claire Emma Jacob Craig Tommy | Interviews of approximately one hour with: Claire Emma Interviews of approximately 30 minutes with: Craig Tommy |
| Group 2 (North East) | n/a | n/a | n/a | Interview 1 Nov - Dec 2007 | Interview 2 Apr - May 2008 | Interview 3 Nov 2008 |
| | | | | Interviews of approximately one hour with: Leanne Dean Daniel | Interviews of approximately one hour with: Leanne Dean Daniel | Interviews of approximately one hour with: Leanne Dean Daniel |

Table 1: summary of research

The research was designed in this way to access the participants thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour – including changes in these over time – and therefore to help understand their learning. Data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently, with initial analysis taking place after the first round of interviews. However, analysis and interpretation continued after the period of data collection well into 2009. Below I offer a discussion of the methods used at each stage of the study.

4.4.1 Selection of settings and participants

I used a combination of purposive and opportunistic approaches to the selection of participants for the research. Because I had been involved in an earlier research project into democratic learning in art galleries (the 'Enquire' project, referred to earlier), I was able to conduct research with some of the young people from this setting. In this sense, the selection of this group involved an opportunistic element. However, because these young people had been involved in a project which aimed to foster democratic practice in the collective creation of art, they were also chosen purposively because of their recent experience of participation in arts contexts with an explicitly democratic dimension. Similarly, the remaining young people were recruited from a further education college where I had been able to negotiate access, and there was therefore an element of opportunism in the way these young people were chosen for the study. However, these participants were also selected purposively, based on their recent experience of participation in arts contexts without any explicitly democratic dimension. Stake (2003) has argued that such a combination of purposive and opportunistic approaches to the selection of cases, settings and individuals can be justified on the basis that the potential for learning is the most important criterion for selecting cases and this potential is often dependent on pragmatic questions such as access (2003, p.153).

The process described above resulted in the selection of two distinct but related sets of participants for the research. The first group was made up of five participants (aged 14/15 at the start of the research), from the South West of England, who had been involved in the Enquire project. These young people

also shared a context for formal arts participation as they were all in the same GCSE art class at the time. The second group was made up of three participants (aged between 17 and 21 at the start of the research), from the North East of England, with recent experience of arts participation in informal contexts. These contexts included a charity providing opportunities for engagement in the performing arts, a private drama school and a music workshop organised as part of a young carers initiative. These young people also shared a context for formal arts participation as they were enrolled on the same performing arts course at a further education college. There were similarities between the two groups in that they were both made up of young people with an interest the arts. However, there were also some differences between the two groups in terms of age, geographical location and cultural contexts.

As well as the initial selection of participants, theoretical sampling was employed during the course of the research, following some of the procedures for this strategy, as described by Charmaz (2006, pp. 96-115). Charmaz has argued that theoretical sampling is an effective research strategy in grounded theory because it allows the researcher to refine the focus of the research as it proceeds, by testing out initial ideas and returning to the field to address areas that merit further investigation. She explains that this process, 'can entail studying documents, conducting observations, or participating in new social worlds as well as interviewing or reinterviewing with a focus on your theoretical categories' (2006, p. 107). The purpose of using such strategies in the research was to direct my attention to topics that the participants articulated as being important and to collect a breadth and depth of data about the key areas for the research. While I did not change the sample size during the course of the research, I did use later rounds of data collection to sample various kinds of data from the different participants based on my emerging ideas.

4.4.2 Data collection

The principal method of data collection employed in the study was the use of semi-structured individual interviews. This structured yet flexible strategy for

interviewing was adapted from Charmaz' approach to interviewing in grounded theory research (2006, pp. 25-35). Based on Charmaz' approach, I devised a schedule for each interview, listing some initial, open-ended questions; some topics for conversation that I wanted to cover; and some closing questions. However, I also took a flexible approach to conducting the interviews, remaining open to what the participants had to say and following up on interesting responses. For example, if it seemed that the participants were telling me about an important experience, I asked questions to elicit further information and reflection on this, such as, 'how did that feel at the time?' or 'that sounds interesting...could you tell me a bit more about that?'. In order not to break the flow of the interviews, I sometimes made a note of interesting topics that were brought up and went back to cover these later in the interview. I also compiled a list of standard questions that could be asked at the end of each interview so that I could compare the participants' responses over time. These included questions such as, 'What would you say is most important to you at the moment?', 'what are your hopes for the future?' and, 'where do you see yourself in five years time?'. These were designed both to bring the interviews to an end smoothly and to access evidence of learning.

The main purpose of initial interviews was to find out about each person, about their engagement with art, and about other contexts that were important to them. A sample of questions in these early interviews include, 'could you tell me a little bit about yourself?', 'what kinds of arts activities have you been involved in recently?', 'could you tell me a bit about your family and friends?' 'What kinds of things are you involved in outside of school/ college?' Interviews in later rounds of data collection were used to follow up on themes and experiences that the participants had mentioned in earlier interviews. Often this involved asking questions such as, 'Last time you talked about working with a charity...could you tell me a bit more about that?', or, 'Last time we spoke, you said you were feeling nervous about starting a new job...how is that going?' At other times, this involved sharing some of my interpretations with the participants, by asking questions such as, 'In the last interview, it seemed like

you were saying that other people's opinions are quite important to you...would that be fair?'. This was designed partly as an ethical strategy – whereby the participants were kept informed of the research process and their opinions taken seriously – and partly as an interpretative strategy aimed at enhancing the validity of the research. However, I did not see the participants' interpretations as a privileged source of knowledge, nor as the 'correct' interpretation, but rather as valid contributions that could offer alternative interpretations against which to compare my ideas.

As well as individual interviews, I made additional use of data I had collected during my involvement in earlier research into the Enquire project, involving the participants from the South West. This data consisted of observation notes gathered during participant observation of the project sessions, and a group interview with the young people. The group interview was designed to gather the participants' initial responses to taking part in the project. It took place in the gallery setting on the final day of the project and included an interactive task in which participants were asked to create a piece of art work in response to their experience of the project, which they could then use in interview to help communicate their thoughts and opinions. This exercise was followed by open ended questions directed to whole group, such as, 'How did you find working with Laura (the artist)?', 'What did you think about being in a gallery rather than school?', 'How did you feel about doing the tasks and activities Laura set you?'. This incorporation of creative and artistic forms of data collection was also applied in the later, individual interviews. This principally involved two strategies. Firstly, in some of the interviews with the participants from the South West, I used photographs from the Enquire project – and prints of art works they had encountered in that setting – in order to generate conversation about the project and to capture the participants' responses to taking part in it. Secondly, I invited the young people from this context to create an art work that in some way articulated their response to the project.

4.4.3 Data analysis

In order to analyse the data, I used the constant comparative method characteristic of grounded theory, based on Charmaz exposition of this strategy (2006, pp. 42-95). Data analysis began early in the research process, after the first round of data collection. The first stage of data analysis consisted of initial coding of the observation notes and interview transcripts. Observation notes were coded incident-by-incident, while the interview transcripts were coded line-by-line. In each case, I annotated each separate piece of data with a code that reflected a process, for example, 'worrying about what people think', 'wanting to have an end product', 'having control over a decision', 'choosing not to vote', 'enjoying modern art'. Following this initial stage of analysis, I used focused coding to look for connections between codes for individuals and to come up with focused codes for each participant. During this stage, some codes were subsumed under others, while in other cases, a number of codes were synthesised to describe a process that seemed to be important for an individual. For example, codes from the initial interview with one participant included, 'thinking about modern art', 'enjoying art without an obvious purpose', 'seeing painting a stereotypical' and 'enjoying reading about artists' intentions'. As the focused coding proceeded, these codes were synthesised under a tentative category of 'theorising about art'.

After coding and comparing data within individual interviews to come up with focused codes for each participant, I then compared these codes across the individual cases to arrive at tentative categories about the processes occurring within each group of participants. For the group from the South West, these included, 'having negative feelings about student council', 'reflecting on experiences of decision making', 'having control over final decisions in the Enquire project', 'diminishing interest in art over time', 'informality an important aspect of art'. In one case, an *in vivo* code from the data, 'being treated like an adult' came up in the interview transcripts for two of the participants from this setting. By comparing and contrasting data that seemed to exemplify this code for these participants, it became clear that codes for other participants such as

'being treated with respect', 'being trusted', 'being listened to' and 'being on first name terms with artists/teachers' could be subsumed under this *in vivo* code. This then became a tentative category used to describe a general process occurring within this group. These stages of initial and focused coding, and the development of tentative categories were repeated after each round of interviews to direct further data collection. In this way I was able to direct my questions towards topics that would help to further explore differences and similarities between the individual participants and the two groups of young people, and which would help me better understand the participants' experiences and viewpoints. As the research progressed, and more data was collected, I began to compare not only across individuals and groups, but also across time, going back to earlier interviews and observation notes to see what had changed or remained the same.

Gradually, I integrated the focused codes and tentative categories to construct analytic categories that represented important themes running through the data, and which were also relevant to the overall aims and objectives of the research. An important part of this process involved integrating tentative categories for each group into broader analytical categories that reflected the experiences of both sets of young people. Sometimes clear similarities between the two groups were subsumed under an analytical category. For example, 'coping with difference and freedom during the Enquire project' (a tentative category derived from the data generated amongst the young people from the South West) was combined with 'making the transition from school to college' (a category that occurred in the data for both groups) under the larger analytic category of 'making transitions across contexts'. In other cases, differences between categories for each group led to the development of analytic categories that captured this diversity. For example, 'learning a craft' (a category representing the way in which the young people from the North East viewed their involvement in their performing arts course) and 'reinstating art as a hobby' (which related to the young people from the South West) contributed to the development of the analytical category, 'making sense of art in one's life', which

pertained to both groups, and reflected the ways in which the young people variously interpreted the role of art in their lives in terms of work or leisure.

Memo writing was an important strategy used in the gradual development of analytic categories from the data. From the early stages of the research, I wrote memos to help organise my thoughts, develop ideas and build towards interpretations of the data. These interpretations included ideas about the relative importance of processes and experiences for different participants and connections between different elements of data gathered in relation to individual participants. I used Charmaz' 'clustering' technique (2006, p. 86-8) to help write the memos. This involved visually mapping my thoughts about the data as a diagram that drew connections and distinctions between codes and pieces of data. These maps were used to write memos explicating my thoughts, asking questions about the potential connections in the data, and suggesting ways to follow these up in later interviews. So, after each round of interviews, I developed a list of topics and questions for the next round of data collection. Some of these topics and questions were relevant to all of the young people, some to each group or other subset, and some to individual participants. Using memo writing in this way was part of the constant comparative method and the synchronisation of data collection and analysis, as my thoughts and interpretations were used to direct further rounds of data collection.

4.4.4 Interpretation

Following the construction of analytic categories from the data, I referred back to the theoretical framework to interpret what the data could reveal in terms of significant findings about the nature of the young people's democratic learning and its relationship with art. The analysed data offered examples of the young people experiencing instances in which they were able to act democratically and experience democratic subjectivity. They also offered evidence of how the young people attitudes, feelings and behaviour had changed over time and rich data about their engagement with art. In this way, the analysis of the data resulted in some important findings about the kinds of opportunities for democratic action the young people had experienced in arts and other contexts

and some indications of their learning in relation to these opportunities. These findings were then interpreted in light of the conceptualisation of terms for the research, in order to explore what the categories of data had to show about *how* the young people had experienced democratic action, *how* they had learned from it, and the *ways* in which art was involved in those processes. One important element of the interpretative process involved exploring the young people's particular uses of language in relation to politics and art, in order to address how they related to wider discourses as they experienced and learned from instances of democratic subjectivity. While interested in the uptake of established idioms from these discursive frameworks, I was particularly attuned to the possibility that in adopting these established forms, the participants also had the potential to subtly change and subvert them through a process of slippage and errancy. In practice, this meant comparing the participants' use of words and phrases to those commonly employed in existing cultural contexts to address the topics and issues they were talking about. Examples of this included comparing the participants' articulations about society and politics with formulations of perspectives on these issues often found in the media, in order to see how the participants adopted established ways of talking about particular concerns in their own unique ways.

4.4.5 Ethical procedures

Decisions made about the conduct of the research – from the recruitment of participants to the interpretation of the data – reflect the ethical approach outlined earlier in the chapter. Recruitment of participants for the research occurred following negotiation with gatekeepers, i.e. the principal of the college and the head teacher of the school the participants attended. After informal discussions with class teachers, I met with groups of young people to explain the nature and purpose of the research and to ask for their participation in the study. I told the participants that I was doing research as part of a University degree and that I was interested in their involvement in the arts but also in how they learned about ways of working with people that might be considered more or less democratic. I also explained that the research would involve taking part

in a series of interviews that would last between thirty minutes and an hour and would take place over the following year to eighteen months. I also informed the young people that, in the interviews, I would ask them about their involvement in the arts but also about other aspects of their lives and would be interested in hearing about their thoughts and opinions as well as their experiences. Finally, I assured the young people that the interviews would be conducted in private, that if there was any information they wanted to keep confidential, I would do so, unless it involved criminal activity (in which case I would be obliged to inform the relevant authorities), and that when reporting the findings of the research, I would not use their real names. This explanation was designed to inform the participants of the nature and purpose of the research as fully as possible, using general rather than specialised terms.

Following this explanation, I asked the participants if they would be willing to take part in the research. I informed them that if they did take part, they would have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. I also emphasised that their decision about whether or not to participate in the research was independent of their studies and relationships with staff at school and college. I felt this was necessary because, as I was approaching the participants through these educational establishments, it may have been interpreted that my research was in some way endorsed by the school or college and that value judgements might be made about their decision on whether or not to participate. This was particularly important in the case of the participants from the South West, whose involvement in the Enquire project had been jointly coordinated by their school and the galleries directing the project. In practice, this meant assuring the young people that my research was not officially linked to either the school/college or the Enquire project, that their decision about whether or not to take part in the research would not affect their school/college work and that their teachers would not think any better or worse of them based on whether or not they chose to take part in the research.

I also obtained written, informed consent for participation in the research from each of the participants. In the case of the participants from the South West, I

also obtained written consent from parents and guardians as the young people were all under 16 at the start of the research. In some ways, this could be seen as clashing with the principle of equality that guided the research. By seeking the consent of the participants' parents and guardians, it could be inferred that I did not consider the participants as equals because they were not considered capable of making their own judgement about their participation in the research. In order to mitigate against this inconsistency, I gave priority to the participants' consent to take part in the research, with parental consent framed as a secondary consideration with a ratifying function. This was achieved by verbally emphasising the importance of the participants' own consent in my initial meetings with the young people and by positioning of the participants' signatures before the signatures of parents and guardians on consent forms.

During the research, I spoke with the participants at the beginning of each interview to confirm their willingness to take part and to remind them of the terms of the research. In order to minimise any mental or emotional harm to the participants, I reminded them, in particular, that if any questions or topics came up in interview that they did not want to talk about that they could let me know and we wouldn't pursue them any further. While I intended to conduct all interviews in private, in practice, this was not always possible. Most interviews did take place in private but for some of the later interviews, I had to make use of public spaces such as common rooms and cafés. Where interviews had to be held in public spaces, I took care to find as quiet a place as possible and reconfirmed that the participants were still willing to continue with the interview given this change in circumstances. I was the only person with access to recordings and transcripts of the interviews and I did not discuss the content of the interviews with anyone other than my supervisors. In drafts of the findings, I used pseudonyms for the participants. In order that the participants would not be identifiable in the thesis, I have not only changed the names of the young people in the data analysis and interpretation chapters, but also the names of other people who featured in the data. I have also omitted place names and the names of institutions, workplaces etc.

4.4.6 Strategies for ensuring validity and reliability

Adopting the constant comparative method of data analysis was one way in which I was able to incorporate strategies for ensuring validity and reliability within the research design, as this involved the exploration of negative cases and the comprehensive treatment of data. Working in this way, I was able to avoid what Silverman has referred to as the problem of anecdotalism in interpretative research (2005, p.212) by using all, rather than only some, of the data and by looking for negative cases that would challenge my emerging interpretations. Another strategy used to enhance the validity of the research was sharing my emergent interpretations with the participants and inviting their response. While I agree with Silverman (2005, p. 212) that this approach cannot in itself ensure validity, since it cannot be assumed that research participants have a privileged position on the reality under investigation, I did see this as a way of accessing alternative interpretations that could be taken into account in the generation of findings. In terms of reliability, I employed strategies that were designed to achieve consistency in the way the research data were collected, analysed and interpreted. These included the use of verbatim transcripts and a standardised approach to data analysis. Using the constant comparative method of data analysis was also useful in this respect as this allowed me to implement strategies aimed at enhancing consistency, including a standardised approach to coding and categorising data and a fixed time scale between data collection, transcription and initial analysis.

When addressing my impact on the field as a researcher, my approach was not to minimise this but to employ strategies that would allow me to take account of this impact in my interpretations and therefore to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. These were applied in a responsive way, as I dealt with issues that arose during the course of the research and which could impact on the nature and quality of the data. For example, as a result of my earlier involvement the Enquire project, the participants from the South West already knew me in my capacity as a researcher. The affect that this may have had on the data was highlighted in an early interview with one of the participants from

the South West, who apologised for giving a negative opinion of the project because, in her words, 'that's probably not what you want to hear'. While I reassured both this participant and the others that I was interested in their honest opinions, the impact of my involvement on their responses could not be entirely negated. By being aware of this, and taking it into account when interpreting the data, I aimed to increase the validity of the research findings.

4.5 Evaluation

One of the strengths of the research design is that it allowed me to conduct a close study of a small number of individuals and to offer thick description of their experiences and perspectives, as articulated in the participants' own words. As a result, the analysed data constituted a rich resource for interpreting the nature of the young people's democratic learning and its relationship with art. Because I worked with two groups of young people from different settings and with different experiences, the research also resulted in the generation of data about arts participation both in contexts specifically designed to encourage democratic practice and those without any explicitly democratic dimension. Also, by taking a grounded theory approach that allowed for the exploration of broad themes and topics of interest, I was able to contextualise the data about the young people's participation in arts contexts within the broader context of their overall lives. Finally, by conducting the research as a longitudinal study, I was able to generate data that reflected changes and continuity in the young people's experiences and perspectives over time, and which therefore provide important insights into the young people's learning. For all these reasons, the research design and its implementation allowed me to address the research objectives and questions successfully.

However, there were also some limitations to the study as a result of the research design and my implementation of it. One of these is the generation of data that is somewhat uneven. For example, while I was able to draw on observational as well as interview data in relation to the experiences of the young people from the South West in arts settings, for the young people in the North East, I only had access to the the participants' reconstructions and

articulations of their experiences in such contexts. Additionally, the quality of the data generated improved over the course of the research, as I was able to develop my interview technique. As the research progressed, I worked reflexively, developing my ability to ask more open-ended questions, allowing the participants to speak at length and adopting a conversational tone that encompassed a broad range of topics. This resulted in the generation of better quality data over time. A compounding factor here was the fact that early interviews with the young people from the South West were limited in time to half an hour as interviews took place in lunch times in order to cause minimal disruption to their school work. Later interviews with this group took place in the young people's free time and I was therefore able to explore ideas in greater depth in these later interviews. In contrast, all the interviews with the young people from the North East took place during tutorial periods and lasted an hour. Although the somewhat uneven quality of the data – as a result of these factors – can be seen as a weakness of the study, being aware of these discrepancies when working with the data allowed me to mitigate against this and maintain validity in my interpretations.

Another limitation is that the use of creative and artistic strategies for data collection remained underdeveloped in the research. While I made use of art prints and photographs during interviews with the young people from the South West, in actuality, these played a minor role in the generation of data. Similarly, while I tried to incorporate a creative task within the research process, none of the young people in fact took this opportunity up. As a result, the collection of data was reliant on the classical approaches of observation and interview. Had I emphasised this element of the research process more strongly, or given the young people time to create art work in the research setting, I may have been able to incorporate creative forms of data collection more effectively, and therefore to have generated a greater variety of data that also involved the articulation of the young people's experiences and understandings in non discursive ways.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the research resulted in the generation of rich data, which allowed for analysis and interpretations that constitute important findings about the nature of the young people's experiences democratic learning and its relationship with art. Although they represent only one interpretation, these findings are the result of rigorous and methodical study that employed checks and balances to ensure validity and reliability, and which was conducted reflexively, as I took account of my own impact on the field as a researcher. In the following chapters, I present the categories that emerged from the data analysis, an interpretation of these via the conceptualisation of democratic learning taken in the thesis, and a discussion of the broader significance of the research findings.

Chapter 5 – Data analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of the data, focusing on five broad areas that are of central concern in the thesis. These are; decision making, participation, creativity, identity and learning. I have chosen these five areas because they provide a meaningful structure for presenting the data analysis, and are closely linked to the aims of the study, the outcomes of the literature review and the theoretical framework. While these five broad areas provide the overall structure for the chapter, the particular findings of the research are presented in the form of categories that emerged following analysis via the constant comparative method. In the chapter, I discuss each of the broad areas of interest in turn, presenting the categories that emerged in each area, with reference to data from the interview transcripts and observation notes. For each of the categories, I outline a process that was found in the data as well as describing the differences and similarities in how that process was experienced across the two groups of participants and between individuals.

5.2. Decision making

A number of categories emerged from the data analysis that relate to the broad area of decision making. One of these involved the process of balancing the need to arrive at a final outcome, with the aim of including the opinions of all those concerned when making decisions. Another important category was the process of adopting more active and passive roles during collective decision making. The participants' use of non-discursive forms of communication when making decisions in arts contexts was another category to emerge from the data. While these categories represent processes that were relevant to both groups of young people involved in the research, there were sometimes differences in the way the young people from the two different settings experienced and articulated these processes, and indeed in the experiences of individual participants.

