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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

**How Did Young Left Wing Political Activists
Learn to Become Active and Critical
Citizens?**

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1. Abstract

This thesis explores the factors that inspired left wing young people to become politically active. In particular it examines their citizenship education experiences. It asserts a critical and maximal conception on citizenship education and offers insights into how it can be improved pedagogically to promote activism for social justice. This thesis draws on and contributes to the literature in three fields: political socialisation; citizenship education; Marxist analysis of education and critical pedagogy. Its central theme focuses on the contradiction evident in the citizenship education literature. Based on the perspective that young people are increasingly disengaged from formal political activity, citizenship education is fundamental in education policy in Scotland. Whilst the Scottish policy context suggest a maximal conception of citizenship education which aims to build young people's capacity to engage actively and responsibly in political affairs and to encourage thoughtful action to achieve social justice, the evidence shows that the minimal conception is dominant. This produces 'personally responsible citizens' who accept our unjust and unequal status quo, meaning that it is largely unchallenged and reproduced. By working with young activists who were already active, critically conscious citizens committed to social justice, this thesis uncovers the key reasons for their development as activists and highlights the pedagogical approaches that helped this process. It deployed a critical qualitative research approach and conducted 17 individual, in-depth interviews with political activists from the Communist, Labour and trade union movement. A theoretical thematic analysis method was used to analyse this interview data.

Growing up in a political family and peer relationships were identified as key political socialising agents. This is consistent with the literature. However, music, which is often ignored in the socialisation literature, was also cited as a key agent. Another significant contributing factor to activism was their sense of political efficacy. This was underpinned by critical agency linked to a firm commitment to social justice. The Scottish Independence referendum and the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party were also identified as 'critical moments' that prompted their move to activism. The role of the formal school curriculum was complex. It supported the activism of some of the respondents, but for others it played little part. A few activists could identify taking part in some form of citizenship education. The influential role of the teacher was particularly significant in this context. Interestingly, this was largely restricted to one subject area, Modern Studies. Nevertheless, most of these active and critical citizens struggled to recall undertaking any clearly identifiable citizenship education in school. New knowledge and insights are offered for those interested in promoting a critical and maximal citizenship education that can support activism for social justice, particularly in school settings. The thesis shows that whilst schools do contribute to the reproduction of the current status quo, politically committed educators can also find the spaces in schools to resist this process. By adopting Freirean dialogical approaches to teaching and by providing opportunities for activism through participation in representative structures or community based voluntary opportunities educators can help nurture and inspire the development of young political activists.

1.2. Lay Summary

Why did young left wing people become politically active and what role did their educational encounters play in supporting this transformation to activism? The findings of this thesis answer these questions. Drawing on Marxist social analysis, this study adopted a critical qualitative research approach to conduct in depth individual interviews with 17 young political activists from the Communist, Labour and trade union movement. A thematic analysis method was used to examine the data produced from these interviews. A central concern of the study was the effectiveness of the citizenship education these activists experienced in school. The literature places conceptions of citizenship education on a spectrum. At one end is a minimal conception, which produces personally responsible citizens, who uncritically accept and leave unchallenged the status quo. At the other is a maximal conception which aims to produce critically aware citizens who question the status quo and encourage activism for social justice and social change.

The findings show that growing up in a political family, learning through peer relationships and the influence of popular music were important factors in creating foundational interest in politics and developing activism. Becoming active was also the result of a strong sense of political efficacy underpinned by a commitment to social justice, fuelled by anger at the injustice and inequality in society. The formal school was revealed to have a complex role for these activists. It was supportive for some but for others it had little influence on their activism. Although examples of the maximal conception were identified, the minimal conception was predominant in the young people's accounts. Whilst

schools were identified as reproducing the dominant capitalist status quo, some teachers and their pedagogical practice were able to encourage and inspire some to develop their critical activism for social justice.

1.3. Acknowledgments

There is an African proverb that claims 'it takes a village to raise a child'. I think this perspective, emphasising a collective contribution, has to be applied to the production of this doctoral thesis. Although it is my own work, I would not have been able to produce it without the help and support I received. I would like to thank my family, first and foremost my wife Tansy. It is the case that this thesis would not have been written without her. She has unselfishly borne the greater domestic burden creating time for me to work on it. Moreover, her constant support, encouragement and love has sustained me. This thesis is as much the result of her efforts as it is mine. It is difficult to fully express in writing how indebted and grateful I am to her. Thank you, Tansy. Thanks also to my children; Zack, Jude, Jessie and Ruby whose love and encouragement has kept me going.

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doctoral studies. Lastly, thanks to the young activists who agreed to take part in this research.

2. Introduction

2.1. Setting the Scene

This thesis identifies and discusses the key factors that explain why some young people became politically active citizens and it draws attention to the role and the extent that their educational experiences played in promoting their activism. These key factors and formative educational experiences are examined to explore how they can inform the conceptual understanding, purpose, content and pedagogical practice of a critical citizenship education that focuses on the promotion of active democratic participation and action towards social justice. Furthermore, this study is fundamentally concerned with transformation, in three ways. Firstly, this thesis explains the transformation of these young people into political activists. Secondly, the thesis offers insights into what this move to activism tells us about the citizenship education they encountered and consequently how we might transform its current content and practice to promote critical citizenship and social justice. Thirdly, overall this thesis is underpinned by a desire to contribute emancipatory knowledge to the ongoing struggle to challenge and transform the dominant exploitative and unjust capitalist social relations and to help develop society for the better.

This introduction will proceed as follows. I begin by introducing a central topic of concern for this thesis: the contested nature of citizenship and citizenship education. I then explain and justify my motivation and inspiration for undertaking this study: a combination of my professional experience and political activism. Next, I set out the context of the particular problem I aim to address in this thesis: how we can best support young people to become

critically conscious active citizens working towards social justice? This is followed by an overview of the research questions and research approach I adopted to explore this problem and I briefly introduce the participants I worked with to produce the qualitative accounts for this thesis. I will conclude with a summary of my key findings and an overview of the chapters of the thesis.

2.2. The Contested Nature of Citizenship and Citizenship Education

A central topic of concern for this thesis is what is meant by citizenship education. Particularly the education sponsored and deployed by the state and designed to develop young peoples' capacity for active engagement in political and civic life. Yet citizenship education and the 'citizens' this education is to create are contested. For example, as Osler and Starkey (2005: 4) claim, citizenship education *'provokes heated debate and controversy...'*. For that reason I have set out in this thesis to explore and problematise citizenship education. The literature presents differing conceptions of citizenship education (see for example Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, Veugelers, 2007 & Johnson & Morris, 2010). A key conception for this thesis is that developed by McLaughlin (1992). My interpretation of his conception of citizenship and the education that supports it is that it ranges from 'minimal' to 'maximal'. A Minimal conception is seen as being uncritical and emphasises personal responsibility in which students are not *'...sufficiently empowered to take effective political action in a way that goes beyond their immediate concerns and responsibilities'* (Biesta, 2013: 109) and so the current political, economic and social status quo is largely unexplored, unchallenged, and as a result preserved and reproduced. Alternatively, maximal conceptions take a more dynamic and critical approach.

For example, echoing a maximal approach Miliband (2007: 96) sees education for citizenship as being about '*...the nurturing of a capacity and willingness to question, to probe, to ask awkward questions, to see through obfuscation and lies...*'. A maximal approach seeks to develop people's critical consciousness and encourage them to question the current status quo and to identify and explore the injustice and inequality caused by it. In turn this can potentially lead to challenges to the dominant order and offer opportunities for progressive social change.

2.3. Thesis Inspiration and Motivation: Professional Experience and Political Activity

The inspiration and motivation behind my thesis topic and my overall aim was a synthesis of two factors, my long term professional experience and the result of my Marxist political orientation and analysis of the world as it is under capitalism. Underpinning these factors is my long-term commitment to and interest in contributing to developing and sustaining a participative and critical democratic culture through civic and political activism. In relation to my professional experience, between 1995 and 2012 I was a Community Educator working in a Local Authority in Scotland. Some of the core values of this profession include the promotion of democracy, active citizenship and social justice (See for example Johnson, 2000: 14 or Mackie *et al.*, 2012: 13). As a result, I regularly worked with young people in schools to promote learning for democracy, citizenship and participation. In my work I was consistently being confronted by the reproductive function of schooling and by views and practices, evident amongst most individual teachers, school management

teams and Local Authority managers, that conformed to the minimal conception of citizenship education. As an educator and a Marxist working within this context, and informed by a maximal concept of citizenship, I attempted to apply a critical pedagogical approach to my own work. Despite citizenship education being a key priority for Scottish education during this period, most of the young people I worked with displayed no evidence of the suggested outcomes of citizenship education as they had little knowledge of politics and democratic participation and were cynical about and or disinterested in this. However, in small ways I witnessed some of the young people I was working with becoming interested in politics and develop a critical awareness due to the pedagogical approaches I adopted. As a result I became more interested in studying this situation.

Alongside this professional experience, for over forty years I have been actively involved in the Labour and trade union movement as a member of a number of trade unions and two British Communist Parties.¹ Therefore, this study is informed by my professional experience, but driven by my political experience and activity, and in particular, my commitment to Marxist social theory as a way of explaining and critiquing the world as it is, and offering a vision for how we can make it better. I discuss how I deal with the challenges of this committed standpoint in relation to social research in chapter 4, but below I offer a summary of my political orientation.

¹ Labour & trade union movement membership: Transport & General Workers Union, UNISON and University & College Union. Also I am currently a member of the Communist Party of Britain and was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

My view of the world is shaped by a Marxist analysis. From this perspective the capitalist neoliberal world we live in is *'palpably deficient'* (Green, 2003: 97). Capitalism is defined by a particular form of exploitation (Malott & Ford, 2015). This exploitation is the result of the interaction between the existing class divided structure of our society and the free market profit seeking form of economic organisation, which characterises the capitalist social formation and the social relations which it produces (Wright, 2005). The result is that neoliberal capitalism produces *'...a world of escalating social divisions, injustice and oppression, with an environment in varying stages of ecological decay'* (Allman 2010: 1). For example, there are increasing concentrations of income, wealth, and privilege in fewer hands and as a direct consequence, expanding human disadvantage poverty and degradation. There are significant differences in educational attainment or life expectancy between the richest and the poorest in capitalist societies and these circumstances reflect the impact of wider, deep seated, historically located social, political and economic discrimination and injustice based on class, gender or race (see Wright, 2005, Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, Hill & Kumar 2012, Walker, 2012, Piketty, 2014, Dorling, 2015). For Marxists, capitalism creates the conditions in which the full human flourishing of the majority of people is severely limited or denied (Allman, 2001, Wright, 2005).

Moreover, through the use of ideology, the cumulative effect of capitalist social relations produces in the majority of people, an uncritical way of interpreting the world in which they see and accept these exploitative and unjust material conditions as natural and inevitable. Marxists see this lack of awareness as the

means by which these human limiting social relations and supporting ideology are reproduced and sustained. To paraphrase Allman (2001: 16), our humanity is impoverished as our consciousness is uncritical. Crucially for the ontological position of this thesis, education plays a prominent and dual role in this analysis as both the problem and the solution to this situation. The education system currently plays a key role in reproducing and maintaining the status quo and its supporting ideology, in part, through the dominance of an educational approach which frames citizenship in its minimal conception and so, in general, produces uncritical, 'responsible' citizens who accept things as they are. But, from some Marxist perspectives, schools can also be 'sites of struggle' (Harvie 2006: 26 see also Sarup, 1982) where educators can create pedagogical niches that promote a maximal conception of citizenship which facilitates the development of critically aware, active citizens, who can examine the world around them and if required, take thoughtful action to challenge and change things and work towards social justice.

It is this formative role of education to either reproduce the status quo or facilitate its transformation that is a focus of this thesis. More specifically, echoing the contested nature of education, Freire (1985) reminds us that education is not neutral and argues that educators should recognise this essentially normative and binary nature of education and make a choice about which side they are on. Therefore, I am interested in uncovering and contributing to knowledge that can help those interested in critical citizenship education to challenge 'minimal' conceptions and develop and sustain 'maximal' ones.

2.4. Framing the Key Problem

This study is concerned with exploring how some young people learnt about democracy and became active citizens. Yet as noted above, citizenship and citizenship education (hereafter referred to as CE) are contested concepts and these disputes are set in the context of a world of considerable injustice and inequality (Walker, 2012, Greaves, *et al.*, 2007). Interest in CE has now become an important focus for education policy and practice across the UK and internationally (Kerr *et al.*, 2008, Osler and Starkey, 2006). For example, in Scotland it is now one of the four key priorities of education (Munn and Arnott, 2009 or Biesta, 2013). Therefore, within these circumstances, the problem this study frames and aims to engage with is this; given the priority of CE in Scotland, how should we best educate young people to become active citizens who can contribute to developing and sustaining a vibrant democratic culture and help to creating a more socially just world?

This increased interest in CE is in part informed by a 'paradigm of disengagement' (Farthing, 2010). According to this perspective, young people are seen as lacking in knowledge and understanding of democracy and they are assumed to be apathetic and increasingly disinterested and disengaged from the political and democratic process (Henn & Foard, 2014, Farthing, 2010, Osler and Starkey, 2006). There is concern from some politicians and policy makers that unless young people are encouraged to learn about and engage with the democratic process then this disinterest and disengagement could persist into adulthood resulting in increasingly lower turnouts at elections in future. Consequently, this raises questions about the future legitimacy and

operation of our democracy and political institutions (Hooghe, 2004, Russell *et al.*, 2002).

Certainly, research evidence suggests that 18-24-year-olds are less likely to vote in elections than older cohorts (Phelps, 2005, Fieldhouse *et al.*, 2007). However, it is important to note that the existence and extent of this disengagement paradigm is challenged. Other research suggests that whilst young people may be disengaged from the formal political process, they are not apathetic or disinterested '*per se*'. They are more likely to be engaged actively in more informal, single issue or consumer activism such as demonstrations, boycotts, on-line petitions or direct action. The ongoing world-wide climate strikes by young people are the most current evidence for this. Therefore, young people are not necessarily apathetic, they just appear more cynical, less trusting and unwilling to engage with formal political processes and institutions and they feel marginalised by them (See Henn & Foard, 2012 or Sloam, 2012). Nevertheless, these notions of apathy, disengagement and cynicism help explain the current interest and policy priority of CE.

The overall goal of CE is to encourage active involvement in political, economic, social and cultural life. In the Scottish context Biesta (2013: 101) claims that the key conceptual principles, purpose and outcomes of CE that inform today's approach were established in an important policy paper, 'Education for Citizenship: A Paper for Discussion and Consultation (LTS, 2000). For example, this paper set out that young people are seen as '*citizens of today*' (LTS, 2002: 8) with the rights and responsibilities that go along with this status.

So on leaving school they should not only have knowledge and understanding of democracy, its institutions and processes, but also have the capacity and motivation to participate actively in the democratic and decision-making process, and if necessary take morally and ethically informed action to influence change and work towards social justice.

Yet for some, the interpretation of the conception, content and practice of CE is problematic and contested on epistemological and pedagogical grounds. As noted above, there are contradictory conceptions of citizenship (see also, Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, Veugelers, 2007 or Johnson & Morris, 2010) and these inform how CE is understood and taught. Commenting on how CE is framed in the Scottish context Biesta (2013: 100) reminds us that it, *'...is not neutral or inevitable...but rather a particular position within the available spectrum of conceptions of democratic citizenship and citizenship education'*. Furthermore, in relation to pedagogy a study by Spanring (2008: 47) showed that one of the problems with CE is *'...down to the inadequate content and method of citizenship education at school...'*

These critical accounts of CE match my own professional practice experience in the field of Community Education in Scotland. I have worked with a range of young people who have been through formal schooling during the period when citizenship learning has been a priority. Yet at the beginning of my work with them they often demonstrated little or no knowledge of, or interest in, the political and democratic process. For example, as one male 16 year old participant commented (Moir: 2011):

At the beginning when they came in and said about politics a thought “aw naw man”, but honestly looking back to how a used to be a was stupid hinking politics didn’t affect me, thanks to the course a now know it does and a have a voice and a plan to use it for the good.

This represents a common theme from the evaluations of ‘Learning for Democracy’ courses I taught in a college of further education. It would seem that despite the participants’ initial lack of knowledge and interest in the topic, this learning experience, shaped by a critical pedagogy approach, had some impact on the development of their understanding of, and attitude towards, becoming active. This initial lack of knowledge and interest also suggests that the citizenship learning these young people had previously experienced, particularly within the context of their formal schooling and the priority it is given in policy, was ineffective. I would argue that this apathy and lack of knowledge towards democratic participation and politics may be partly explained by the particular approach to CE that they encountered. In other words, was it a maximal or a minimal interpretation? Biesta (2013) offers a useful insight here. He argues that the minimal or ‘personally responsible’ conception of CE is dominant in Scottish policy and practice. Moreover, for Biesta this conception is ultimately seen as being unsuitable for advancing democracy and as a result, this risks undermining the ability of CE to fully meet the policy ambition set for it in Scotland.

Biesta’s analysis and my practice experience described above, helps illustrate the problem of CE that this thesis aims to explore. Specifically, the priority for policy is claimed to be learning which encourages active involvement in the democratic and political process and which promotes a commitment to social

justice. Nonetheless, despite this ambition, a minimal conception, focusing on personal responsibility is dominant, contributing to my experience of young people who appear disinterested and apathetic in political and civic activity. In the context of an unjust and unequal world, my interest in this thesis concerned identifying and developing with research participants ‘emancipatory knowledge’ (See Comstock 1982 or Carspecken, 1996). That is knowledge in relation to citizenship education that can offer an *‘...understanding of how alternative pedagogic and curricular arrangements can yield more egalitarian relations and processes in education and society’* (Ferrare, 2009: 456).

2.5. Research Questions and Approach

To identify this emancipatory knowledge I recruited some young people who were already politically active, critically conscious citizens, committed to social justice and then ‘worked backwards’ (Kane, 2007) to uncover what they considered to be the key factors that contributed to their development as political activists. Therefore, my main interest in this thesis is to answer this central question: how did these young political activists learn to become active and critical citizens? To focus the study and take it forward the following specific research questions were addressed.

1. What were the significant factors that account for these young people becoming politically active?
2. In what ways and to what extent did their educational experiences, particularly pedagogical processes and curricular content, encourage or hinder their becoming active?

By 'educational experiences' I do not just mean the education associated with formal schooling, I also mean informal or non-formal learning experiences where '*...informal education is the lifelong process in which people learn from their everyday experience, and informal education is organised activity outside formal systems*' (Smith, 2006: 15). In addition to these research questions I was also interested in answering the following supplementary one:

3. How and to what extent did their experience of education for citizenship in their formal schooling influence their motivation to become active?

To answer these questions I adopt a critical research approach. For the avoidance of doubt, my understanding and use of the term 'critical' does not just refer to the commonly used meaning concerning the objective systematic questioning and analysis of knowledge claims. Rather, critical research is specifically informed by the theoretical and philosophical traditions of Marxist social theory and it is deployed to critique capitalist social relations in the interest of those exploited, marginalised and disadvantaged by these relations. Therefore, in the context of the 'palpable deficiency' of our contemporary capitalist society, I think a critical research approach is not only an appropriate form of enquiry for this thesis, but also a moral and ethical necessity. I think so for two reasons. Firstly, it is consistent with my ontological and political orientation. Secondly, a critical approach to research is not only concerned with examining, problematising and explaining inequality and injustice, but it also seeks to develop knowledge that can inform action to challenge and overturn these circumstances and work towards a more socially just world (Carspecken,

1996, Crotty, 2015). I discuss and justify this approach in detail in chapter 4, but I will give an overview of how I conducted the research next.