5.2.1 Balancing the need to make a decision with an inclusive approach

One of the categories to emerge from the data in this area involved the finding that the participants understood collective decision making to be a complex process that involved balancing the need to make a final decision with the desire to include everyone's opinions. This was particularly the case in relation to the Enquire project (for the participants from the South West) and the performing arts course at college (for the participants from the North East). The following extract from an interview with Tommy illustrates how the participants experienced and articulated the process of balancing the need for inclusion with the focus on making a final decision in the Enquire project:

sometimes people would just think of something else and say...or like Emma, like she was the one who was saying, 'are you all happy with that?' and then some people were like... most of the people were like 'yeah, that's fine' but if we wanted to say something else then we would say it and it would be fine. (Tommy, South West, interview 1)

By referring to Emma's attempts to reach consensus on a particular course of action and the tendency of the other participants to agree, Tommy indicates the participants' awareness of the need to arrive at final decisions. However, his qualification of this with the assertion that people were free to disagree or offer alternative ideas indicates that this concern was balanced against the need to include everyone's ideas. The process of balancing these two interests was also evident in the following extract from an interview with another of the participants from the South West:

[it was] confusing at first because everyone was sort of thinking about their own thing and not really thinking how it would fit in with the group and we sort of struggled. (Jacob, South West, interview 1)

Jacob's interpretation that the group 'struggled' indicates a sense of difficulty involved in collective decision making, which he attributes to the conflict between the individual participants' expression and pursuit of their own ideas, and the need to work collectively to get something done. The complexity of decision making in this context had a lot to do with the fact that the participants

were genuinely committed to working inclusively. This is illustrated in the following extract, again from an interview with Tommy:

We all sort of put in equal ideas and stuff and basically it came to like a good project and yeah...We all like took them into consideration definitely and no one was left out if you know what I mean. (Tommy, South West, interview 1)

These comments show that, for Tommy, including everyone's ideas was an important concern, and one that was even associated with the quality of the project. They also demonstrate another important point, i.e. that the young people sometimes managed to decide on a direction for their collective project that also took into account the ideas and opinions of everyone concerned. At other times, however, the tension between these concerns resulted in different people doing different things because the participants were unable to arrive at a collective decision:

Well, we would say, erm 'who wants to do this?' and then we'd see how many people wanted to do it and then the other thing. If we could we'd try to get half the group doing what they wanted to do and then the other half doing something else. (Jacob, South West, interview 1)

This way of resolving the tension between the need for inclusion on the one hand, and the imperative to make decisions on the other, was also evidenced in Emma's comments about combining different people's ideas:

It was okay – this project was quite a long project spread out whereas if it had been a smaller project it could have caused a bit of friction, like I think they had their whole music idea didn't they, whereas like the girls probably weren't as much into that, whereas if we'd had a short project we probably wouldn't have been able to do both types of things, whereas because it was like larger, we could fit in all different aspects of it and different things. (Emma, South West, interview 1)

Balancing the concern for inclusion with the need to take decisions was a process that also emerged in relation to the North East participants'

experiences in the context of their performing arts course. This was evident in the following extract from an interview with Daniel:

Like the last performance we did, which was Henry VIII – there was Karen in there who was stage manager, but she was struggling with it so I was like, 'well, we'll do it this way and we'll do it that way, and this way might be good but if you've got any other ideas then that's fine'... we share ideas and we have a little debate about things about which ones will be better and then it all works out like that. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

While Daniel felt the need to 'step in' and offer his own ideas about what would be a good solution in this instance, he also wanted to allow his classmate to disagree and offer her own opinions. As with the Enquire project, the inclusion of everyone's ideas was an important concern for the young people who participated in this context, as is evident in the following extract, again from an interview with Daniel:

Well we say, like, say one person isn't inputting any ideas, we sit down with them and say, 'do you have any ideas?' and it depends on whether they're shy or not because if they're shy they won't say anything but if you just sit down and talk to them, they will say, 'well, this could be good' and then we'll try it out and if it works, it works and if it doesn't it doesn't but they still contributed in some way by giving their ideas. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

Daniel's comments show that the participants made deliberate efforts to include people's contributions on the course, negotiating barriers such as shyness to ensure that everyone offered their ideas in some way. The participants also described what they considered to be their success in balancing inclusion with the need to make a final decision in this context. The following comments from Dean illustrate this point:

We coped really well because everybody had their own ideas and we...we said to people 'right, have two or three ideas and we'll try to fit

every idea into the script', which we did, we got everyone's ideas and put them into the script. (Dean, North East, interview 2)

Dean clearly felt that he and his fellow students had successfully negotiated the problem of including everyone's ideas within the parameters defined by the need to produce a final script. Leanne's characterisation of decision making on the course also illustrates an understanding that the group were successful in balancing such competing concerns:

at the end we always make sure that the last decision is as a group so there's no one like saying, 'oh well I don't want this da da da da da.' Everyone's got their own opinion whether they like the idea or they don't and then we sit and think together and think of the right, like a good solution. (Leanne, North East, interview 1)

For Leanne, it appeared to be important not only that everyone was entitled to offer their opinion, but also that there was a final point after which people could not dissent or complain about the decision taken. The understanding of decision making as a complex and sometimes difficult process of balancing competing interests was a common feature of the young people's responses to both the Enquire project and the performing arts course. A plausible interpretation of this is that both the Enquire project and the performing arts course were contexts in which the participants had responsibility for decision making amongst their peers and where there was some external expectation that they should be inclusive of everyone's ideas. The first of these elements – the quality of the contexts as settings in which the participants were given responsibility for decision making amongst their peers – was evident in the observation notes from the Enquire project:

Laura stressed to the group that they must make a decision about how long to spend in the museum and what they would do there. She then physically distanced herself from the group and encouraged Kate and I to do the same so no adults were present in the discussion. (Enquire project observation notes, session 1)

This element was also a characteristic of the way the participants from the North East experienced the context of their performing arts course:

we're told] 'fine, fair enough its your production, you've got control over it, its up to you what you do' they're just the stage managers, the teachers are just there for light and sound, we're there to put the effort in and make sure the production works. (Dean, North East, interview 1)

The second element – an external obligation to be inclusive of everyone's opinions in their decision making – was also evident in both the Enquire project and the performing arts course, although this was experienced slightly differently in the two contexts. In the case of the Enquire project, the aim of inclusion was built into the democratic intentions of the project and was evidenced in the way the participants were encouraged by the artist to take everyone's opinions into account when making decisions:

Laura asked the group about the use of sound in the room and whether they were happy with it. She asked them if it might need to change during the day for everyone to 'get their turn' in terms of their preference for use of sound in the room. (Enquire project observation notes, session 4)

In the case of the performing arts course, the participants' commitment to working inclusively when making collective decisions appeared to be related to the assessment criteria for the course, as was evident in the following extract from an interview with Daniel:

you have to try to egg them on to try and put their ideas so you can...so we can all work together as a big group and not as half and half, so everyone has their own ideas to input and...because...with the grading criteria, a lot of its like, 'how did you contribute?' and you get graded on how you contributed towards the piece, erm so we try to egg people on to contribute as much as they can so they can get a better grade for themselves. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

Although the reasons why the participants felt the need to be inclusive of everyone's ideas in their decision making differed across the two contexts, in

both cases the structure and purpose of the participants' engagement in these settings appeared to result in their experience of decision making as a complex and sometimes difficult process of balancing the need to make a final decision with the need to include everyone's ideas. This dynamic was also evident in some of the participants' experiences of decision making in other arts contexts. Craig, for example, talked about having to make compromises when making decisions in his band:

Well it's great because we have to...we don't all try to rush in and say, 'our idea's better than yours, you have to stop your idea so we can have this idea.' We kind of all, if we come to a split decision we just all sit down, we make sure we're all on agreement on it before we move on, so it kind of, it's not just one person controlling everything, its say, the rest of my band's six people controlling everything between them, so you always get a fair decision instead of one person's view over five or five over one. You always have to come to an agreement and make compromises. (Craig, South West, interview 2)

Although Craig here represents decision making in his band in positive terms, his reference to having to make compromises also indicates an appreciation of the complexity of this process and the difficulties it can entail. Craig also described the reasons *why* he felt that he and his fellow band members made decisions in this way:

Kind of at home, you just get your parents telling you what to do, you get your parents nagging you going, 'you have to do this, you have to do that, make sure you've done this', whereas in my band its more, like there are no parents, but we've taken on the role of the parents, we have to make sure we're doing what we need to do without someone having to remind us to do it. (Craig, South West, interview 2)

As with the Enquire project for the participants from the South West, and the performing arts course for the participants from the North East, the band was a context in which Craig felt that he had responsibility for making decisions with his peers. Although there was no external obligation to include everyone's ideas in this context, Craig and his band mates appear to have imposed this

obligation on themselves. This was perhaps because Craig was already familiar with making decisions in an inclusive manner in other contexts, such as at home:

Well mainly my parents work out the decisions between them, they talk it over and that, but because we've moved house, they asked us before we moved they asked us what we thought of this house and this house. They ask us for our opinions and views on things before they go ahead and make the final decision. So my parents do involve myself and my younger brothers a lot, not too much but enough to make us feel like we're involved with it. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

Although Craig understood there to be a clear hierarchy at home, in which his parents had the final say over decisions, he also experienced decision making in this context as an inclusive process in which he and his brothers were consulted. It is possible that this kind of experience played a role in Craig adopting an inclusive approach to decision making in his band and in his characterisation of this as a context that involved the need to compromise. However, Craig's comments about family life also reveal that he viewed decision making in this context in fairly fixed and uncomplicated terms. Tommy and Emma viewed decision making at home in a similar way:

Its normally me and my mum who like discuss it probably. My dad doesn't, really well he sort of would discuss it but its normally like me and my mum who would sort of decide mainly and he'll just like get informed later. He'll get told what to do, he doesn't really get a choice in much stuff. (Emma, South West, interview 1)

Well my brother's at University and my mum's...well my mum and dad are separated so my dad lives somewhere else and I see him a few times a week so that's fine and like we eat at the table, like obviously and talk basically every evening. Like me and my mum and my sister usually, sometimes my brother but... and making decisions, we just, I don't really know really, we just do it together. (Tommy, South West, interview 1)

While in some contexts the young people therefore understood decision making to be a complicated process of balancing the need to work inclusively with the need to get things done (for example in the Enquire project, the performing arts course and in informal contexts such as bands), in other settings – such as home life – decision making was seen as a more straightforward and uncomplicated process in which people were assigned particular roles.

5.2.2 Adopting active and passive roles in decision making

A second category to emerge from the data analysis involved the young people variously adopting more active and passive roles when making collective decisions. This is related to the above category because it was often when the participants found themselves in situations where they had responsibility for making decisions amongst their peers – and where there was some understanding that these decisions had to be inclusive – that this variation in approaches became evident. Observation notes from the Enquire project indicate that some of the participants from this context adopted more active roles than others when making decisions:

Emma and Craig were the first to offer ideas and then some of the other students joined in. During the discussion Emma and Craig's voices were heard louder and more often than the other students. (Enquire project observation notes, session 3)

Emma's tendency to take control of discussions when making decisions on the project was also evidenced in data from interviews with other participants:

everybody did make a contribution its just her like being the leader...she's just the sort of person who likes to speak in front of people and stuff. (Tommy, South West, interview 2)

the first sessions everyone was nervous really but she was like the first to bring out the nervousness, like bring out the confidence and everyone started talking. (Tommy, South West, interview 2)

As well as indicating Tommy's interpretation that Emma took on quite dominant role during the project, this latter comment also suggests that he was aware of another tendency, i.e. that the other young people were more reluctant to get

involved in the decision making process. Other participants also commented on this as a feature of decision making and group discussions during the Enquire project:

Well sometimes it was quite hard because we were all completely silent and no one was willing to speak their mind. I know I was like that, I really didn't like putting my ideas forward. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

we often had those silent moments like we had in there a second ago when we're just like, 'erm, yeah, really don't know what to do'. (Claire, South West, interview 1)

For the young people from the North East, the performing arts course was a context in which they felt that people took on variously more active and passive roles in decision making. Daniel saw himself as someone who took on an active role when making decisions on the course. Below, he describes the reactions of his classmates to this approach:

It depends on the mood of the rest of the class because sometimes they feel like, 'right I'm not going to take him bossing us around telling us how to do things' but it doesn't cause that big a problem because then we just talk about it and its like, 'yeah, maybe if you contributed some idea as well, things would be different' and then it all gets sorted. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

As well as indicating his own, active role in decision making on the course, Daniel's comments indicate that other students were more passive in their approaches to decision making. Sometimes the participants' existing dispositions appeared to have an impact on the kinds of roles they adopted when making decisions with others. Daniel expressed his preference for taking the initiative in decision making:

A lot of the time my contributions are used because I usually take charge because I don't know why but I like taking charge on these kind of things and it works well. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

On the other hand, Tommy expressed a preference for someone else being in charge during collective decisions. When asked about his feelings regarding what he saw as Emma's assumption of a leadership role during the Enquire project, he offered the following view:

I think its quite good really, because otherwise there's no one taking charge and you don't get anywhere if there's no one to lead it. (Tommy, South West, interview 2)

For some participants, these dispositions also appeared to be related to previous experiences. Emma, for instance, was used to being in charge of decisions in other contexts. This was evident in her description of working at her parents' restaurant:

I think probably as well because I'm like the boss's daughter...not, well you know, just like...although I'm the youngest there but if something goes wrong its always like, 'Emma, this has happened' or 'Emma, what shall I do here?' even though there's like, Katy's like 27, she'll still ask me like what to do if something goes wrong, which is really weird, because I'm like ten years younger than her. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

Such experience of being in charge was also evident when she talked about going on a weekend away with friends:

well I got nicknamed 'mum' for the whole weekend and I was the one who had to carry everybody's tickets and when we got to a tube station I had to give the tickets out because no one like trusted themselves to carry their own tickets and it was like, 'where are we going now?', 'what are we doing for lunch, Emma?', 'what are we doing now?', 'what shops are we going to now?' (Emma, South West, interview 3)

While expressing mixed feelings about taking on this role, Emma also indicated that she enjoyed being in charge in these contexts:

I don't know, its quite nice but then it has its down points as well...again if something goes wrong, it'll be my dad going, 'Emma, this has

happened', 'Emma, go do this', 'Emma, why is this happening?' and its like, 'I don't know', its not always like...its quite nice. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

I like doing stuff like that, I like to sort of feel like I'm in control of things like, and know where I'm going and stuff but then it did get occasionally annoying when they took it slightly too far and started like...but yeah, I do like it I think, yeah. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

Emma appeared to have developed a positive disposition towards taking a lead role in decision making, based on her experience of this in other contexts. This may have had an impact on the way she approached decision making during the Enquire project.

5.2.3 Using non discursive forms of communication when making decisions

A final category to emerge from the data in relation to decision making involved the participants' use of non discursive forms of communication when making collective decisions in arts contexts. For the participants from the South West, this was sometimes an element of the tasks set by the artist facilitator. Observation notes from the project illustrate such instances:

Laura explained that we would be doing lots of different tasks today and started by asking Jim, one of the students, to use masking tape to mark out on the floor where the 'art' area would be. Jim started to do this and as he went around marking out a space, it was necessary for him to negotiate with the other students where to mark out the space as they needed to decide together if some of them needed to move or not. (Enquire project observation notes, session 2)

They were told that they would have to take a route through the city centre for about 15 minutes and that they would have to decide as a group what would be the strategy for making decisions about which route to take...the group explained that they had decided to follow a person with interesting shoes, then allow someone else in the group to identify another interesting pair of shoes and follow that person until

each person in the group had had a chance to pick a pair of shoes and follow the person wearing them. (Enquire project observation notes, session 2)

In the above extracts, the participants can be seen to use physical movement and aesthetic judgement, rather than relying on rational discussion to make decisions. For the participants from the North East, the performing arts course was a context for employing non discursive forms of communication when making decisions:

a lot of people are more creative if they write something down, they like, they can express themselves a lot more, whereas other people can express themselves through movement so we decided that if the ones who are creative who write down can write the script and then other people can just say their ideas, what they're used to saying and then we'll just write that down as well and it worked. (Dean, North East, interview 2)

For some of the participants, informal contexts for arts participation, for example in bands, involved making decisions through artistic means of communication:

When we get together its kind of like, we try and get songs together that we can all play and we warm up with and then when it comes to writing songs, it goes in a process where I write the lyrics and then we kind of have a jamming session with guitar and bass, trying to work out guitar and bass riffs and then we go into trying to layer drums over the top and then seeing what it sounds like together and carrying on accordingly. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

In the above extract, Craig describes a process of using collective judgement and making decisions through musical practices. This is evident in his reference to 'jamming' and to 'layering' different people's contributions over others, then 'carrying on accordingly' rather than discussing options and verbally deciding on a course of action. Tommy described a similar process in relation to his experiences of making decisions in a band:

Sometimes we improvised and stuff and we were like, 'oh, that's really good'. Sometimes we kept stuff, put it all together...but mainly we like wrote the songs before a band practice and then Mike would play it, I would like make a part with it, try it out, like get the best possible stuff together and then put some drums to it and stuff. (Tommy, South West, interview 1)

For Tommy too, making collective decisions in his band sometimes occurred via the practice of making music, rather than as a deliberative process.

5.2.4 Summary

When the participants experienced decision making in contexts that were explicitly modelled on democratic principles – or where there was an implicit assumption of democratic ideals such as equality and inclusion – they were able to appreciate the complexity of decision making and deal with it ways that variously embodied these ideals more and less successfully. The individual attitudes and approaches that the young people brought to these situations – often based on their previous experiences – played an important part in how they collectively negotiated the decision making process. While employing deliberative strategies often associated with democracy, the young people also used non-discursive, and even artistic, forms of communication to make collective decisions. Sometimes this occurred under the direction of the artists and educators they worked with, whereas on other occasions, the young people employed these strategies on their own initiative.

5.3 Participation

In this section, I discuss what the participants said about involvement in groups, organisations and communities at local, national and global levels. Important categories to emerge in this area included the young people's lack of interest in participating in mainstream politics despite an interest in political issues; a sense of frustration with representative structures and a willingness to take part in direct action; and an enthusiasm for volunteering and charity work. Again, there were differences and similarities in terms of the ways in which these processes were experienced by the two groups of young people and by the individual participants.

5.3.1 Lack of participation in mainstream politics despite an interest in political issues

One of the findings to emerge from the data was that, while the young people often expressed an interest in political issues, they were generally not enthusiastic about taking part in mainstream politics, and sometimes even expressed an aversion to this kind of participation. The participants' interest in political issues was articulated in a variety of ways. Some of the participants from the South West related their experiences of talking about current affairs at home:

Well if we're watching the news and erm something comes on about war in Iraq, then I'll say, er, 'there's a lot of death going on, why don't they just withdraw and then it'll be a lot better.' (Jacob, South West, interview 1)

when we're watching the news or something, I will ask him [my dad] a question about it and then he'll probably just go on from there, its not like often it happens but like...I'm quite interested in the money side of politics, like all like shares and like economics and that kind of thing and I'm often asking things about that. (Emma, South West, interview 1)

Both Emma and Jacob appeared to use the context of talking about news stories within the family as a way of exploring their interest in issues of political importance. Talking about the news at home was also a context for exploring political issues for Daniel, one of the participants from the North East:

I talk about it to my family when its on the news... my mam kind of has like the same kind of aspect on it...Its easy to talk to her because with sharing the same views and stuff and we end up having long discussions from like 6 o'clock in the afternoon till like half past 11 at night just talking about the same things over and over again. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

In other cases, the participants from the North East expressed their political concerns more obliquely. Rather than referring to specific political debates or

discussions of current affairs, they demonstrated a belief in wider principles such as equality of opportunity, social justice and equal rights:

I believe in equal rights, I think everyone should have an opportunity to do things they want to do. They shouldn't be judged on like what they are, who they are, they should be treated the same. (Dean, North East, interview 1)

I think everyone should have a fair shot at everything like...like for a job and stuff. I think everyone should have an equal shot because there's a lot of unemployed people out there that really do deserve jobs. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

At other times, the participants expressed concerns about prejudice and discrimination:

that's one thing I think strongly when I see people getting bullied for the colour of their skin or their height or the way they look, it's just, it's not fair because they wouldn't like it to happen to them. (Leanne, North East, interview 2)

In a variety of ways, then, the participants demonstrated an interest in political issues. Despite these interests, however, the young people were generally not inclined to participate in mainstream political structures, and in some cases even expressed negative attitudes towards this kind of participation. The following extract from an interview with Daniel offers an example of this:

I refused to vote. I didn't vote and I don't think I ever will because I think with the two main ones being labour and conservatives, neither of them are good for the country because if we've got Gordon Brown for labour, he's just dragging us downstairs and conservatives, last time we had conservatives it was Maggie Thatcher and she got us nowhere so I think the best way for it is no politics and that's my view of politics. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

Here, Daniel articulates a negative attitude towards voting while at the same time demonstrating a relatively high degree of interest in politics. For Daniel, the

reason for not taking part in mainstream politics was not a lack of interest but rather the conviction that such participation would be ineffective. Daniel expressed this view explicitly in the following comments:

No, I refuse to vote because its...I would vote if the lib dems had a chance in the running but I don't think they ever will so I'm not going to vote because I think it's pointless, I mean my one vote's not going to help anything. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

The expression of such openly negative attitudes towards participation in mainstream politics was rare. More often, the participants simply showed little interest in such engagement. One exception to this was Emma, who offered a fairly positive opinion of political structures and their role in society:

if you have a point you want to get across, there's like you know which route to go, you would go and see someone on your local council who would go and see someone higher and like if it's a valid point obviously, like the way that you can like get the things you want to say heard and stuff like that, whereas if you like, if there was no system then it would just be like ridiculous, you wouldn't like, there would be no control over anything. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

With varying degrees of emphasis, then, the majority of the participants demonstrated a lack of interest in participating in mainstream politics despite their evident engagement with political concerns. The differences in the participants' experiences of this process tended to occur at the individual level but there did appear to be a tendency for the young people from the North East to express concerns over inequality and injustice, which was not the case for the participants from the South West. One interpretation of this is that the participants from the North East were more aware of inequality and disadvantage in society through their everyday experiences. Such an awareness was evident in the data, for example in Leanne's reflections on her experiences at school:

at my other school I went to at [name of town], everyone was like all one, like whether you'd be like from a quite rich, well not rich but like,

someone, like family, like mam and dad who earn a lot of money and like you live in a big house, whereas some people might be like, well not be poor but have enough money to like get on through their life and everyone wasn't judged for what they wore or how their hair looked or for what their life was, which was really good. (Leanne, North East, interview 1)

Although there were differences in the nature of the participants' political concerns, the relative lack of interest in addressing these through participation in mainstream politics was a feature of the young people's attitudes in both groups.

5.3.2 Disappointment in representative structures and involvement in direct action

Another important category in the broad area of participation was the participants' sense of frustration with representative structures, and a willingness to engage in direct action to address collective concerns. This category related specifically to the participants from the South West, who expressed a sense of disappointment in their student council, but were enthusiastic about direct action following their involvement in a boycott of their school canteen. Some of the participants from the South West expressed the view that the council was a forum in which students had very little power. This was the case for Craig, who experienced the council as part of the larger student body but was not directly involved in it:

at the end of the day its not up to them its up to the teachers and the governors, so they really have no power whatsoever. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

Jacob expressed a similar view, although he tempered this sense of disempowerment with an acknowledgement that the students themselves could do more to make their opinions heard:

It would work well if the teachers actually listened to the students, because they don't really seem to be listening that well. We still need a bit more action from the students themselves, because they just say,

'well we want this' and if we can't get it, 'oh well'. (Jacob, South West, interview 1)

This sense that the students didn't have much power was also expressed by Emma, who was more actively involved in student council as a class representative:

We just sort of meet once a week and discuss things about the school, its never normally – occasionally we get a good natter, but normally its just school uniform and pointless things which people argue about constantly (...) school uniform jumpers and what we serve at the canteen and stuff. I do that, I'm not really keen about it though, I just sort of go along and take my tutor group's points along. (Emma, South West, interview 1)

However, Emma's sense of frustration with the council resulted as much from the students' lack of understanding about how the structure worked, as it did with the fact that the teachers and governors always had the last say:

I mean like it just goes round in a sort of cycle, where it's like, basically every single session over uniform, like, 'why aren't we allowed to wear really short skirts?', 'why aren't we allowed to wear our jumpers inside?' and every time and then every like couple of months I suppose somebody will go and address Mr. Jones about it and he'll say, 'well, this is the reason' and we'll come back and say, "this is the reason" and everyone will say to you, 'well, why can't we do this?' (Emma, South West, interview 2)

From a variety of perspectives then, the participants expressed disappointment in student council as a democratic channel within the school. However, an exception to this occurred when the students used the council to stage a boycott in protest at price rises in the school canteen. Emma related the reasons for the boycott, referring to how the prices had risen following a move to new premises as part of a public-private partnership scheme:

from the beginning when [the company] came into the school when the new school was built the prices had gone up by like, oh I can't

remember what it is now, but it was a big amount, especially for us who are like...and our prices were meant to be...because obviously we're tax free and as well we're meant to be a lot lower because it's a school sort of thing and like... but then we had to pay the prices and everyone was like, 'if we we're allowed to go out of school to like Tesco's for our lunch it would be so much cheaper'. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

The above extract demonstrates that the boycott was perceived by the students as a way of addressing what they considered to be an injustice, which itself was a result of the wider political circumstances of the school's ownership and management. Another reason behind the boycott had to do with the way the students felt they were treated by the company:

[The company] said, 'There's nothing we can do about it' and I think they were quite rude to them as well, so...and then they said, 'well, that's what you end up...we end up going on strike'. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

Emma also described how the boycott came about:

It had been going round and round and round, again like one of those things and everyone had already sort of said, 'oh we should go on strike, we should go on strike' so it had never really got sorted out. I think it helped because we had it when we changed the student council heads and I think because they came in all excited about doing it sort of thing and they like had loads and loads of time for it and they like got really into it and stuff and got it going. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

Although the boycott was organised through the student council, for Emma, it represented an exception to her normal experiences of this context:

Oh I think that's...I think it's really good because a lot like...our student council like, everyone's like goes to student council and we sort of, a lot of the time, like our arguments and our...the things that people point to (?) are like petty like, 'oh, I don't like...', say it's like the school uniform, it's like – which obviously is important – but it was sort of quite repetitive over the weeks, like the girls' skirts were too short and the

boys didn't button their top buttons up if they wore shirts and like things like that, which like, and it was quite nice to have something which was like an actual like sort of really, like more valued point which we could do something about, and you sort of like, that makes it more sort of like a real council, like in the real world, like something which would happen like more of a meaningful point. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

The contrast between the boycott and the way student council normally operated was also alluded to by other participants from the South West:

I do think it was a good idea because it shows them what the students think really because there's not many other ways that you can get, you can prove to them how many other people, like how many people generally want one thing. (Tommy, South West, interview 3)

The above reference to there not being 'many other ways' of getting the students' point across suggests that, while Tommy considered the boycott to be an effective channel for communicating the students' views, he did not consider other available channels – including the student council – to be effective in this respect. For the participants from the South West then, the experience of the boycott was an incident through which they articulated their understanding of direct action as a way of addressing collective concerns within a community. This sense of the effectiveness of direct action was articulated in contrast to the democratic channels afforded them through the student council, which they experienced as frustrating and ineffective. Paradoxically, it was the student council which provided the context for this action, albeit through an exceptional use of the structure by the students themselves.

5.3.3 Enthusiasm for volunteering and charity work

A final category to emerge in relation to participation was a general sense of enthusiasm amongst the young people for volunteering and taking part in charity work. The participants often saw such work as a way of enacting a sense of shared responsibility and of addressing concerns about their communities at local, national and global levels. For some of the participants, volunteering involved helping out in informal ways in their local communities.

Emma, for example, talked about volunteering at a local rainbows group (part of the guiding movement):

I help at a rainbow unit with younger kids, like 5 to 7 year olds on a Friday evening. I went through the whole guiding series, going up and now I help at a thing – I do like arts and crafts and stuff with them on a Friday evening. (Emma, South West, interview 1)

Similarly, Craig talked about volunteering at school:

Miss Hall asked us would we volunteer to go round picking up rubbish off the playground and we said yeah we'd do it. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

I sometimes go back to coach the year 11 and year 10 team and I'm also going back at some point to help with GCSE art students. (Craig, South West, interview 3)

Emma and Craig both saw their volunteering work as a way of doing something for their communities, which suggests that they felt a shared sense of responsibility in these contexts. This was evident in Emma's comments about why she volunteered with the Rainbows group:

I just enjoy doing it and like, if I wasn't there then they'd have to get someone else to come and help and it's like, it's nice to like...and the little kids, like you can tell the little kids appreciate it and it was like nice when I like arrive there I always get like a few little girls running over to me like, 'Emma!' and giving me a hug and stuff and it's just like, it's nice to feel like you're helping and stuff. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

As well as feeling appreciated, Emma was clearly motivated by the desire to help and by the knowledge that if she didn't take on this responsibility, it would fall to someone else. A similar sense of shared responsibility was evident in Craig's reflections on volunteering at school:

Well I don't mind because it's our school and if we don't look after it then it's not gonna stay like it is forever, it'll become like the old school and fall to pieces. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

Craig's comments also indicate that he understood his voluntary work as a way of addressing his own concerns about the school community – he helped out because he didn't want to see the school building deteriorate. Volunteering was also an important activity for some of the participants from the North East. For Dean, this involved working with a local charity:

I used to work for them, with [name of charity]...its like a charity organisation for children who don't get the chance to perform, who can't afford to like go to acting schools and things like that and they get a fund, they get funding, and get loads of money and then get the chance to put productions on with children and take them to theatres and stuff like that. (Dean, North East, interview 1)

As with the participants from the South West, Dean saw his voluntary work work as a way of doing something positive in a particular community:

It felt good because I felt as though I was giving the children something back or [the charity] something back because when I was little I joined the [the charity] as an...like in the drama group...It made me feel proud because I felt as though I'd taught them something; I'd given them something back from what they taught me. (Dean, North East, interview 2)

As well as demonstrating the sense of responsibility Dean felt in this community, his comments also reveal that his motivation for participating in the charity was a result of his own experiences. This was also the case for Daniel, who took part in charity events and fund raising:

Well, I've just recently sponsored one of my friends for doing a children's cancer run. He did that on Sunday and I sponsored him five pounds. I've just given him that, just given him his five pounds this morning, erm he did really well, I think. He does it every year so I'm going to continue sponsoring him for as long as I know him and not long ago I did a charity event down at the Sage. It was for St Oswald's and er...I was a volunteer for there and that turned out to be, that had a

good turn out as well. I don't think we got as much as we hoped but every little helps. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

I like to do as much as possible. I was a steward for the great north run. I've been talking to my friends and my girlfriend and we're going to walk from the top of Scotland to Hastings for charity next year. (Daniel, North East, interview 3)

Daniel explained that his reasons for taking part in charity work were partly driven by his personal experiences:

My best friend's sister has autism and my brother's got learning difficulties, which is why I had the young carer's experience. I've always wanted to do things for charity because kids who are suffering need more than grown ups who are suffering because children can't fend for themselves but adults should be able to unless they have learning difficulties or autism, which is why I'm particularly interested in that charity. (Daniel, North East, interview 3)

For Daniel, raising money for charity was a way of addressing his own concerns about vulnerable people in society based on what he knew of their needs. However, Daniel also saw charity as a way of addressing more global concerns:

all the people that are starving in Africa and stuff, I just think that if we don't get something done about it, it's just going to ruin the human race and like all this global warming I think that its just going to get worse and worse if we don't like put charity in...put money into charity to get research and stuff and try to change it. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

The participants from both groups demonstrated an enthusiasm for taking part in volunteering and charity work as a way of addressing concerns about their local communities and wider society, and as a way of enacting a sense of shared responsibility in these communities. However, their particular experiences and motivations differed, and there appeared to be a distinction between participation in informal and civic contexts for the participants from the South West and participation in more formal, charity organisations for the participants from the North East.

5.3.4 Summary

The participants demonstrated a genuine interest in the political circumstances that affected their lives at local, national and global levels but found that some outlets for expressing and acting upon their concerns were more effective and satisfying than others. Although there were variations amongst individuals and between the two groups, the young people generally favoured volunteering and charity work over participation in mainstream politics and sometimes found that staging direct action was more effective than using the representative channels available to them when addressing concerns within their immediate communities.

5.4 Creativity

Within the broad area of creativity, there were a number of processes that characterised the participants' experiences and understanding. One important category to emerge from the data analysis in this area was the participants' understanding that experimentation was an important part of the creative process. Other categories involved the processes of finding a place for art in one's life, losing one's self in the moment when creating or performing, and theorising about art and creativity with reference to established ideas. Again, there were variations in the way the two groups, and the individual participants, experienced these processes.

5.4.1 Experimentation as an important part of the creative process

One category in this area involved the finding that experimentation was often an important feature of the young people's experiences of creating art. For the participants from the North East, the performing arts course was a context in which they took an experimental approach to creating artworks:

Its quite good because even if we don't have much ideas, there's always someone who says, Oh, how about this? and if we don't like it we can say, Oh, I don't know if we can do this and we can think of something else. (Leanne, North East, interview 2)

Well, what we do is we just get together as a group and we just basically rehearse it, act it out and if we can't do something we say to

the teacher, oh I don't think we should do that bit we think we should put something else in. (Dean, North East, interview 1)

Leanne and Dean's comments indicate that, in this context, creating art involved a process of trial and error in which different ideas were rehearsed and tested out in the creation of a final performance. For Leanne, experimentation was also a feature of the creative process in relation to her experiences at a drama school:

Well we all put in our like ideas to make the show better or to change it but really it didn't need changing that much it was just like for people to put in their ideas and say well can I do this, can we do this as a group, and the ideas were took to notice...So it wasn't necessarily like all what was planned it was like what was planned plus like different people doing like solos and duets and stuff. (Leanne, North East, interview 1)

Leanne's reference to the inclusion of ideas that were not originally planned for the production illustrates the experimental approach taken to creating the final performance. For the participants from the South West, the Enquire project was a context for adopting an experimental approach to creating art. Sometimes the participants explicitly referred to experimentation in this context:

Laura would like tell us a few things and to think like almost like backwards towards...like just look at things differently as you try and come up with an idea and stuff...just like experimenting. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

At other times, this was articulated in terms of unpredictability and spontaneity:

You'd start out doing something and you wouldn't know where that would actually end up. (Jacob, South West, group interview)

The thing with our project was, at the beginning, we were thinking that it was just going to turn into this big project and everyone, well this big thing that everyone's (?) whereas it turned into more sort of spontaneous art. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

For Jacob and Claire, then, an important element of creating art on the Enquire project was the fact that they didn't know where their activities would end up

when they started out. The participants from this setting also referred to their experiences of creating art in their own time as a process characterised by experimentation. Earlier, in relation to decision making, I referred to the experimental nature of Tommy and Craig's participation in bands, where the band members used improvisation to create music collaboratively. Experimentation was also a feature of the way in which the participants from the South West created art individually, as is evident in the following extract from an interview with Jacob:

I...sometimes I don't really think, I just make it up as I go along...I think, 'let's just do this' and then see how that goes and then if its rubbish I'll try doing something else and then if that goes well I'll maybe add something else to it and then when once I've finished I think, 'oh maybe if I put this there', just that really. (Jacob, South West, interview 2)

For both sets of participants then, their experiences of creating art involved an element of unpredictability and experimentation. For the participants from the South West, this association between experimentation and creativity was particularly strong, as was evident in another process that occurred specifically in relation to this group, whereby the young people lost interest in art over time, following their involvement in GCSE arts courses. The participants from this group described how their experiences of creating art at school were quite restrictive and allowed for little experimentation or spontaneity:

for the exams we do erm, we get a title and then we have different paths to follow and they've limited them so we can only do one or two paths. Instead of going off into loads of different things, we have to stick to those two. (Jacob, South West, interview 2)

Well a lot of the time my art is probably for my school work, which is like, well like, oriented around a certain topic or point or something and its all quite like, I'm trying to get somewhere...I don't know. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

As a consequence, a number of these participants lost interest in creating art and explicitly referred to the overly structured nature of their GCSE arts courses as a key factor in this process:

It completely ruined it for me, especially with music as well because I find the music was quite hard and because it was hard I had to tick these certain boxes, which I just found really impossible to do, it wasn't enjoyable to play the piano, I just sort of got annoyed with it like, 'eugh, why is this not working?' and art wasn't so much like that, art was more just the amount you had to produce because there was so much work.
(Claire, South West, interview 3)

Claire's reference to creating music for GCSE as a process of 'ticking boxes' illustrates her disappointment with the restrictive nature of the creative process at school. Emma articulated a similar disappointment:

I don't know, when you're younger, it's probably more, there's probably a lot more pressure now on us, especially with the GCSEs and stuff and then when you were younger it was probably a lot more exciting and interesting, the stuff you did, it wasn't so tied down and structured.
(Emma, South West, interview 2)

While experimentation was experienced as a feature of the creative process by both sets of participants, for the young people from the South West, this was interpreted as being particularly important. Indeed, these young people viewed experimentation and spontaneity as crucial elements of the creative process, to the extent that, when these elements were not involved in their arts experiences, the young people's interest in creating art was diminished.

5.4.2 Finding a place for art and creativity within one's life

Another important finding in this area was that the participants from both groups engaged in a process of actively situating their creative engagement in the arts within their overall lives, often with reference to a distinction between work and leisure. However, the ways in which the participants did this differed across the two groups involved in the study. While the participants from the South West mainly saw their creative engagement in the arts as a leisure activity, the

participants from the North East tended to understand the role of creativity in their lives in terms of work. For the participants from the South West, the disaffection with art mentioned above was also important in the way they understood the role of art and creativity in their lives. The participants from this group seemed to view their involvement in GCSE art courses as something which temporarily interrupted their view of the arts as an enjoyable leisure activity in their lives. This understanding is exemplified in the following extract from an interview with Claire:

Erm, they [drawing and music] were both something that I'd always enjoyed since I was little, so they were sort of just part of my life, whereas then it sort of became part of my work as well in that I had to do well in it because that's what I was getting my qualification for. I couldn't just do something, it sort of had to be...not right but...it had to like...you had to put a lot of effort into it, whereas now, I'll play the piano or I'll draw something and I won't really mind if some of it's wrong because it's not...the thing I'm gaining from it is my enjoyment, I'm not trying to get a grade out of it...It's really ridiculous if you think about because what are grades really? (Claire, South West, interview 3)

For Claire, her creative engagement in the arts went from being an enjoyable pass time to something that was more associated with work and back again. Moreover, this association with work was something that she disliked and she was relieved to be able to enjoy art as a leisure activity again once her GCSEs were over. This was further expressed by Claire in the following comments about taking up art as a hobby again after leaving school:

I find it much more enjoyable because like with the GCSE as well it was so kind of milked out of you, whereas now I just kind of pick up something and think, 'yeah, I think I fancy just drawing, drawing a picture', yeah, or to pass the time, out of enjoyment rather than part of a requirement. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

This process of losing interest in art when it was associated with work, and reinstating art and creativity as an enjoyable part of one's life was also important for other participants from the South West. Tommy and Emma related

how they developed negative feelings towards art during the completion of their GCSE courses:

Even though I liked art loads, like I just, like there was so much work on top of everything else so... (Tommy, South West, interview 3)

Most of the time I enjoy it, but again, its like pressure because we have deadlines for everything so its like my prelim book's due in in two weeks or like a week on Friday so probably next week I'll be panicking and sort of cursing art because I'll be bashing around my house trying to finish it all off and not enjoying it. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

it wasn't enjoyable because I couldn't do it enjoyably and like I had to do it so much and it was like art I didn't really want to do, because it was for my GCSE...in school and stuff it's quite a challenge because you have to work so hard on it, it takes up a lot of your time and you can end up resenting it in some ways. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

As with Claire, the association of art with work was partly to blame for Emma and Tommy's negative feelings. Emma also talked about reinstating art as a hobby after leaving school:

I did like a big mural thing with like photographs and like paint and stuff...I enjoyed doing that because it didn't need to be done and I probably did it over like a month in the summer holidays and just sort of every now and then I'd work on it for a couple of hours and it's like, it wasn't like I had to do it so it was like enjoyable. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

Like Claire, Emma was able to re frame the place of art in her life in terms of leisure following the completion of her GCSEs. In contrast, the participants from the North East primarily associated their creative involvement in the arts with work. Sometimes this was expressed explicitly, as in the following extract from an interview with Daniel:

I do take it as seriously as I can. I like to have a laugh and a joke but when you're doing proper work you have to be serious because you

have to get it done. The quicker you get things blocked and rehearsed, the better it will be and the more time you'll have. I used to think of drama as just a leisure activity but now I try to take on what people are doing. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

Daniel often articulated this view of his engagement with art as work rather than leisure via the idea of professionalism:

I'm still open to see as much as possible. It helps with our own experience because if you watch carefully you learn other people's techniques so it's not just a leisure thing, it's also professional. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

its much more professional, because with gigs and with free running and all my other hobbies, its just having a laugh and stuff. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

The participants from the North East also articulated their view of the place of creativity and the arts in their lives via a characterisation of the arts as a potential career path. When asked where he saw himself in the future, Dean offered the following response:

Hopefully on the stage and in musicals or having my own workshop to work with kids like [name of charity], doing that kind of thing. Or having my own theatre company or like singing workshop, to give...teaching people how to sing and being a vocal coach, that kind of thing. (Dean, North East, interview 2)

In the above extract, Dean balances more vague and ambitious dreams of being on stage with perhaps more realistic and achievable career goals within the performing arts sector. Daniel and Leanne held similar views of how they might make careers for themselves within the performing arts:

If I can't get into stage acting I will teach it because I've always wanted to teach as well at the same time because it is a really good subject to... I think it would be a really good subject to teach and its a really good subject to learn as well. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

Whether I'm getting paid or not, I want to be a performer because it's not the money to me it's just actually getting up and doing something that I love. (Leanne, North East, interview 2)

While the participants from both groups situated art and creativity within their lives in terms of work and leisure, there was a qualitative difference in the way the participants from each group approached this. In contrast to the young people from the South West, creativity was something that the participants from the North East closely aligned with work. One interpretation of this difference is that these latter participants saw their involvement in performing arts at college within the context of their wider concerns about qualifications and employment, which emerged as important to them:

when I think about it school is basically a few things; you listen, you learn, you get, you like get educated so you can get a job, go to college, get whatever you want in life and that's what I, what I'm glad that I actually did. (Leanne, North East, interview 2)

The sense of purpose in relation to education and careers articulated here by Leanne was echoed in Daniel's clear sense of his career plans and his determination to do well on the course:

I'm hoping to get onto the degree course and then I want to start looking for work in performing arts. (Daniel, North East, interview 3)

When asked what was important to him, Daniel offered the following response:

Passing the course, passing the degree and finding my own place to live. (Daniel, North East, interview 3).

5.4.3 Losing oneself in art

Another important finding in relation to creativity was that many of the participants described a process of 'losing themselves' during the creative process of practising or performing art. This was articulated by Claire:

it's just such a fun song to play and you get really into it, and just sort of lose yourself. That's what I find art does, like I often get lost doing it

and I'm like, 'ooh, I've been here for two hours, didn't realise.' (Claire, South West, interview 3)

Other participants echoed Claire's sentiments by referring to the process of losing sense of time and place when practising or performing art:

when I'm doing it I find it relaxing and you can just forget everything else around you and just concentrate on the art. (Jacob, South West, interview 2)

when I'm performing on stage and I'm singing, it's just like I...no one else is there, it's just me on the stage and I'm just singing away. (Leanne, North East, interview 1)

For Jacob and Leanne, the process of creating a painting or performance involved losing sense of their surroundings. Some participants also described accessing another world, or gaining a sense of otherness, through their art practice. Tommy's comments about his feelings when playing the piano illustrate this:

Just like in a different world. (Tommy, South West, interview 3)

While losing one's self in art was a common process articulated by the young people, the individual participants interpreted the significance of this in different ways. For many, it simply involved passing time in a pleasant and satisfying way, as the following extract from an interview with Claire demonstrates:

I suppose as well as enjoying it it's probably quite useful for me because it does use up my time so I'm not just sat around thinking, 'hmm, I need to do something', erm but yeah, when you get lost in something it's because you're enjoying it so at the end you're not like, 'oh, well I've just wasted three hours', you're like, 'oh, that was nice, what shall I do now?' (Claire, South West, interview 3)

In other cases, the participants' reflections revealed an understanding that losing oneself in art was an important part of the creative process:

when I'm singing, it's just its like I'm in my own little world, I don't even need to think about what I'm doing it just automatically just comes, my voice just comes out in whatever range it wants to. (Leanne, North East, interview 2)

In the above extract, Leanne expresses the view that losing herself in the moment – going into her own little world – was crucial to creating a good performance. Indeed, she sees this as part of a process in which the music itself takes over, personifying her voice as something which, 'comes out in whatever range it wants to'.

5.4.4 Theorising about art and creativity

A final category in this area involved the participants' expression of views about art and creativity, often with reference to established ideas and theories. Although the ideas the participants engaged with differed across the two groups, this was a significant process for both sets of participants and was often prompted by their experiences of arts participation. For the participants from the North East, their involvement in the performing arts course was an occasion for theorising about the creative process as they learned new techniques and engaged with ideas about the arts as part of their studies. Leanne, for example, referred to the idea that art was about the expression of emotions:

Well what makes it good, its er...just really has to have like some kind of feeling to it, emotion in it, even if you don't know what it is it's... sometimes you just, without understanding it you just get a feeling of what its about. (Leanne, North East, interview 2)

In the above extract, Leanne refers to the idea that comprehending art can have more to do with emotions than cognitive processes. Dean also referred to ideas about the use of different media for expression in the arts, and to the process of drawing on one's own experiences to deliver a convincing performance:

you can express yourself through choreography but if you're playing a part of someone who's emotional and you're emotional yourself, you can relate to that part by thinking back to your sad memory and playing that character through that...through you (Dean, North East, interview 3)

As well as referring to these established ideas, Dean demonstrated an awareness that they formed part of a discourse within the performing arts:

We've been to watch theatre and we've spoke to someone, the director, he said a lot of people express their self through movement and a lot of the movement they do is related to real life. (Dean, North East, interview 3)

For the participants from the South West, being exposed to art they considered to be strange and unsettling was an occasion for discussing ideas about the nature of different art works:

I don't know, it's interesting, it's very sort of like original, unique. It's not like, its different to the sort of stuff we do nowadays or in school at the moment I suppose. It's very much like taking its own path and we're not probably encouraged to do that so much in school. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

Now they're just not scary, it's just kind of...I appreciate them more because its, because it was originally just really strange to see them, but now it's just more like you know what they are, you know why they've been done and you know that they've been done for a reason so... (Craig, interview 2)

For Emma, this led to a discussion about her opinions about art more generally:

I don't know, it's like, it's like different. I suppose there's like always been like a sort of like stereotypical sort of form of art and this like - which is like sort of paintings and that kind of thing - it's just like completely different and you have to like, you look at it and you think like, or well (?) a lot of people would think, 'that isn't art', then it's like, it's nice to sort of, especially if you read about it and like find out like what the artist was thinking and why like...because when you, if you looked at it straight away, like you don't always think, like you wouldn't always think that's a piece of art work but then you sort of like read into it and you think, 'oh yeah, I see why that thing's (?), what that's representing and like, stuff like that. (Emma, interview 2)

I do find it quite interesting, especially like modern art, it's like different. I'm not so keen on like paintings and stuff to look at so much but I like the like different sort of stuff, which is like you have to think like, 'why did they do that?', like... (Emma, interview 2)

In the above extract, Emma draws on ideas such as representation and modernism to articulate her own opinion about the nature and purpose of art. Jacob engaged with similar ideas to offer an opposing view:

When people say, 'think of art', I always think of realistic paintings, rather than just shapes and colours or just blobs of colours that look like an explosion in a paint factory. I don't really think that's art. (Jacob, interview 2)

Both sets of participants engaged with established ideas and theories about art to express their own views about art and the creative process. In both cases they were prompted to discuss these ideas through their participation in the arts. While the specific ideas and theories the participants engaged with varied across the two groups, and were related to the ways in which each set of participants experienced arts participation, the precise opinions offered varied on more of an individual basis.