I undertook a qualitative approach in which I recruited 17 young political activists. My original design had incorporated a series of qualitative focus group interviews, but logistical difficulties and the associated time constraints I encountered in recruiting participants meant I had to redesign my approach and so I was unable to conduct focus groups. Therefore, the data I collected is the product of one individual in depth interview with each participant. My rationale for identifying and recruiting the participants was fundamentally informed by my political orientation, in an epistemological and a practical sense. Given my Left political orientation and my critical and transformative purpose, I chose to recruit participants who would be more likely share this perspective and my purpose. Additionally, the research literature identifies a gap in knowledge in relation to the underrepresentation of young left wing political activist who are Party members (Gordon & Taft, 2011, Rainsford, 2013). Recruiting these activists helps me address and fill that gap in knowledge. For practical reasons I chose young people who were already active in the broad Labour and trade union movement. This is because I am already active in this movement myself and have well established connections with some organisations and their key gatekeepers. Therefore, I could use my 'insider' status to help gain easier and more effective access to these organisations and their young members than someone who is from outside the movement.

I recruited young people from the following organisations: eight from Scottish Labour Young Socialists: six from the Young Communist League and three from the Trade Union Movement. In addition to their political orientation the participants had to have attended Scottish high schools and be between the ages of 16 and 27 at the time of the data collection (2017). This would ensure that I was working with young people who had been at school when education for citizenship was a priority. To analyse the data I collected I applied a thematic analysis method drawn from Braun and Clarke (2013).

2.6. Summary of Findings

My findings present comprehensive answers to the research questions I set. Some of my findings contribute to and confirm the existing knowledge and understandings presented in the literature. However, significantly I identify some new knowledge and insights. My findings will be summarised briefly below, broadly organised around the research questions.

Research Question 1: How Did the Young Activists Account for Their Activism?

Political socialisation is the informal learning process social scientists use to explain how young people develop an initial interest and understanding of political issues and develop a political identity. The research literature shows that this process is facilitated by a number of socialising agents, such as the family, schools, peers, the media or the church. I identified four important socialising agents for these participants: Family, peers, music and their schooling. Principal amongst these is the family. A number of studies

(Jennings, 2007, Casciano, 2007) show that children growing up in households where politics is discussed and where parents or members of their extended family are politically active are more likely to become interested and active themselves. This is reflected in my findings as all but three of the participants cited growing up in a political household as a key reason for their interest in politics, their political identify and their activism.

Peer relationships were important for seven of these activists. Four of these had grown up in households where politics was discussed. Yet, there was no evidence of political activity among their parents when they were growing up. This early socialisation seems to have predisposed them to seeking out peers who were interested and active in politics and these peer relationships became important by building on this early socialisation in the household to encourage their activism. Importantly, the other three activists did not grow up in political households. Their peer relationships, in part, acted in a similar way as the family in that politics was discussed and activity witnessed and so this appeared to compensate for their deficit of a political family. Music is something that is overlooked in most of the literature on political socialisation. So my findings here help to fill this gap in knowledge. Music was cited by four young people as being their primary socialising agent. Although this is a small proportion of my participants, it was very significant for them. Their engagement with music went beyond just listening to or singing songs with their friends but moved on to a deeper reading, analysis and research of the lyrics and the ideas that lie behind them. This process raised their awareness of political ideas that connected to their lived experience and ultimately encouraged their move to activism.

Education and in particular school was an important socialising agent for some of these activists. Yet my analysis reveals this was a complex relationship. I will briefly discuss the school and its influence in the next section. It is important to note that the political formation of these activists was often the result of the interaction between two or more of these socialising agents.

My findings identify two other key factors which supported the participants transition to activism. All participants display the concept of political efficacy. That is the sense that people have about how their involvement in the political process being worthwhile and their confidence that the political system is open to influence and change. In particular this political efficacy is informed by strong emotions. I identified an anger at the injustices and inequalities they see around them and a sense of solidarity and empathy with those disadvantaged. The result is a commitment to get involved to change things. In this way this efficacy is driven by a deep commitment to social justice that all participants have. The other factor is what is conceptualised as 'critical moments' (Thomson *et al.*, 2002). These are events that have significance in people's lives. For my participants, two important political events motivated them to become politically active:

- the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014
- the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party in 2015.

Research Question 2 & 3: Role of Education

The participants experience of education and in particular their encounters with formal schooling and citizenship education were mixed. For a small proportion

of participants, the non-formal educational experiences they had with trade unions, political parties or peers were seen as positive and supportive to their activism, but not the cause of it. Nonetheless given the age of the cohort, their formal schooling features significantly in all the interviews. Given that education for citizenship was a key priority for education during their schooling, then it is noteworthy that only seven of these young political activists cited the formal school curriculum as supporting their activism and only one cited it as a primary reason. Two activists cited school as important to their activism, but this was as a result of the negative experiences they had, not any citizenship education they encountered. The remaining eight activists did not cite the formal school as contributing to their activism at all. The extra-curricular activities provided by schools was seen to be important for some activists, specifically, debating clubs, pupil councils and volunteering opportunities. In most cases those who mentioned extra-curricular activities were also those who thought they had benefited from their formal experiences. Yet, there is an exception to this as one participant cites the extra-curricular debating club as the primary source of his political socialisation. This demonstrates the compensatory effect schools can have on those who do not grow up in a political family. In general, most participants' awareness of any form of clearly identifiable citizenship education was low or non-existent. Additionally, those that cited the formal school curriculum as important could identify some citizenship education that was crucial to their development, but this was limited to a very narrow range of subject areas, mainly Modern Studies².

² Modern studies is a subject in the Scottish secondary school curriculum. The focus is to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of contemporary political and social issues from local to international contexts. It is compulsory in the first two years of secondary schooling, but a student course option in subsequent years.

In relation to the political orientation informing this thesis, my findings reveal evidence of the reproductive role of education and a narrow employability purpose. Nonetheless, the findings also provide support for the idea that, in some circumstances, schools can also be sites of struggle. By presenting the voices of these activists, my findings offer qualitative insights to help illuminate how these processes work on people. For instance, some participants discuss how their overwhelming experience of formal education was just focused on passing exams and gaining the qualifications to get a job. With little engagement in study that would develop their critical awareness of the world around them. Alternatively, some participants did identify influential teachers who were able to engage them in learning about the world through critical discussion and debate and the promotion of democratic and political participation. Moreover, my findings draw on the participants' experiences to highlight the pedagogical approaches that they thought either supported or hindered their development as political activists. Authoritarian or hierarchical relationships between teachers and pupils and rote learning and uncritical content were not supportive. But open class room discussions, more equal classroom relationships and some critical engagement with students' lived experience of material inequality or injustice was cited as supporting the development of critical awareness, and fuelling a desire for activism.

2.7. Overview of Thesis Chapters

I will give a brief summary of the focus of each chapter, but I want to begin by making clear the approach I used to present the words of the participants in these chapters. The majority of the young people I interviewed spoke in a

mixture of standard English and the Scottish dialect. I wanted to offer to the reader the authentic voice of each participant and so I have not translated their Scots words or phrases into English. However, although all interviews were transcribed verbatim, I do present some edited quotations. A quotation will be edited for two reasons. Firstly, to include only the relevant parts of the section of text. Secondly, to ease the reading of the quotation I have removed some of the hesitation, false starts, repetitions or stumbles.

In the next two chapters (3 & 4) I review the key literature I have drawn on and which informs this thesis, and I give my ethical position in relation to social research and present a detailed overview of the methodology and methods I adopted to answer my research questions. Then the following four chapters present and critically analyse the concepts and key themes I developed from the data I collected. Chapter 5 introduces the concept of political socialisation and discusses the key primary socialising agents I identify as important for these participants: the family; peer relationships and music. Chapter 6 builds on the previous chapter. Political socialisation relates to the 'micro' level individual and internal process of learning and formation. Nonetheless, for a full account of why people become active then a 'macro' level of analysis needs to be applied to take account of the wider social, political and economic factors that act on any individual and shape their development. This chapter identifies and explores two macro factors that influenced these activists, those of political efficacy and its connection to social justice, and the critical moments of the Scottish Independence Referendum and the election of Jeremy Corbyn. Chapter 7 presents a detailed analysis of the effect the educational experiences

of these participants had on their political socialisation and their development as political activists. I examine the role of the formal taught curriculum and the informal extra-curricular activities that schools provide. I also briefly consider the role of non-formal and informal education. The role and effectiveness of citizenship education is also considered. Chapter 8 builds on the previous chapter and draws out and discusses four particular elements I consider important in informing the theory and practice of a curriculum for a critical citizenship education. These are: the role of the influential teacher and the school as a site of struggle; a review of the pedagogical approaches that can support or hinder activism, namely banking and problem posing approaches, the importance of extra-curricular activities, and the need to include in the curricular content of citizenship education the lived experience of students. Chapter 9 presents a review of my findings and offers what I think are some implications that follow from these findings.

3. UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS: CONCEPTS, THEORIES & POLICY CONTEXT

3.1. Introduction

In this thesis I demonstrate how the young people involved became political activists and assess the role their educational experience played in this. Crucially, in doing so, I have explored their development as activists in the context of education for citizenship being a priority in national education systems, with particular reference to Scotland. Nonetheless, my aspiration in this thesis is not just to explain citizenship education, but to offer a contribution to the critique of citizenship education that will help to transform its purpose and practice. Furthermore, this critique is set in a context of a society that is characterised by significant injustice and inequality and this situation is sustained by educational practice that fails to facilitate the critical questioning of this situation. This chapter will therefore introduce and discuss the key concepts I have used to analyse and explain the emergence of political activists. I will then highlight some key debates in the literature on CE relevant to this study and explore some of the related theoretical ideas and policy contexts that inform the differing conceptions, purposes and practices of CE. I will end by introducing some theoretical and pedagogical concepts from the critical tradition of education which frame this study and have helped analyse the data. These concepts and ideas are offered as ‘resources of hope’ (Williams, 1989) to those engaged in critical educational practice and working towards social justice.

This section is presented in five parts:

3.2. I will review a number of conceptual ideas that social scientists use to explain how people develop an interest in politics and become political activists.

I have drawn on these ideas to frame this study, specifically, I will discuss the concepts of political socialisation, political efficacy and critical moments.

3.3. Education, particularly for citizenship, is seen as a contributing factor in the development of politically literate and active citizens. And as such it features prominently in education policy. I therefore explore the wider context of CE by focusing on three areas; the explanations for the current prominence of CE in policy; the key developments in the approach in the UK, with particular reference to the Scottish context and the criticisms of the approach taken in Scotland.

3.4. I will then introduce a key conceptual framework I have used to understand citizenship and CE, namely McLaughlin's (1992) maximal and minimal interpretations of citizenship. This framework helps to highlight some fundamental tensions at the heart of liberal democracy and so I will identify and explore these tensions and the implications they have for CE. This section will also briefly introduce and discuss Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) influential tripartite typology for categorising conceptions of CE and this typology will be used to identify and explore the dominant conception in Scotland.

3.5. To understand CE fully, one has to understand the relationship between democracy, education and the economy and so this relationship will be explored. In particular, I will identify how the dominant political and economic discourse of neoliberalism influences CE by valorising one form of citizen; what Westheimer and Kahne (2004) call the personally responsible Citizen.

3.6. Lastly, my aim with this study is not only to show how some young people became politically active, but also to offer insight into how the practice of CE can be transformed into a more critical approach that promotes critical consciousness and social justice. Hence, I will identify and discuss some of the key theoretical and pedagogical ideas that can inform a critical CE approach and which offers an alternative to a CE which promotes the personally responsible Citizen.

3.2. Explaining Political Activism: Some Key Concepts

A number of authors draw attention to the fact that the study of people's motivations to become active in political and civic affairs is interdisciplinary, drawing on insights and concepts from the literature of both political science and psychology (See for example Sapiro, 2004, Beaumont, 2010 or Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014). Some of these insights and concepts have been useful in my interpretation of the data this thesis has generated and I introduce and explore these in the following section.

I begin this section by discussion political socialisation; the formative informal learning experiences that helps to develop an interest in political affairs. However, it should be noted that there are some differences of opinion reflected in the minutiae of the literature on political activism, particularly the relationship between political socialisation and participation. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a general consensus that political socialisation and political participation are related (Quintelier, 2011). However, fundamentally, political socialisation describes an internal developmental and learning process at an

individual or micro level (see, Sapiro, 2004 or Owen 2008). Yet, political activism is stimulated by and involves knowledgeable and interested individuals or groups interacting with other people and the world around them. Therefore, political socialisation from an individual micro perspective lacks a full account of the material conditions of the wider social, political and economic context of the world around any individual. So, to fully understand the move to political activism, studies would gain from also looking at the '*macro level system and societal factors*' (Owen 2008: 14). The literature highlights a number of these 'macro factors' which assist or motivate a move from interested inactivity to political activism and I draw on two factors which I have identified as being crucial in the development of these activists. The first of these macro factors is the concept of political efficacy; the crucial and inter-related sense which drives and sustains activism, that is, people have a desire for change and they also have the confidence that the political system is open to change. The second macro factor is the notion of 'a critical moment' or 'period effect'; a significant and distinct political event which stimulates interest and galvanises political activism.

3.2.1. Political Socialisation

One of the central aims of this thesis is to show how the young activists involved account for their interest and active engagement in the democratic and political process. The health and sustainability of any democratic polity in part relies on the participation of its citizens. At a minimum, the claim of legitimacy made by elected governments and the institutions of the political system rests on citizens turning out to vote in elections. But, for any democracy to fully function and

flourish, it also requires its citizens to go beyond this minimal form of interest and political participation to engage in other repertoires of political activism. For example; contacting or lobbying elected officials, joining and participating in the work and activity of political parties, trade unions or voluntary and community organisations or campaigning, demonstrating or protesting (see Norris, 2011 or Teorell *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, given the crucial role of participation and activism in sustaining any democratic system, it would seem that being clear about the ways people develop and sustain the necessary desires and habits to be active would be important for any democracy. As Sapiro (2004: 4) states, *'Surely the question of how people develop their basic set of skills, orientations and practices and how their experiences shape their politics are as pressing as ever'*.

One of the ways political science has sought to answer the question of how a propensity for political participation is developed in people is through an examination of the concept of political socialisation. This concept is theorised as having a significant causal relationship with political participation (see Quintelier, 2011). Political socialisation describes how the political culture of a society is transmitted to a new generation (see Almond & Verba, 1963, Jennings 2007, Owen, 2008). It is generally understood as a mainly informal social learning process usually situated in young peoples' formative life experiences and which is the result of their interactions with a range of socialising agents, that is the people and institutions around us (see Neundorf & Smets, 2017). Political socialisation, according to Merelman (1986: 279) is a

process in which people ‘...*acquire relatively enduring orientations toward politics in general and toward their own political system*’.

The literature on political socialisation identifies a broad range of socialising agents, yet five stand out as common across the literature. For example, parents and family are often seen as the most important. In addition, schooling and education, peer relationships, membership of voluntary associations and television and the media also feature as significant (see for example Almond & Verba, 1963, Jennings & Niemi, 1974, Norris, 2011 or Quintelier, 2015).

As noted above, one useful way of understanding how the process of political socialisation works on young people is through a social learning concept in relation to the family. For instance, drawing originally from the work of Hess and Torney (1968), Verba *et al.* (2003) highlight three learning models that are relevant to socialisation; *accumulation*, *identification* and *interpersonal*. The *accumulation model* relates to parents and family members directly raising their children’s awareness of political issues and transmitting their preferred values and attitudes about politics, through for example engaging in political talk and discussion. The *identification model* involves parents demonstrating by role modelling political behaviours such as their participation in civic and political activity. As a result, the young people are more likely to go on to develop these attributes and dispositions and emulate this behaviour. The *interpersonal transfer model* concerns the implicit lessons young people learn from the particular nature of the social relationships that exist in their family, particularly in relation to power. For example, to what extent are the family relationships

democratic or authoritarian, what level of autonomy are children given, to what extent are they encouraged to share their opinion. These internal dynamics of family life can encourage or discourage future political interest and behaviour. I think it is important to note that whilst Verba *et al.* (2003) deploy this learning model concept in relation to the family, I have extended it to help understand another socialising agent identified in this study, peer relationships.

3.2.2. Political Efficacy

Political socialisation relates to the individual or micro level of analysis explaining why people become interested in politics. But to understand the reasons for someone's activism then a macro level of analysis is required that takes into account how societal factors interact with any individual. Political efficacy is one such 'macro' factor. Political efficacy, or lack of it, relates to our sense of feeling powerful or powerless in the political process. Commentary and analysis of public attitudes to our political system are often characterised by reference to a lack of trust, disillusionment, cynicism, apathy, fatalism or ignorance (For example see Hay 2007 or Morrell, 2003). This lack of trust in the political process and politicians, the lack of knowledge and the apathy or cynicism that is often displayed, also reflects a deep lack of political efficacy. This can help account for non-engagement in political affairs. Conversely, the presence of a strong sense of political efficacy is a key contributing factor in explaining someone's active involvement in civic and political participation (Norris 2011, Valentino, *et al.*, 2008). Political efficacy is used in both the political socialisation and psychology literature and is characterised as having a dual character. It is made up of two components; internal efficacy and external

efficacy. Internal efficacy relates to an individual's sense that their direct involvement and actions in the political process can contribute to or influence some change in the decision-making process of politicians, organisations or government policy. External efficacy relates to an individual's sense that political change in the prevailing system is possible, that the political process, organisations, government policy or society are responsive to the influence and actions of individuals and groups (See Schugurensky, 2000, Beaumont, 2010 or Watts *et al.*, 2011).

3.2.3. Critical Moments

The second important macro factor that helps to explain the activism of some of the young people in this study is the importance of what are termed critical moments. I used a life history approach (Miller, 2000 or Holford & Edirisingha, 2000) in my interviews with these activists to help identify critical moments that contributed to their activism. For Thomson *et al.* (2002: 339) a critical moment is an '*...event described in an interview that either the researcher or the interviewee sees as having important consequences for their lives and identities*'. I identify three of these critical moments, the Scottish Independence referendum and the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the British Labour Party were the most frequently cited but for one young activist it was the Iraq war. These moments were experienced and had an effect on each of these individuals, but they were of course not just moments that affected these young people alone. As such, these critical moments also resemble what the literature on political activism describes as period effects. For Norris (2003) these events can be a '*...major historical event which had a decisive impact*

upon all citizens in a society at one point in time'. This concept therefore accounts for the political attitudes or behaviour of people being influenced by a particular and distinct economic or political situation or event in a society at any one time (Neundorf & Smets, 2017, p 14). Neundorf and Smets argue that unlike age or cohort effects, which relate only to specific sections of the population with a range of characteristics in common, these period effects are idiosyncratic and usually have the potential to make an impact across the whole population, not any sub set of it

3.3. Policy Context: Explanations for the Prominence of Citizenship

Education

Osler and Starkey (2006) highlight the renewed interest in CE, both in the UK and internationally. By drawing on a systematic review of the literature between 1995 and 2005, they identify 'six contextual factors' which explain this growth in interest. I will briefly summarise these six factors below.

The first factor relates to the notion that education should contribute to helping people understand and challenge global injustice and inequality. This is influenced by the recognition that there is a growing link between inequality and injustice, and the growth in terrorist movements across the world. A key policy driver here is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which contains within it an aim for education focused on developing respect for human rights and freedoms and to equip people to live a responsible life in a free society.

The second factor relates to the educational response to globalisation and the resultant migration. As nation states and geographic communities become increasingly multicultural, there is a tension between the need for education to promote national unity and the need to include and accommodate increasing cultural diversity. Therefore, to nurture social cohesion, CE should help promote a set of democratic values and ideals such as human rights, justice, equality and tolerance of diversity that all citizens can support and embrace.