5.4.5 Summary

The young people's experiences of arts participation often served as occasions for considering both the role of art in their own lives and the nature of art and creativity more generally. Although there was a clear difference in the way the young people from the two groups understood the place of art and creativity in their overall lives, there were common themes in how the young people in each setting experienced and understood the creative process. For example, for the participants from both groups, experimentation and the experience of losing oneself in the moment when creating art were seen as important elements that characterised the artistic process. Both sets of participants also drew on ideas from wider discourses to express their own particular views about art and creativity.

5.5 Identity

A number of important categories emerged from the data analysis in relation to identity. One of these involved the process of developing a new sense of identity following the transition across contexts. Other important categories in this area were the processes of constructing identity in relation to other people, and making use of art and culture in order to construct a sense of identity. As with the other broad areas of interest, there were variations in the way the participants experienced and articulated these processes, which are reflected in the following discussion.

5.5.1 Making transitions across contexts and the impact of this on identity

One important finding in this area was that making transitions across contexts allowed the young people to construct their own identity in new ways. A prominent example of this was the young people's development of an understanding of themselves as adults, following the transition from school to college. Participants from both groups in the study articulated this:

when I've come to college I've felt a totally different person. Obviously I've had to grow up and stuff but it's made us feel more...made us be more confident with myself and around other people because of that.
(Dean, North East, interview 1)

I think the summer between school and college, you grow up a lot because you do sort of leave childhood behind. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

Dean's reference to feeling like, 'a totally different person' and Claire's comments about 'leaving childhood behind' indicate the impact that this transition had on their sense of identity. Sometimes the young people attributed this possibility of constructing a new sense of identity to the differences between the two contexts, and particularly to the fact that they experienced college as a place where they were 'treated like adults':

Well I think everyone sees it as professional because once you get to college I think you mature more because you're treated more like an adult. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

when I was at school I felt like a child but when I'm here I feel like an adult because you get treated like an adult and it works as well – you get treated like and adult and that's what makes me feel good. (Dean, North east, interview 1)

While not all of the young people explicitly articulated the connection between the way they were treated at college and their sense of identity, being 'treated like an adult' was identified by the participants from both groups as a way in which college differed from school:

the teachers just sort of treat you like adults instead of...like different from school and you can call them by their first name in college. (Tommy, South West, interview 3)

There were a number of elements that the participants associated with the experience of being treated like an adult. As well as being on first name terms with lecturers, the participants identified elements such as having their opinions taken seriously and being treated with respect, as important aspects of this:

they kind of ask for your opinion and they're more...because obviously they did it at school but it was more sort of like, 'you need to know this', whereas now it's like, 'what do you think about this?', 'do you agree?', you know that sort of thing. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

you have to listen and if you give them respect they give you respect but in school you give respect and they give you some small amount of respect but they don't have as much respect for you have for them. I mean in school you've always got a teacher that you look up to but they just still look down on you but in college It's like everyone's on the same level and everyone's fine with each other. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

I can't really explain it just the way they speak to you and like, it's more like civil and no shouting and like ordering to do...it's just like, 'do your work if you want to', like, 'if you want to do well in this subject then do this' . (Tommy, South West, interview 3)

There were also exceptions to this, and some of the participants referred to situations at college where, because of their relationships with particular lecturers or the attitudes of individual people, they felt they were not treated like adults. The following comments from an interview with Craig offer an example of this:

She took a level of teaching where she was talking down at you like you were about three years old and on the first lecture we had with her that wasn't to do with induction, she was telling us how to draw a sphere. Now I'm not one for complaining but trying to teach 16 and 17 year olds how to draw a sphere is a bit patronising. (Craig, South West, interview 3)

In general, however, the young people felt that they were treated like adults at college, which was in contrast not only to their experiences in school but also in other contexts such as work. Daniel, for example, referred to the restrictive atmosphere at work and the lack of trust placed in him by his bosses:

You don't get a chance to like talk, you're always either cooking or on the tills, like and erm, you've always got to make sure that you keep an eye on your till in case like people steal things from your till. There was one time where I got accused of stealing £80 from my till and I didn't know where that went but we found out that it was some other lass that was covering my till when I went on my lunch break and she got fired for it and I still got in trouble for it anyway for not like clearing it with my boss. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

Similarly, Dean complained about the lack of social interaction that was permitted in one of his workplaces:

like I sometimes I work on the tills and the warehouse you can carry on with the managers at [name of company] but at [name of company] you couldn't, they used to say get on with your work, you haven't got time to talk. (Dean, North East, interview 1).

As well as the transition to college, the participants from the South West also understood the transition from school to the Enquire project as one which involved more experiences of being treated like adults:

Yeah, we were treated more like adults I suppose, like there wasn't like, you're the kids, we're the adults, 'you do this' it was like we got to decide. (Jacob, South West, group interview)

it was good in Enquire because obviously as a child or as a young adult, I'm like, you're not used to it so much, having that freedom (Emma, South West, group interview)

They also reflected on how the transition between school and the Enquire project allowed them to construct new understandings of themselves:

Yeah, it was good and I thought it was quite it...like in town in non uniform, you don't feel as like young and stuff, cause everyone was walking around from like college it was like, you don't feel like you're in school and stuff. (Emma, South West, group interview)

It's like more grown up. (Jacob, South West, group interview)

As well as articulating the understanding that their transitions across these contexts had allowed them to develop their sense of identity, some of the participants reflected on the nature of this process. Dean's thoughts on how he had changed following the transition from school to college offer one example:

Well, at school, I couldn't really...if the teacher asked for ideas it was normally like, she would normally just ask certain people and like she'd ask some other people and they'd say, say their ideas, 'oh no I don't think that's right' but since we've come to college we've been given a chance to develop who we are but, at school you've just been put, its like in a background where you've got to be at the back but you've got a chance to come forward and say what you feel at college (Dean, North East, interview 2)

The above extract illustrates that Dean understood his development of a new sense of identity at college as something that was dependent on the particular

circumstances associated with that context, i.e. being in a situation where everyone's ideas were taken seriously. Dean's choice of language also demonstrates *how* he understood this process. In his reference to 'coming forward' out of the background and having the chance to, 'develop who we are', Dean indicates that, for him, changes to his sense of identity involved both developing a sense of what made him an individual, and a process of moving into some sort of public arena or space of recognition. This understanding is further reflected in the following extract:

I thought well if I give my ideas it might not be right but since I've come to college and started to be my own person and had the space to do that and be an individual, I thought well, 'why not?' I might as well.
(Dean, North East, interview 2)

Claire articulated a similar understanding of developing her identity through the transition from school to college:

I don't know because we had such a long break, like everyone's parents were still at work, so you...because I live quite out of [the city] so normally I get driven places whereas I was going my own way, just sort of standing up as your own person and a lot of people got jobs over the summer as well so that made everyone sort of take on responsibilities and stuff. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

Claire's reference to, 'standing up as your own person' shows that she too understood the process of developing a sense of identity as one that involved both individuality and movement into a public arena. Claire also referred to the impact of her experiences during the Enquire project on her sense of identity. Reflecting on her experiences of being given freedom and responsibility in this context, Claire offered the following opinion:

it makes you kind of braver as a person as well because you discover kind of who you are and how you do react to situations and stuff.
(Claire, South West, interview 3)

As with Dean's understanding of how he was able to develop his sense of identity through the particular circumstances he encountered at college, Claire

felt that she was able to develop a sense of herself as a 'braver person' and 'discover' who she was through her response to specific circumstances. Although Claire and Dean responded to these circumstances by constructing new understandings of themselves and their capabilities, for others, encountering such situations involved a reconfirmation of existing constructions of identity, as Tommy's response to the Enquire project illustrates:

I just maybe realised that I'm not really the person who'll speak up most in front of everyone and I just sort of sit there and take it all in and make a contribution if I want to. (Tommy, South West, interview 2)

5.5.2 Constructing identity through interaction with others

Another important category in this area involved the participants' construction of their identity through their interaction with other people. This was also related to the above category because it was often when the participants made transitions from one context to another that they had to interact with people in ways that impacted on their understanding of themselves. This kind of experience was articulated by Claire who described her encounter with new people at college:

most people are actually not from [the city] schools, they're from schools that I've never heard of and wouldn't know where they were...there's loads of people from like [another area] and like other schools I've never heard of. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

For Claire, this was an opportunity to reassess her own identity:

it's quite interesting because you realise how little you do actually know about where you live and that like half an hour away there's like these different schools that you've never heard of and whereas you do just get used to being like, 'yes I'm a [county] girl through and through', whereas actually you don't know anything about where you live. It's interesting. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

Through encountering people from different locations, Claire's understanding of her identity as something that was tied to a particular place had been challenged and modified. For Craig, moving from one part of the country to another provided a similar experience:

It was completely daunting because I moved outside my safety area into somewhere where I'd never been before and I did get bullied quite a lot because of my accent, everyone found it absolutely hilarious and they kept asking me do I wear kilts and stuff like that and in the end it got really really annoying and now I've just like put it out of my head, because I've lost my Scottish accent, really, it's still there but not as much as it used to be. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

Although Craig's experience was more negative than Claire's, encountering new people following the move from one context to another had been an occasion for him to consider and even change his own sense of identity. A similar process occurred for Leanne, who encountered different people when she started a job in an affluent area. As for Claire and Craig, this encounter prompted Leanne to consider her own understanding of who she was:

I wouldn't say I was like kind of common but I'm like Geordie but I'm not broad Geordie as you can tell because I'm from kind of like a...I wouldn't say posh...but you know like kind of (?) background and they were like really, really like smart and I was a bit like, oh God, I'm not going to fit in here. (Leanne, North East, interview 1)

For Leanne, the process of considering her own identity in relation to others involved an encounter with social rather geographical differences. Leanne's concerns about not fitting in reflect a view of the social world as stratified in terms of how 'posh' and 'common' people are and the experience of starting a new job forced her to consider where she fitted into this framework. In each of the above cases, the participants' reconsideration of their identity occurred as a result of finding themselves in contexts that brought them into contact with different people. At other times, the participants' construction of identity involved a more deliberate process, in which the participants defined their own sense of who they were in contrast to others. This sometimes occurred in relation to culturally and stylistically identified groups at school:

at school it's like different groups its like the chavas, the normal quiet people like me – not boasting or nowt – and then there's like the goths

and the skaters and that, there everyone was like in their different zone.
(Leanne, North East, interview 1)

I've always felt different to people – the way I dress – hardly anyone dresses like that where I come from and it's the same here. In school, people were a bit weird with me, they didn't like who I was and who my family was. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

For Leanne and Daniel, the sense of being 'normal' or 'different' respectively, was derived from an active process of contrasting themselves with others based on cultural and stylistic differences. At other times, the participants defined themselves in opposition to others based on attitudes and behaviour. The following extract from an interview with Emma offers an example:

Like this morning, I stayed at my friend's house because her parents were away on holiday so like, we're all like living at her house so to speak and like a lot of my friends were there like in the morning like, 'I'm not going to college for first lesson' and I was like, 'well I am' ...and then they were there like, 'oh, well I suppose' they were like, 'well if you're going' and they ended up coming as well but if I hadn't said, 'oh, I'm going' I think they would have sort of stayed at home because they're...some of them aren't as sort of motivated. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

In the above extract, Emma constructs a view of herself as a motivated person by contrasting her own attitude with those of her friends. Leanne's comments about the pressure to fit in at school illustrate a similar process:

I keep on looking back at what I could have been in that group and thinking I could have either been in that group and still got my life or I could have gone down the wrong path and I could have been where the rest of them are, so when I put it all together I'm actually glad that I wasn't popular. (Leanne, North East, interview 3)

Like Emma, Leanne here defines herself in opposition to other people by expressing satisfaction that she is not, 'where the rest of them are'. Another way in which the participants constructed their own identity through interaction with

others involved consolidating or re evaluating their sense of identity through discussion with others. For Jacob and Daniel, having discussions in which they disagreed with others and were forced to support their opinions was a way of consolidating their own position within a debate:

They're quite good sometimes because they sort of make you think about what you erm...they make you think about what you think about other things, your opinions of them, so you're not just saying, 'oh but I think this' and then you can't back that up, but with the arguments you learn how to back things up and how to sort of hold your own against other people's arguments. (Jacob, South West, interview 2)

Because people like start having debates about it and then you try to put your point across even more and then people think, 'well, he's got a good point. I still don't think that way but that's the way he thinks and I've got respect for him for thinking that way and I've got respect for him because I'm not going to be able to change his mind on it'. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

Jacob' reference to the way in which debates can 'make you think about what you think' and allow you to 'hold your own', illustrates how discussion was a way of understanding and positioning himself in relation to others. Daniel made a connection between this process and his sense of identity:

I'm not too bothered about people challenging with my views and stuff because a debate's always good because it helps like your inner self and it makes you realise how other people think and I think it helps you respect them and helps them respect you a lot more with your views and stuff. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

For Daniel, entering into debate with others allowed him to construct a view of himself in relation to others, which he expressed in terms of his 'inner self'. Across both groups then, the participants used their interaction with other people as a way of considering, modifying and consolidating their own sense of identity. This happened in various ways – through reappraising their own sense of identity when confronted with different kinds of people, through deliberately

comparing themselves with others to assert their own identity, and through using their discussions with others to further understand and consolidate their own sense of who they were.

5.5.3 Making use of art and culture to construct identity

A final category in this area involved the participants' use of art and culture when constructing their identity. This was manifested in various ways. Some of the participants constructed a view of themselves based on their interest in the arts, as the following extract from an interview with Daniel demonstrates:

Well it just left me sitting in the house watching movies all the time and it made me think, 'right, this is what I like doing' and I criticise a lot of movies now because I think, 'that shouldn't work like that' and 'that's not right' so its like a main part of me now, watching movies. (Daniel, North East, interview 2)

Daniel's view that watching movies had become, 'a main part of me' illustrates the significance of his engagement with film in terms of his sense of identity. For Daniel, this kind of identification through art was not only an individual process but also one that enabled him to negotiate social relationships and build a sense of shared identity with others:

Yeah, I like being comical about things. I'm always up for a laugh and I like to make people laugh, its why I get on with people. My best mate – he's called Martin, he's in my class – I get on with him really, really well because he's a...he is a chav...but I get on with him because he's like a comedy kind of person and I like getting on with people who are are comedian types and we're stuck together like glue now because we're some kind of like comedy act. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

In the above instance, Daniel's awareness of social differences that could present a barrier to friendship was overcome by a shared sense of identity derived from a particular art form. For others, constructing a sense of identity through art and culture was about developing a sense of what was possible in life through an engagement with ideas and models available in narrative culture. This was demonstrated in Dean's remarks about his future aspirations:

I've got like friends of the family who've got...who haven't had a really good life, have been poor through life and stuff with their family and then they've come out of that kind of life and got good jobs and then made money themselves which has made me, which has really inspired me because I've thought 'well, if they've been through it' and then I've seen a lot of people on TV do it. (Dean, North East, interview 3)

In the above extract, Dean draws on models derived both from his own experiences and from televisual culture to construct a view of his own place in society and of what is possible for him in the future. In slightly different ways, then, both Daniel and Dean drew on art and culture when constructing their sense of identity.

5.5.4 Summary

The young people drew on a variety of resources when constructing their sense of identity, including their experiences in different settings, their relationships with other people, and models drawn from art and culture. The participants' sense of identity could therefore be described as having contextual, relational and even aesthetic dimensions. The process of constructing identity was also something that was ongoing and subject to change over time, often following new experiences and transitions across contexts. Sometimes the participants were able to articulate their understanding of what was involved in constructing a new sense of identity. When they did so, they characterised the process as one in which they were able to develop a sense of who they were as individuals, and experience some kind of public recognition. The experience of having to respond to particular circumstances such as being taken seriously, or being in a situation where no one was in charge, acted as catalysts for this process.

5.6 Change

Change and adaptation were evident in the way the participants thought, felt and behaved over time. Categories in this area included the development of a new awareness or understanding following experiences of a particular context, transition or event; the development of the participants attitudes, viewpoints and beliefs; and the adoption of new practices over time or the application of existing practices from one context to another. Often, these developments and

adaptations involved the participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviour in terms of themselves and their environment as well as in relation to ways of interacting with people, ways of working and creating art, and ways of participating in the public sphere.

5.6.1 Developing a new awareness or understanding

An important category in this area involved the participants' development of a new understanding or awareness following particular experiences. For the participants from the South West, the Enquire project led to changes in their understanding of different ways of interacting with people, as the following comments from Jacob illustrate:

it's taught me how to work better in a group and different sorts of people. (Jacob, South West, interview 1)

Well I think it's sort of helped us to take into account that we can't just think about our own ideas, you have to think about other people's ideas and how they think things should fit together. (Jacob, South West, group interview)

For Jacob, the project allowed him to take account of something he hadn't previously considered and offered new insights into ways of working inclusively with other people. Claire articulated a similar process of becoming aware of the positive aspects of working with a variety of different people:

like there's more variety when you work with other people and your idea's not necessarily the best, like when you hear other peoples' ideas and think 'oh yeah, I hadn't thought of that.' (Claire, South West, interview 1)

Claire also expressed the view that taking part in the Enquire project had brought to her attention something new about the nature of group discussions that she had not been aware of in other contexts:

I think I kind of discovered that there's not a right opinion or a right way to do things whereas in class I'd always be like, 'oh, I don't really want to put up my hand, what if it's wrong?' Whereas with that you kind of

realise everyone's in the same boat really. No one's going to be like, 'oh you got that wrong, get out now' (Claire, South West, interview 3)

you just kind of come to accept that you are allowed to make mistakes but also that everyone's opinion is worth something because everyone's worth something as a person so... (Claire, South West, interview 3)

For Claire then, the experience of the Enquire project had altered her understanding of the nature of collective discussion, which in turn led to a new perspective on people's opinions that was linked to their intrinsic value as human beings. The project also had an impact on Craig's understanding of different ways of interacting with people. Whereas Jacob and Claire had become aware of the benefits of working in inclusive ways with other people in terms of fairness, equality and the quality of decision making, for Craig, this new awareness related to the more personal and emotional benefits of such interaction:

So us working in the way we did, it was different to me because I could test different ways of working with other people and find out which ways work better than other and kind of like, you make new friends by doing that. (Craig, South West, interview 2)

Their experiences of the project also sometimes affected the participants' understanding of themselves. This was the case for Claire, who talked about gaining a new awareness of what she was capable of within group discussions:

I think it's given me more confidence probably and the way that you can just give your ideas and things, no matter what people think and just get your word out there and your ideas and how if, how you can just take control of a situation if you can see it's not going anywhere, rather than just kind of think, 'oh, no-one else is saying anything, we'll just like go and... if you know what I mean? (Claire, South West, interview 1)

As well as impacting on the participants' understanding of themselves and their interaction with others, the Enquire project also led to a new appreciation of

different ways of creating art. This is illustrated in the following extract from an interview with Emma:

I think that was really good for art in way cause Laura like taught us to like look at things in different ways and when you're thinking of like what you're going to do for a final piece or anything in the subject it just taught us to look at it in different ways and like approach the problem or approach whatever you want to do do in the like different aspects of it and stuff like that. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

For Jacob too, taking part in the project had led to an awareness of more open ended ways of creating art:

Well I've kind of grown used to being told what to do and how to...well not how to do it but just to do it, and then Enquire came and it was a bit of a shock because we were given the choices of what to do and when to do it. We were given the choice of the subject we wanted to do, how we wanted to do it and sort of...how big, how much of it, that sort of thing. (Jacob, South West, interview 2)

Jacob's reference to the 'shock' of being given choices and the contrast of this to the way in which he had 'grown used to' working illustrates the affect of this experience on his awareness and understanding. Some of the participants from the South West also talked about arriving at a new understanding following their experience of the boycott. For Claire, this involved developing an awareness of the political circumstances affecting her school:

Erm, but no it was just so funny because the newspapers came and [the company], who are the people who own it, they wouldn't let them in because they own the school and so there were all these people outside who had been barred out and then everyone was sort of just like stood on the hill. I don't know, it was just the most surreal thing, it was really funny. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

For Claire, the visual impact of the boycott – the 'surreal' sight of everyone gathered in one place and the press being barred at the gates – led to a new awareness of the political circumstances affecting her school, i.e. the fact that it

was owned by a private company. This experience also made Claire aware of the nature of the school community in a new way:

It was just so strange because it was like literally three quarters of the school just all in the courtyard and there were so many people – I'd never seen like the whole school together as well so it was quite nice how everyone did join in and support it. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

For Claire then, the boycott was an aesthetic experience that led to an altered understanding of herself, her school community and the involvement of both within a wider political and societal framework. The boycott also led to the development of a new awareness for Tommy. Reflecting on whether the boycott was justified or not, Tommy offered the following comments:

Well I thought it was funny. I saw the dinner ladies get quite stressed out about it and they just didn't find it...like they just didn't find it the right thing to do or anything and only a couple of people went in and erm everyone else was sort of outside and like having a go at the people who were actually in there because they were still buying things...But I don't think there was anything that wrong with it. (Tommy, South West, interview 3)

In Tommy's case, reflecting on the boycott involved developing a new awareness of the ethical implications of the students' action, as he deliberated over whether the boycott was justified given the upset it caused to the canteen staff. For the participants in both groups, the transition from school to college was also an occasion for the development of a new awareness or understanding, often in relation to encountering different people. Claire articulated this when she reflected on some of the differences between school and college:

Erm, it's been really interesting because you're just so much part of a community, it's like your little family, you know everyone's names, you know what they're like, you know their groups and that sort of thing, whereas now you're trying to meet new people and you're...you

have...you're thrown into talking to them with no background knowledge of them and it's kind of...I would say its probably more interesting because obviously it's new and you find out new things. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

The participants from the North East also articulated a process whereby they developed a new understanding following their interaction with a wider variety of people at college, and the occurrence of this in more open and unrestricted ways than they had been used to at school. For these participants, the experience of gaining such new insight also had an emotional impact because it challenged the prejudices and stereotypes they held about other people following negative experiences in the past. Leanne's account of her transition from school to college illustrates this:

when I first come to the college I was getting like really intimidated because I was like, 'oh, I'm going to have a hard time here, I'm going to get bullied and they're going to get bullied because of the way they dress and the way they look', and once we got into class, we got our set classes, it was like, 'whoa, everyone's actually getting along and helping each other out and not going, "eugh, you're...what're you wearing?" and "you look like a whatever"' so it's actually opened my eyes to different things because I had all that experience at school with the bullying and I was like, 'oh, it's going to carry on all the way through life' but it hasn't. (Leanne, North East, interview 1)

For Leanne, the experience of moving to college had 'opened her eyes' to new possibilities for interacting with people who were different to her. Rather than seeing this in purely negative terms, Leanne was made aware that interacting with different people could also be a positive and pleasant experience. Encountering people with learning disabilities at college had also challenged Leanne's pre existing ideas and led to a new awareness:

it's really good because you see them and actually they're, like people think, 'oh, bless, he or she can't do much' but actually they're really really, actually brilliant. They've got a really good like...I mean there's some things obviously they can't do like obviously they'll not be able to

read or write as well as other people but they've actually got good senses. (Leanne, North East, interview 3)

Daniel referred to a similar process of becoming aware of the positive elements of interacting with people who were different to him, following the move to college:

over the year and a half I've learned that everyone's different, they all have different styles which can carry different stereotypes, but those stereotypes aren't correct. Everyone is different, they've all got different styles but everyone's nice, no one's aggressive. (Daniel, North East, interview 3)

For Daniel, encountering different types of people at college was an occasion for having his prejudices challenged and for seeing the possibility of interacting with different people in a new way. However, Daniel also described how his interaction with people at college had led to a new awareness of people's prejudices:

people are like when they get on buses and Muslims get on the bus they get a bit scared because of the London bombings and stuff and I do feel a bit edgy, but I know nothing is going to happen, it's just like with all the stereotyping and stuff. It just ends up in a big debate about racism and stuff because some people are racist and some people aren't. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

For Daniel, making a transition from school to college involved changes in his understanding of differences amongst people in both positive and negative ways. At the same time as having his own prejudices challenged, he also became more aware of the existence of prejudice amongst his classmates. The move to college was not the only transition across contexts that led to the development of a new understanding amongst the participants from the North East. Dean spoke about how his involvement in charity work had led to a new awareness of inequalities in the education system:

it taught us that like how different schools can do stuff, it taught us like what life's like at different schools, how schools, like how some schools

are better than other schools, I mean some schools that can afford to put productions on don't work as hard and the ones that can't afford to put productions on. (Dean, North East, interview 1)

For both sets of participants, new experiences had the power to offer the young people new insights and altered understandings of themselves, their communities and the wider issues that impacted on both.