The third factor relates to the 'paradigm of disengagement': the perceived reduction in the civic and political engagement of young people. This paradigm views young people as apathetic, ignorant and indifferent to the political process. As Biesta (2011: 12) comments, young people are seen as lacking the *'...proper knowledge and skills, the right values and correct dispositions to be the citizens that they should be'*.

The fourth factor focuses on another perceived youth deficit, this time in relation to their lack of appropriate morals and values. For example, there is widespread public concern about the perceived rise of a range of risky and problematic behaviour such as alcohol consumption, drug taking and sexual behaviour amongst some young people. All of which are seen as emphasising a need for CE to help young people develop the appropriate views, values and morals (The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998: 15).

The fifth contextual factor leads on from the end of the Cold War and the subsequent rise and development of democratic states across the world. CE is

seen here as a key means of helping to develop and sustain these new democracies.

The sixth factor comes from the need to address the rise in anti-democratic and racist movements, particularly in Europe. Anti-racism is therefore seen as an important element of and motivation for CE.

Not all of these factors are as relevant or play an equal role in shaping the interest in CE in particular nations. In the Scottish context I would suggest that all but the fifth factor, focused on rebuilding democracy after the Cold War, are relevant. In addition, some of the key themes reflected here such as social justice and equality, human and children's rights and anti-racism resonate directly with the wider intellectual project of this study. Importantly for this study, there can be a tension between some of the intended aims of these contextual factors. Specifically, this tension relates to the perceived purpose of CE. For example, one factor emphasises respecting rights and helping young people learn knowledge and skills to participate actively in the democratic process. Yet for another there is a concern about anti-social behaviour which leads to a focus on moral duties and individual responsibilities. For Wood (2009: 149) *'Citizenship education, in this mould becomes nothing more than a programme of addressing a young person's individual political, social and moral deficits'*. I will now turn to discuss the policy developments for CE in the United Kingdom (UK) with particular reference to Scotland.

3.3.1. Citizenship Education: Main Developments in the UK & Scottish Policy

Context

According to Munn and Arnott (2009) the work of Bernard Crick has had a significant role in shaping the theory, practice and goals of CE across the constituent parts of the UK. In particular they identify three key goals; *'developing political literacy, community involvement and social and moral responsibility in young people'*. Munn and Arnott (2009) also point out that four of the contextual factors outlined by Osler and Starkey (2006) have influenced developments in CE in Scotland specifically, the challenge of inequality, the perceptions of youth deficits in political engagement and morals, and the focus on rights and social justice education.

The key policy development in Scotland began in 1999 when the Scottish Executive established a working group to report on how Scotland could develop education for citizenship. In 2002 this working group produced a report for discussion and consultation (LTS, 2000) and then a more substantial paper in 2002 titled 'Education for Citizenship: A Paper for Discussion and Development' (LTS, 2002). A range of further influential papers and reports were produced which focused on the development and implementation of the ideas in the 2000 and 2002 LTS papers (see HMIE, 2003 & 2006, Scottish Executive, 2004). The result of these policy developments is that Education for Citizenship and the ability of young people to develop the capacity to become an active and responsible citizen has been an educational policy priority in Scotland since 2002 and it is imbedded, teleologically, in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (See, Munn & Arnot, 2009, Biesta, 2013, Riddell, 2016). Biesta

(2013) has critically examined the Scottish policy discourse relating to citizenship education and singles out the 2002 LTS paper as the most important. He argues this document set out how citizenship and citizenship education should be understood, as well as setting out the framework for further developments that shaped and informed practice.

Biesta's analysis highlights the stated purpose, central ideas and intended outcomes which inform education for citizenship. I have drawn on Biesta's interpretation to interrogate the data from this study. This has helped me make sense of the development of the young activists involved as I note some parallels between their development and the intentions of policy. For instance, an important and fundamental concept framing citizenship in Scotland is that young people '*...should be regarded as citizens of today rather than citizens in waiting*' (LTS, 2002: 8). Furthermore, young people learn most about citizenship when they are actively involved in the process (LTS, 2002: 3) and so schools should function in ways that promote democracy and democratic relationships, including enabling young people to apply their rights and responsibilities. Developing young people's capability for citizenship also includes the need for the development of political views and values. Yet the LTS paper also recognised that conflicts in values and power relationships exist and so young people would need to develop a critical awareness of these ideas and values. As Munn and Arnott (2009: 447) argue, the report saw developing '*critical autonomy*' in young people as a key element in helping them understand and actively apply their citizenship. And so in the Scottish context, citizenship is understood as being '*...about making informed choices and*

decisions, and about taking action, individually and as part of collective processes... (LTS, 2002: 8). This capacity to make decisions and '*...where appropriate take action*', should be infused with a sense of social and environmental responsibility (LTS, 2002: 11).

Following on from these principles and values, the overall aim of education for citizenship in Scotland is to develop active and responsible citizens who have the '*...capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life*' (ibid: 11). The ability of young people to develop this capability is rooted in their becoming politically literate through achieving a series of learning outcomes that include; *knowledge and understanding, skills and competencies* and *values and dispositions*. These outcomes express some important ideas relevant to my thesis and so I will briefly unpack and examine them here.

In relation to *knowledge and skills*, it is recognised that to be responsible citizens, young people need to '*...base their opinions on a critical evaluation and balanced interpretation of evidence...*' and to do so they require '*...knowledge of political, social, economic and cultural ideas and phenomena*' and they need to be '*...aware of the complexity of the economic, ethical and social issues and dilemmas that confront people*' (ibid: 12). The *skills and competencies* required for responsible citizenship fundamentally relate to the development of young peoples' political efficacy, although this concept is not explicitly referred to in the document. So, for example, this outcome relates to young people developing the necessary core skills and dispositions to facilitate

their participation such as, '*...self-esteem, confidence, initiative, determination and emotional maturity...*' (ibid: 13) and in turn these core skills will help them become skilled and competent as citizens, which means citizens '*...feeling empowered, knowing and valuing one's potential for positive action and being generally prepared to take a constructive and proactive approach to issues and problems*' (ibid: 13). In relation to values and dispositions, these skilled and competent citizens should also develop '*...the ability to recognise and respond thoughtfully to values and value judgements that are part and parcel of political, economic, social and cultural life...*' and so education for citizenship should cultivate '*...a number of personal qualities and dispositions rooted in values of respect and care for self, for others and for the environment...*' (ibid: 13) such as by understanding and valuing '*...social justice, recognising that what counts as social justice is itself contentious...*' and that they should '*...confront views and actions that are harmful to the wellbeing of individuals and communities*' (ibid: 14).

This brief overview of some of the core principles, values and ideas that characterise citizenship education in Scotland would seem to reflect a maximal conception with ideas such as developing critical awareness, active participation and taking action being prominent. However, there are some criticisms made which suggest that a minimal conception is a more accurate description of the Scottish approach.

3.3.2. Criticism of the Scottish Approach

Biesta (2013) makes some important criticisms of the way CE is conceived of and practised. I will draw on two here. He claims there is a strong individualist tendency in the Scottish approach, which sees citizenship as an individual rather than a collective responsibility. The emphasis is on developing the appropriate capacities and values to participate individually in society, but not to challenge the existing norms. Linked to this criticism, Biesta also argues that despite the rhetoric of taking action and developing critical awareness, this emphasis on individual responsibility limits the potential for developing effective political action for change. Therefore, he argues that CE, as it is conceived and subsequently practised, is at risk of being individualised and apolitical, by focusing on young people's individual responsibilities and underplaying the need to help them to learn about and promote their active political engagement in the issues that affect their lives. This it is not something unique to Scotland. For example, in the English context, Cunningham and Lavalette (2004: 258) make a similar criticism about this individualistic and apolitical tendency as they claim young people are *'...seen as problems to be managed, moulded and reformed rather than as active citizens capable of thinking and making decisions about issues that concern them'*.

What lies behind these critiques is the notion that citizenship and CE are 'essentially contested' concepts which *'...inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users'* (Gallie, 1956: 169). Citizenship and CE are not neutral. The particular approach adopted at any one time represents a choice from a spectrum of different, and often diametrically

opposed, interpretations of citizenship (Biesta, 2013). Citizenship and CE therefore embody ambiguities and tensions in both how the concepts are understood and especially about their purposes.

3.4. Theorising Citizenship: Minimal and Maximal Interpretations

As noted above, McLaughlin (1992: 236) states that citizenship can be mapped on a continuum ranging from minimal to maximal conceptions. He argues that this range of understandings is linked to '*...different political beliefs and interpretations of democracy*'. This can be illustrated by drawing on what he claims are the four key characteristics of citizenship; the nature of the identity conferred on an individual by citizenship, the virtues that are required to be a citizen, the extent of the political involvement individuals are required to show, and lastly the particular social prerequisites necessary for effective citizenship. I will now discuss these four characteristics in turn.

In the minimal view, the nature of identity mainly relates to an individual's formal legal status and the civic rights and obligations that are conferred on them, such as being able to vote, hold a passport and having a sense of '*an unreflective nationality*' (ibid: 236). A maximal interpretation is seen in much fuller terms. It includes the need for individuals to recognise the rights and responsibilities they have as a member of civic society, yet it is also seen as being much more than this. Individuals are seen as having a critical consciousness and are part of a dynamic shared democratic culture. They also have a sense of '*the common good and fraternity*' (ibid: 236) and the active role they have in creating this. Further this notion of the common good is '*dynamic rather than static*' as it

should continually be debated and refined, particularly in recognition of the way that citizenship relates to notions of equality of access and so participation can be undermined by social disadvantage caused by class, race, gender or disability for example.

In relation to the virtues required by citizens, the minimal approach focuses on their '*loyalty and responsibility*' (ibid: 236) to be law abiding with a focus on doing good works such as volunteering or being a good neighbour. The virtues required in the maximal interpretation require '*a more extensive focus for their loyalty and responsibility*' (ibid: 236), with citizens having a responsibility for engaging in critical questioning about existing social conditions and working towards improved social justice and the empowerment of all citizens.

The political involvement of citizens in the minimal interpretation frames citizens as essentially private and passive with an obligation to vote when required. Alternatively, a citizen in maximal interpretations would be involved in much more than just voting. They would be expected to engage actively in a much more participative democratic culture and by doing so they also sustain and develop it. The social prerequisites involved in the minimal approach are simply the awarding of the legal status of citizen. In the maximal interpretation equality is the key social prerequisite. Therefore, society should do all it can to counter circumstances such as social disadvantage, which can undermine the ability of citizens to participate fully.

McLaughlin's framework problematises the underlying assumptions informing a specific conception of citizenship, and the wider purposes to which the related CE is being harnessed. Particularly, what kind of citizen is CE being deployed to create? McLaughlin (1992: 241/242) introduces two kinds of citizen, the 'autonomous' and the 'autarchic'. The autonomous citizen and their activity would be characterised by critical reasoning and, where required, a challenging of the status quo. The autonomous citizen would be associated with the maximal conception. The autarchic citizen however is framed as being more individualist and self-reliant and their activity would be more limited in scope and in particular would not extend to *'calling into question fundamental matters...such as the prevailing social and political structures'* (ibid: 241). The autarchic citizen would be associated more with the minimal conception. I find McLaughlin's framework persuasive as it resonates deeply with my own critical theoretical orientation. For example, as he presents the purpose of CE as being either minimal, pacifying people to accept the status quo or maximal, developing critical awareness to promote change.

3.4.1. Reproduction or Transformation: Citizenship Education and the Tension it Creates in Liberal Democracy

The minimal interpretations of citizenship and the types of citizen they produce have some resonance with Biesta's critique of the Scottish policy context as being apolitical, uncritical and individualized. Yet McLaughlin's conceptions of citizenship also reflect a more fundamental tension between the nature of pluralist liberal democracy and the role of CE. Carr and Hartnett (2002: 11) argue that there is a tension *'...between the 'liberal' commitment to individual*

freedom and the 'democratic' commitment to a more equitable distribution of power'. Carr and Hartnett compare and contrast what they term as the 'contemporary' conception of democracy and the 'classical' conception. Carr and Hartnett's view of contemporary conceptions of democracy see citizenship in a minimal way. For example, there is a representative democratic culture and formal notions of equality. A core principle is the development and maintenance of a social system that allows individuals to pursue their own private self-interest with a minimum of state interference. This positions citizens as little more than politically passive voters. Alternatively, for Carr and Hartnett classical conceptions of democracy frame citizens in a maximal way and encourage their active participation in the political and decision-making process. People are seen as active political beings in a participative democratic culture who share in the deliberations that shape and develop their world.

These differing conceptions of democracy, and the citizens required to populate them have a significant impact on the particular function of CE. According to McLaughlin (1992, see also Carr and Hartnett, 2002), pluralist liberal democracies like the UK are characterised by a diversity of beliefs and values, but especially a diversity in what should constitute the appropriate public virtues, identities, principles and loyalties that shape and sustain the good and just society. Consequently, there is a tension in the operation of a pluralist society between the ability of individual citizens to pursue their private lives and the extent to which this is constrained by the wider society's desire to maintain or enforce particular social norms. As there are these countervailing forces at work in a pluralist democracy there is always a difficult balance to be struck

between 'cohesiveness and diversity' in our public and private lives and the values which inform them (McLaughlin 1992: 240). McLaughlin suggests that CE in pluralist societies therefore has two principal, but contradictory roles, to enable students to develop an understanding of and commitment to the various shared public virtues and dominant ideas that characterise society, but also to encourage a critical examination of these public virtues and norms, and when required change them.

The problematic nature of CE therefore follows on from this tension, as it depends where on the minimal/maximal continuum those who are promoting CE choose to draw their particular conception of citizenship from and the purpose this education is thought to serve. Any position taken will be normative, informed by the particular view a person holds on political economy and their particular view of democracy and citizenship. However, a key test should be to what extent any approach helps to promote and sustain a vibrant democratic culture and challenge inequality and injustice, which is claimed to lie behind the recent interest in CE.

3.4.2. A Typology of Citizens: Strengths and Limitations for Citizenship

Education & Democracy

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) draw on their own empirical research in the United States to develop a typology of citizens and CE (see also Veugelers, 2007 & Johnson & Morris, 2010), which is in many ways consistent with McLaughlin's maximal and minimal conceptions. Westheimer and Kahne

suggest three types of citizen. These are; the personally responsible Citizen, the Participatory Citizen and the Justice Oriented Citizen.

These conceptions reflect different ontological and epistemological assumptions about what a good citizen is and what learning supports them. All three conceptions promote the development of individual knowledge and skills such as how democracy and government institutions work. However, the conception of the personally responsible citizen differs sharply from the other versions. Personally responsible citizenship is focused solely on building individual skills and capacities and promoting traits such as developing good character, behaving responsibly, obeying the law, volunteering and charity giving; a minimal interpretation in McLaughlin's terms. Participatory citizenship emphasises community leadership and action, whereas justice orientated citizenship, as well as involving these things, would also emphasise the development of critical awareness and structural analysis of social problems. These would be more closely aligned to a maximalist conception.

In relation to the key test of promoting and sustaining a democratic culture, Westheimer and Kahne (2004: 248) state that an exclusive emphasis on personally responsible citizenship is '*...inadequate for advancing democracy*'. They argue that whilst some of the traits associated with the personally responsible citizen, such as '*fostering honesty, good neighbourliness and so on*' (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004: 244) are in themselves good things for people living together in communities to have, they are not inherently democratic. Emphasising the problem, they go on to argue that '*...government leaders in a*

totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship' (ibid: 244).

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that the personally responsible conception is the dominant conception in the United States. My experience of the field would suggest that this is the case in Scotland as well. Biesta (2013) also argues that although drawing on elements of all three of Westheimer and Kahne conceptions '*...the Scottish approach is predominantly that of the personally responsible citizen'* (Biesta 2013: 113). The policy documents relating to Scotland could be seen to promote the idea that CE should be about creating and sustaining a '*healthy and vibrant culture of democratic participation'* (LTS, 2002: 11), where by '*taking action'* (ibid: 11) '*issues of social injustice'* and '*inequities'* will be addressed (LTS, 2002: 6). However, from my own experience and from the findings of Westheimer and Kahne and Biesta, it would seem that serious doubt is cast over the ability of CE, as it is currently conceived in Scotland, to achieve these ends.

3.5. Explaining the Dominance of the Personally Responsible Citizen:

Neoliberalism and its Impact on Citizenship Education

The dominance of a personally responsible interpretation of citizenship as an outcome of CE presents a fundamental challenge to those interested in CE's potential for developing a participative democracy and a more socially just world. However, to understand the dominance of the personally responsible citizen we need to understand the wider context from which this dominance

arises. According to Hollis *'Education is a process of shaping society a generation hence'* (quoted in Carr & Hartnett 2002: 17). Whilst I agree with Hollis regarding the formative task he suggests education can play in shaping society, I want to draw on a fundamental idea from Marxism to frame and explore this relationship further. For Marx and Engels (1976: 64) the class which controls the *'means of material production'* is also the *'ruling intellectual force'* and so as a result, this ruling class can *'...determine the extent and compass of an epoch...'*. So whilst education may play a part in shaping society, the particular nature and purpose of education at any one time is related, dialectically, to the dominant political and economic ideas of the time. Therefore, the choices we make as a society about education today can lock us into a particular set of economic, political and social relations for the future.

For many academics (Crowther, 2004, Olsen & Peters, 2005, Garret, 2009, Hill & Kumar, 2012 & Tett & Hamilton, 2019) the ruling idea that dominates the political economy of today is neoliberalism, and education policy and practice are being distinctively shaped by its particular nostrums. According to Harvey (2005: 2) neoliberalism is:

... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.

For Harvey (2005: 5) neoliberalism, by serving the interest of a small but powerful elite, exacerbates inequalities already inherent in capitalist society in which the opportunities for the majority of people to fully develop and flourish

are limited or negated. However, to help understand some of the factors sustaining the dominance of neoliberalism, it is important to look more closely at the particular relationship between the role of education and the economy that neoliberal ideas foster.

Ball (2012: 2) suggests that neoliberalism has changed how we think about the nature and purpose of education today, including CE. In relation to this thesis, one of the significant effects of this change on education is a tendency towards economic reductionism. For example, Aspin and Chapman (2000) argue that education has a 'triadic nature'. It includes an economic purpose for employability and prosperity and a personal element, which relates to an individual's personal development and growth. But it also includes a democratic element, which should foster social inclusiveness, democratic understanding, and activity which will help develop and sustain a *'more democratic polity and set of social institutions'* (ibid: 17). Yet crucially, the key for Aspin and Chapman is that these elements are interrelated and indivisible, with a *'complex interplay between all three'* (ibid: 16). However, Biesta (2006b) and Crowther (2004) argue that there has been a significant realignment in both the priorities and understandings of this triad over the last three decades.

As a result of the dominance of neoliberalism, the economic dimension has become pre-eminent in education policy, marginalising the other two dimensions of education. As Crowther (2014: 26) claims *'In these neoliberal times the justification for almost everything to do with public policy is measured in terms of its economic value'*. Tett and Hamilton (2019) reinforce this claim

by arguing that this emphasis on the economic function of education has resulted in the '*...neglect of its social and developmental responsibilities*'. Others (Coffield, 1999, Crowther, 2004, Biesta, 2006) also highlight that the purpose of education has shifted from being focused on 'learning to be', aimed at developing full, rounded humans and a socially just society, to 'learning to be productive and employable', focused on the individual development of human capital, employability and the subservience of education to needs of the economy.

This economic reductionism has important consequences for the purpose of education, and by implication, for CE in particular. Part of the neoliberal project is an attempt to remoralise society by nurturing a new sense of 'flexible' individualism which shifts the responsibility for prosperity and welfare from the state to the individual, so people will 'self-capitalise' over their lifetime (Lingard, 2009, quoted in Ball, 2012: 3). For Sennett (1999) this has fundamental implications for human beings leading to the very 'corrosion of their character'. Education is a key contributor to this remoralisation. Importantly, as Crowther (2004: 127) argues, there is a '*hidden agenda*' in this neoliberal educational discourse, which involves the creation of '*...malleable, disconnected, transient, disciplined workers and citizens*'. The result of this over emphasis on the economic dimension and on 'learning to be employable', reinforces the status quo as education becomes '*...adaptive rather than transformative...*' (Walker, 2011: 386). Rather than creating 'active subjects in politics' (Shaw & Martin 2000: 402), who can think critically about the world and their place in it so they can act to change it, the individuals who are disciplined and shaped by this

neoliberal discourse in education are positioned as 'objects of policy', that is, passive economic actors, and so they would resemble in McLaughlin's term, autarchic citizens. This is also the outcome of the dominance of a personally responsible or minimal conception of citizenship, which emphasises the individual over the collective and tends towards the creation of individualised, apolitical and uncritical citizens.

3.5.1. Democracy, the Economy and Citizenship Education: Personally Responsible Citizenship as 'Merely' Useful knowledge

Carr and Hartnett (2002: 44) argue that the purpose of specific forms of CE can be directly linked to particular concepts of citizenship, democracy and economic relations. For them the 'contemporary' or currently dominant conception of democracy reflects the '*political requirements of the market economy*'. In this context, the purpose of CE therefore is to produce the '*...political ignorance and apathy of the masses*'. In this form of CE the pedagogical relationships are authoritarian or transmissive and focused on developing uncritical attitudes and knowledge which fit people submissively into the dominant status quo preparing them for their role as workers and consumers in a market economy. On the other hand, for Carr and Hartnett, a classical conception of democracy would seek to develop knowledge and attitudes in people that would facilitate political participation and critical awareness, allowing them to '*reappraise existing social norms and reflect critically on the dominant social, political and economic institutions of contemporary society*' (ibid: 44). The pedagogical relationships here would be democratic and participatory, focusing on democratic

deliberation and the problematising of lived experience, which could lead to transformation and emancipation, not adaptation to the status quo.

This overview of the purpose of education reflects an important 19th century debate about the development of Mechanics Institutes in the United Kingdom (see Fieldhouse, 1998 & Johnson, 1988). These Institutes were a notable innovation in education for working people. In the context of poor economic growth, education was seen as both the problem and solution. The economy was not growing effectively due to the lack of technically skilled workers. In order to overcome this shortfall in skilled labour, industrialists and philanthropists were instrumental in creating mechanics institutes to offer the latest in technical training. However, whilst the education on offer may have benefited people individually, these institutes were not designed to develop the critical consciousness of workers. As Engels (quoted in Fieldhouse, 1998: 27) once asserted:

Mechanics' Institutes...offer classes in the brand of political economy which takes free competition as its God. The teachers of this subject preach the doctrine that it does not lie within the power of the workers to change the existing economic order...they must resign themselves to starving without making a fuss. The students are taught subservience to the existing political and social order.

As the above highlights, on one side of this historical debate were those who saw education as being primarily about providing workers with the appropriate skills and attitudes to serve the needs of the economy and to increase prosperity, but mainly the prosperity of the owners of capital. On the other were radicals who saw this education as domesticating people into an exploitative socio-economic situation. For these radicals the education that mechanics

institutes offered developed 'merely' useful knowledge; enhancing workers technically skills making them more efficient and productive, but also compliant. What the radicals wanted was 'really' useful knowledge. This was knowledge and a way of thinking which would help people to reflect critically on and understand their current exploitative situation and raise awareness of how they could join together to transform the underlying conditions of society for the better of all. This knowledge therefore was focused on '*...ideas concerning our conditions of life...what we want to be informed about is...how to get out of our present troubles*' (Johnson, 1988: 21). This debate about the core educational function of these institutions has deep resonance with today. As noted above, the current policy context is increasingly prioritising the economic function of education.

As Marx and Engels (1976: 46) point out, there is an important formative relationship between those who control the economy and the production of the prevailing ideas that shape society. Those who have no control over the means of production in the economy are subject to the ideas and priorities of those who do. The inter-relationship between the economy, conceptions of democracy and education is therefore crucial in understanding the core purpose of the education that emerges from this relationship. They have to be considered as a dynamic inter-related and reciprocal totality, rather than static separate elements. Any change in one will influence and reinforce changes in the others. As a result, there is always a struggle, or a 'long revolution' as Raymond Williams (Carr and Hartnett, 2002) describes it, between those who control and benefit from power and wealth and want to maintain this privileged

situation, and those who are disadvantaged by the current status quo and what to change things. This struggle also lies at the heart of the contested nature of citizenship and CE.

I would argue that in the context of a dominant neoliberal political economy, it is the 'contemporary conception' of democracy and citizenship that is shaping the nature and purpose of CE. For example, in the Scottish policy context, Biesta and Priestley (2013) comment that the Curriculum for Excellence (CoE) is torn between an economic imperative, dominated by a neoliberal context, and a democratic imperative. Whilst their analysis so far suggests an '*open verdict*' on the direction that CoE is moving, '*there are trends within the new curriculum that more clearly go in the direction of the economic imperative*' (ibid: 242). This creates the conditions for the prominence of a 'minimal' or personally responsible approach to CE thereby facilitating a process where young people are being locked uncritically into a world that prepares them '*...for a new economic reality designed by others.*' rather than preparing people to '*... shape social reality in more progressive and socially just way.*' (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer, 2009: xvii). Therefore, CE in Scotland, conceptualised around the idea of a personally responsible citizen, resembles a modern version of the 'merely' useful knowledge of the 19th century, which serves to reproduce the existing unequal and unjust status quo.

3.6. Resisting Personally Responsible Citizenship: Radical Education for Critical Citizenship and Social Justice

Following on from Williams' analytical observation of the 'long revolution' and the crucial inter-relationship between the economy, democracy and education that this implies, I will now focus on how the purpose and practice of education is understood from a particular critical perspective. Carr and Hartnett (2002) argue that an education dominated by a contemporary conception of democracy will, by implication, result in the production of apathetic, 'ignorant' and submissive people, leading to the reproduction of the dominant and unjust status quo. Yet my intention in this thesis is to identify, explore and promote alternatives to this form of education and democracy and assert the need for a radical education characterised by '*really*' rather than '*merely*' useful knowledge. I am particularly interested in and committed to this radical education and so to help frame this thesis and analyse the data it has generated, I have drawn on some ideas that underpin this radical approach to education and which can inform an alternative, critical CE. Hence, in this section I will discuss the relationship between radical education and democracy and clarify my own position in relation to the particular radical tradition I favour. I will then go on to present some of the central theoretical ideas and concepts which shape this radical tradition of education specifically: the concept of school being a site of struggle as well as reproduction; hegemony; praxis and critical agency.

3.6.1. Education, Democracy and Political Participation

The relationship between education and democracy, particularly in promoting active and critical political participation, is well established in the literature and for many writers stretches far back into history. Biesta (2006 a, p118) for example reminds us that in ancient Athens *'Questions about democracy have always been closely intertwined with questions about education'* (see also Kelly, 1995 or Carr & Hartnett, 1997). Peukertruth (1993: 166) notes that the interdependence of democracy and education featured in the ideas of prominent enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and especially Rousseau, and educational theorists such as Dewey (2012) have also famously emphasised the relationship between creating and sustaining democratic societies and education. Nevertheless, within the ontological and epistemological framework of this thesis, it is important to note that this reciprocal relationship between education, democracy and political participation is sharply emphasised in more critical intellectual and political traditions whose interests are in fostering radical, participative forms of education and democracy, and in promoting social justice. For example, in examining the 19th century origins of this radical tradition in the United Kingdom, Simon (1972) highlights the contribution of early working class and socialist movements such as the Chartists, Trade Unions or Co-operative societies, noting the important role that class based self-education, independent of Church or State, played in developing the critical consciousness of people. Nevertheless, although its roots are historically located, this is also a contemporary and multi-national radical educational project that clearly links education with expanding democracy, but also social transformation and political and economic emancipation. For example, this is

evidenced in the writing and work of academics and activists such as Paula Allman, Greg Rikowski, Dave Hill and Jim Crowther in the United Kingdom or Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple and Antonia Darder in the United States.

Sometimes referred to as, critical pedagogy, radical or critical education or popular education (see Amsler, 2010), the literature dealing with this educational approach is broad and diverse. For example, it can relate to work in different settings and with different people such as; young people in formal school settings (see McLaren 2007) or with adults in non-formal or informal community-based settings or in social movements (see Crowther *et al.*, 2005 or Hall *et al.*, 2013). The literature also draws on an array of historical, philosophical and political traditions and purposes which shape particular perspectives. For Apple (2013: 40) this diversity means a radical approach '*...suffers from a surfeit of meanings...*'. This ambiguity is problematic as it becomes difficult to discern the particularly nature, purpose and desired outcomes of any claimed approach. Amsler (2010: 20) also highlights the difficulties resulting from this diversity stating that the traditions and purposes that inform radical or critical education also exist in '*...tension with one another...*' As Amsler (*ibid*) explains, '*... Critical educators do not all speak the same theoretical language, and the term 'critical pedagogy' may refer to anti-capitalist education, anti-racist pedagogies and feminist pedagogies. The result is that these approaches can be '...employed in liberal and conservative educational projects as well as radical ones...*' (*ibid*, see also Au & Apple, 2009: 991)

Given this diversity and the ambiguity associated with the radical approach to education, and for the avoidance of doubt, it is important to make clear what my position is and the particular tradition that I draw on in this study. I favour the term critical pedagogy. But, as noted above, this is a broad and ambiguous term, informed by differing epistemological and ideological positions (Apple & Au, 2009). The result, as McLaren and Jaramillo (2007: 34) point out, is that some forms of critical pedagogy are at risk of domestication and so 'critical pedagogy is *'...no longer the dangerous critic of free market liberal education that it once was.'* As a consequence, some writers now use the term 'revolutionary critical pedagogy' to distinguish between their perception of critical pedagogy and other more bourgeois liberal versions (see Allman, 2001, McLaren 2005 or Rikowski, 2007a). It is this particular tradition that frames this thesis. In this tradition, education is seen as crucial, not only in helping to create, sustain and expand democracy, but it is linked specifically to the illumination and critique of existing exploitative, unequal and unjust capitalist economic and social relations. In doing so the aim is that this will help to fuel a political initiative focused on challenging these relations. The ultimate goal of revolutionary critical pedagogy is to work towards social emancipation from capitalism by transforming these capitalist social relations (Rikowski, 2007a: 3).

Perhaps unsurprisingly the most influential thinker informing this revolutionary critical pedagogy is Karl Marx. As Brosio (2000, p79) comments, Marxist thought is *'...central to critical democracy, as well as to the education necessary to achieve it'*. Furthermore, as well as Marx, other Marxists such as Gramsci,

or Freire, who significantly draws on Marx's work (Rikowski 2007b), have also made important theoretical contributions to this radical tradition by emphasising the link between education, democracy, political participation and social transformation (See Allman, 1988, 2007 or 2010, Small, 2017, Brosio 2000). I will introduce some of the central ideas from Marx, Gramsci and Freire in relation to radical education. But first, to set a context for this radical approach, I turn to a brief discussion about how Marxist social theory interprets the role of formal schooling in capitalist societies.

3.6.2. Schools as Sites of Social Reproduction and Sites of Struggle

All the young people in this study were schooled in state provided education systems and became political activists with a left-wing political identity set in opposition to the dominant capitalist status quo. Yet, the emergence of these activists and the adoption of an oppositional political identity would seem to run counter to some Marxist interpretations of the role and function of schools in capitalist societies as developed for example by Bowles and Gintis (1976). According to this interpretation, a 'correspondence' can be identified between the dominant economic relations of production and the social relations of the school. Subsequently, in the final analysis, the underlying function of schooling in capitalist society is to reproduce the dominant capitalist social relations. Schools do this by fulfilling an ideological role. Through the taught formal curriculum, and as a result of the cumulative effect of the informal day to day experiences and interactions in the school, specific class based social relations are promoted and transmitted which mirror the values, attitudes, rewards, punishments, power relationships and hierarchies that exist in the wider

economy and class based society (McLaren, 2007, Au & Apple 2009, Ford, 2014, Small, 2017). The result is that young people are conditioned into accepting, uncritically, these capitalist social relations in school and society and they bring this uncritical and compliant consciousness with them as they enter the labour market and the economy as adults. Accordingly, for the majority of those in schools; teachers and pupils alike, resistance to this reproductive role is very difficult, or if present, a marginal and ineffective activity. For, as Althusser (2001: 106) suggests, the ideological state apparatus is '*bigger than they are and [which] crushes them*'.

This reproduction thesis has long been contested and continues to be the source of much debate amongst Marxist social theorists (see Rikowski 1996 & 1997, McLaren 2007, Allman, 2007, Ford, 2014, Small, 2017, Hill, 2018). The weakness of this interpretation of the role of schooling is that it relies on too narrow an interpretation of Marx's base/superstructure metaphor. This is a central concept in Marxist thought which argues that the social relations of production in any society form the economic base, '*...the real foundation...*' (Marx, 1990: 389) on which the superstructure of society is built. These relations of production frame and are mirrored in the values and ideas that mould the institutions and social relations that exist in society and so condition the consciousness of people. As Marx (1990: 389) states; '*The mode of production of material life, conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general*'. Yet as Au and Apple (2009: 84) point out, though Marx is theorizing that the economic base can determine the nature of the superstructure, they also argue this 'correspondence thesis' interpretation is

too 'mechanistic' and economically 'determinist' and runs counter to how Marx intended this metaphor to be understood. On the contrary, the economic base and the superstructure should not be understood as two separate dichotomized elements, nor does their inter-relationship mean that '*...movement between the two takes place in only one direction...*' (Allman, 2007: 32). Instead, as Allman maintains, Marx's conception is that the economic base and the superstructure should be seen as internally related and their relationship dialectical, that is they are '*...shaped and determined reciprocally*' (Allman, 2007: 57). Thus, despite the fact that schools can and do perform a reproductive role, they can also be '*sites of struggle*' (Harvie 2006: 26 or Youngman 1986: 22, see also Sarup, 1982) in which teachers and pupils can be positioned with some relative autonomy and these imposed, limited ways of understanding and being can be exposed, challenged and alternatives produced and nurtured. Furthermore, although these autonomous spaces can be narrow, they can be found and as Lynch (2019: xvii) argues, educators also have a moral imperative to find these spaces and resist this process of reproduction.

3.6.3. Hegemony: An Explanation of Capitalist Domination and the Reproduction of Uncritical Consciousness

According to Ford (2016: 1), living under capitalism means we all experience social relations that are '*...inherently and unalterably relations of exploitation.*' The result is that capitalist societies are riven with social and economic contradictions leading to significant inequality, injustice and '*...human degradation and inhumanity*' (Hill & Kumar, 2012: 12). If this assessment of life under capitalism is the reality for the majority of people, then it poses this

question: given these conditions, how is the capitalist class able to maintain its rule? Why then do people, as Armstrong (1988: 147) asserted, appear, *'...to perceive reality through ruling class spectacles, unable to recognise their own servitude'*.

To explain how consent to this 'servitude', injustice and inequality is organised in capitalist societies, theorists of revolutionary critical pedagogy draw on the concept of hegemony. Hegemony is a way of framing and understanding the use of power in society and how ruling groups are able to maintain their dominance and power. Brookfield (2010: 94) explains that hegemony is the way we *'...learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us'*. Brookfield's reference to how we learn, illustrates the vital role education plays in reproducing and maintaining this rule and making it seem natural and immutable.

The writer and political activist most associated with the development of the concept of Hegemony is Antonio Gramsci (Brookfield 2010: 94, see also Allman 2001 or Pizzolato & Holst, 2017). Although the term already existed, Gramsci expanded the concept of hegemony to explain how the capitalist class was able to maintain their rule in societies that are divided on class terms and riven with social and economic contradictions causing inequality and social injustice. Evoking the image of the Centaur (half beast half man), Gramsci (1991: 170) identified a 'dual perspective' in relation to how ruling groups maintain their domination, making a distinction between 'rule' and 'hegemony'. Rule can be

understood as the use of force. It is exerted openly through the coercive organs of the state such as the police, army or judicial system. It is rule by domination and in mature, stable capitalist societies would only be apparent in times of crisis (Williams 1977). Hegemony however, operates by generating a population's consent through moral, intellectual, ideological and political leadership.

In developing the concept, Gramsci built on this key idea from Marx and Engels (1976: 65/66):

Each new class which puts itself in the place of the one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society...it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, valid ones.

Hegemony then is more about subtle persuasion. It is not forced on us through the repressive institutions of the state, but is built and operates within the diverse and inter-related range of institutions and social relationships that constitute 'civic society' such as: religion; voluntary organisations; trade unions; cultural organisation; the media and importantly the education system. (Williams 1977, Simon, 1972). As Brookfield (2010: 98) suggests, hegemony '*...saturates all aspects of life and is constantly learned and relearned throughout life*'. Given this need for constant 'relearning', it is important to note that hegemony, although powerful, is also seen as having to be formed and reformed in order to maintain a specific social group's domination as it is vulnerable to challenges and so is '*...continually resisted...*' (Williams 1977: 112).

Hegemony and education are therefore inextricably related and education is crucial, both in terms of sustaining, but also challenging hegemony. As Gramsci claims *'Every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship'*. (Gramsci 1991: 350). This dialectical understanding opens up the opportunities to challenge the dominant hegemony by developing what Gramsci calls a 'counter hegemonic' project. Key to this is his distinction between 'common' sense and 'good' sense. Common sense is an uncritical view of the world which most people have and which unquestionably accepts the dominant hegemonic claims about the world and people's place in it. The key for Gramsci was to develop in people the critical consciousness of 'good' sense so people become aware of their situation and come together to act to change it. It is the development of good sense that will help build a counter hegemonic project.

A central task for critical pedagogy is the creation of this 'counter hegemony' (Darder *et al.*, 2003: 14) to foster 'good sense'. As Johnson and Morris (2010: 79) suggest, critical pedagogy is the educational means by which *'...the oppressed (or subaltern) may begin to reflect more deeply upon their socio-economic circumstances and take action to improve the status quo'*. This process of critical education leading to enlightenment and transformative action is echoed by Freire when he comments it is, *'the process in which people, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociohistorical reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality'* (Freire, quoted in Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 157/158).

For Gramsci the domination of a capitalist hegemony was based on the class relation and the structure of society it creates. In essence, from a Marxist perspective this class structure is exemplified by the private ownership and control, by one class, of the 'means of production'; the means by which all human life is sustained. As a direct result of this ownership, another class, composed of the majority of people, have to sell their labour power to the class who own the means of production in order to not only sustain themselves and their families, but crucially, in applying their labour, the *'fuel for the living fire'* (Rikowski 2007: 13), they also produce all the material wealth of the society; all that is required to sustain human life and enable its flourishing (Wright, 2006). Furthermore, with the ownership of the means of production comes the power to influence our political and social life and crucially the economy, ensuring that in the final analysis, they operate to serve the best interests and material gain of the class of owners. As Allman (2001: 14) comments, *'One class actually produces the material wealth of the society, but another commands the results of that production...and decides what is to be produced'*.