5.6.2 Changing attitudes over time

Another important category in this area involved changes and developments in the young people's attitudes over time. Sometimes this was evident within interviews, as the young people's professed opinions altered over the course of the research. One example of this was the attitudes of the participants from the South West towards the way of working they encountered during the Enquire project. Claire's account of her experiences of the project offer an example of this. In early interviews, both she and her fellow participants expressed the view that there was too much freedom involved in the way they worked during the project:

like a mixture of the two would be best, because at school, its kind of too led, but this was kind of too free, cause we often had those silent moments like we had in there a second ago when we're just like, 'erm, yeah, really don't know what to do', cause we're so used to not doing that, that its hard to get into the whole thing. (Claire, South West, interview 1)

I think we probably could have done with maybe at times slightly more guidance in like what we were doing. (Emma, South West, group interview)

However, over time, Claire developed a more positive attitude towards being in situations where there was more freedom, for example because of the lack of an obvious authority figure:

You do experience more [freedom] definitely now because when you were younger you were so used to, 'who's in charge? Who's the person?' like when you do something naughty, like, 'oh no, they're

looking, quick, pretend you're doing something'...I'd say it's much more kind of enjoyable because you can just sort of like relax and know that everyone's sort of in it together, you're not out there by yourself or you haven't got to answer to someone particularly, you're just allowed to be.
(Claire, South West, interview 3)

A similar process occurred with regard to Claire's attitude towards working in an open ended way on the Enquire project. In an early interview, she expressed anxiety over not having an end product to show for their efforts:

I feel like there should be something more, 'This is our art, here it is', not 'oh yeah there's this and there's this little thing here and we did this', but, I know there's the book, but that's kind of more like a collection, its almost as if that should lead somewhere as well, but it kind of hasn't so... (Claire, South West, interview 1)

However, when asked about this in a later interview, it was clear that Claire's attitude had changed:

I think everyone did really enjoy it as well because it was nice not to have to plan everything out...Yeah, it was quite interesting how we could just do that and how – because you've still got an end point and we still did something – and you don't always have to think through everything, it is al right to just sort of spur of the moment kind of thing.
(Claire, South West, interview 3)

Claire had revised her opinion about the unpredictability she encountered during the Enquire project and had developed a positive attitude towards working in open ended ways more generally:

I'm not as fussed any more, like with English, we're doing like writing, writing in different styles of people and the first one I did linked really well to this author and so I was just like, 'fine, I'm just going to do that', and just sort of set my mind on that, whereas as we've gone through and looked at different things, I've been inspired by different things and sort of was happy to leave something behind and start on something new and just sort of try different things. Its more interesting than just

sticking with one thing, which does get a bit boring when you haven't experienced the others, you're sort of like making a judgement when you haven't got all the information if you know what I mean. (Claire, South West, interview 3)

Another example of changes in attitudes occurring over the course of the research involved Daniel's opinions of mainstream politics. In early interviews, Daniel expressed a very negative view of politics:

Yeah, I'm not one for politics. I think it's boring and I think it's not getting us anywhere because Gordon Brown is not getting us anywhere, he's just going along the same lines as Tony Blair and Tony Blair's on the same side as George Bush and George Bush is just sending his troops out to Iraq and Afghanistan and making the British fight for them and it's not our fight and I think that it's pointless that the British are fighting for America when it's got nothing to do with us. (Daniel, North East, interview 1)

However, in a later interview, Daniel balanced such views with what he saw as more positive examples:

I'm so excited about Obama...I'm happy he's going to be the first black president, I think it will like change the world. (Daniel, North East, interview 3)

As well as the participants' attitudes evidently changing over the course of the research, there were also examples in the data that demonstrated how the young people themselves felt that they had gone through a change in their attitudes and opinions over time, often following particular experiences. Craig, for example, described how his attitude towards interacting and working with people who were different to him had changed:

I've only started to feel like that since the beginning of last year, because I used to have a lot of problems and now it's just to the point where I've had so much counselling and stuff that it's just to the point where you go, 'no everyone's different, you have to allow for other

people', but not to the point where you're just letting everything slip for them. (Craig, South West, interview 2)

Craig's reflection on certain experiences also demonstrated a change in his attitudes, as was evident in his discussion of the boycott of his school canteen:

I mean I'm all for making a scene about something rather than, you know...because talking about it, sitting down and talking about it only works for so long and then you have to take action. I wouldn't go severe, like hold people hostage until they remove certain rules because that's just stupid but definitely taking protest action is more effective than just talking about it. (Craig, South West, interview 3)

For Emma too, the boycott had led to a modification in her attitudes towards taking direct political action. While Craig expressed the development of a positive attitude towards such action as a way of addressing one's political concerns, Emma expressed a view on how particular strategies – including aesthetic strategies – could be put to use in political acts such as the boycott:

In my opinion, it would've been so much more effective if we'd all just like stood or like sat or even like gone into the canteen...it would have been more effective if everyone had brought packed lunch and everyone had gone into the canteen and sat there in silence it would have had the most effect. (Emma, South West, interview 3)

5.6.3 Adopting practices over time and across contexts

A final category in the area of change involved the participants' adoption of practices and behaviours over time. One example of this could be observed within the Enquire project, where the participants' behaviour changed over time following their exposure to practices modelled by the artist facilitator:

Laura asked the group about the use of sound in the room and whether they were happy with it. She asked them if it might need to change during the day for everyone to 'get their turn' in terms of their preference for use of sound in the room. (Observation notes, Enquire project, session 4)

Claire asked Emma to put some music on. Emma replied, 'does everybody want music on?' Claire then turned round to the others in the room and repeated the question for everyone to hear. (Observation notes, Enquire project, session 4)

The above extracts demonstrate that the participants adopted an inclusive approach to decision making, using strategies that had been modelled for them. There was also evidence that the participants adopted inclusive approaches to decision making by applying strategies experienced in one context to another. For example, in an early interview, Craig described the inclusive approach to decision making he had experienced in his band:

Because there's four of us we decide between us what we think would work best and then we go ask some of our friends outside the band what they think works best, so we kind of get an outside opinion as well as ours... Then it's kind of like we put it up to a vote in the band and if it's a tie we just ask three random people that we know which they think best and go for the better out of them. (Craig, South West, interview 1)

In a later interview, Craig described the approach he and his friends took to decision making within the context of hockey coaching for younger students, an activity he had taken up in the time between the two interviews. It appeared that Craig had applied the same inclusive approach to decision making in this context as he had experienced in the band:

It's kind of split between the four of us, it can't just be one person saying, like a dictatorship, one person says, what one person says is law, it's all four of us have to come to a group decision about what's going to happen. (Craig, South West, interview 2)

Another example of the young people enacting new practices over time was their adoption of new approaches to their art work following the Enquire project. This was evident in Emma's comparison of her art work before and after her involvement in the project:

Whereas with my old sketchbooks I was bit kind of like, 'get there', get to the point kind of thing and then getting it done with sort of thing, its

probably in my later sketchbooks I've done after the Enquire project you can probably see that I've had more time like experimenting and thinking about things. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

Craig described a similar process:

I used to only do drawing and painting cause it's what the teacher said would be best, but now I do loads of different art forms in my book so its kind of changed the way I approach art. (Craig, South West, group interview)

Another way in which the young people adopted different practices and behaviours over time involved their responses to encountering difference. This is illustrated in the following extract from an interview with Jacob:

Yeah, but then because at school and people erm...have to bully people who don't have the same opinions as them. It does put you down a lot and make you less erm, what's the word? Less open with your opinions. (Jacob, South West, interview 2)

For Jacob, encountering people with different opinions had caused him to modify his behaviour by being less open. While Jacob's experience could be described as a negative instance of changing one's behaviour in response to the encounter with different people, others articulated a more positive process of adapting to difference. Emma, for example, described how she coped with meeting new people from different backgrounds, who had different opinions and interests than hers:

you can normally find some sort of common ground somewhere...yeah everyone at work is doing all different options and stuff and all my friends at school are doing like different things to me, I don't have anyone who is doing exactly the same as me, so...because you do, you just like adjust and find stuff that you have like similar... (Emma, South West, interview 2)

For Emma, adapting to accommodate differences came easily. Emma herself attributed this to her previous experiences of relating to a variety of people:

I suppose like because of the restaurant especially, I've always been quite like social, like from a young age, like before first school in the mornings, I used to live above the restaurant, so me and my sister would always come down, we would come down before my mum and we'd go into the kitchen and like chat to the chefs and the morning staff who were in. (Emma, South West, interview 2)

5.6.4 Summary

Changes occurred in the participants' understanding, attitudes and behaviour over time and often in response to particular experiences. These changes were sometimes reported by the participants themselves, whereas at other times they could be observed in the data as the young people's behaviour and articulations altered over the course of the research. Some experiences had more of an impact on the way the young people's understanding, attitudes and behaviour changed over time, with the Enquire project (and other informal experiences of arts participation), the canteen boycott and the transition from school to college having a transformational impact on the young people. However, it was not always the case that a particular event or context led to a specific change. Often, change was more of a gradual process as the young people drew on their previous experiences in many areas of life as they adapted their attitudes, behaviour and understanding over time. There was also an element of continuity in this process as the young people adapted existing perspectives and strategies from one context to another.

5.7 Conclusion

While some of the findings to emerge from the data analysis are unsurprising, others offer more unexpected insights. For example, one interesting aspect of the findings is that the young people's experiences of taking an inclusive approach to decision making – in ways that involved some commitment to the democratic principles of equality and freedom – were often encountered in arts contexts. Additionally, this kind of decision making was often mediated through artistic forms of communication in these contexts, involving the use of experimentation, improvisation and collaboration through creative and non discursive means. However, while the participants' experiences of such

decision making often occurred in arts contexts, their experiences of interacting with people in these settings did not always involve this kind of decision making, as was evident in the participants' description of art at school as a quite restricted and tightly controlled practice. Also, the findings show that the young people also experienced this kind of approach to decision making in other contexts involving collaboration with others, such as sports coaching.

On a related point, another interesting and perhaps surprising aspect of the findings is that free and equal interaction in the process of decision making occurred both in contexts that were specifically designed to foster democratic practices and those without any explicitly democratic dimension. The common element between these two kinds of contexts was the expectation or assumption of the need to be inclusive of everyone's ideas when making decisions. However, this expectation was not always related to the explicit intentions that lay behind a project, or to the way in which a particular context was structured. Rather, factors that were sometimes incidental – or could even have been seen as being at odds with inclusive and equal approaches – allowed for such interaction. The North East participants' experiences of the performing arts course offer a case in point. The impetus for an inclusive approach in this context came from the assessment criteria for the course, which could be seen as representing a target driven or 'top down' agenda that might be at odds with democratic principles. So, while it might have been predicted that starting a project with the explicit intention of fostering democratic practices would lead to instances of inclusive decision making characterised by the free and equal exchange of opinions, the occurrence of such interaction in other arts and educational contexts in unplanned ways is perhaps a more surprising aspect of the findings.

What is also interesting is that the participants' previous experiences appeared to play an important role in the way they approached collective decision making. This is also related to the above point about the conditions that allowed inclusive and more democratic kinds of decision making to take place. The incentive to interact with people in ways that were inclusive of all those involved sometimes came from the internal assumptions, attitudes and expectations of the young people who took part. When there was an expectation that decisions

would be made in an inclusive way, the participants' various responses to this also reflected their existing attitudes and assumptions, often based on their previous experiences. This is interesting because the young people's existing attitudes and behaviours had both a facilitating and a debilitating impact on the possibility of adopting inclusive approaches to decision making, that recognised both the equal importance of all those involved and their freedom to voice their opinions.

The data relating to the young people's participation in their communities and wider society also yielded some surprising insights. Although the fact that the participants showed little interest in engaging in mainstream politics was something that might have been expected, what is perhaps surprising is that the young people were very interested in community and political issues, as illustrated both in their stated attitudes and their commitment to volunteering and charity work. Some of the participants also became aware of how wider political circumstances affected their everyday lives, as for example in the case of the boycott, which was staged in protest at changes that resulted from national policy changes. This suggests that the participants were not apathetic about politics – as may have been expected given prominent discourses about young people – but that they were selective about how they engaged with politics. What is also interesting is that the very same structures that the participants felt were a barrier to effective political action also sometimes acted as contexts in which to enact the kind of political engagement that they found much more effective and satisfying. This is significant because it suggests that the way in which contexts and structures for political engagement were *used* by the participants were as important to the quality of the young people's experiences as the nature of those contexts and structures themselves.

What is also interesting is that while there were sometimes marked differences between the experiences of the two groups of young people involved in the study, there were also many similarities. This was particularly the case in relation to their engagement with art, as participants from both groups construed the artistic process as one that involved experimentation and spontaneity. Likewise, both sets of participants engaged with wider discourses about art and viewed the artistic process as one that involved a process of

losing oneself in the moment. Also, while there was a tendency for the participants from the South West to view the role of art in their life in terms of leisure, and for the participants from the North East to see this in terms of work, both sets of participants engaged with a discourse about the differences between work and leisure in order to make sense of the role of art in their lives. In effect, their understandings represented two dimensions of the same process. This is perhaps not surprising when given the prominence of discourses about the arts in wider culture and the fact that all of the participants in the study were in some way interested and engaged in the arts.

Also, while there were some differences between the two sets of participants that seemed to be related to their social and geographical contexts – such as the North East participants' greater awareness of social inequality – some differences and similarities amongst the participants existed at more of an individual than a group level. For example, Emma shared a tendency to take charge of group discussions with Daniel (one of the participants from the North East), which was in contrast to the more retiring attitude demonstrated by Tommy, one of her fellow participants from the South West. Similarly, the two participants who were most sensitive to the process of identity formation were Dean and Claire, from the North East and South West respectively. An interesting aspect of the findings then is that, although social and geographical differences between the two groups played were important in some respects, this was not the most significant marker of difference amongst the participants' experiences.

In relation to identity, one of the interesting aspect of the findings is that engagement with art and culture was not only implicated in the participants' construction of their own identity, but that these constructions also sometimes impacted on the young people's social relations and their understandings of themselves within society. This was evident for example in Daniel's development of a close friendship with someone he considered to belong to a different social class to him, because they both derived a sense of identity based on their enjoyment of comedy. Similarly, Dean drew on ideas and models from television to construct an understanding of what he could do with his future – both for himself and for others in his community. What is particularly

noteworthy here is the interaction between the participants' engagement with art and their sense of who they were, what they were capable of doing, and how they fitted into broader social contexts and relationships.

Another significant aspect of the findings is the fact that the process of constructing a new sense of identity was often triggered by an uncomfortable and new situation in which rules and norms that the participants were used to in other situations no longer applied. This was evident in Claire and Dean's comments about 'coming forward' and 'discovering who you are' when forced to react to a new kinds of social interaction in college and the Enquire project respectively. While Claire and Dean understood this experience positively, as a chance to develop their sense of identity in new ways, for others, similar situations had resulted in a confirmation, or re-affirmation of an existing sense of self. This was the case for Tommy, for whom the experience of having to make decisions amongst his peers during the Enquire project served to confirm his understanding of himself as someone who didn't like to speak up. An interesting aspect of the data then is that the process of developing one's sense of identity was experienced as a precarious and unsettling process that could lead to the development of a new sense of identity but could also result in a retreat into existing and familiar constructions of oneself.

Finally, while it might have been expected that the participants' attitudes and behaviour would change over time and in relation to new experiences, the degree to which the participants' attitudes also remained the same is worthy of note. While the participants did relate and display a number of ways in which their attitudes, behaviour and understandings had changed, these also sometimes remained constant over time. This was evident in the fact that Daniel and Emma, for example, continued to express a preference for being in charge following their experiences of interacting with people in more inclusive and equitable ways. Another interesting aspect of the findings in this respect is that, when the participants' attitudes, opinions and behaviours did change in relation to new experiences, these changes sometimes took the form of embodied experiences rather than cognitive processes. This was particularly evident in the comments of some of the participants from the South West in relation to the boycott, in which they dwelt on the aesthetic dimensions of this experience and

how this impacted on their understanding. This aspect of change was also reflected in the fact that changes over time were evident in the enactment of different behaviours as well as in the expression of new attitudes and understandings.

The findings presented in this chapter therefore offer examples of when the young people experienced situations that could be described as more and less democratic, based on the conceptualisation of democracy adopted for the research. Specifically, they offer examples of when the young people encountered situations that involved the possibility of democratic action, as conceptualised via Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt as a quality of social interaction, and via Rancière's (1999; 2006) philosophy (and May's (2008) reading of his work) as political subjectification and solidarity. They also offer examples of when the young people experienced situations in which such action was not possible. Within the data, there are also some important indications about how these experiences impacted on the young people's attitudes, behaviour and understanding. In this way, the findings already begin to offer answers to some of the research questions, by illustrating *what* opportunities for democratic action the young people experienced in arts contexts and other settings, and *what* they learned from these experiences. In the following chapter, I offer an interpretation of the data via the conceptualisation of democratic learning adopted in the research, and outline what the findings reveal about the young people's learning. In doing so, I also offer some answers to the remaining research questions by illustrating *how* the young people learned from their experiences of democratic subjectivity and its impossibility, and *how* their engagement with art was related to this learning.

Chapter 6 – Interpretation

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss what new insights, knowledge and understanding the findings offer about the nature of the young people's democratic learning, when this is understood as a process of learning from instances of democratic subjectivity that also have an aesthetic dimension and are sometimes related to art. Earlier, I conceptualised democratic learning via the work of Biesta (2006; 2010) as an embodied and reflective process of experiencing and responding to instances of democratic subjectivity (or its impossibility) in ways that can be observed through changes in people's thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour. Additionally, I argued via Butler (1993; 1997; 2004) – and the application of her work to the sphere of education by writers such as Hey (2006) – that an important part of such democratic learning involves changes in people's sense of self, as they perform their subjectivity from amongst the positions available to them in the cultural and discursive contexts of their lives. I have further argued, via the work of Rancière (2004; 2007), that the process of learning from instances of democratic subjectivity can be related to art because democratic subjectivity is something that has an aesthetic dimension (in terms of what it makes visible, thinkable and doable) and because such subjectivity is sometimes made possible through art. In chapter 5, I illustrated how the findings offered examples of instances when the young people had experienced the emergence of democratic subjectivity – as conceptualised via the work of Biesta (2006; 2010) and Rancière (1999; 2006) – as well as times when such subjectivity was not possible. The findings also illustrated the ways in which these experiences had affected the young people's understanding, attitudes, behaviour and sense of identity over time.

In this chapter, I use the examples mentioned above as the basis for a discussion of the young people's democratic learning. Firstly, I address the nature of the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity. This is followed by a discussion of the aesthetic dimension of these instances, and of the ways in which they were sometimes made possible through art. In each case, the discussion centres on the dimensions and dynamics of these

processes in order to offer insights into young people's democratic learning and its relation to art.

6.2 Democratic subjectivity

In this section I discuss what the findings show about the nature of the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity. This discussion is presented in three stages. Firstly, I discuss what the findings reveal about how the young people encountered opportunities to act democratically, and how they responded to these opportunities. I then go on to discuss what the experience of democratic subjectivity was like for the young people and what was involved in the process of learning from such experiences. Finally, I discuss how the young people also learned from experiences of not being able to act democratically. In each stage, the discussion focuses on the empirical dimensions and dynamics of these processes and phenomena.

6.2.1 Encountering opportunities for democratic action and allowing democratic subjectivity to occur

In terms of the possibility of democratic action in every day life, the findings of the research corroborate and expand on what has already been shown in the literature. In particular, they support the insights offered in Biesta *et al.*'s (2009) work concerning the impact of contexts, relationships and dispositions on opportunities for democratic action, and offer some additional insights into the nature of this impact. The findings show that, for the young people in the study, formal contexts such as school and work were less able to provide conditions conducive to democratic action than informal contexts such as sports coaching, arts participation and volunteering. This is because the hierarchical structure of these former contexts, the value they placed on attributes such as leadership, compliance and efficiency, and their frequent emphasis on achieving a given set of outcomes acted as a barrier to the unpredictability necessary for such subjectivity to occur. This can be seen in the way the young people characterised school and work as settings that involved tightly controlled ways of working, and within which, interaction was focused on the achievement of specific outcomes. College was an interesting context in this respect because, although a formal educational setting, the young people experienced it as a context in which interaction was much more loosely structured, where there was

a degree of equality amongst the staff and students and where there was a certain unpredictability to their interactions with others. There were, however, exceptions to this, such as Craig's experience of not being able to interact on equal terms with a member of staff at college. This suggests that, although the relative formality of certain contexts affected the extent to which they were able to provide conditions conducive to democratic action, the specific dynamics of interaction within these contexts was also important.

Interestingly, the hierarchical structure of more formal contexts such as school and work, and the tightly controlled nature of the interaction that went on in them were experienced as inhibitive to democratic action as much for those who occupied positions of power within those hierarchies as those who held relatively little power. From either perspective, the young people experienced these settings as contexts in which qualities such as leadership, compliance and efficiency were valued over equality and unpredictability. So, for example, while Daniel and Dean experienced a lack of opportunities for democratic ways of interacting at work because of their lack of responsibility and power in this context, Emma was unable to act democratically at work because she occupied a position of authority and was in charge of other people. This suggests that regardless of the degree of power the young people enjoyed in these settings, certain contexts – particularly formal contexts for interaction such as school and work – were often unable to create the conditions necessary for democratic action because their hierarchical structure was organised around the principle of inequality and interaction in these contexts was focused on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes. This implies that inequality and hierarchical structures can operate in different ways to stifle the kind of unpredictability necessary for democratic subjectivity, as I have theorised it via Biesta's reading of Arendt.