For Marxists it is the class relation that lies at the centre of explanations of the exploitation, injustice and inequality that exists in capitalist society. However, it should be noted that other writers, such as Fraser (2000 & 2013) have problematised and developed these ideas, broadening out understandings of domination to highlight the importance of recognising how class mediates and is linked to other forms of exploitation and injustice based on race, gender or sexuality. I recognise and acknowledge that class intersects with race, gender and other forms of oppression and exploitation and that this intersectionality

has to be considered carefully and understood dialectically in the context of critical educational research (Apple, 2013: 151/2). Nonetheless, I understand class in its Marxist not its Weberian sense, as a social and material relation of production (Allman *et al.*, 2005, Wright, 2005). As Kincheloe *et al.* (2012: 17) point out the class relation is the '*motor force*' of economic exploitation in capitalist society. Furthermore, as well as class analysis being crucial in revealing the nature of power, exploitation and injustice in capital's social universe, it is also important in constructing '*...knowledge capable of pointing to ways of restructuring society...*' (Kelsh & Hill, 2006: 2). As a result, this Marxist understanding of class is central to my ontological position.

3.6.4. The Concept of Praxis and Critical Agency

A critical education, leading to emancipatory enlightenment and transformative action, and that stresses the relationship between learning, reflection and action, relates to what theorists and writers refer to as the theory of praxis, the '*dialectical interweaving of reflection and action*' (Kiryol 2011: 154). The use of praxis as a conceptual framework in this thesis is appropriate for a number of reasons. For example, citizenship education is intrinsically about learning to act in a political context and the term praxis, in its original ancient Greek sense, relates to people '*acting or doing*' in relation to political activity (Kiryol 2011: 153). Furthermore, in general, writers (for example Kemmis & Smith, 2008 or Bernstein, 1971), describe the concept of praxis as a social practice which relates to human consciousness and agency, that is, how people think about the world and act in it. This action also reflects a moral commitment and is framed by some notion of the common good deriving from traditions or

theoretical ideas (Kemmis & Smith 2008: 17). However, the term praxis has been developed and used by many theorists and writers including Aristotle, Kant and Arendt, and so it means different things to different intellectual and philosophic traditions (see Pickle, 2015, Kemmis & Smith 2008, Bernstein, 1971). The result is that praxis has a '*conceptually vastness*' which can lead to the clarity of its meaning being lost (Cunningham, 2017: 295). Therefore, in order not to lose its descriptive and analytical power, it is important for me to set out clearly here, how I understand and use the concept of praxis in this thesis.

As this thesis is conducted within the critical research paradigm, then my understanding and use of praxis is drawn from the Marxist tradition. Praxis is a central concept in Marxism (Allman & Wallis 1990, Youngman, 1986 or Bernstein 1971) and relates directly to Marx's theory of human consciousness which as Allman states is understood as '*...the totality of the thought and feelings of which a person is aware*' (Allman, 2007: 74). It is important to note how Marx understood the development of human consciousness. For Marx, human consciousness does not pre-exist our engagement with the material world and the social relations in it but is actually the product of our engagement with our social world. As he argues, '*...it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness*' (Marx, 1971: 21). Praxis therefore describes a way of relating human thought or consciousness with their action in the world, their '*sensuous human activity*' as Marx describe it (Bernstein 1971: 42). Yet Marx argued that to fully understand our consciousness and our '*sensuous human activity*' in the

material and social world, we have to understand them dialectically. That is, thought and action are internally related, and so whilst our social existence shapes our consciousness, human thought and action also creates and shapes our social existence. As Allman points out, for Marx, Praxis combines thought and action in an internal relation, a '*...unity of opposites that reciprocally shape and determine one another*' (Allman 2007: 79).

As well as the concept of praxis being of central importance to Marxism, Allman (2010) argues that the dialectical nature of the concept means it also has crucial significance for education and especially for critical educators. She argues that as all human thought and action are interlocked and inseparable, this implies that there can be two forms of praxis; two ways in which we can think about and act on the world. One is uncritical and so is reproductive praxis. This form of praxis means our thought and action leads us to take for granted and act within the exploitative, unjust material conditions that exist. These conditions shape our social existence and ultimately constrain full human development. In our social existence we have not been encouraged to think critically about existing structures and social relations or explore alternative possibilities, and so we uncritically accept existing relations as natural and given. The other form of praxis is critical or revolutionary. Allman (2007: 59) argues that this form of praxis, opens up the possibility of developing critical agency in which people have become critically aware of the world as it is and how its existing social relations can constrain human development. As a result, people's thought and action are increasingly focused on abolishing or transforming existing social relations leading to the creation of '*...a socially and economically just*

society...where people can realise their full potential as human beings' (Allman 2010: 6). The citizens who would embody these two forms of praxis would also resemble the typology of citizens outlined by McLaughlin (1992) where reproductive praxis would relate to an autarchic citizen and critical praxis to the autonomous citizen. When trying to make sense of how people develop an understanding of democracy and then become active in it, the concept of praxis and critical agency, will have significance.

3.6.5. Approaches to Pedagogy: Banking and Problem Posing

The literature relating to critical education has a lot to say about the pedagogical approaches that best promote critical consciousness raising leading to action for social transformation and justice. Of importance to this thesis is what Freire (1990) refers to as problem posing and banking approaches. The key characteristics of a problem-posing pedagogy are that students are active subjects in the educational process, which strives to have democratic relationships between teachers and students. Knowledge is presented for critical examination and teachers and students are positioned as critical co-investigators of this knowledge and the society around them so that new knowledge is developed and a conscious awareness of the oppression, injustices and inequalities that exist are revealed and collective action for social transformation and social justice is developed. In contrast, banking education is '*...stripped of all critical elements...*' (Giroux 2010: 336). It renders students passive objects in educational processes and in which the teacher's authority of knowledge and their power is dominant in a hierarchical relationship. Students are the submissive 'receptacles' for knowledge 'deposits' (Freire

1990, p 45/46) transmitted by teachers. This knowledge is a commodity to be consumed uncritically by students to promote individual skill development which has exchange value in the labour market, but also to encourage students to adapt unquestionably to the world as it is.

3.7. Conclusion

This review of theoretical concepts and the policy context has demonstrated that ideas about CE and its relationship to democracy and the economy are complex and contested. Ideas about CE range between minimal conceptions that provide ‘merely’ useful knowledge and which act to pacify people and reinforce an unjust status quo, and maximal conceptions providing ‘really’ useful knowledge and which aim to raise people’s critical awareness of inequality and injustice and work towards developing a more equal and just society. I have also suggested that in Scotland, within the context of a dominant neoliberal political economy, there is a disjunction between policy and practice. On the one hand, the aims of policy evoke a maximal conception of CE, and on the other, the interpretation and impact of policy in practice reflects a more minimal or personally responsible approach. As an educator and researcher with a commitment to working towards a more just society, I am interested in exploring how a maximal and more critical approach to CE can be developed and sustained. And I have explored a range of important theoretical concepts which I suggest can support this radical approach to CE. In this context I have used this research project to uncover the ‘really’ useful knowledge participants have regarding how they became active citizens and what pedagogy approaches supported their development. In the next chapter I will outline the

research approach I adopted and the methods used to engage with the participants to collect the data.

4. Research Design

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will set out and justify the methodology and methods I have deployed. I will restate my topic of enquiry and the questions I am trying to answer. In doing this I will also reveal my epistemological and theoretical orientation which frame the underlying assumptions that inform my choice of methodology and methods.

As noted above, I embarked on this enquiry to uncover the factors that motivated some young people to participate fully in political activity and to identify the extent to which their educational experiences, particularly in relation to citizenship education, contributed to their development as left wing political activists. Furthermore, I was interested in identifying the pedagogical approaches, processes and content that encouraged this development process in order to identify a citizenship education that supports the building of critical consciousness and a commitment to social justice.

To undertake this research I adopted a critical research approach. Kincheloe and McLaren (1998: 264) argue that it is important for any critical researcher to openly declare their political orientation. Therefore, I have been politically engaged all my adult life from a Marxist perspective and I view Marxism as having strong analytic and explanatory power, particularly in understanding inequality and injustice in capitalist society (Wright, 2015). This political orientation has therefore fundamentally influenced my interest in this topic, as well as shaped my approach to the research design I have chosen. For Crotty

(2015: 12) a critical research approach seeks to ‘...*unmask hegemony and address oppressive forces*’ and it is focused on ideological critique; investigating how the dominant capitalist ideology is produced and sustained but also the ways it can be challenged and transformed. Furthermore, critical research has particular significance when applied to the examination of education and its role in society (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). It is this emancipatory purpose and potential that attracted me to critical research

To answer my research questions I recruited 17 young political activists between the ages of 19 and 28. All but two of them grew up and were active in Scotland. I approached the following organisations to invite participation in the research: Scottish Labour Young Socialists; The Young Communist League; the Trade Union Movement. The method I chose to collect that data was semi-structured individual interviews and I used a thematic analysis method to analyse the data collected from these semi-structured interviews. This chapter will now proceed as follows; I will begin by offering a description and critical discussion of my chosen research approach, including a review of some of the criticisms levelled at this approach and a defence if it. My approach to research ethics will then be discussed. An overview of how I organised and conducted the interviews will then be presented along with a biographical summary of the participants. Next is a discussion of how I conceptualise the semi-structured interview. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on my approach to data analysis.

4.2. My Theoretical Orientation and Methodology

4.2.1. Critical Research: An Overview

Critical research is a way of gaining knowledge about our social world to help formulate an awareness of the inequalities and injustices that exist. Yet it is only one way of knowing, and so to demonstrate how I conceive of critical research in this thesis, it is necessary to briefly position critical research in this text in comparison to other ways of knowing. This is particularly important as Crotty (1998: 1) notes the issue of ambiguity, commenting that '*...the terminology is far from consistent in research literature and social science text. One frequently finds the same terms used in a number of different, sometimes contradictory ways.*' Given this apparent ambiguity it is important to set out how I understand the key research terms I use in this chapter.

A Critical research paradigm is a broad and 'untidy' term so making a precise definition is difficult (Griffiths, 2009 & Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Its foundational ideas come from the work of Marx, and the Marxist tradition is still central to this research approach today (Kincheloe *et al.*, 2012). It also draws on the ideas of critical theory developed by the Frankfurt School (Brookfield, 2010, Darder *et al.*, 2003). Although a heterogeneous category, critical social researchers would share a basic unifying theoretical and value orientation (Comstock, 1982, Carspecken 1996, Smyth *et al.*, 2010, Steinberg & Cannella, 2012) around two key and interrelated ideas: a concern to investigate and challenge social injustice and inequality, and an explicit commitment that their research will contribute to the creation of a '*more just social order*' (Lather, 1986: 257). Critical research therefore can be seen to draw on the Marxist and

Freirean concept of praxis, specifically the revolutionary kind, (Allman 2007, Small, 2017) as it involves both critical reflection on the world in a search for ‘emancipatory knowledge’ and action to change it (Crotty 2015: 159). For Harvey (1990) these interrelated ideas distinguish critical research from other research paradigms and it is exemplified in Marx’s famous assertion that ‘*The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways the point is to change it.*’ (Marx & Engels 1976: 123)

How the term ‘critical’ is defined is crucial in fully understanding this research approach and its theoretical orientation. For example, one understanding of being ‘critical’ should be an approach that is present and valued in all academic work. Related to critical thinking, this meaning of critical is about ‘...*epistemic adequacy...*’ (Burbules & Berk, 1999: 47). That is being robust and systematic about the assessment of any knowledge claims (Hammersley, 2012) such as how strong the evidence is to support them or the clarity of argument presented. Yet the ‘critical’ in a critical research approach refers specifically to political and ethical issues and to ideological critique (Brookfield, 2010).

The concept of Ideology should be understood here in the Marxist sense. Ideology is not just a set of ideas and beliefs that help us make sense of the world, but specifically a negative concept in which ideology ‘...*serves to mask and misrepresent, to distort reality...*’ (Allman, 2007: 40). A key belief of critical researchers is that the social relations of capitalism are oppressive and exploitative and result in an unjust and unequal world in which the distribution of power and wealth favours a small minority (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

Therefore, the ability of the vast majority of people to develop to their full potential is limited (Freire 1972). Furthermore, the unequal distribution of power which characterises capitalist social relations is hidden by the operation of hegemony. Gramsci (1991) argues that these oppressive capitalist social relations are powerfully presented as natural and unchangeable, therefore helping to sustain the unequal and unjust social order, especially amongst those most disadvantaged and exploited by these social relations. For example, by the content and operation of the mass media or, importantly for this thesis, through the function of education and schooling. As Cohen *et al.* (2003: 28) point out, critical educational research is concerned with interrogating the relationship between society and school such as how the education system produces and reproduces power relationships, inequality and injustice in society and in whose interests, it functions.

Critical research therefore, is framed by a critical analysis of capitalist social relations and the specific forces that shape them. It involves engaging people, the researched as well as the researcher, in a process that helps them to explore the unequal and unjust world they live in and to encourage them to take action to change these circumstances. As the researcher and those researched are related in this way, the researcher's values will frame and inform the research process, making any findings '*value mediated*' (Guba & Lincoln 1994: 110).

Influenced by these arguments, I share the critical researcher's epistemological position that there is no objective truth or knowledge. There is a real world 'out

there', but its social structures, social relations and people's consciousness have been shaped by social, political, economic and other forces (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowledge of the social world is therefore not impersonal or objective. Rather it is socially and politically constructed and so it is '*personal, subjective and unique*' (Cohen and Manion 1994: 6) and which incorporates '*ideological preferences*' and '*normative assumptions*' (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 75). More specifically I am associating myself with the idea of 'social constructionism' rather than 'social constructivism' (Crotty, 2015) where the former relates to the collective and the latter to the individual. Moreover, I am attracted to constructionism as, '*constructivism tends to resist the critical spirit while constructionism tends to foster it*' (ibid: 58).

Consequently, this theoretical orientation and the transformational social purpose of critical qualitative research is consistent with my own values and political outlook. Nevertheless, this overtly critical and political approach to research and its radical and emancipatory purpose, focused on developing a critical awareness of the capitalist status quo leading to transformative action for social change, can be open to criticism and so it is important that I acknowledge that and offer a response to that criticism in this thesis.

4.2.2. Criticisms of Critical Research

Many researchers, some of whom would share the emancipatory and transformative purpose of critical research, would also challenge some of the fundamental theoretical and epistemological assumptions which underpin it. For example, critical research draws on the traditions and ideas of the

European enlightenment, in particular Marxism, and so for critics, this research approach has a tendency to be ethnocentric and economically reductionist. The foundational thinkers in critical research tended to be white, male and European, and it focuses on the Marxist formulation of the class relation as the central form of exploitation and domination. This, either implicitly or explicitly ignores or underplays the significance of intersectionality, specifically questions of race, sexuality and gender (See Ellsworth, 1989, Darder, 2003, Steinberg & Cannella, 2012). Whilst I recognise these important criticisms, nevertheless as a Marxist and as a consequence of the injustice and inequality I see around me, I still find critical research a legitimate, necessary and ultimately compelling approach, in particular with class analysis as a central leitmotif.

Another important criticism in the literature relates to the claim of inherent 'researcher partisanship' (Hammersley, 2000) on account of the value laden and overt political nature of a critical research approach. It is claimed that this approach can lead to 'bias' which reduces or undermines the 'validity' of any findings (see Hammersley, 2000 & 2012 or Darder *et al.*, 2003). From this perspective, researchers should not be ideologically driven but be '*...dispassionate, disinterested and objective.*' (Cohen *et al.*, 2003: 32) These criticisms reflect profound epistemological questions about knowledge, truth, neutrality and objectivity that are complex and can be difficult to resolve for any researcher. Consequently, I would agree with MacFarlane (2009: 136) about the need for all researchers to develop and apply the '*...intellectual and moral virtue...*' of reflexivity. Because of the theoretical and political position that informs my research, and in light of the questions raised about a critical

approach, a sense of reflexivity was important to me. Ruby's (1980, quoted in Shacklock & Smyth 1998: 7) definition of reflexivity resonates with my approach. In relation to the production of knowledge, he states that:

...being reflexive means that the producer deliberately, intentionally reveals to his (sic) audience the underlying epistemological assumptions which caused him (sic) to formulate a set of questions in a particular way, to seek answers in a particular way, and finally to present his (sic) findings in a particular way.

Reflexivity therefore required me to be aware of, but also make explicit, my own values and beliefs and to reflect on and show how my theoretical orientation and political position influences the research process at every stage. I have already demonstrated this reflexivity above, and I discuss at sections 4.3 and 4.6 below how I applied this reflexivity in my relationships with the participants.

4.2.3. Asserting the Necessity and Value of Critical Research

Whilst I fully endorse the need for reflexivity and have applied it in this research, I would also argue that some of the challenges to the approach and knowledge claims of critical research rely on a particular epistemological position, that is, a view on issues of truth which use a criterion that presuppose '*a single absolute account of social reality is feasible*' (Bryman, 2008: 377). These criticisms are in part informed by a positivist epistemology, in that the social world exists independently of the observer; any research and those engaged in enquiry must remain objective, value free, and thus avoid any subjective assessments (Cohen and Manion, 1994, Guba and Lincoln, 1994). For many, this view is problematic. For example, despite the emergence of alternative research paradigms, positivism still remains the dominant paradigm in social research, particularly that sponsored by public funds. As St Pierre and Roulston

(2011: 674) state, whether we like it or not, positivism is '*...the gold standard for educational research*'. Others see more profound epistemological problems. As Eisner (1993: 54) clearly points out '*...there is no single, legitimate way to make sense of the world*'. Williams (2002) also argues that this problem relates to the tension between notions of truth and truthfulness. He questions the idea that there can be such a concept as objective truth and '*...whether it can be more than relative or subjective*' (Williams, 2002: 11). So whilst objective, valid 'truth' might be impossible to achieve, he suggests an approach to research that cultivates truthfulness, which '*implies a respect for truth*' and so Williams (ibid) argues for:

...accuracy and sincerity: you do the best you can to acquire true beliefs, and what you say reveals what you believe. The authority of academics must be rooted in their truthfulness in both these respects: they take care not to lie.

The use of the notion of bias to characterise 'value laden' research approaches is contested, and I would argue pejorative, as it is presented as something that is just associated with critical approaches. But the presence of values is inevitable in any research. The views and values implicitly or explicitly held by a researcher will have an influence on their research, including for example the choice of topic, the research questions formulated, the data collection methods, the approach to analysis and the conclusions drawn (Griffiths, 1998). Moreover, in relation to educational research in particular, Carr (1995: 88) makes a strong case that eliminating values from research is impossible and that researchers who claim to adopt an objective or non-biased position are therefore '*...failing to recognize certain features of their work.*' Bias therefore, comes not from having a value laden or political position, but on the contrary, it

comes from the researcher not being aware of them or not making them clear and explicit. As Griffiths (1998: 133) argues *'Taking an explicit stance helps to reduce bias, unless that stance is one of neutrality'*.

Nonetheless, whilst I am committed to a reflexive research practice I would argue that a fuller and more nuanced understanding of reflexivity is required. MacFarlane (2009) reminds us that being reflexive does not just relate to being open and honest about your own beliefs and values and their effect on the research process. He states that reflexivity it is also about developing a *'...critical awareness of culture and society around us'* (Hiller & Jameson, 2003, quoted in MacFarlane, 2009: 124). This notion of critical reflexivity is important and deepens my awareness of issues of power and ideology and how they can frame any research endeavour. Shacklock and Smyth (1998: 6) also discuss the importance of critical reflexivity, but they do so to highlight the danger of researchers 'locking in' to their research positivist forms of enquiry. Reflexivity therefore is also about researchers, particularly those with an emancipatory interest, pushing back against the dominant form of enquiry and being aware of how their research can be 'ideologically constrained'.