Another context that rarely provided conditions conducive to democracy was home and family life. In this case, it was not only the hierarchical structure of family life that prevented democratic action from occurring but also the familiarity of this context both in terms of the people the participants interacted with in these settings, and the reliance on established patterns of decision making. The young people characterised home and family life as a context in which clear delineations of power existed and people rarely deviated from

established patterns of behaviour. Although the degree of power afforded to the different family members varied from case to case, with some of the young people (for example Craig) experiencing family life as a context for inclusive decision making, the young people described interaction in this context in fairly fixed terms. Because this was the case, this context provided neither the plurality nor the unpredictability necessary for democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction. However, the dynamics of these contexts did not always operate in the way that might be expected, i.e. as a situation in which parents or other responsible adults dominated decision making and allowed the young people little say. So for example, Emma experienced family life as a context in which she adopted a powerful role and had more say in family decisions than one of her parents. As in the case of formal contexts such as work and school, there were, therefore, a variety of ways in which the predictability, homogeneity and inequality of family life contributed to the lack of plurality and unpredictability necessary for democratic subjectivity to take place as a quality of social interaction - as conceptualised via Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt.

Another context that inhibited the possibility of acting democratically and experiencing democratic subjectivity for the young people in the study was a broader political culture that often reinforced a sense of inequality. This can be seen in the rarity of occasions on which the young people experienced democratic subjectivity – as I have theorised it via the work of Rancière (1999; 2006) (and May's (2008) reading of his political philosophy) – as processes of political subjectification and solidarity, each involving a presupposition of equality. Instead, the young people preferred to employ apolitical forms of action such as charity and volunteering to address their concerns about public life. The findings also show that the young people's engagement with the media played a particularly important role in the way in which this broader context created conditions that were not conducive to democracy. This is illustrated by the fact that the participants generally engaged in discussions about mainstream politics following their exposure to news reports on television and by the fact that some of the young people – for example, Daniel, Emma and Jacob – referenced specific news stories to express their political concerns.

However, this is not to suggest that the media alone were responsible for the creation of conditions unlikely to lead to democracy. Rather, they interacted with the young people's experiences of material structures and systems in their contribution to such conditions. This can be seen in Daniel's expression of his refusal to vote. Daniel's claim that his one vote would not make a difference indicates that an engagement with prominent ideas about politics and common formulations of these – such as the idea that one person's vote never changes anything – combined with his experience of the electoral system to preclude the possibility of acting democratically. The findings therefore illuminate the way in which broader political contexts can sometimes make democratic subjectivity – as conceptualised via Rancière's (1999; 2006) work – less likely to emerge and illustrate the particular role of the media in this respect.

However, while some contexts were more able than others to provide conditions conducive to democratic action, this was not the only factor that affected the possibility of democratic subjectivity actually being enacted in any given circumstance. Rather, there were a whole range of factors that affected the ways in which the young people responded to these opportunities. So, for example, even when a context was characterised by the kind of plurality and unpredictability that can lead to democratic subjectivity as a quality of social interaction, the young people's attitudes towards different ways of working with people, and the expectations they carried from previous experiences affected the likelihood of democratic subjectivity actually being performed. The fact that the young people from the South West were not always able to achieve democratic ways of working with each other during the Enquire project because of the existing attitudes, dispositions and expectations of the individual participants is an illustration of this. Conversely, the fact that the ways in which the young people used the contexts and structures available to them for political engagement were as significant as the *nature* of those contexts and structures indicates that even when a context was unlikely to provide opportunities for democratic action, the way in which young people responded to these conditions sometimes allowed them to 'override' these to perform instances of democratic subjectivity.

Not least amongst the factors affecting the possibility of the young people acting democratically and experiencing democratic subjectivity in this way were those with an emotional dimension. When the young people felt strongly about the way they were treated or when they felt challenged and disturbed by new situations, this affected the possibility of democratic action occurring. This is illustrated by the fact that one of the key factors precipitating the boycott for the participants from the South West, was a feeling of injustice and the sense that staff working for the company running the canteen talked down to the students and did not take them seriously. Similarly, Emma's feelings about being in charge during group discussions and her unwillingness to let go of control over a situation was an important factor that sometimes prevented democratic subjectivity from occurring through social interaction during the Enquire project. This suggests that, for the young people in the study, there was an important emotional dimension to the possibility of democratic action occurring, and that the way in which the young people felt in a given context was sometimes even more important than the conditions they encountered in that context.

In relation to this emotional dimension, the findings also show that the young people's feelings about the *conditions* necessary for democratic action were particularly important in determining whether they would be able to capitalise on the opportunities for such action they encountered in various contexts. The example referred to above – Emma's feelings about wanting to be in charge during decision making – demonstrates how negative feelings about the unpredictable nature of interaction she encountered on the Enquire project sometimes prevented democratic action from occurring in this context. On the other hand, it was Claire and Dean's positive feelings about uncertainty, and their willingness to take a risk that allowed them to act democratically and experience democratic subjectivity on the Enquire project and at college respectively. Therefore, it is also possible to see that in order to allow democratic subjectivity to occur, the young people needed to be willing to try something new and to accept a certain level of uncertainty and ambiguity. This willingness was itself dependent on the young people's feelings and attitudes, which at times appeared to be related to their previous experiences.

The findings therefore show that, for the young people in the study, contextual, relational and emotional factors all combined to make the possibility of democratic action more or less likely in any given circumstance. Although certain conditions were necessary in order for democratic action to take place, these were not in themselves sufficient for such action to occur. Indeed, the ways in which the young people responded to an opportunity to act democratically depended on a variety of other factors, including their attitudes and feelings, not least with regard to the conditions that make such action possible. In this way, the research supports Biesta *et al.*'s (2009) findings about the role of contexts, relationships and dispositions in providing opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning. Their work has shown that all these factors are important in allowing people the opportunity to act in democratic ways and learn from it the various contexts that make up their lives. The findings of my research build on this insight by highlighting the particular significance of emotional factors in the provision of opportunities for democratic action, and by illustrating how contexts, relationships and dispositions can interact with *each other* to affect the possibility of democratic subjectivity emerging. What the findings indicate about the qualities and dimensions of the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity when this did occur, and about the ways in which the young people learned, both from these experiences and from situations in which democratic action was not possible, are discussed in the following section.

6.2.2 Experiencing and learning from democratic subjectivity

Although the combination of factors that led to instances of democratic action was complex and unpredictable, there were common characteristics and patterns in the ways the young people experienced and learned from the process of becoming democratically subject when such instances did occur. In particular, the findings indicate that, for the young people in the study, democratic subjectivity was an uncomfortable and unsettling experience that they found difficult and even disturbing. In terms of democratic subjectivity as a quality of social interaction, experiencing such subjectivity was often an unnerving experience that unsettled the young people's perceptions of themselves and their social environment, and which required them to behave in

ways they were unfamiliar with, or which they actively disliked. One illustration of this is in the initial expressions of discomfort amongst the young people from the South West following their experiences of democratic interaction during the Enquire project. Craig and Claire's sentiments about not knowing what to do when confronted with a situation in which there was no clear authority figure and no clearly defined set of outcomes illustrate this very well. Dean's characterisation of discussions at college – in which everyone's opinions were taken seriously – as an initially strange and unsettling experience offers another example. The findings therefore show that, for the young people in the study, experiencing democratic subjectivity through social interaction was an uncomfortable and unsettling experience that the young people often felt inadequately prepared to deal with and which forced them to behave in new ways.

The findings indicate that this was also true of the young people's experiences of democratic action through more overtly political forms of engagement and which more closely resembled a process of political subjectification. When the young people took their equality seriously to expose contradictions in the political conditions that governed their lives, this was disruptive not only for the situation they disturbed, but also for the young people themselves. This can be seen in the fact that, for the young people from the South West, the boycott of the school canteen exposed dormant realities about the political conditions of the school's ownership and therefore challenged their understandings of themselves, the school community and the place of this community within wider society. The unsettling dimension to democratic subjectivity in this instance is illustrated in Claire's characterisation of the experience as 'surreal' and 'bizarre'. It is also illustrated by the fact that the experience of the boycott raised ethical concerns for some of the participants, as for example in Tommy's dilemma over whether the boycott was justifiable given the distress it caused to the canteen staff. In slightly differing ways then, many of the young people found the experience of democratic subjectivity both through social interaction *and* through a process more akin to political subjectification to be challenging, disturbing and unsettling.

The above observations imply that the experience of performing democratic subjectivity, was – as is the case with all performances – something which exposed the young people to the public scrutiny of an audience and therefore often induced anxiety. In terms of performing democratic subjectivity through social interaction – in the way I have theorised it via Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt – the young people's experiences of this often involved making their presence felt within a public discussion, without knowing how their performances would be received. In terms of experiencing democratic subjectivity through a process of political subjectification – in the way that I have theorised it via Rancière (1999; 2006) – this public dimension of the young people's performances of democratic subjectivity was experienced via the impact of their actions on others. May (2008) has argued that the ethical dimension of Rancière's concept of democratic politics lies in the fact that the claim for equality inherent in such action always demands a response from others. My findings illustrate how this ethical dimension can be experienced in practice, as the uncomfortable situation of knowing how one's actions have affected the feelings and opinions of people within one's own community, and of having to take responsibility for this.

Just as democratic subjectivity was a difficult and unsettling experience, learning from it was an equally difficult and challenging process that placed great demands on the young people. For the participants in the study, adopting positive attitudes towards democracy, developing the desire for more experiences of democratic subjectivity and enacting further instances of democratic subjectivity in the future were processes that only occurred when the young people opened themselves up to new experiences and behaved in new ways without knowing in advance where this might lead. This in itself required both the imagination to envisage new ways of being, and the courage to implement them without any guarantee of success or reward. Craig's adoption of democratic forms of interaction in new contexts such as hockey training, without knowing exactly if and how this would work is a case in point. Similarly, in the case of the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity through overtly political engagement, learning positively from these instances was a demanding process in which the young people had to confront

the ethical questions raised by the experience of such subjectivity and imagine the possibilities for future action. This can be seen in the way that Craig modified his views about direct action following his involvement in the boycott through both a consideration of the ethical implications of such action, and a use of the imagination in terms of when such action might be appropriate in the future.

Because I have theorised democratic learning not only as a reflective process but also as one that involves the enactment of new behaviours and changes in one's sense of self, it is possible to see why this process was so difficult and demanding. In particular, this understanding highlights what was personally at stake for the young people in taking a risk and imagining new ways of being. This is illustrated in Dean and Claire's development of a new sense of identity following their positive response to the experience of democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction in college and the Enquire project respectively. Dean and Claire were able to learn positively from their experiences of interacting with other people in democratic ways by enacting new forms of behaviour, and developing new understandings of themselves and their capabilities. For both of these participants, this involved developing new understandings of who they were or even of *becoming* new people – something which they characterised as a strange and challenging process. This indicates that, for the young people in the study, learning positively from the experience of democratic subjectivity involved having to leave behind established and even cherished ideas of themselves for a new sense of identity that had yet to be formed. This suggests that learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity in a way that resulted in the young people becoming more positively disposed towards the further enactment or performance of democratic subjectivity in the future required courage and imagination because the young people's very sense of who they were was at stake.

Although the above examples illustrate how some of the young people managed to negotiate such experiences by developing new understandings of themselves that was also more conducive to enacting further instances of democratic subjectivity, on other occasions – and for other participants – this was simply too difficult. Emma's expression of a preference for being in charge

of discussions, even following her experience of acting democratically during the Enquire project, is an illustration of this. For Emma, allowing others to contribute equally to discussions and respond to her own ideas in unpredictable ways was difficult because of the positive sense of identity she derived from being in charge in other contexts. Not only did Emma characterise herself as a sociable and responsible person but she also clearly enjoyed this role and found it hard to give up. Tommy's preference for having someone in charge during group discussions following his experience of democratic action in the same context, and the retrenchment of his view of himself as someone who was more suited to a passive role in discussions provides another example. For these young people, abandoning established and comfortable understandings of themselves that they were emotionally attached to in exchange for a more nebulous and uncertain sense of identity was too difficult and therefore the capacity of such experiences to contribute to the development of positive attitudes towards democracy, and the appetite for enacting further instances of democratic subjectivity, was diminished. The theorisation of learning – via Hey's (2006) interpretation of Butler – as an ongoing process of learning to identify with places in discourse, helps to make sense of this. Specifically, the findings show that a process of re-identification was central to the young people's democratic learning. They also illustrate how this can be a difficult and painful experience, involving a sense of loss and regret at leaving behind established senses of self.

Related to this insight, it is also possible to see that learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity was complicated by the fact that the social and cultural contexts the young people engaged in sometimes encouraged and promoted less democratic ways of being, and rewarded them for adopting roles that were less conducive to democratic action. Earlier, it was shown that contexts such as school, work and family life provided fewer opportunities for democratic subjectivity than others because of their hierarchical structure and – in the case of work and school in particular – because of the value they placed on qualities such as leadership, compliance and efficiency. Because of these characteristics, such contexts also made it difficult for some of the young people to learn from democratic subjectivity when they experienced it in other settings.

Emma's difficulty in learning from her experiences on the Enquire project in ways that might have made her more disposed to further instances of democratic subjectivity illustrates this. Particularly pertinent here is the fact that Emma was emotionally attached to the idea of herself as a natural leader because of the praise and encouragement she received – and the trust that adults placed in her – when she adopted this role at work and amongst her friends. Emma enjoyed being the person that her workmates turned to for a final decision and being trusted enough by her friends' parents to allow them to go on a weekend away without adult supervision. This indicates that, for some of the young people, contexts such as work and family life also formed barriers to learning positively from democratic subjectivity because they in fact supported the kinds of roles and behaviours that can inhibit democratic forms of interaction.

Another indication of the findings is that the young people's democratic learning involved the development of attitudes, behaviour and understandings not only in terms of democracy itself, but also in terms of the conditions that make democratic action possible. Following their experiences of democratic subjectivity, the young people became more and less positively disposed towards the conditions of plurality and unpredictability that would allow them to enact further instances of such subjectivity in their interaction with others. This can be seen in the way some of the young people from the North East developed a positive attitude towards plurality following their experience of more democratic ways of interacting with a variety of people at college. Other examples include Claire's development of a positive attitude towards encountering difference and plurality following her experiences of democratic forms of interaction at college, and Craig's slow acceptance that it is impossible to avoid having to interact effectively with people who are very different from oneself following his experiences on the Enquire project. Conversely, the adoption of negative attitudes towards the unpredictability that characterised interaction on the Enquire project amongst some of the participants from the South West illustrates how this dynamic can also work in more negative ways. These examples suggest that changes and developments in the way the young people felt about the *conditions* necessary for democratic subjectivity as a

quality of social interaction, were also an important a part of their democratic learning.

As with the kind of learning that involved adopting positive attitudes and feelings towards democracy, developing a positive attitude towards the conditions of plurality and unpredictability was also a difficult and emotional process for some of the young people and one that also involved having their existing thoughts, feelings and sense of identity challenged. This can be seen in the fact that for Leanne and Daniel, the process of becoming more inclined towards encountering different people involved the unsettling experience of having their prejudices overturned and being forced to think differently about other people. Similarly, Claire's increased enjoyment of encountering different people at college was accompanied by the experience of having her sense of identity disrupted as she encountered people from different places and was forced to reconsider an idea of herself based on the geographical location in which she grew up. As another example, the gradual acceptance of uncertainty and unpredictability amongst the participants from the South West followed on from their initial characterisation of this as an uncomfortable and unsettling experience that many were unhappy with. This suggests that learning to accept and enjoy the conditions necessary for democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction was also a difficult and emotional process for the young people.

A final indication of the findings in this area is that there was no guarantee of permanence or duration in the learning that followed from the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity. Indeed, such learning was sometimes inseparable from the moment of democratic subjectivity itself. This was particularly the case with regard to changes in the young people's understanding and behaviour. One example of this was Claire's development of a new awareness through her experience of democratic subjectivity during the boycott. It was precisely *in the moment* of the performance of democratic subjectivity in this instance that Claire became aware of the political conditions affecting her life and community, as well as her own place and potential agency within those wider conditions. Craig's enactment of democratic ways of working in new contexts, and the gradual adoption of democratic approaches to interaction amongst the young people during the Enquire project illustrates that,

in some cases, the young people's democratic learning did have a lasting impact. However, the possibility of enacting democratic subjectivity again in the future – or in new contexts – was always contingent upon other factors, as was noted in the discussion of the opportunities for democratic action that the young people encountered and how they responded to them. Just because the young people reached a new understanding or developed a new attitude in relation to democracy, this did not mean that they would necessarily be able to act democratically and become democratically subject again in other circumstances. While the young people's democratic learning sometimes achieved a certain duration through the recreation and re-enactment of democratic subjectivity, this was never guaranteed. This illustrates how a performative understanding of both democratic subjectivity and democratic learning worked in practice for the young people in the study. Because a performance is always a 'one-off', that can never be precisely repeated, the young people's democratic learning was precarious and fragile – it was only ever as good as their last performance.

6.2.3 Learning from the impossibility of democratic subjectivity

As with learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity, the data show that, for the young people in the study, learning from times when democratic subjectivity was not possible also involved adopting attitudes and dispositions towards the *conditions* necessary for democratic subjectivity as much as towards democracy itself. This was particularly the case in relation the kind of democratic subjectivity that can occur through social interaction. The findings show that the young people learned from the experience of not being able to act democratically by adopting negative attitudes and feelings both towards democracy itself and towards the conditions – such as plurality and unpredictability – that made it possible. Examples of this include both Leanne's and Daniel's wariness of encountering different people at college following their experiences of situations in which the free and equal exchange of ideas amongst different people at school was not welcomed. Jacob' unwillingness to offer his true opinions after experiencing a similar situation at school is another case in point. These examples indicate that, for the young people in the study, one of the dimensions of democratic learning was the development of negative

attitudes towards experiences such as encountering difference and coping with unpredictability.

Another indication in the data is that the young people's experiences of a wider political culture – including the representation of politics in the media – also affected the ways in which they learned from the impossibility of democratic subjectivity. In relation to encountering opportunities for democratic subjectivity, it was shown that political structures, systems and ideas were an important part of the way in which some of the young people experienced situations in which they were unable – or felt unable – to act democratically. When democratic learning is also understood in terms of subjectivity, it is possible to see that these factors also affected the ways in which the young people learned from these experiences. The example of Daniel's dissatisfaction with mainstream politics is particularly illustrative here because of the way he drew on established discourses (about the futility of voting, the corruption of politicians and the pointlessness of politics) to adopt a negative attitude towards mainstream politics and to construct an understanding of himself as a disengaged and disaffected member of the polity. This suggests that established discourses played a significant role in the way Daniel learned from the experience of not being able to act democratically because they provided the language and metaphors through which he was able to make sense of his own place within the wider political conditions affecting his life.

However, the findings also show that while the wider political culture (including the presentation of politics in the media) did have an impact on Daniel's democratic learning, they did not determine the exact nature of this learning. When Daniel's use of language and his reference to established discourses about politics are examined in detail, it is possible to see that through slippages and errancy in his use of these, Daniel was able to express a position on politics and democracy that was not wholly negative. For example, by conflating existing discourses about monarchy and politics in ways that did not – strictly speaking – accurately reflect the precise logic of the arguments he adopted, Daniel was able to express his own unique view about the *type* of politics that he felt was needed in society rather than to dismiss it entirely. This suggests that political contexts – both material and discursive – contributed to some of

the young people's democratic learning, but the *way* in which these had an impact was neither straightforward nor predictable. Specifically, it shows that the experience of not being able to act democratically – or not feeling able to act democratically – did not always prevent the young people from learning from such experiences in what might be considered positive ways.

These observations also offer insights into an important aspect of democratic learning, as I have conceptualised it in the thesis, because they illustrate how the process of learning to identify with places in discourse (as theorised via Hey's reading of Butler) can occur in practice. In particular, the findings demonstrate the significance of the media in this process, and illustrate how slippage and errancy in the way discursive positions are taken up can lead to the creation of new and unexpected possibilities. Specifically, the findings show that the young people were able to perform their political subjectivity and learn from it in unique and unexpected ways when they inaccurately – and creatively – made use of 'standard' formulations and received opinion, familiar to them from their engagement with media such as television and the press. This suggests that popular beliefs about the stultifying effects of television and other media perhaps underestimate the creativity and idiosyncrasy with which young people can make use of the discourses, ideas and models of behaviour that they encounter via these means.

6.3 The role of art in making democratic subjectivity possible

Following the theorisation of democratic learning as a process of learning from instances of subjectivity that are also sometimes made possible through art, this section addresses what the findings reveal about how, empirically speaking, art was able to contribute to the young people experiencing opportunities for democratic action and democratic subjectivity. There are principally two ways in which I conceptualised art as being able to contribute to the possibility of democratic subjectivity. The first is through the provision of conditions conducive to democratic forms of interaction in arts contexts. The second is through the more diffuse ways in which people engage with art as a part of the general culture, and the contribution of this to the possibility or impossibility of acting democratically, understood as political subjectification and solidarity. In the discussion that follows, I address what the findings show about the

dimensions and dynamics of these processes and how they were related to the young people's learning.

In terms of arts participation, the findings show that, for the young people in the study, art was practised and experienced differently in the various settings they engaged in. In turn, this had an impact on the capacity of these contexts to offer opportunities for democratic action and democratic subjectivity. Specifically, the way in which art was experienced by the young people in contexts that focused on practice meant that these provided more opportunities for democratic action than those that were focused on teaching. In these former contexts, art involved a strong element of experimentation, which contributed to the element of unpredictability necessary for such subjectivity to occur. This can be seen in the way the young people from the South West encountered many opportunities for democratic action during the Enquire project, which they characterised as a context for working in open ended, experimental and spontaneous ways to create art collaboratively. Other examples of how the young people encountered opportunities for democratic action in contexts that focused on arts practice include their participation in informal contexts such as bands, workshops and drama clubs, where the practice-based approach again involved a focus on experimentation, spontaneity and open ended collaboration.

In contrast, the young people's experiences of arts participation in contexts that were focused more on teaching tended to offer fewer opportunities for acting democratically and becoming democratically subject because art in these contexts was experienced as a much less experimental and spontaneous practice. Rather, in these contexts, the young people were exposed to ways of creating art that focused on the achievement of a predetermined set of outcomes via a narrow set of means. This can be seen in the way the young people from the South West lost interest in art during their GCSE courses because they felt that the experimental dimensions of art were subjugated in this context in favour of a focus on the achievement of given outcomes demanded in coursework and examinations. Similarly, their characterisation of art in school more generally illustrates how art was experienced in this context in less experimental ways. In turn, this context did not provide the conditions of plurality and unpredictability necessary for democratic subjectivity as a quality of

interaction, as can be seen in the fact that the young people experienced this context as a setting in which they habitually worked alone or with close friends to achieve clearly defined outcomes.

This shows that, for the young people in the study, arts contexts that were focused on practice rather than teaching offered more opportunities for democratic action because the experimental dimensions of art were given more prominence in those contexts and this in turn allowed for the kind of unpredictability needed in order for democratic action to occur. The experiences of the young people from the North East on the performing arts course at college offers another interesting example of how this dynamic played out empirically. Their experiences in this context included elements of both teaching-based and practice-based approaches. Although set within a formal educational context and organised via the achievement of set outcomes, this context was also primarily practice-based in that the majority of the young people's work on the course involved staging productions collectively as a group, a process over which they were given gradually more control as the course progressed. As a result, this context provided a practice based approach to arts participation from within a structure that was organised around teaching people to achieve certain objectives. Through this focus on practice, the course retained an emphasis on experimentation and open ended creative processes that in turn provided the unpredictability necessary for enacting democratic ways of being, as can be seen in the young people's experiences of decision making in this context. What this shows is that the key link between art and the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity as a quality of social interaction – as theorised via Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt – was the focus on experimentation and spontaneity that characterised the young people's experiences of arts participation in contexts focused on practice.