In choosing my overtly political and value laden approach, I realise that it is open to criticism and can be problematic for some researchers and commentators. Nevertheless, I feel these views have to be challenged and the critical approach asserted. For instance, Hammersley (2000: 32) maintains, *'I believe that social research must necessarily be committed to value neutrality simply because it cannot validate value conclusions.'* Yet this claim of validity

derived from objectivity is itself a normative position (Cohen *et al.*, 2003: 32). I would argue that Hammersley's view reflects a broadly positivist frame of reference. And so, despite its dominance, like many critical researchers, I reject the '*...epistemological constraints of positivism...*' (LeCompte, 1995: 94), that is, the claims for the necessity for objectivity, as well as its ideological purpose which aims to depoliticise and domesticate forms of knowledge (Down *et al.*, 2014). In particular, from a Marxist perspective, Lenin's (1932: xxi) strident counterblast to positivism and notions of objectivity still seems relevant and is instructive for me:

Throughout the whole civilized world Marxist teachings draw upon themselves the extreme hostility and hatred of all bourgeois science (both governmental and liberal). It sees in Marxism something in the nature of a harmful 'sect'. No other attitude could be expected, for an impartial social science is impossible in a society founded on class struggle. In one way or another every governmental and liberal science defends wage slavery, and Marxism has declared a ruthless war against this slavery. To expect impartial science in a wage slave society is rather stupidly naïve – like expecting owners to be impartial on the question whether to raise the worker's wages at the expense of the profits of capital.

I agree with Lenin's analysis of the problematic nature of objectivity in research, and the value laden assumptions that underpin it. Yet modern critical researchers and commentators make a similar point to Lenin. For instance, Down *et al.* (2014: xiv) reject claims of neutrality in research and state that all research is political. Fine (1994: 15) echoes Down *et al.* adding that those calming neutrality are '*...camouflaging their politics*'. And Apple (1996: X) argues that the criticism of critical research is really a pernicious, naïve stereotype, which places critical research in opposition to a 'normal or neutral' approach, with the explicit intention of presenting a neutral approach as superior to one where the researcher is politically active and positioned.

Down *et al.* (2014: xiv) demand that critical researchers be unapologetic about where they stand on important issues facing education and society. As I noted earlier in this thesis, my interest in this research topic and the research approach I have adopted are driven by my moral and political commitment to challenging the unjust capitalist status quo and work towards social justice.

As the above discussion has highlighted, claiming objectivity and neutrality in relation to social research knowledge and truth are problematic. Nevertheless, critical social research is a subjective, social practice (Scott & Usher 2011: 10) and so I am aware of the criticisms that may be levelled at my 'value laden' research approach. By embracing critical reflexivity and Williams' notion of truthfulness, I have taken care to be rigorous in my data collection and analysis, ensuring that the knowledge claims I make here have not stretched the data beyond what can be reasonably supported or defended by the evidence I present. Ultimately, in choosing my research approach I recognise that any assessment of the knowledge claims I have made and how issues of validity and bias are understood depends on the ontological and epistemological position of those making a judgment and so are out of my control. Becker (1967) reminds us that being neutral and value free is not possible and these issues can cause real dilemmas for researchers. Nonetheless, in my approach to this thesis I have taken guidance, comfort and inspiration from his comments on the research process (*ibid*: 247):

We take sides as our personal and political commitments dictate, use our theoretical and technical resources to avoid the distortions that might be introduced into our work, limit our conclusions carefully, recognize the hierarchy of credibility for what is, and field

as best we can the accusations and doubts that will surely be our fate.

Now that I have set out and justified my research approach I will turn to discuss my understanding of research ethics as they relate to this thesis.

4.3. Approach to Ethics in Critical Social Research

When conducting any social research, the researcher should strive for the '*...highest ethical standards*' (Braun & Clarke 2013: 61). This research was guided by the ethical guidelines of the University of Edinburgh and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011 & 2018) and it received ethical approval from the University of Edinburgh's ethical subcommittee. I gave particular attention to how I dealt with the data I collected from participants. Good practice relating to data storage, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity has also been observed throughout, with participants' names being anonymised and informed consent granted from all participants. I made my approach clear to participants both verbally prior to and during the interview, and in written form via the information sheet and consent form (see appendix 3 & 4).

Fundamental issues of ethics, such as how researchers relate to those being researched and the methods they use cannot be avoided. Whilst the literature on ethics and research is complex and lacks consensus (Bryman 2008: 113), some common fundamental principles can be identified and stressed. Hammersley and Traianou (2012: 2/3) suggest five, all of which I have embraced in this research. They are: minimising harm; respecting autonomy;

protecting privacy; offering reciprocity and treating people equally. Social researchers will generally agree on the need to act ethically, yet disagreements on how these principles are interpreted can occur. In addition the principles themselves can sometimes contradict each other requiring careful consideration in weighing one against the other. This is particularly true for researchers who approach enquiry with clear political values and who are interested in relations of power, oppression and social justice (see Griffiths 1998). For instance, A vital ethical principle in social research is to maximise benefit and minimise harm (See BERA, 2018: 4 or Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). I share this principle to the extent that it forms a key motivation for this study and frames the particular research approach I have taken. By that I mean this study is framed by my reaction to the current inequality and injustice that exists in the world around us and my assertion that certain conceptions of CE can help to create the conditions that sustain these circumstances. Consequently, I will now consider some of the general ethical principles that have informed my thinking and that frame my approach in this research. I will then discuss some of the more specific issues that are likely to arise from the adoption of critical research approach.

In discussing the ethical dimensions of research, Pring (2000: 146) suggests that the dominant principle should be '*...finding the truth*' and Hammersley and Traianou (2012: 6) claim that '*...the prime ethical responsibility of the researcher is to pursue worthwhile knowledge*'. These are important principles that I share, yet as a critical researcher, I am also looking to '*...overturn sovereign regimes of truth...*' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002: 87). Critical

qualitative research, like any form of social research, is focused on the pursuit of worthwhile knowledge, but it is also dedicated to wider ethical issues related to *'...revealing and challenging oppression'* (Harvey, 1990: 212). And so at the centre of my ethical understanding of social research is also *'...the fundamental principal of social justice, equality and participatory democracy'* (Troyna & Carrington, quoted in Griffiths 1998: 3). Furthermore, Freire's notion of dialogue guides my research approach and especially how I have related to the participants of this research. As Freire explains, *'Founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the participants is a logical consequence'*. (1990: 64).

This research did not involve any significant intervention into participants' lives. Nevertheless, the idea of doing no harm has some relevance in this research context, particularly when set against the right to privacy. For example, given my critique of citizenship education in Scotland, the knowledge created by my research may well be seen as a direct criticism of some current practice by schools, teachers or other practitioners and they may well feel undermined by it. Therefore, should knowledge that is discovered in partnership with young people and which illuminates better educational approaches and practices, be privileged over the potential criticism and damage to the reputations of government policy, a particular school or a professional's practice? In this case, critical researchers should apply a particular ethical perspective, which differentiates between those who are less powerful or oppressed and those they are perceived by the researcher to be responsible for or standing in the way of empowerment, critical awareness or social justice. In these

circumstances my position as a critical researcher is to work to challenge those in powerful positions and 'overturn' their sovereign regimes of truth and so I would see my ethical duty as a researcher to prioritise the promotion of my research over the views or 'truth' of Government, teachers or schools (see Hammersley and Traianou, 2012: 6). Nonetheless, I think it is also important to recognise and reassert that in social research, claims to truth are provisional and contingent (Pring 2000).

Another aspect of 'doing no harm' relates to raising participants' expectations. This research was about inviting participants to join me in a process that identifies effective ways to support people to become active citizens and to contribute to theoretical knowledge and practical resources which not only problematise and challenge injustice and inequality, but promotes transformative action for change. Yet as a critical educator and researcher, I recognise that social transformation is a long and difficult collective process, there is no '*sudden leap*' from small scale critical research or educational intervention to whole scale social change (Allman & Wallis, 1995b: 19). Therefore, I was also careful not to raise the expectations of the participants and so risk failing to meet any of the transformative aspirations implied by my research. I was clear that in all my relationships with research participants I struck a realistic balance between the opening up of the possibility of change and the awareness of the obstacles to that change. Yet, despite this challenging context, as a critical researcher with a desire to help create a more just society, I was also aware that, despite the difficult circumstance we find ourselves in, one needs to be optimistic and hopeful in any emancipatory and radical

research endeavour. Consequently, I aimed to frame my engagement with participants to reflect Raymond Williams' famous aphorism that, '*To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing*' (Quoted in Hall *et al.*, 2013: ix).

Now that I have outlined and justified my research approach and discussed issues relating to research ethics relevant to this thesis, the next sections will introduce the research participants, the characteristics I selected to frame the sample and identify the methods I adopted to recruit them.

4.4. Introducing the Young Activists: Why and How They Were Selected

This thesis is focused on offering an explanation of why these young people chose to become politically active and so I would suggest this involves a discussion about the development of their consciousness. From a Marxist position, our consciousness is the result of our interaction with our social world, understood dialectically. Consequently, if we want to understand consciousness we should start '*...with real people and their activity...*' in the material world (Allman, 2010: 38). This epistemological perspective influenced my approach to recruiting the participants in my research. I was also influenced by the method adopted by Kane (2007) in his research. Kane points out that there is a wide range of literature which focuses attention on the 'prefigurative' (McCowan, 2009) educational interventions and processes required to develop active citizens. However, Kane's own quantitative research was focused on looking the other way. That is, looking in the other direction at people who are already active citizens and working backwards to identify the critical factors in

their lives which led to their becoming active. Drawing inspiration from the 'direction' of Kane's research, this thesis also 'worked backwards' by asking some 'real' political activists to account for their involvement in the democratic and political process by surfacing and exploring the potentially detailed and rich data which can be gained from them reflecting on and sharing their political life history.

As noted earlier, the paradigm of young people as being apathetic and disengaged from politics is still a dominant theme in the research literature (Manning, 2013). Although others writers counter this position showing that young people are engaged and interested, just not in formal political activities (see for example Farthing, 2010, Henn & Foard, 2012 or Pilkington & Pollock, 2015). Manning (2013) highlights that this dominant paradigm of 'youth apathy' is partly due to the research that informs it being drawn from quantitative methodologies and relies on conventional and limited signifiers of activity such as voting. Nevertheless, whilst there is a range of, mainly quantitative, literature focusing on young people's political engagement, there is also a clear gap in knowledge about the political engagement of some groups of young people. Specifically, little attention has been given to young political activists who are '*...mostly absent...*' from the research literature (Gordon & Taft, 2011: 1500) and the voices and perspectives of young people in political parties is not widely represented in research studies (Rainsford, 2013). In particular my literature search for research that focused specifically on activists on the left of the political spectrum did not identify anything other than that of Kane's (2007).

Therefore, this qualitative research and my findings make a contribution to fill that gap in knowledge as I have recruited participants who are active in political parties and social movements. Specifically, for this research, I recruited young people who are members of three particular political and Labour movement organisations. These organisations are:

- **Scottish Labour Young Socialists (SLYS)**. Formed in the Autumn of 2015 by young members of the Scottish Labour Party who identified as socialists and had campaigned together for Jeremy Corbyn in the first Labour Party leadership context. The SLYS website says it is '*...An organisation for socialist young members, trade unionists and activists of the Scottish Labour Party*' who '*...ascribe to democratic socialist principles*'. Eight participants are members of SLYS.
- **The Young Communist League (YCL)**³. Founded in 1921 as the youth wing of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)⁴, their website defines the organisation as '*...the political membership organisation for young people in Britain who are Communists...*'. Although organisationally independent, it follows the programme of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB). Six participants are members of the YCL.
- **The Trade Union Movement**. Three young activists active in two trade unions. One is a member and employed officer of Unite the Union, Britain's 2nd biggest trade union which represents workers across a range of sectors of the economy, he is also a member of the Labour Party. Two are members

³ See here for the website of the YCL <https://ycl.org.uk/about/>

⁴ The CPGB disbanded in 1991 and transformed into the Democratic left. The YCL referred to in this study is therefore associated with the CPB which was formed (or reformed) in 1988 as a result of a split in the CPGB. If required the history of the formation/reformation of the CPB is available here <https://www.communist-party.org.uk/britain/forthcoming-events/2564-100-years-for-socialism-join-the-celebrations.html>

of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) which represents workers employed in departments of the United Kingdom Government and other Public Bodies.

It should be noted that whilst I used these organisations to recruit the participants, all of them were also active in other organisations. For instance, of the three recruited from the Trade Union movement, two were active members of the Labour Party and one the Scottish National Party (SNP). Amongst the activist recruited from the party political organisations, all but two were active members of a trade union. In addition to their Labour Party and trade union activity the young people were also active in a wide range of other left and progressive organisations. This activity includes: anti austerity, anti-fascist, anti-war, anti-arms trade, anti-zero hours contracts, feminist groups, LBGTQ groups, international solidarity (Palestine, Cuba, Venezuela, Kurds), refugee and migrant solidarity and campaigning, CND, environmental campaigning (climate change, anti-fracking), disability campaigning, community activism, community theatre and arts activism and volunteering in food banks. I will present a short biographical overview of each of the participants below which also links this activity to specific individuals (see section 4.5). However, next I will discuss in more detail and justify the particular characteristics I established to help frame who I would target as participants for this research and give an overview of my plan to recruit them.

Rather than seeing research participants as a 'sterile' sample of passive research objects, critical research frames research participants as active

agents and critical collaborators or co-investigators. The research relationships and processes that are developed should be dialogical and democratic in character and all involved in the research are interested in the search for emancipatory knowledge to guide action for social transformation (See Comstock 1982, Guba & Lincoln, 1995, Carspecken, 1997, Cohen *et al.*, 2003, Crotty, 2015). Guided by this epistemological and methodological research position, I sought to recruit participants who in general terms declared themselves on the left of the political spectrum and would be likely to broadly share my epistemological orientation and the transformative and emancipatory ambition of this research project.

In addition to this political orientation and recruiting young activists from the above named organisations, other biographical characteristics were important. In particular, I wanted to recruit activists between the ages of 16 and 27 at the time of the data collection (2017), and who had attended Scottish high schools. This is important as one of my subsidiary research questions relates to uncovering the participants' views of the education for citizenship they received during their time in compulsory schooling. This age range covers the period that CE has been a priority in Scottish Schools. My choice of participants is not only the result of my political orientation, but also pragmatic, given the time constraints on me as a doctoral student and working full time as an academic. For example, it was a convenient and efficient way of finding, in the one place, groups of young people who are both activists and who would share the broad theoretical orientation of this research. I already have some relationship with these organisations, or the key gatekeepers to them, and so negotiating access

and identifying and recruiting participants was less problematic than it might have been for a researcher without this relationship.

My original plan was to recruit from the organisations named above, between five and ten young people per organisation on a self-selecting basis. Moreover, from those who came forward to take part, my aim was to achieve a gender balance of participants. I planned to conduct one individual semi-structured interview with each participant. In addition, I intended to conduct four focus group interviews with membership being on a self-selecting basis; one with the young people from each individual organisation and then one which aimed to bring together young people from across the three organisations involved in the study. I will discuss the rationale and detail of these interviews in the data collection section below (4.6). As the recruitment of participants began, it became clear that there was a significant gap between my ambition; the intended data collection plan, and reality; the time consuming and logistical difficulties in arranging individual interviews. Therefore, given the overall time constraints on completing this stage of the process and the overall doctorate, it became obvious that a revised data collection plan was required. In discussion with supervisors, I decided to abandon the focus group element and concentrate on recruiting a spread of participants from the three organisations and only conduct individual interviews. In what follows the identification and recruitment of these participants is discussed. In doing so I also reveal some of the logistical difficulties I encountered and how I overcame them.

4.4.1. Recruiting the Research Participants: Snowball & Convenience

Sampling

As I had established a particular set of characteristics that potential participants to my research should have, then my sampling strategy was therefore purposive (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I wanted my sample to have '*experienced a particular phenomenon*', in this case being active, on the left and within a specific age range, and as a result, this would allow me generate knowledge, understanding and in-depth insight of these experiences. In recruiting these participants, my first step in gaining access to participants was to identify and contact the key gatekeepers of the target organisations. In identifying these gatekeepers I utilised my 'insiderness' (Sikes & Potts 2008: 3) to facilitate access by drawing heavily on my relationships and contacts with close comrades in the wider Labour and trade union movement. I began by sharing a draft research proposal with these comrades in advance of an initial meeting (see appendix 1). In addition to an overview of the research, this document makes explicit reference to my political orientation and critical research approach. Turning firstly to the YCL. As I am a member of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) I already have a strong associational connection to the YCL and know some of the key gatekeepers. Therefore, I approached the Scottish Secretary of the Party directly and in a meeting, I explained my research proposal and quickly got support to contact the Secretary of the YCL. In relation to the Scottish Labour Party (SLP), I have a long-established friendship, through joint campaigning and activism, with a Member of the Scottish Parliament and a key member of his staff. I got their support and they suggested the organisation, Scottish Labour Young Socialists (SLYS) and introduced me

to a leading member who could act as a gatekeeper. For the Trade Union movement, both my CPB and SLP comrades noted above were able to suggest the names of two key members of the Scottish Trades Union Council Youth Committee (STUCYC) who were also active in the YCL.

In the case of all three organisations, my initial contact was by an email sent to the identified gatekeepers; the Secretary of the YCL and the leading members of SLYS and STUCYC. The email asked for their support in recruiting participants, briefly described the recruitment strategy and it was accompanied by a brief overview of the research proposal (see appendix 1). I asked that if they could help with my research then we should arrange a telephone conversation to discuss in more detail the research project, my recruitment requirements and how best we could go about recruiting participants from their organisations. In recruiting participants, my approach had two elements and involved asking the gatekeeper to forward on to all members of their organisation an email invite to take part in the research and for an opportunity to present my invite directly to any group meetings of their organisation. Whilst emails were sent, I did not get an opportunity to attend any group meetings.

My strategy relied on the self-selection of participants and once the first participants had come forward I applied the '*snowballing or friendship pyramiding*' (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 57) technique of sampling. In this technique, once the researcher establishes the key characteristics of the people they want to research, the researcher will identify and recruit a small number of these people and then use them to identify or suggest other

participants who they know meet the established characteristics. The researcher or the participant will then contact those suggested, raise awareness of the research and invite them to take part. I acknowledge that my strategy also combines elements of the 'convenience or opportunity' sampling method as the participants are potentially more easily accessible to me (Cohen *et al.*, 2003, Braun & Clarke, 2013, Bradford & Cullen, 2013). There were a number of advantages to me in adopting these methods of recruiting participants. As noted above, convenience is an obvious one as I already knew and had relationships with individuals who could connect me directly to the key people in these organisations. Snowballing is also considered appropriate when the researcher is looking for particular characteristics shared by all participants and this was the case in my research. Importantly for my method, in relation to research with young people, snowballing can build in some 'security and trust' between the researcher and the participants as those who have already been involved can positively promote and vouch for the researcher and the research project and so encourage further recruitment (Choak, 2013: 98).

Having sent the initial emails I had a very prompt and positive reply from the gatekeeper of SLYC. In our subsequent telephone conversation my recruitment strategy was slightly amended and improved in two ways. First, the invitation would also be shared on various social media platforms. Second, the gate keeper suggested creating a video invitation. He thought this would be more appropriate and accessible to young people as they would be able to see me as the researcher and hear directly from me what the research was about.

I accepted this would be a good method and I was able to quickly negotiate University support to produce a 5 minute video invitation. I then used this amended method with all the gatekeepers, which included asking them to send out an email invite to the members of their organisations. The email included the URL to the video, which can still be viewed, and it was accompanied by an information sheet explaining the purpose of the research and what would be involved (see appendix 2 & 3).