The findings also offer some important insights into the dynamics of how the young people's more general and passive engagement with art in wider culture contributed to the possibility of them acting democratically and experiencing the emergence of democratic subjectivity. One of the indications of the findings in this area is that prevalent ways of thinking about art were adaptable to circumstance in terms of the impact they had on the possibility of democratic

subjectivity. This was evident in the way both sets of participants made sense of the role of art in their lives via a binary opposition between work and leisure. The two groups engaged with this idea in different ways that reflected their respective experiences, with the young people from the North East tending to prioritise work and the young people from the South West tending to prioritise leisure. This also appeared to reflect the fact that the young people from the North East were acutely aware of inequality and disadvantage in society, and keenly felt the need to make a living, whereas the participants from the South West were perhaps less aware of this and expressed fewer concerns about establishing themselves economically. This variation was perhaps also a consequence of the difference in age between the two sets of participants and the fact that the young people from the North East were engaged on a vocational course and hoped to find employment in a specific sector, while the young people from the South West were engaged in more general education.

In both contexts however, the young people's engagement with this way of thinking about art involved the construction of a view of themselves and what was possible for them in ways that were apolitical. Specifically, this understanding the role of art in their lives via an opposition between work and leisure helped the young people to construct ideas of themselves as workers and consumers but not as political subjects with democratic agency. This suggests that the way in which this particular mode of thinking about art was able to contribute to the impossibility of democratic subjectivity was adaptable to different circumstances and that it may even have had a greater impact on the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity than the social and economic circumstances of their lives. This in turn demonstrates the strength and adaptability of prominent ways of thinking about art in terms of their impact on people's lives, which – as I have theorised via Rancière's work – involves the provision of models and templates for ways of being that can work both to facilitate and stultify political subjectification.

Another indication of the findings is that, for the young people in the study, some ways of engaging with art in the wider culture had more of a pronounced impact on the possibility of democratic subjectivity than others. When art was involved in providing channels or models for ways of being that impacted on the

possibility of experiencing democratic subjectivity, this occurred most commonly through the young people's engagement with television and film. The clearest examples of art having an impact on the young people's subjectivity and their sense of identity involve television (as in the case of Dean's construction of what he wanted to do with his life via a narrative partly mediated through television programmes) and film (as in the case of Daniel's construction of identity and his close friendship with someone he considered to be very different from himself via an engagement with a particular cinematic genre). In Daniel's case in particular, it is possible to see that this could also have an impact on the possibility of democratic subjectivity as it affected his interaction with others. Although the nature of this impact was uncertain and could be read in one of two ways – either as contributing to democratic action through interaction with a plurality of people or as inhibiting democratic action through the reinforcement of social groupings based around a shared sense of identity – it is reasonable to interpret that this engagement with art had an impact on the possibility of acting democratically and experiencing the performance of democratic subjectivity for Daniel. These examples illustrate that, for the young people in the study, narrative arts such as television and film were particularly potent in terms of their contribution to the possibility or impossibility of democratic subjectivity. It was through these art forms in particular that the young people experienced the aesthetic and political configuration of possibilities that I theorised, via Rancière (2004; 2007), as providing the background against which people experience and learn democracy.

When democratic learning is also understood in terms of subjectivity, it is possible to see that the above examples are illustrative of the young people's democratic learning. The process of becoming subject – in ways that had more and less to do with democracy – was an important part of how the young people made sense of their place within the wider political conditions that made up their lives. The fact that the possibility of acting more or less democratically within these conditions was affected by television and film more than other art forms suggests that, for these young people at least, television and film also had a particularly potent impact on their democratic learning. Also, the fact that wider discourses about art and aesthetics were adaptable to different circumstances

in the ways in which they impacted on the young people's democratic subjectivity suggests that the impact of this on their democratic learning was similarly flexible and that ways of thinking about art were sometimes equally or even more important than material conditions in terms of their impact on the young people's learning. Finally, the differences in the way art operated in various contexts for arts participation suggests that, for the young people in the study, art was able to offer different kinds of opportunities for democratic learning in contexts where it was treated as a form of practice and those where it was treated as a set of skills or body of knowledge.

6.4 The aesthetic dimension of democratic subjectivity

The final element of the conceptualisation of democratic learning employed in the study was the view that democratic subjectivity can also have an aesthetic dimension and that this has implications for democratic learning. This was mainly theorised via Rancière's (2004; 2007) work and involved an understanding of democratic subjectivity as a process of political subjectification, and specifically in terms of what such instances of democratic subjectivity can make visible and possible. However, the findings reveal that democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction (as theorised via Biesta's (2006; 2010) reading of Arendt) also sometimes involved an aesthetic dimension because it was experienced *through* artistic practice. In this section therefore, I address what the data can show about how, empirically speaking, the aesthetic dimension of democratic subjectivity was experienced by the young people in the study, and how this related to their democratic learning. Again, the discussion focuses on what the young people's experiences reveal about the dynamics and dimensions of these processes.

In terms of the realisation of democratic subjectivity *through* artistic practice, the findings show that, for the young people in the study, such subjectivity was experienced through some artistic practices more than others. In particular, the young people experienced democratic subjectivity as an aesthetic phenomenon through practices such as rehearsal and improvisation within the context of their engagement in the performing arts, particularly music and drama. One example of the young people's realisation of democratic subjectivity in this way can be seen in Craig and Tommy's experiences of creating music in bands, where they

worked collectively in ways that took into account the will of everyone concerned to come up with something new, through the use of improvisation. The way in which the young people from the North East used improvisation and rehearsal on the performing arts course to make collective decisions in free and equal ways that also allowed for the emergence of new and unpredictable outcomes offers another example of this. Although the experimental nature of the way in which the young people engaged with other arts forms and other artistic practices also contributed to *opportunities* for democratic action through collective decision making, it was only through the particular practices of improvisation and rehearsal – and their use in drama and music – that the young people experienced democratic subjectivity *through* artistic practice, as a phenomenon with an aesthetic dimension.

This suggests that, for the young people in the study, the aesthetic dimension of democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction enacted through artistic practices was something that occurred specifically through the performing arts. This is not to imply that the young people's experiences of the performing arts always led to the enactment of democratic subjectivity as an aesthetic experience. Indeed, Claire's experience of taking GCSE music is an example of when this art form was involved in a more restrictive and goal orientated approach to creating art that did not provide the unpredictability necessary for democratic subjectivity. Rather, while there was something specific about the performing arts – and particularly about the use of rehearsal and improvisation in drama and music – that were able to contribute to the young people's experiences of enacting democratic subjectivity as an aesthetic experience, the use of these practices was not in itself enough to guarantee such experience. For this to occur, these specific practices needed to be combined with collective and inclusive approaches to interaction and experimental approaches to artistic creation. What this suggests is the importance of the assumptions held about art and educational practice by all those involved in its implementation, in terms of whether or not young people's involvement in these contexts can allow them to experience democratic subjectivity *through* arts activities.

In terms of the aesthetic dimension of democratic subjectivity as a process of political subjectification and what this is able to make visible, the findings show

that the aesthetic dimension of such subjectivity was related to its unsettling and disturbing nature. Specifically, the data show that, for some of the young people, this disturbing and unsettling element of their experience of democratic subjectivity was realised in aesthetic terms. This is illustrated by Claire's experience of democratic subjectivity during the boycott. For Claire, this was an unsettling and disturbing experience literally because of what it made visible. The realisation that the school was owned by a private company and that she formed part of a larger collective – an experience that Claire described as bizarre and surreal – was a visual, embodied experience that involved *seeing* the whole school gathered together and the press being barred and the gates, and physically *being* part of the crowd. This shows that, for Claire at least – and on this occasion - the aesthetic dimension of democratic subjectivity lay in its contribution to the strange and unsettling nature of this experience.

When democratic learning is conceptualised in terms of subjectivity, it is also possible to see that the experience of democratic subjectivity – and the aesthetic dimension of this – was also sometimes part the young people's democratic learning. In the example above, Claire's aesthetically realised experience of becoming democratically subject also involved learning because it brought her to a new understanding and awareness both of herself and of the political conditions that affected her life. A similar dynamic can be observed in relation to the aesthetic dimension of subjectivity as it is enacted through artistic practices. Again, when democratic learning is understood in terms of subjectivity, and as an embodied experience, it is possible to see that Craig's enactment of democratic practices in new contexts – following his experience of these through arts practices – was also a part of his democratic learning, and therefore that this learning had an aesthetic dimension. Consequently, the findings show that, for the young people in the study, learning from instances of democratic subjectivity in ways that involved an aesthetic element occurred particularly through the performing arts, and through the disturbing and unsettling dimension of political subjectification.

6.5 Other dimensions to the role of art in democratic learning

The ways in which art provided opportunities for democratic action and subjectivity, the ways in which it made such subjectivity less likely, and the ways

in which democratic subjectivity was also experienced as an aesthetic phenomenon constitute some of the most important aspects of what the findings can show about the role of art and the aesthetic in the young people's learning. However, building on what has already been shown about the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity and their democratic learning more generally, the findings indicate that there were other dimensions to the way in which art was implicated in this learning. Specifically, the data show that art was also related to the young people's democratic learning because it was able to support some of the internal dynamics involved in this process. There are principally two ways in which this was the case. Firstly, the data show that the young people's engagement with art also contributed to the development of their feelings and attitudes towards the conditions necessary for enacting further instances of democratic subjectivity. Secondly, they indicate that some of the young people's experiences of art, and their engagement with ideas about art and aesthetics, helped them to take the imaginative step required in order to learn positively from such experiences.

In relation to the first of these, it has been shown that, for the young people in the study, an important element of democratic learning involved the adoption of attitudes towards the conditions necessary for democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction, such as plurality and unpredictability. What the findings also show is that art was involved in this aspect of the young people's learning because it contributed to how they felt about these conditions and how these feelings changed over time. One example of this is Claire's development of a positive attitude towards uncertainty, following her participation in the Enquire project, through her further engagement with art at college. For Claire, the experience of acting democratically during the Enquire project, her reflections on this and her subsequent involvement in other arts participation through college allowed her to develop a more positive attitude towards uncertainty and unpredictability over time. This is illustrated in Claire's reference to how she had let go of the need for a final product in her artwork and had come to enjoy the spontaneity and experimentation that she saw as an important part of the artistic process. In this way, Claire became more positively disposed towards the kinds of conditions necessary for enacting further instances of democratic

subjectivity through her engagement with art. This process was not only affected by Claire's direct participation in the arts but also by her engagement with the idea that experimentation is an essential characteristic of the arts – a conviction shared by many of the young people in the study. This illustrates that both arts participation and the more diffuse affect of ideas about art and aesthetics had a role to play in this element of the relationship between Claire's democratic learning and her engagement with art.

Additionally, it is possible to see that the process of becoming more comfortable with uncertainty and unpredictability over time – and which was affected through Claire's engagement with art – might have contributed to Claire's ability to cope with the uncertainty involved in learning from democratic subjectivity. Based on the insight that the young people needed to be open to uncertainty and ambiguity in order to make the imaginative leap necessary to learn from the experience of democratic subjectivity in positive and meaningful ways, it is possible to see that, for Claire, the process of becoming more comfortable with uncertainty through her engagement with art might have supported this element of democratic learning. Evidence of a similar process can be seen in Emma's reflections on her experience of the boycott and the performance of democratic subjectivity that this entailed. Following this experience, Emma reflected on how certain aesthetic strategies, such as the use of silence and the positioning of bodies, might have allowed the boycott to have more of an impact.

When interpreted via an understanding of learning as both a reflective and embodied process, it is possible to see that Emma's previous experiences of the arts might have been involved in the way she learned from her experience of the boycott. Using what she knew about the arts and her recent experience of actually trying out new practices such as performance art, Emma was able to imagine how the use of movement, sound and physical presence might be put to use in direct political action. Although this principally involved Emma envisaging how specific artistic practices could be useful for democratic action, perhaps the more interesting possibility here is that the contribution of art in this respect occurred in terms of imagination itself – Emma was able to see the possibility of using certain practices in this way because her involvement in the arts and her introduction to new art forms had allowed her to *imagine* things

differently, and to see the aesthetic possibilities inherent in the situation to a greater degree. These examples demonstrate how intrinsic elements of the young people's arts experiences such as the use of imagination and experimentation might, for some of the participants, have played an important role in allowing them to make the imaginative leaps necessary in order to learn from democratic subjectivity.

By offering the above insights, the findings add to Biesta *et al.*'s (2009) work about the dynamics of young people's ongoing learning from their experiences of more and less democratic forms of interaction. Specifically, they demonstrate that art can be one important factor in the provision of opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning across the various contexts that make up people's lives. Additionally, the findings support and extend Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research by further illustrating *how* art plays such a role. In particular, the findings show that art was able to contribute to the provision of opportunities for democratic subjectivity and that it also affected both the young people's *experiences* of democratic subjectivity and their *responses* to such experiences. In doing so, the findings also demonstrate how some of the aesthetic and intrinsic qualities of art such as imagination, experimentation and spontaneity can play a significant role in the way in which art can contribute to young people's democratic learning.

6.6 Conclusion

In summary, when interpreted via the conceptualisation of democratic learning adopted in the in the thesis, the findings offer a number of insights about the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity, their democratic learning and the role of art in these processes. In terms of how the young people were able to experience democratic subjectivity, the findings can be interpreted as follows. Firstly informal contexts were better at providing opportunities for the young people to experience democratic subjectivity than formal contexts such as school and the work place. While there were some exceptions to this, on the whole, these latter contexts were unable to provide the conditions of plurality and unpredictability necessary for democratic subjectivity to occur as a quality of interaction, because they were structured in hierarchical ways and were predicated on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes. Similarly, the

homogeneity and predictability of family life made it less conducive to democratic action. In contrast, informal contexts were more able to offer conditions conducive to democratic subjectivity because they were structured much more loosely, involved open ended collaboration, brought the young people into contact with a wider variety of people, and were characterised by a degree of equality. Additionally, the broader political context of the young people's lives impacted on the possibility of acting democratically through processes such as political subjectification and solidarity. The media constituted one important way in which the young people engaged with this broader context and it often contributed to a situation in which the young people did not feel able to act democratically to address their political concerns.

However, the provision of conditions that were conducive to democracy was not in itself enough to ensure that democratic action and democratic subjectivity would occur in a given context. Equally, the creation of conditions less conducive to democracy did not always prevent the young people from acting democratically and becoming democratically subject. Rather, there were a whole range of factors that affected how the young people were able to respond to the opportunities for democratic action they encountered – or the lack thereof. These factors included the young people's feelings and attitudes, and the specific relationships that characterised their experiences in a given setting. This meant that the young people did not always capitalise on the opportunities for democratic action and democratic subjectivity they encountered and that, conversely, because of such relational and emotional factors, they were sometimes able to enact instances of democratic action and democratic subjectivity in unlikely circumstances.

In terms of learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity, the findings offer the following insights. Firstly, because democratic subjectivity was a disturbing and unsettling experience, learning positively from it was a difficult and demanding task. In some cases this required the young people to adopt attitudes and behaviours they were unfamiliar with, while at other times it involved having to consider the ethical implications of their actions and take responsibility for these. In order to learn from their experiences of democratic subjectivity in positive ways, therefore, the young people had to take

imaginative and courageous steps into the unknown, often trying out new behaviours without knowing in advance where they would lead, or even giving up established and cherished ideas about who they were. For some of the young people, this process was too difficult and they retreated instead to established attitudes, behaviours and understandings of themselves that were less conducive to democracy. However, when the young people did make the imaginative and courageous leap necessary in order to learn positively from their experiences of democratic subjectivity, this was a rewarding experience which changed the way they thought and felt about democratic ways of being, as well as the way they understood themselves and their agency in the public sphere. However, any permanence or duration in the young people's democratic learning was to be found in their re-enactment of democratic subjectivity in different circumstances rather than in permanently changed attitudes or understandings.

Although in slightly different ways, the young people also learned from situations in which they were unable – or felt unable – to act democratically. One important way in which the young people experienced this was through their learning in relation to the political possibilities available to them from within a political culture that often obscured equality and prevented the young people from acting to address their concerns about public life through political and democratic means. This learning involved the young people positioning themselves in relation to wider discourses in order to make sense of their place within the broader political conditions of their lives, often in ways that involved disaffection or disengagement. However, despite being based on the experience of not feeling able to act democratically, this learning sometimes involved adopting positive attitudes towards democracy from amongst the discursive resources available to them. Both in terms of learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity and the impossibility of democratic subjectivity, changes in the young people's attitudes towards the *conditions* necessary for democratic action were also significant.

In terms of the contribution of art to the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity and their democratic learning, the findings offer the following insights. Firstly, art was able to contribute to opportunities for

democratic action in contexts that focused on practice, and in which experimentation was understood as a key part of the creative process because art lent an element of unpredictability to interaction in these contexts. In contexts that focused more on teaching and the achievement of specified outcomes, other dimensions of art were prioritised and consequently, these settings offered fewer opportunities for democratic action. In addition, the narrative arts had a particularly significant impact on the possibility of democratic subjectivity because they affected the ways in which the young people constructed their sense of identity, related with others, and imagined the political possibilities available to them. Because art contributed to the possibility and impossibility of democratic subjectivity in these ways, it was also implicated in what the young people learned from these experiences.

Art was also implicated in the young people's democratic learning as a function of the fact that their experiences of democratic subjectivity sometimes had an aesthetic dimension. This aesthetic dimension of democratic subjectivity was experienced by the young people in two ways. Firstly, their experiences of engaging in the performing arts – specifically music and drama – sometimes led to the enactment of democratic ways of interacting with others *through* artistic practices. Secondly, the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity in other contexts – and specifically the unsettling and disturbing nature of such subjectivity – was realised aesthetically, as an embodied and sensual experience. Again, because the young people's experiences of democratic subjectivity sometimes involved an aesthetic dimension, this aesthetic element was also implicated in the young people's learning from these experiences.

Finally, art was related to the young people's democratic learning because some of its intrinsic qualities were able to facilitate the stages involved in democratic learning. Specifically, for some of the young people, their experiences of arts participation – and what they learned through these contexts – could be seen as important factors that helped them to make the imaginative leap necessary in order to learn from democratic subjectivity in positive and meaningful ways. In particular, the use of imagination, the process of becoming more comfortable with uncertainty, and the experience of opening oneself up to new ways of working through their engagement with art helped

some of the young people to make the imaginative leap necessary for democratic learning and to cope with the uncertainty that this involved.

In the previous chapter, I highlighted how the findings provided answers to some of the research questions, by offering examples of when the young people had encountered opportunities for democratic subjectivity in arts contexts and in other settings, and what the young people learned from this in terms of the impact of these experiences on their attitudes, behaviour and understanding. The above discussion adds to this by illustrating some of the dynamics involved in *how* the young people experienced these opportunities for democratic subjectivity, *how* they learned from them and *how* art was implicated in both of these processes. The discussion therefore provides some answers to the remaining research questions, by illuminating the nature of the young people's democratic learning and its relationship with art. In the following chapter, I bring this interpretation of the findings into dialogue with the broader aims and objectives of the research to explore what they suggest about the role of art in democratic learning more generally, and the implications of this for practice and further research.

Chapter 7 – Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The principal contribution of this thesis is that it offers an alternative approach to the instrumentalist logic that has dominated discussions concerning the role of art in democratic education. Rather than offering a prescription for how to perfect the curriculum or advocating best practice in teaching, the thesis offers educators a new way of thinking about what is important in democratic education and the arts. The contribution of the thesis is both theoretical and empirical, on the one hand illustrating how existing theory has purchase for understanding young people's actual experiences of art and democratic learning and - on the other - extending the theory to make a case for the integral role of art in learning from democratic subjectivity. In doing so, the thesis also constitutes a political performance in that it invites a reconsideration of the role of art in democratic education from the perspective of radical political philosophy.

In this chapter, I aim to show how the thesis makes such a contribution and to indicate areas for further investigation following on from this research. This involves a discussion of my research in the light of the broader concerns of the thesis, including the objectives of the research, the problem I aimed to investigate, and the overall aim of the work in terms of exploring the significance of art in the relationship between democracy and education. In order to address these concerns, I firstly discuss what the findings of the research (and my interpretation of them as offered in the previous chapter) might indicate if they were found to have relevance beyond the specific case under study, what these indications can add to the knowledge and understanding offered by previous research in the field, and how they relate to the perspectives found in the broader literature. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of the research for practice, the strengths and limitations of the study and its implications for further research.

7.2 Indications of the research

Although limited to the particular settings and individuals in the research, the findings and interpretations offered here illustrate how democratic learning has

worked empirically in one particular context and how, for the young people in the study, such democratic learning was related to art. By offering one particular example of this, the research demonstrates how such learning *can* – at least sometimes – occur in practice. In addition, some of the insights offered by the research corroborate and build on what has already been shown in existing empirical work and therefore contribute to a small body of literature that has focused not on how the arts can be used as tools in the preparation of young people for democracy, but rather on the actual quality of arts contexts, their democratic potential, and the relevance of this for learning. In this way, the research offers some important indications about the nature of art and democratic learning, which are detailed below.

Firstly, the research would suggest that arts contexts can offer opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning, particularly when they involve collective decision making about a shared project, and when the focus of participation in these contexts is on practice rather than teaching. When this is the case, arts contexts are able to harness the experimental dimensions of arts practice to adopt an open ended approach to collective interaction and this can lead to democratic ways of working. As well as contributing an element of unpredictability to collaborative work, arts contexts can provide opportunities for young people to enact democratic subjectivity *through* arts practices and therefore to experience the performance of this in aesthetic terms. The kind of experience alluded to above is more likely to occur in the performing arts – through practices such as improvisation and rehearsal. A connection between empirical performances, and performance as a theory of subjectivity, becomes pertinent here, as the findings show that arts performances can provide circumstances in which young people can also enact unique and precarious performances of democratic subjectivity. Although contexts that are specifically intended to promote democratic action are particularly able to offer such opportunities other arts contexts without any explicitly democratic dimension can also provide opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning, when they also involve some commitment to working in inclusive ways. The kinds of contexts that can allow for such opportunities include both educational settings (including formal educational courses and informal contexts such as

projects, workshops and drama groups) and informal contexts for arts participation that young people organise themselves, such as bands.

However, this is not to suggest that arts contexts always offer opportunities for democratic action or that democratic action can only occur in arts contexts, and through practices that are specifically artistic. The insights offered in the research would also indicate that, in order for arts contexts to offer opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning through artistic practices, these have to be combined with a commitment to inclusion and openness from all those involved, including artists and participants. The way in which art is understood by those practising it is also crucial in this respect. In particular, the findings would suggest that a certain commitment to the idea of art as an experimental and open ended practice can be combined with free and equal approaches to interaction to make arts contexts more conducive democratic action. Also, other factors such as the young people's existing attitudes and feelings about inclusive ways of working can affect the possibility of democratic action occurring through interaction in arts contexts. Similarly, other contexts can also offer opportunities for democratic action and democratic learning in this way. Contexts in which young people feel they are taken seriously and treated like adults are particularly able to provide such opportunities. While contexts such as post compulsory educational settings are more likely to offer this than schools, this is not always the case and other factors, such as relationships with individual staff, as well as the feelings and attitudes of the people concerned can also make a difference in this respect. Additionally, young people encounter opportunities for democratic action through more overtly political engagement in a variety of contexts. The possibility of acting democratically or not in such terms is affected by the political conditions in which young people live their lives. However, the impact of these factors on the possibility of democratic subjectivity is unpredictable and young people can make creative use of the resources available to them to learn in unexpected ways, for example, by developing an enthusiasm for political engagement despite a lack of opportunities for democratic action, or by enacting and learning from democratic subjectivity in unlikely circumstances. In this respect, the research highlights

young people's agency as real participants in a shared social and political context, and illustrates the active and unpredictable nature of this process.

The insights offered by my research would also suggest that the ways in which young people engage with the arts in more general and mundane terms, for example as consumers and audiences, can also contribute to the ways in which young people experience more and less democratic ways of being and learn from these. This is particularly the case for narrative arts such as film and television, which can contribute to the ways in which young people develop their sense of identity and relate to other people. In this way, these art forms can play a part in how young people make sense of the political possibilities available to them, develop ideas about what they are capable of, and adopt ways of interacting with other people. Young people's engagement with prominent ideas about art and aesthetics can play a role in their democratic learning in a similar way, by contributing to the possibility and impossibility for democratic action that young people encounter across a variety of contexts. One of the important insights of the research therefore is that the narrative dimension of film and television can allow these forms to play an important role in the ways the young people think of themselves and make sense of their experiences against the aesthetic and political background that shapes their lives. However, these kinds of engagement with art form only part of young people's larger experiences and do not in themselves determine whether or not young people will be able to act democratically and learn from it. Rather, they interact with a variety of other factors, including the political conditions of people's lives, to make democratic action and democratic learning possible or impossible in any given circumstances.

Finally, my research offers some insights into the nature of democratic learning and how this can be experienced in practice. In particular, by indicating that the young people's learning was only as good as their last performance of democratic subjectivity, the findings show that democratic learning is an ongoing process that can never be considered complete. Rather, it depends upon the continued enactment or performance of democracy through people's interaction with others, and their engagement with the social and political contexts of their lives. In addition, my research would suggest that learning

from the experience of acting democratically is a difficult process that also has to do with identity and that this can be emotionally demanding. In order to learn from the experience of democratic action in a way that is conducive to the further enactment of instances of democratic subjectivity, young people need to be prepared to use their imagination and courage to behave in new ways and unfamiliar ways that can challenge their sense of identity. In other words they need to take risks when their very sense of who they are is at stake. In this way, the research highlights the challenging, emotionally demanding nature of democratic learning and illustrates the sense of disruption and upheaval that often characterises the way young people experience and learn democracy. A further, related insight of the research is that art is sometimes able to provide the step needed in order to learn from instances of democratic subjectivity because young people are able to draw on their experiences of art to imagine new possibilities, and because art can also affect the way people feel about the uncertainty and ambiguity involved in this stage of democratic learning.

7.3 Relation to previous research

By offering these insights, my research corroborates and build on some of what has already been shown about art and democratic learning in previous work. For example, it adds to Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research showing that artist led work in gallery contexts aimed at fostering democratic practice can lead to opportunities that are conducive to young people's democratic learning. In that work, it was noted that the tendency towards experimental, collaborative and open ended ways of working in these settings might make them particularly able to offer opportunities for democratic practice, understood as inclusive social and political action allowing for plurality and difference. My research corroborates this finding by offering further indication of the potential of such settings for democratic action and democratic learning. The research also builds on Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research by showing that arts contexts other than gallery education projects, and those without any explicitly democratic dimension, can also offer opportunities for acting democratically and learning from it when they involve practice based, experimental approaches to art. Additionally, my findings expand on this research by further illuminating *how* the experimental and open ended dimension of arts practices in such contexts can contribute to

democratic action. Specifically, they show that these practices are able to contribute to such action by offering an element of unpredictability through a focus on experimentation. However, the findings also further illuminate this process by showing that the experimental dimension of arts practices in these contexts is not necessarily essential to artistic practices but is rather a function of how art is conceived and employed in different contexts.

In Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research, it was also noted that, although arts projects in gallery settings can offer opportunities for democratic practice, a number of contextual factors including relationships, time and space can affect whether and how such opportunities are realised. My research corroborates this by offering further examples how such factors can contribute to the possibility of acting democratically in these contexts and offer the additional insight that feelings and emotions are also particularly important in this respect. Finally, in Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research, it was noted that learning from experiences of democratic practice in galleries was a complex process and that further research addressing issues such as risk-taking and identity could be useful in helping to better understand this process. My findings address this by illustrating how the process of learning from democratic action involves making leaps of the imagination and having the courage to try out new ways of being when people's sense of identity is at stake. By further illuminating the dynamics of democratic learning in this way, the findings also add to Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) research by addressing the role of arts contexts in learning from democratic action in more overtly political terms. So, as well as showing that arts contexts can offer opportunities for democratic subjectivity as a quality of interaction, the findings also indicate that young people's engagement in these contexts – and what they learn from this – can play a part in allowing them to make the imaginative leaps necessary for democratic learning.

As well as adding to Lawy *et al.*'s (2010) insights about democratic action and democratic learning in gallery contexts, the research also corroborates some of the findings of Biesta *et al.*'s (2009) work on democratic learning more generally. Specifically, my research adds to their findings about the role of contexts, relationships and dispositions in the opportunities for democratic action that young people encounter across the various contexts that make up

their lives. By illustrating how a variety of contextual, relational and emotional factors impacted on the possibility of enacting democratic ways of working for the young people in the study, my work further illuminates the complex interaction amongst such factors in making democratic action more or less likely in any given circumstance. The particular insights offered by my work in this respect include the finding that the *way* in which contexts are used by young people are often as important as the *nature* of those contexts themselves, and that arts contexts which take a practice based approach offer different kinds of opportunities for democratic learning than those in which art is treated more as a set of skills or body of knowledge to be taught.

The research also builds on the work of both Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007) on the potential of theatre and drama for offering young people the opportunity to experience democratic citizenship in ways that might also be relevant to their learning. In their research, ideas from radical democracy, and fluid understandings of subjectivity were used to show that drama and theatre can offer opportunities for young people to experience democratic citizenship and to explore the implications of this for democratic learning. My research corroborates the finding that drama practice can offer opportunities for experiencing democracy and learning from it, and builds on the findings of this previous research in terms of the potential of this for democratic learning. By offering empirical examples of how young people have *in fact* learned from their experiences of democratic action in drama contexts, my research expands on the findings offered in Deeney's (2007) and Holdsworth's (2007) work. In particular, by extending the application of a less static understanding of subjectivity to learning itself, and by employing a longitudinal research design, I have been able to offer empirical evidence of when learning from experiences of democratic ways of being in arts contexts has *actually* led to democratic learning and therefore expand on their indications about the potential of such experiences for democratic learning.

The research undertaken by both Deeney (2007) and Holdsworth (2007) had also shown that the inherent, aesthetic qualities of dramatic practices such as improvisation, collaborative production and role play can be involved in the ways in which young people experience democratic citizenship, and

Holdsworth's work suggests that this might also be involved in young people's democratic learning. My research corroborates the finding that the intrinsic and aesthetic qualities of drama practices such as improvisation and collaborative production can be key in offering opportunities for democratic action. My research also adds to this by showing that these practices can offer opportunities for democratic action through their use in other performative arts, such as music, and that when this occurs, young people can experience democratic action as an aesthetic experience. However, the insights of my research also suggest that it is not something essential about these art forms and practices that make this so, and that they cannot in themselves guarantee democratic action. Rather, my findings show that young people are able to experience democratic action aesthetically, through performing arts such as drama and music, only when these practices are understood in a certain way and when they are combined with a commitment to inclusive forms of interaction.

7.4 Relation to broader perspectives

As indicated above, some of the contributions of my findings result from the particular theoretical approach and conceptualisation of democratic learning that I employed in the research. In this way, my research adds to a small body of work that has approached the problem of understanding the role of art in young people's democratic learning via alternative approaches to the instrumentalism that has dominated the field. By adding to and building on this body of work, my research offers further indication of the value of non-instrumentalist approaches in the field. In particular, by theorising democratic learning as a process of reflecting on and responding to the possibility of acting democratically against an aesthetic and political background that affects how we are able to think, act and behave (but which is not immune to the changes wrought by collective and individual action) I have been able to illuminate the role of art in democratic learning in a way that avoids some of the problems of instrumentalist perspectives. In particular, this perspective has allowed me to add to our understanding of this role in a way that avoids the tendency to depoliticise both education and the arts and which takes seriously the value of the aesthetic and intrinsic dimensions of art for democracy. This can be

illustrated with a discussion of how some of the particular elements of this theorisation allowed me to arrive at findings that would not have been possible had I taken an instrumentalist approach, or one in which learning was theorised purely in cognitive terms.

By theorising democratic learning via Biesta's (2006; 2010) work as a process of learning *from* instances of democratic subjectivity, I have been able to show that young people's democratic learning does not occur in a political vacuum, and to illustrate the meaning of this in people's lives. So, for example, I have been able to show that young people's experiences of living in a culture in which democratic approaches to interaction are not prized – and indeed in which young people are praised for acting in ways that are less conducive to democracy – can affect their ability to act democratically and to learn from it. Similarly, I have been able to show that young people's experiences of a political system in which they feel they have no effective say can also impact on their democratic learning. Had I taken an instrumentalist approach, in which democratic learning was seen as a process of acquiring the correct knowledge, skills and dispositions for democracy, then a very different interpretation of the findings may have resulted. For example, instead of understanding the young people's disaffection with mainstream politics as a consequence of their wider experiences and as something which was also part of their democratic learning, this might have been seen as inconsequential to the process of learning the rights skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary for democracy or even as a sign of the young people's political apathy and therefore as a barrier to such learning.

Equally, because – following Rancière's (2004; 2007) work on the relationship between art and politics – I understood democratic learning as a process of learning from instances of democratic action that also have an aesthetic dimension, and which are sometimes made possible through art, I have been able to show that the arts are also implicated in the political conditions that impact on people's learning. For example, I have been able to show that the narrative arts – and particularly film and television – can impact on the ways in which young people see themselves and make sense their place within the political fabric of society. Moreover, I have been able to show that this can

contribute to the way they act within the larger political conditions that make up their lives. Had I adopted an instrumentalist approach, then the significance of the young people's engagement with television and film might not have been considered important in terms of democracy and learning. Indeed, these mundane and passive forms of artistic engagement might have been seen as peripheral to the process of learning the right skills and dispositions for democracy through arts participation, understood as a politically neutral practice.

Additionally, by conceptualising democratic learning and its relationship with art in the way I did, I have been able to show that art can be relevant to democratic learning because of its intrinsic and aesthetic qualities rather than because of its external value. So, for example, I have been able to show that because of the association of art with experimentation and spontaneity, young people can act democratically in arts contexts and even experience democratic subjectivity *through* artistic practices as an aesthetic phenomenon. Also, I have been able to show that some of aesthetic dimensions of art, such as experimentation, can also play a role in allowing young people to make the imaginative leap necessary to learn from the uncomfortable experience of democratic subjectivity. Had an instrumentalist approach been taken in the research, then the relevance of the young people's experiences in arts contexts and through arts practices might have been interpreted differently. For example, the realisation of inclusive ways of interacting in arts contexts might have been seen as a way of learning the skills necessary for democracy rather than as a genuine instance of democratic action in itself. Similarly, the relevance for democratic learning of aesthetic qualities such as experimentation and imagination might have been interpreted differently, for example as dispositions people need to acquire in order to be economically productive citizens in a democratic society, rather than as experiences which can be involved in the process of learning from democratic action.

Finally, the theorisation of learning via Butler (1993; 1997; 2004) (and Hey's (2006) interpretation of her work) as a process of learning to identify with places in discourse – in ways that also affect changes in people's sense of self – has allowed me to demonstrate the active and creative nature of the young people's

democratic learning. In particular, this theorisation has allowed me to show what it can mean in practice to take up discursive positions in ways that allow for slippage, errancy and the emergence of something new. Specifically, my research has shown how this can happen via the mundane ways in which young people use the language and forms mediated to them in everyday culture inaccurately, thus positioning themselves in relation to wider discourses in unique ways. This element of the theorisation of democratic learning in the research therefore highlights young people's agency in terms of their democratic learning and offers a counter point to views of young people as the passive recipients of ideas, discourses and cultural forms. Indeed, had I taken another kind of approach to learning – for example one in which learning was seen only as a cognitive process – then the complex interrelation of culture, discourse and identity in the ways the young people learned democracy might not have been brought to light.

By conceptualising democratic learning in the way I did, I have therefore been able to highlight the political dimensions of such learning, and the significance of the aesthetic and intrinsic qualities of art in this regard. However, the theorisation of democratic learning and its relationship with art has also allowed me to highlight these elements in a way that avoids any determinism in relation to politics or essentialism in terms of art. This is particularly important with regard to the implications of the research for practice in education and the arts. In terms of the impact of political conditions on young people's democratic learning, the theoretical perspective – and particularly the use of a performative view of subjectivity – has allowed me to show that the material and discursive political conditions of young people's lives can play an important but unpredictable role in democratic learning and that they are not trapped by these conditions. Rather, people can act to change the conditions of their lives from the resources available to them – even when these do not seem very conducive to democracy – and can relate to these material and discursive resources in their own unique ways when making sense of their role within the broader political fabric. Similarly, while highlighting the affect of the intrinsic and aesthetic dimensions of art for democratic learning, the theorisation of democratic learning adopted in the research has made it possible to show that

these qualities are not essential to the arts and therefore that their contribution to democratic learning is neither predictable nor guaranteed. Rather, the potential contribution of art to the possibility of democratic action and democratic learning is a function of the way in which art is practised and conceived – both in society generally and by those involved in the specific circumstances in which they are experienced. Because the findings avoid these problems of determinism and essentialism, they also suggest implications for practice that are both optimistic in terms of democratic education, and realistic in terms of the contribution that art can make in this area.

7.5 Implications for practice

When conceptualising the terms of the research from within a theoretical framework for understanding the relationships amongst democracy, art and education, it was noted that Biesta's (2006; 2010) understanding of the relationship between education and democracy had implications for democratic education. The first of these was that educational contexts could support democratic learning by encouraging young people to reflect on and respond to their experiences of being able to act democratically or not in their wider lives. The second implication of this view was that educational contexts could also offer opportunities for democratic action and therefore for the ongoing enactment of democratic subjectivity, which is itself an important element of democratic learning. Finally, it was also noted that this view had implications for other contexts in society because a recognition of the educational dimension of political existence is needed in order to continue recreating the possibility of acting democratically. By combining this view with a particular understanding of the relationship between art and politics based on the work of Rancière, and by applying this in empirical research through a particular conceptualisation of democratic learning and its relationship with art, my findings offer further implications in each of these areas.

Firstly, if educational contexts are seen as settings that can support democratic learning by allowing young people to reflect on their experiences of democratic and non democratic ways of being, then the insights offered by my research suggest some implications about the particular ways in which this may be achieved. One of these implications is that educational contexts can make a

contribution in this way by allowing young people to reflect particularly on how the experience of democratic subjectivity made them feel, and on how these instances compared and contrasted with their everyday experiences in other contexts. In this way, educational contexts could support young people as they make sense of what democracy entails and why it might be desirable. Similarly, by encouraging young people to think about the impact of experiencing democratic subjectivity on their sense of identity, and about the ethical implications of their experiences of such subjectivity, educational contexts could support young people in the difficult and demanding task of learning from the often troubling experience that democratic action entails. The indications of my research also imply that encouraging young people to reflect on their engagement with art and on the aesthetic dimension of their experiences of democratic action could also be an important way of supporting democratic learning in educational contexts. In this way, educational settings might be able to support the ways in which young people respond to the uncertainty and unpredictability that arts contexts can offer, as well as the use of imagination involved in these settings, and therefore support the element of risk taking involved in democratic learning.

Secondly, my findings entail some implications about *how* educational contexts might themselves be able to offer opportunities for democratic action and therefore contribute to the ongoing, enacted process of democratic learning. Building on the insight that emotional factors were particularly important in making democratic subjectivity more or less possible as a quality of interaction, my findings imply that in order to provide opportunities for democratic action, it is not enough for educational contexts to provide the conditions of plurality and unpredictability. In addition, they may also need to provide support for young people to help them cope with these conditions, particularly when those young people are used to very different ways of interacting with people in other contexts. Careful attention to the emotional impact that these conditions can have, and to how young people can respond to the demands that such conditions make, would be necessary in order to allow young people to experience democratic subjectivity in educational settings and learn from it in meaningful ways. In practice this could mean that, as well as providing

opportunities to experience the kinds of unpredictability and plurality necessary for democracy, arts and educational contexts that aim to foster democratic practice might also offer young people the chance to discuss or otherwise express their feelings about experiencing those conditions in a supportive environment.

In relation to providing opportunities for democratic action, my findings also show the importance for education of *continually* working to provide such opportunities, since democratic learning cannot be understood in finite terms but rather as an ongoing process that is dependent upon the continued enactment of instances of democratic subjectivity. The findings also suggest that as well as offering opportunities for democratic action, educational contexts can support young people in their own attempts to act democratically in ways that involve an assumption of equality – either their own equality with those who govern their communities, or the equality of others on behalf of whom they feel a sense of injustice. This could mean supporting young people in their own attempts to take political action or act in solidarity with others, and allowing them to take responsibility for the ethical implications of such action.

Finally, the findings imply that, *if* arts contexts want to remain open to the possibility of democracy, then working in open ended ways that draw on the experimental qualities often associated with art can allow them to do so. However, such opportunities will also be affected by a variety of factors, including the political conditions of young people's lives in which the arts also play a part. While there are specific qualities of artistic practices, and of the ways in which they are commonly understood, which mean that arts contexts *can* provide opportunities for young people to experience the kind of unpredictability that can lead to democratic action and can support democratic learning, there is no guarantee of this. This suggests that, should educational practices wish to make use of the arts in supporting democratic action and democratic learning, the specific and limited nature of this role needs to be taken into account. In addition, the desirability of using arts contexts to try to offer such opportunities is itself questionable. The findings suggest that perhaps a more fruitful way of understanding how democratic education can 'make use' of the arts is through the encouragement of careful reflection on the various

experiences of engaging with art that young people encounter as they learn democracy across the variety of contexts that make up their lives.

7.6 Strengths and limitations of the research

As the above discussion indicates, the main contribution of the research is in what it adds to our understanding about the role of art in democratic learning and in the implications of this for practice. The particular nature of this contribution in terms of its addition to a small but significant body of literature addressing the role of art in democratic learning from non instrumentalist perspectives is particularly important. By making such a contribution, the research adds to the ways in which the problems associated with instrumentalist approaches in the field can be addressed. There are a number of strengths of the research that have allowed me to achieve this, but also some limitations to what I have been able to show in the study. One of the strengths of the research has been the use of ideas from radical democracy, and a performative understanding of subjectivity, in a ways that takes these theoretical ideas seriously with regards to both action *and* learning, and which has relevance in the empirical sphere. In the discussion of previous research in the field, it was noted that, while offering important insights and indicating interesting possibilities, attempts to use such theoretical ideas in empirical research on art and democratic learning had not taken full advantage of their potential. Through a particular engagement with theory, this research has gone further in translating the significance of such work to the empirical sphere and to the field of democratic education and the arts.

However, there were also some limitations to the way in which I have used these ideas – and particularly to the way in which I have employed a performative understanding of subjectivity. Specifically, I applied an understanding of the way in which people take up positions within discourse only where this was overtly relevant to their democratic learning, and only through the participants' uses of language as recorded in interviews. While aware that linguistic performances of subjectivity more generally could also have implications for democracy, and of the importance of bodily gestures as well as verbal uses of language, these particular concerns were beyond the scope and the nature of this research. While I have therefore referred to some

prominent examples of when the young people's performances of subjectivity involved the kind of errancy and slippage in the use of language that allowed them to subtly subvert available discourses – and how this was relevant to democratic learning – such discussion is limited within the broader framework of the research. Had I conducted a larger study, making use of a wider variety of data collection methods (perhaps including the use of video recordings and the collection of more observational data), or had I decided to focus specifically on the use of language (for example through a form of discourse analysis), then these aspects of performativity – and their relevance for democratic learning – might have been explored further. Instead, my research offers a more holistic view of the young people's democratic subjectivity as something which occurred not only through language but also through their actions and interactions with others, constructions of which – while articulated through the relational context of interviews – were nevertheless understood to be accessible through research.

Another strength of the research is its detailed depiction of the processes involved in democratic learning in one particular case. Through a focus on depth rather than breadth, the research has been able to illuminate the various dynamics of young people's experiences and learning in detail, as they relate to the particular settings and individuals involved in the research. This has been achieved both through the size of the sample and through the longitudinal research design, which has been particularly effective in allowing me to document changes over time and the therefore to illuminate the young people's learning. However, while the relatively small number of participants contributed to one of the strengths of the research, it also constitutes one of its limitations, in that the findings relate only to this one particular case. While I have suggested the ways in which these findings offer important insights into the dynamics of democratic learning and its relationship with art, the findings in themselves do not offer evidence of these processes more generally. In this sense, the specific contribution of the research to knowledge and understanding is in its ability to illuminate the nature and dynamics of the processes under study rather than to offer generalisable evidence about them.

7.7 Implications for further research

Building on what I have shown about the strengths and limitations of the research, it is also possible to identify how further work could add to and build on the contribution offered in this thesis. For example, further research addressing the role of art in democratic learning from a similar perspective but in different settings would be useful in indicating whether the findings of my research have any relevance beyond this particular case, and therefore to what extent the suggested implications of the research might be generally relevant and valid. Similarly, further work could be done to address the role of subjectivity in democratic learning from other perspectives, paying closer attention to the political and democratic possibilities inherent in the use of language. An interesting question highlighted by the research – but one which I was unable to explore fully within the confines of the study – is whether some of the young people's articulations of their thoughts, feelings and behaviour in the interview setting also constituted performances of democratic subjectivity and what the implications of this could be for their learning. A study of this from a perspective more orientated towards the use of discourse would have the potential to add to understanding of the dynamics involved in performing and learning from democratic subjectivity.

Further research might also be conducted into what I believe are some of the more interesting aspects of the findings. One of these is the potential connections between the use of imagination in the arts and the imaginative process required for democratic learning. Specifically, the suggestion in this research that art can contribute to democratic learning by allowing young people to use their imagination and experience the kind of uncertainty and unpredictability that can be useful when learning from the experience of democratic subjectivity, is a particularly interesting one and merits further attention. Another interesting aspect of the research concerns what the findings show about the differences between various kinds of arts engagement such as the narrative and performing arts, and the different ways in which these can play a role in both democratic subjectivity and democratic learning. Further research exploring the reasons behind these differences, taking into account

the way in which the arts are constructed and understood in our society would also have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the field.

In this research I have illustrated some of the benefits of addressing the role of art in democratic learning from a perspective that brings to the fore the political dimensions of art, education and democracy and takes the aesthetic properties of art seriously. I have done so in a way that highlights what is at stake for young people as they become subject and continue recreating their subjectivity from amongst a configuration of possibilities that are mediated to them in a variety of ways, including through the arts. By focusing on subjectivity, I have also been able to highlight the dynamics involved in democratic learning in a way that remains optimistic about the possibilities for change that young people bring to the world they inherit. Elements highlighted in the research that are particularly interesting include the ways in which practices and modes of thought from art and politics can lend themselves to each other to contribute to young people's learning in relation to democracy. Further exploration of this interconnectedness between art and politics and its implications for democratic learning and democratic education would make a valuable addition to what I have been able to show in this thesis.

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