My initial discussion with the gatekeeper of SLYS also led to the first two interviews being established, as the gatekeeper agreed to take part and he also negotiated the participation of his partner, also a member of SLYC. They are presented in this thesis as Jim and Mary. My interviews with them began in early November 2016. The snowballing technique, especially the issue of establishing 'security and trust' to encourage others to take part worked, as did the video. Evidence is this extract from an email from the participant who became James in this thesis. '*... [Jim] got in touch with me stating that you were looking for activists ... After watching your video I would be keen to get involved in your research...*'. Further members of SLYS got in touch in quick succession after this as a result of snowballing.

Unfortunately, this swift and efficient recruitment strategy was not the case with YCL or trade union members. Turning to the YCL first, although I had some email communication with the Secretary of the YCL, he was very busy due to work commitments. As a result communication was limited and sporadic and I could not arrange a telephone conversation. Yet he did send out the information

about my research to YCL members. However, in over a month I had not received any communication from prospective YCL participants. In late November 2016 in my capacity as a party member, I attended a Communist Party national meeting in Glasgow at which two young members were present. Although I did not know them, I took the opportunity to introduce myself. Both were aware of my research from the email invitation and were interested, but they had not got around to contacting me. Fortunately, I was able to get their email contacts and subsequently got interviews arranged with them. They appear as Willie and Mick in the thesis. My sampling technique here clearly resembles Cohen *et al.*'s (2003: 102) description of convenience sampling as 'accidental' or opportunistic. This involves the researcher '*...choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents until the required sample size is obtained...*'. The usefulness of my snowballing technique is further evidenced by the email I got from another YCL member, appearing in the thesis as John. He writes; '*...I believe you met [Willie] on Friday...[Willie] mentioned...you require more participants, and I would be happy to help out.*' The lack of other participants coming forward from the YCL inspired me to take the initiative again by visiting the Party's Glasgow street stall which operates in the city centre every Saturday afternoon. There I was able to speak directly to other YCL members and secure another two interviews. My last YCL recruit, who appears as Rosa in this thesis, can clearly be categorised as the accidental form of convenience sampling. I met her at the Edinburgh May Day rally I was attending. Although I had not met her before, I was able to introduce myself and recruit her as a participant.

I was only able to recruit one participant who was active in the STUCYC, but this was as a result of their YCL membership not under the category of trade union activity. Excluding this participant and despite a range of emails and phone conversations with key members, I was not able to recruit any participants from the STUCYC and so I had to rethink my strategy with this target group. Through my close comrades in the Labour Party I was able to identify and recruit one young activist to the research and he was also employed as an organiser for Unite the Union. He appears as Hugo in this thesis. Part of Hugo's work for Unite was to work with their Scottish Youth Committee. Therefore, this fortuitous development presented the possibility of access to a range of youth activists. By this stage in the data collection process my sample was overwhelmingly male, with only three of the fifteen participants being female. The flexibility of snowballing is an advantage in this situation as it allows for the monitoring of the sample as it is developing and action can be taken to correct any under representation of particular important groups (Choak, 2012). I was able to ask Hugo to only pass the invite on to female activists. Unfortunately, despite a number of female activists being interested, I was not able to secure any interviews due to logistical difficulties. Nevertheless, towards the end my timetable for data collection I was finally able to recruit female trade union activists. On this occasion one of my doctoral Supervisors was able to put me in touch with the Union official responsible for the PCS youth committee. As a consequence I recruited one activist, named Eleanor in this thesis. She was able to help me recruit one more activist, Nan in the thesis. Further evidence of the effectiveness of my snowballing method

is apparent in this email from Nan; *‘[Eleanor] has been in touch with me. I’m more than happy to have a chat with you?’*.

4.4.2. Some Limitations of My Recruitment Method

My sampling methods, focusing on self-selection and snowballing, certainly enabled me to recruit participants and generated rich data. Yet this method also produced a particular range of participants which has to be noted. The most obvious is the limited gender and ethnic diversity. The majority of the participants are male and all are white. I am not able to establish if this lack of diversity is a factor of my overall recruitment strategy or if it is just a true reflection of the membership of these organisations. I think it would be reasonable to assume both had some impact. It is also difficult to say to what extent this lack of diversity influenced the data I collected or my findings. Specific gender identity differences did not seem to be evident amongst the perspectives, values or experiences of the activists. The key themes I identified were reflected in the views expressed by both male and female participants. I did aim for gender balance, but as I was using self-selection as a recruitment method then participants were sometimes hard to identify and recruit. As a result I took a pragmatic approach and accepted those who got in touch as long as they matched my set characteristics, regardless of their gender.

Whilst I did have a clear set of characteristics to identify my participants, the self-selection and snowballing technique did not always secure participants who shared all these characteristics. For instance, one criterion for recruitment was being schooled in Scotland, yet two of the participants were not and this

also had a gender dimension to it. The participant known as Louise got in touch to say she wanted to take part. However, it was only when she arrived for the interview that I discovered she had attended school in France. Nevertheless, given she had taken the time to attend the interview, I decided it would be discourteous and uncomradely to cancel it. In another case, towards the end of the time I had allocated to recruit and interview participants, Eleanor got in touch and offered to take part. In a preliminary phone conversation I discovered that she is based in the North of England and had been to school there, not Scotland. My response here is an example of my pragmatism and convenience sampling. At this point in the data collection period I was running out of time to extend the sample and the sample lacked females so I decided to include Eleanor as she would be a useful comparator with the mainly Scottish experience of the other participants. Including Eleanor also led to the recruitment of another female, this time who was schooled in Scotland.

4.5. Biographical Overview of Research Participants

This section will present a brief biographic profile of each participant, starting with the rationale I chose to allocate pseudonyms to each participant. It was not until I was near the end of the data collection process that I fixed on the method I would use. This happened spontaneously in the interview with the activist who became Hugo. After the interview had officially ended he spoke about being a supporter of Hugo Chavez. I happened to mention that I needed to give pseudonyms to participants and he said he would be happy to be called 'Hugo'. Reflecting on this incident after the data collection was complete led me to the method I have used. That was to draw the pseudonyms from the

pantheon of left wing figures. As all but Hugo were not able to select their own pseudonym I choose to allocate a name that was relevant to the organisation the participants are members of and where relevant, based on my assessment of some similarity in their biographic details.

4.5.1. Rationale for Participant Pseudonyms

Anthony – Tony Benn	Tony Benn is a hero of Anthony's. As well as Labour Party (LP) membership in common, Anthony cites faith as an influence on his developing socialism as did Tony Benn.
Eleanor – Eleanor Marx	Eleanor is a socialist, trade union activist and has an interest in the theatre. Eleanor Marx amongst other things was also a socialist, trade union activist and had an interest in drama.
Eric – Eric Atkinson	Eric is a member of the YCL. In the interview he comments that he is not much for reading theory and is more focused on activity. Eric Atkinson was a Communist Party stalwart and party activist that I knew well. However, he was renowned for his activity and organisational work not for theoretical work. Eric's comments in the interview reminded me of Eric Atkinson.
Fred - Fredrick Engels	Fred is a member of YCL and the CPB. He describes himself as a Marxist who has read and been influenced by Engels' work.
George - George Buchanan	George is a committed socialist and member of the LP from the West Coast of Scotland. George Buchanan was a committed socialist and member of the LP from the West of Scotland. George also cited Red Clydeside as a historical moment he is interested in and George Buchanan was a leading socialist during in this period
Hugo – Hugo Chavez	Hugo identified Hugo Chavez as a hero and so we agreed this would be his pseudonym.
James – James Maxton	As a Glasgow based member of the LP and by his own admission on its radical left wing, James reminded me of James Maxton who was a radical left Labour member and MP from the West of Scotland.
Jim - James Connolly	Jim is a member of the LP, but like James Connolly, he is from Edinburgh, is a self-described Marxist and supports Hibernian Football club (One of two senior football teams in Edinburgh).
John – John Gollan	John is from Edinburgh and is a member of CPB & YCL. John Gollan, also from Edinburgh, was General Secretary of CPGB in 50s/60s.

Keir – Keir Hardie	Keir is a LP member and comes from coal mining stock. Keir Hardie, founder of the LP and Labour MP was a miner.
Louise - Louise Michel	Louise is French and is a member of the LP. She is active as a radical and feminist in a range of other progressive organisations. Louise’s radical political outlook and her nationality reminded me of Louise Michel who was an outstanding leader and activist of the Paris commune. And as well as a being an anarchist she was a strong feminist.
Mary - Mary Barbour	Mary is a socialist member of the LP and a feminist from Paisley. Mary Barbour was an active socialist member of the LP a feminist and peace campaigner who grew up just outside Paisley.
Mick – Mick McGahey	Mick is an active member of the Communist Party and active in his trade union and the STUC. As well as being an active Communist, Mick McGahey was also active in the National Union of Mineworkers becoming its Scottish president from the late 1960s till the late 1980s and a leading figure in the STUC.
Nan – Nan Milton	Nan Milton was a daughter of John McLean, the leading Scottish Marxist. She was a committed Socialist and supporter of Scottish Nationalism. Nan’s radical political views and activity mirror Nan Milton.
Robin – Robin Cook	Robin is on the left of the LP and is interested in theoretical and intellectual ideas. Robin Cook was a member of the LP and MP. He was seen as both on the left and an intellectual in the LP.
Rosa - Rosa Luxemburg	Rosa Luxemburg was a leading female figure of the communist movement and anti-war activist in the early 20 th century. Rosa is a female member of the CPB & YCL and is active in a range of other org such as the anti-war movement.
Willie – Willie Gallagher	Willie is a YCL & CPB member active in Glasgow, with a direct family connection to the Spanish Civil war. Willie Gallagher was from Paisley but became active in Glasgow. He was a lifelong member of CPGB and was a Communist MP from 1935 to 1950. He was one of the leaders of Red Clydeside in 1919 and as an MP campaigned for support to the republican side in the Spanish Civil War.

4.5.2. Participant Biographical Overview

Anthony	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	22
Sample group category	SLYS

Declared social class	Working class: Based on his own assessment of his family being from a working class background.
Current status	Student: Postgraduate student
Educational background	State comprehensive, university undergraduate
Parent's employment status	Both public sector employees, UK government civic servants
Range of political activity	SLYS, Labour Party, Campaign for Socialism, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Youth Committee PCS Union, CND, Anti-fracking, Anti-austerity, Better Than Zero (a trade union anti zero hours campaign),
Eleanor	
Gender	Female
Age at interview	25
Sample group category	Trade union movement
Declared social class	Working class: Based on own assessment of family background, employment status, community she grew up in (ex- mining) and own educational status.
Current status	UK Government department civil servant
Educational background	State comprehensive
Parent's employment status	UK Government department civil servants
Range of political activity	PCS member, PCS Youth Committee member (regional chair), PCS Shop Steward, PCS LGBT committee, Labour Party Member, Anti-austerity, Anti-Fascist
Eric	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	19
Sample group category	YCL
Declared social class	Working Class; Marxist definition
Current status	Student: Undergraduate
Educational background	State comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Both public sector professionals (Social Work related)
Range of political activity	YCL, International solidarity (Cuba, Venezuela, Anti-fracking), geographic community activist
Fred	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	20
Sample group category	YCL
Declared social class	Working Class: Marxist analysis
Current status	Student: Undergraduate

Educational background	State Comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Father: ex services, now precarious driving jobs (Mother not mentioned)
Range of political activity	YCL, CPB, Unite Community branch, LGBTQ, Disability Rights, Feminist groups, Anti-Fascist
George	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	23
Sample group category	SLYS
Declared social class	Working class: Marxist definition
Current status	Student: Undergraduate
Educational background	State comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Mother: Receptionist NHS - Father: Teacher
Range of political activity	SLYS, LP international solidarity (Cuba, Venezuela) CND, previously a member of SNP & SSP
Hugo	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	28
Sample group category	Trade union Movement
Declared social class	Working Class: based on family background and employment status
Current status	Full time Officer Unite the Union
Educational background	State comprehensive, HNC FE college
Parent's employment status	Mother : Nurse NHS – Father factory worker
Range of political activity	LP, Trade union movement, Militant Arts group, Anti austerity
James	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	20
Sample group category	SLYS
Declared social class	Not specifically identified in interview
Current status	Student: Undergraduate
Educational background	State Comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Mother: teacher, Father not mentioned
Range of political activity	SLYC, LP, Member of unit the union
Jim	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	26

Sample group category	SLYS
Declared social class	Working Class: Based on his own assessment of his family being from a working class background
Current status	University Lecturer
Educational background	State Comprehensive, Student: UG, PG & Doctoral.
Parent's employment status	Mother: Teacher – Father: Public sector worker (not explicitly stated)
Range of political activity	SLYC, LP, Member & Shop Steward UCU, International Solidarity (Palestine & Venezuela), Anti-war, Anti-fascist.
John	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	24
Sample group category	YCL
Declared social class	Working class: Marxist analysis (But describes family background as lower middle class due to a grandparent who went to public school)
Current status	Teacher
Educational background	State Comprehensive, Student: UG & PG
Parent's employment status	Mother: learning Assistant in state Comprehensive – Father Civil Servant (Not explicitly stated)
Range of political activity	YCL, CPB, member & shop steward: Educational Institute for Scotland ⁵ (EIS), Cuba Solidarity
Keir	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	19
Sample group category	SLYS
Declared social class	Working class: based on family background and where he grew up
Current status	Student: FE access to HE course.
Educational background	State comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Mother: Care worker Public sector - Father estranged
Range of political activity	SLYS, LP, Unite Community Branch, Office bearer local momentum group, Organiser local Anti-Fascist group, Anti-austerity.
Louise	
Gender	Female
Age at interview	22
Sample group category	SLYS

⁵ Scotland's largest teaching trade union

Declared social class	Middle Class: based on parents' employment (Mother lawyer) but states parents' backgrounds as working class.
Current status	Student: Undergraduate
Educational background	State School (In France)
Parent's employment status	Mother: University law professor – father: Sales executive
Range of political activity	SLYS, LP, University Student association officer, LGBT, Feminist society, migrant & refuge solidarity, Environmental campaigner.
Mary	
Gender	Female
Age at interview	24
Sample group category	SLYS
Declared social class	Working class: Based on own assessment of family background and employment status, manual/semi-skilled work
Current status	Local Government Officer
Educational background	State Comprehensive, Student: UG.
Parent's employment status	Mother: School janitor – Father: not specifically identified but manual/semi-skilled
Range of political activity	SLYC, LP, member of LP National Youth Committee, Member and activist in Unison, Momentum activist.
Mick	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	26
Sample group category	YCL
Declared social class	Working class: Marxist definition
Current status	Student: FE access course, now HE undergraduate
Educational background	State Comprehensive, FE access course
Parent's employment status	Mother: Factory worker – father: Former shipyard worker, now salesman.
Range of political activity	YCL, CPB, Member and activist in Unison, member of Unison Scotland youth Committee, member of STUCYC International solidarity (Cuba, Kurds) Radical Social Action Work Network
Nan	
Gender	Female
Age at interview	26
Sample group category	Trade union movement
Declared social class	Working class: Based on assessment of family background
Current status	UK Government department civil servant

Educational background	State Comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Mother: Foster carer – Father: Engineer & auxiliary Fire Fighter
Range of political activity	Branch officer, member & activist in PCS Union, Member of PCS Youth Committee, Member & activist in SNP, Community activist, Community Arts Group.
Robin	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	23
Sample group category	SLYS
Declared social class	Not declared (Lives in self-declared relatively affluent community & parents are graduates and public sector workers)
Current status	Student: Undergraduate
Educational background	State comprehensive
Parent's employment status	Both social workers
Range of political activity	SLYS, LP, Disability activist group.
Rosa	
Gender	Female
Age at interview	27
Sample group category	YCL
Declared social class	Working class: Marxist definition (But prefixes this with 'white collar')
Current status	Bank employee: Risk assessment
Educational background	State Comprehensive, Student: UG
Parent's employment status	Mum: Anaesthetist NHS – Father: Computer programmer
Range of political activity	YCL, CPG, Anti-Fascist, Anti-Arms trade, Feminist activism.
Willie	
Gender	Male
Age at interview	24
Sample group category	YCL
Declared social class	Working class: Marxist definition
Current status	PhD Student
Educational background	State Comprehensive, Student: UG & PG
Parent's employment status	Mother: surveyor – Father: Teacher (both in public sector)
Range of political activity	YCL, CPB, Member & Activist in UCU

4.6. Data Collection: The Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview

4.6.1. Introduction

The research questions that frame this study relate to investigating the meanings the young activists give to their motivation and experiences of becoming activists. And so I was interested in identifying and exploring their political life history with them. As a result, the data collection method I adopted was the semi-structured qualitative interview. As the researcher, I wanted to see things '*through the eyes*' of the participants involved (Bryman, 2008: 385). However, I acknowledge Silverman's (2011: 40) note of caution regarding how this qualitative data is handled. Treating people's experience uncritically can underplay how this experience is shaped by particular social, political or cultural influences and so the risk of 'romanticism' should be avoided. Nevertheless, my understanding of the interview in social research is consistent with my overall research approach. That is, the participants are understood and positioned in the research as active agents who can think about and interpret their social world, rather than as passive objects. I would argue that this approach allowed me, as the researcher, to work with the participants and to go beyond the surface detail of the phenomenon under discussion. This '*contextual sensitivity*' (Silverman 2011:17) enabled the uncovering of 'thick' and nuanced data that helped me develop a deeper understanding of the particular phenomenon under investigation and the specific contexts in which the participants live and act (Bryman 2008: 385). The interviews also provided opportunities to relate the perspectives being surfaced to questions and issues about '*...the wider context in which the phenomenon arises...*' (Bryman 2008:17) and help me interpret why this happens. The qualitative semi-

structured interview enabled me to build a deeper understanding of the motivations and perspectives of the participants, more so than would be the case for example with survey data. As noted above my original research design also included the use of focus groups, but logistical difficulties and pressure of time led me to abandon this data collection method. In the next sections I will give a brief descriptive overview of how I organised and conducted the qualitative interviews. This will be followed by a discussion about how I conceptualise the semi-structured qualitative interview and why this is important for my research approach. I will also discuss how I dealt with my political standpoint in the interviews.

4.6.2. Collecting the Dialogical Data

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted between November 2016 and July of 2017. After initial email communication confirming their interest in taking part, I spoke to each participant on the phone. This gave me the opportunity to introduce myself and give some background to the wider research project. To support the process of informed consent, I was also able to brief them on the process of the interview and allow them to ask any questions. I see the creation of this dialogical process as central to my practice and reflects my identity as a researcher. Furthermore, I also gave consideration to the location of the interview and how this was decided. Rather than suggesting that the interviews would be conducted to suit me such as in my office at the university, I approached this as a negotiation. But I gave the participant the opportunity to lead the process and decide on a location for the interview where they would be most comfortable and that was convenient for

them. But also where the interview could be conducted in a quiet and undisturbed space (see Braun & Clark, 2013 or Herzog, 2014). For Herzog (2014: 213) this approach reflects the socially constructed nature of any interview and begins the 'democratising' process of producing knowledge, as researcher and interviewee become co-participants in arranging the event. I also see this approach as consistent with my own understanding of the participative and democratic nature of interviews. As a result of negotiations the interviews took place in the following venues: seven in my office in the Moray House School of Education, four in the participants' own home, two in meeting rooms at the participants' university, two in meeting rooms in the participants' trade union head offices and one in a meeting room at the participant's workplace.

Some research literature stresses the importance of briefing participants in advance of an interview (See Kvale, 2007 or Choak, 2012). I share this view and the need to ensure participants were as prepared as possible for the interview. Participants would have already received the information sheet sent out with the original invite. This gave an outline of my research aims, including its radical and social justice purpose. It also laid out what was involved in the interview such as, what they were committing to, what rights they had, that the research was being conducted under the auspices of the University of Edinburgh and information on my supervisors (see appendix 3). In advance of the interview I also sent an email giving an overview of my research questions and attached to this was a consent form (see appendix 4 for an example of the text of an email and the consent form). I had a number of reasons for briefing

the participants in advance, principally for their benefit, but also for mine. For example, Kvale (2007: 27) notes how briefing participants can encourage their involvement in the process and in obtaining informed consent. Additionally, as I am interested in elements of their life history then I wanted to give them an opportunity to reflect on my broad research questions in the hope that this would allow them to make an informed response to my interview questions. From my perspective as the researcher and as an educator, I felt it was just good practice to prepare participants in advance, as well as it reflecting my desire to create a democratic and dialogical interview.

I discuss the initial informal stage of the interview at page 121 below. However, I began the formal stage of the interview process by setting the scene (see appendix 5). This involved introducing myself and a general recap of the briefing I had given in the telephone conversation such as; the background and purpose of the research project, their rights, a reminder that the interview would be recorded, an explanation of how I was going to manage their data. I also emphasised the need for their informed consent and I obtained their signature on the completed consent form. I then asked each participant to introduce themselves by giving a short biographical summary including their name, age, school they attended and a description of their current or past political activity. Each interview was guided by the same interview schedule of questions which were formulated from and focused around my overall research questions (see appendix 5). In bringing the interview to a close I gave participants an opportunity to ask me any questions or to return to anything that they said. Although each interview addressed the same general questions, there was

flexibility in my approach and each interview developed slightly differently depending on the response of the participant. An interview took between approximately one and a half and two hours. Each in depth interview was recorded with permission. During the interview I took notes of what the main issues or points were and what I should follow up or explore further in the interview. In addition, I also recorded on cards the most significant things the participant said about their motivation for becoming active or their educational experiences. In the last part of the interview I applied a form of 'member checking' (Carspecken, 1996: 166) by verbally feeding back a summary of the key points of the interview to check for accuracy and invite their reaction (Cho & Trent, 2016: 330). I also laid out the cards with key points on and asked them to confirm if these were accurate, to rank them in order of importance to them and to indicate if and how the noted key issues related to each other. After the interview, each participant received an email from me thanking them for their time and inviting them to get back to me if they needed any more information.

4.6.3. Conceptualising the Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview in Critical Research.

The semi-structured interview is a common technique used by qualitative researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 78, Mason, 2006: 63). Miller and Glassner (2011: 131), claim that interviews reveal:

...evidence of the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, including the contexts and situations in which it emerges, as well as insights into the cultural frames people use to make sense of these experiences and their social worlds.

For Kvale (2011: 10) the interview is a '*... powerful method for producing*

knowledge...' about the social world and the key venue for researchers to explore how participants understand their world, allowing participants to describe, in their own words, their understandings, experiences and perspectives. A suitable definition of a semi-structured interview, which matches my understanding, is offered by Kvale (2011: 65). For him a semi-structured interview:

...has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as some prepared questions. Yet at the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and question forms in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the interviewees.

As I am interested in the factors that influenced their development as activists, then selecting interviews is an appropriate way to surface their life history. As Bold (2012: 96) asserts, using interviews to gain access to a participant's life history is a powerful means of finding out the '*impact of past events on people's lives*'. A focus on life history in interviews can give attention to documenting the whole life of those interviewed or just a part of it (Fielding 2006:159). In my interviews I was interested in just a part of the participants lives, that is their '*political life history*' (Miller, 2000: 80) and in particular the critical moments, events or key influences that made them politically active. This approach is seen as particularly useful in relation to understanding people's development as citizens (Holford & Edirisingha, 2000). Nevertheless, whilst interviews are a powerful method to collect data about the social world, a critical research approach conceives the interview in a particular way and so I will briefly outline how I understand and use this method.

The data generated by critical qualitative research is transactional and dialectical (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110). That is the researched and the researcher are related interactively and attention is focused on developing a deeper and collective understanding of the research topic and the aim is the collection of what Carspecken (1996) calls '*dialogical data*'. Collecting this form of data therefore required me to develop a democratic and participative relationship in the research process (Carspecken, 1996: 155) and so Holstein and Gubrium's (2004) conception of the interview as an unavoidably interactive process is important to my approach. Holstein and Gubrium's conception of interviews challenges the more traditional notion of interviews in that this interaction is problematic as it could be a potential source of bias, error or misdirection due to the researcher not conducting the interview with sufficient objectivity. Interviews in this traditional view are seen by Holstein and Gubrium (2004: 141) as a '*...pipeline for the transporting of knowledge...*', held by the respondents, who are treated as passive '*...vessels of answers...*' (ibid: 145). This view of interviews is based on a positivist epistemology. Instead Holstein and Gubrium (2004: 141) see interviews as a '*...social encounter in which knowledge is actively constructed...*' by all involved in the process.

Consequently, my approach did not treat the interview as a one way series of stimuli and responses guided by me, but as an '*...interpersonal drama with a developing plot*' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 149). This conceives the interview process as '*...an on-going interpretive accomplishment...*' (ibid: 149) that enables those involved in the interview, particularly the respondents, to become actively involved. This active process develops when researchers pay

keen attention not only to what the respondents are saying, but also to the nature of the social interaction in the process that enables this information to come forward. Therefore, unlike an objectivist influenced paradigm where this active interview is a potential source of 'contamination', the participants in the active interview process are '*...involved in meaning construction, not contamination...*' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 155). I applied this conception in my approach to these interviews.

Nonetheless, whilst my intention was to create an interview that was democratic and participative, I was also conscious that interviews are '*...not merely data collection exercises*' (Cohen *et al.*, 2003: 278) but inherently social interpersonal interactions. And so the decisive factor in creating a successful interview relies on the researcher 'setting the stage' (Kvale, 2011: 58) appropriately by creating as equitable and convivial an environment as possible in which the interviewee feels comfortable and safe enough to talk about aspects of their lives which, although anonymised, may be made public at a later date (Atkinson, 2014). Therefore, I gave careful thought to how I would create this environment and in particular how I developed a rapport with the participants.

It is recognised in the literature that a crucial method in building rapport with an interviewee is self-disclosure in relation to the researchers' own biography and in particular their position on the research topic. Yet, whilst the need to develop a rapport is recognised as important, there is debate about whether it should be done, and if so, how and to what extent. In the first instance, self-disclosure

depends on the epistemological position of the researcher. If neutrality is valued then self-disclosure would be problematic and so not considered. Yet in summing up the debates in the literature, Morris (2015: 93) suggests that the dominant contemporary view amongst qualitative researchers is that in interviews '*...both parties give information about their views and feelings* (see also Braun & Clark, 2013). This is particularly the case in interviews which draw on life history as these interviews require a degree of trust and rapport to be built up and the greater the trust and rapport the greater self-disclosure is required (Atkinson, 2012: 93).

Nevertheless, Morris (2015: 93) highlights that self-disclosure should be used carefully and reflexively and that the context of the research is crucial in deciding if it would be useful and appropriate. Importantly, the example he uses to illustrate this point has some relevance to my own research topic. He suggests for example, that if you are interviewing a traditional conservative school head teacher then it would not be wise to disclose that you think the role of schooling is oppressive and fundamentally concerned with the reproduction of labour power. Yet, if you were interviewing trade unionists and you were a trade unionist, then disclosing this may help build trust and rapport with the participant. Talmage (2012: 298) also stresses the tactical need for researcher self-disclosure, especially as the nature of the research questions can require a deeper process of mutual self-disclosure. My epistemological position is consistent with this notion of reflexive self-discourse. Furthermore, given the political and emancipatory orientation of my research and my commitment to critical reflexivity, then I would argue that this necessitated making clear my left-

wing political commitments and views to participants. As a consequence of these position, I took the decision that in all communication I would be open and honest about the purpose of my research and my own Party membership and political position. I made this clear to the participants from our first phone conversations as well as during and after the interviews. I emphasised that I wanted them to join with me and contribute to developing our understanding of how young people become active and how we can improve citizenship education to promote transformative social change and social justice.

As a result of taking this approach to self-disclosure and 'stage setting' I think each of my interviews can be characterised as two members of the Labour and trade union movement establishing what I would described as a 'comradely rapport'. As well as seeing each activist as a research participant, I saw them as comrades and I think this was reciprocated due to the approach I adopted. For example, whilst I am not from the same generation as the participants or a member of the youth groups they were, I am an active member of the wider Labour and trade union moment and so my position as a researcher in many ways resembles that of an 'insider'. Sikes and Potts (2008: 177) note the advantages that being an 'insider' can confer on the researcher and the research project such as; the researcher is already familiar with the language and jargon used, participants would be more likely to be trusting and less hostile and mutual empathy can be developed quicker. So, taken together, these factors help promote an environment where participants feel more comfortable sharing information and private knowledge. My assessment of the interview process offers some evidence of me benefiting from being an insider. Each of

the interviews followed the same broad pattern. For example, there was often conversations about their support for the wider political purpose of my research. One or both of us would refer to and discuss mutual acquaintances or comrades, and often we would have a more general political discussion about issues and situations current in left politics such as the fortunes of Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party, or our positions on Independence or left perspectives on leaving the European Union. I would often have to cut these discussion short to begin the interview. After the interview had ended these comradely discussions would continue, often at length and in some depth with one or both of us picking up on and developing a particular topic surfaced in the interview. These post interview conversations would take place either where the interview was conducted or sometimes in a local coffee shop or pub. My approach to the interview, as well as being a consistent ontological and epistemological position, positively contributed to the recruitment of participants and certainly helped me develop trust and rapport with my interviewees (See Braun & Clark 2013: 93) allowing me to collect a rich data set.

Notwithstanding this desire to establish a democratic and active process in the interviews and the rapport I established as an 'insider', it is important to note that in preparing and conducting these interviews I also recognised the essential role power plays in any interview process and how this may condition the data that are constructed and collected. Despite my approach, as Kvale (2007: 11) points out, a research interview is still different from a more conventional spontaneous conversation. Regardless of the extent to which the participant agrees with the research topic and the researcher's position, it is a

professional encounter in which the structure and purpose are largely framed and controlled by the researcher. Power therefore is never distributed equally and the '*...respondent never has full control of the setting...*' (Scott & Usher 2011: 116) despite the best intentions of the researcher to '*...democratise the research process...*' (Carspecken 1996: 155). The questions I asked were framed by me and to an extent; at least in the early stages of the process, the direction in which the interview went was based on my research interests and the overall framework of the research. Added to this has to be consideration of the biographical issues of those involved such as class, gender, race or age and how these conditions the development of relationships in the 'on going interpersonal, interpretive drama' of the interview process. Nonetheless, as noted above, I ensured that I set the stage for the interviews appropriately to develop trust and rapport with the participants and I think this allowed them to feel comfortable enough to express themselves and to '*...help them explore issues with their own vocabulary, their own metaphors and their own ideas.*' (Carspecken 1996: 155). Some evidence for my success in this comes from participant responses to an evaluative question I built into the end of the interview schedule. This question asked participants about my practice as an interviewer and how they felt about the process. I did not always have time to ask this question in the interview but I also invited comment in the post interview email. The following three quotations, the first from an interview and the remainder from emails after the event, are representative of all the participants positive views; Jim: '*It was good...I didn't feel like I was having a dialogue restricted so that was useful*'. John, who is a teacher said: '*I found taking part in the interview extremely rewarding, and it was an opportunity for me to reflect*

on my own practice'. Anthony: 'Thanks for the interview, it was thoroughly enjoyable and I hope it proves useful for your research moving forward.'

4.7. Analysing the Data: Using Thematic Analysis

This research is focused on exploring with the participants their political life histories in order to identify and analyse the key factors and motivations explaining their activism. Yet, whilst I wanted to see things '*through the eyes*' of the participants involved, it is important to note that my research and its findings were also influenced by the '*substantive concerns*' (Dey 1993: 84) I bring to the analysis of the data I collected. That is the conceptual framework of this study, led by a strong theoretical orientation and set of theoretically derived assumptions about the topic being studied. In relation to qualitative data analysis, Nowell *et al.* (2017) point out that the researcher is the 'instrument for analysis', making all judgments about the way the data is collected, organised, analysed, coded and evaluated. As a result they stress the importance of the researcher making clear to any reader how they have done this. Consequently, in this section I will offer a detailed account of the approach I took and the method I adopted to analyse the data.

I adopted thematic analysis (TA) as the method of data analyse. In relation to interview data, TA is the most commonly used method of qualitative analysis (Roulston, 2001, O'Reilly & Dogra, 2019). There is a broad range of literature from across a number of disciplines which explains and discusses this method (see for example Boyatzis, 1998, Fereday & Muir Cochrane, 2006, Willig, 2013 or Nowell *et al.*, 2017). However, for this thesis I have drawn mainly from the

approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006 & 2013) as this is seen as the most influential approach in the social sciences (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I chose TA as it allows me to ‘...*identify, make sense of and highlight the key themes in a rich qualitative data set ...*’ (King & Brooks, 2018: 222). In particular, as I was interested in the participants accounts of the reasons for their development as activists, TA allows me to identify ‘...*the salient issues raised by interviewees...*’ (O’Rielly & Dogra, 2018: 71) and helps to answer ‘...*questions about people’s conceptualizations or ways of thinking about particular social phenomena.*’ (Willig, 2013: 183).

Whilst, there are many different ways to conduct TA, Braun and Clark (2006: 178) point out that it is just ‘...*really a method...*’ of analysis in that it is not linked to any particular theoretical or epistemological position and so it offers flexibility to a researcher as it can be applied to answer almost any research question or analyse any form of data, no matter the epistemological or theoretical orientation of the researcher. Nevertheless, within this diversity, Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between two broad types of TA. One is an inductive ‘bottom up’ approach where the themes ‘emerge’ from the data and they may not have a close relation to the questions that were asked of the participants. As Braun and Clark (2006: 83) summarise, it’s a way of analyzing the data ‘...*without trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame or the researcher’s analytic preconception.*’. This is a data driven approach, with a ‘...*similarity to grounded theory...*’ (ibid). However, Braun and Clark (2006: 84) remind their readers that researchers can’t free themselves from their ‘...*theoretical and epistemological commitments...*’ and that the process of analyzing and coding

data cannot take place in a '*...epistemological vacuum*'. The other approach to TA outlined by Braun and Clark (2006: 84) is a deductive or 'top down' approach, which is driven by the researcher's theoretical interest and the themes identified would '*...capture something important...*' in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 82). So rather than being data driven it is '*...more explicitly analyst driven...*' (ibid). Braun and Clark (2013: 175) name this approach 'theoretical TA' and describe it as follows; '*Analysis is guided by an existing theory and theoretical concepts (as well as by the researcher standpoint, disciplinary knowledge and epistemology)*'. Given my stated overall critical research design it will therefore be self-evident that it is the theoretical TA approach I have adopted in this thesis.

TA is a form of data analysis that focuses on identifying and interpreting themes in textual data (King & Brooks 2019: 220). For Braun and Clarke (2006: 82), themes identify important elements or patterns in the data that relate to the research questions. In terms of conducting data analysis using a TA approach, Braun and Clark (2006 & 2013) set out six recursive phases. These are neatly summarised by Neuendorf (2019: 213):

1. Familiarisation with the data. Regarding this thesis, that is 17 semi-structured interview transcripts.
2. Generate codes. Codes are interesting features of a text that are meaningful and relate to answering the research questions.
3. Search for themes. An examination and collation of the codes to identify broader patterns of meaning.

4. Reviewing themes. Test potential themes against the data set to determine if they tell a convincing story that answers the research question.
5. Defining and naming themes and develop a detailed analysis of each theme.
6. Writing up of analysis.

I used these steps as a guide to my own data analysis which I will now explain.

4.7.1. My Approach to Analysing the Data

The first phase of my data analysis involved immersing myself in the data. Braun and Clark (2006: 87) note that this stage involves active and repeated reading of the data to find meaning and patterns. In my approach, my immersion in the data and its analysis began at the interview stage. For example, I took notes during the interviews. In addition, in the card sorting exercise, the participants were able to confirm what the salient points were for them and rank them in some form of significance. Through the interview process I was beginning to identify patterns and possible themes relevant to my research questions. As the data collection process continued, I started to transcribe the first two interviews. Whilst this enabled me to be familiar with the interview I was transcribing, my lack of skill made this process very time consuming and so I had the remainder professionally transcribed.

Once all the interviews were completed I began my immersion in the full data set. I read through each transcript whilst listening to the audio recording, in part to check for accuracy. Whilst reading I also started to make notes in the transcript which highlighted interesting or relevant points. At the end of the first

reading of each transcript I completed a pre-prepared proforma which recorded some biographical details and my reflections of the main points or themes of the interview (see appendix 6 for an anonymised sample of this form).

Phase two involves the generation of codes, the building blocks of any analysis in TA (Braun & Clark 2013: 207). Codes are words or phrases that reflect the meaning of sections of the text. For Braun and Clark (2006: 87) they are a feature of the data that is interesting to the analyst as they are '*...the most basic element... of the raw data...that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon*'. The coding process I chose was 'complete coding' which according to Braun and Clark (2013: 206) aims to identify '*...anything and everything...*' in the complete data set that seems interesting or relevant to the research question. Braun and Clark (2013) distinguish between two broad and related types of codes: data driven or semantic codes and researcher driven or latent codes. It was latent codes that I developed as they were derived from interpretations of the text framed by my conceptual or theoretical orientation and the specific research questions I was attempting to answer.

My process here involved a close multiple reading of each interview transcript. I took Braun and Clarke's (2006: 89) advice and, as time permitted, coded for as many potential themes and patterns as possible that related to my research questions. This process was recursive as it involved identifying and naming initial codes in some transcripts and then renaming or redefining the code as a result of reading subsequent transcripts. By the end of this phase I produced a coding frame of 55 codes (see appendix 7). During this process I also began to

identify important conceptual ideas which I had not expected or had not been familiar with in the literature I had read prior to the data collection process, specifically political socialisation and efficacy. I needed to explore this literature to help me develop my analysis of the data. The last element of this phase involved transferring the individual codes from the hard copy transcript on to the NVivo software package. This involved further close reading of each transcript and a refining of the codes.

Phase three involves searching for draft or 'candidate' themes in which different codes can be combined. Braun and Clark (2006: 89) suggest that a useful way to do this is through visual representations. My method was to use post it notes and a bare wall to create a schematic map of the codes. I had created a coding frame with 55 codes (see appendix 7) and as I searched for themes I began to categorise the codes into broad categories that related to my research questions. I developed four candidate themes: the significant factors in the participants' development as activists; the participants' general educational experiences; pedagogical process; their experience of citizenship education.

Phases four and five are focused on refining and naming codes. Braun and Clark (2006: 92) point out that at this stage the themes will be linked to the broader 'overall story' of your data. In the refining and naming process, I created four broad themes by '*...capturing the most salient patterns in the data...*' relevant to answering my research questions (Braun & Clark 2013: 225). The identification of these themes led to the final stage, the analysis and write up of these themes in a way that '*...tells the complicated story of your data...*' (Braun

& Clark, 2006: 93) in a convincing way and which is faithful to the data. The four key themes I identified form the topic of the analysis chapters in this thesis; foundational political socialisation, explaining the move from socialisation to activism, the complex role of education, and schooling in particular, in the development of these activists, and insights into how citizenship education could be improved to promote transformative action and social change. Each of these themes are introduced and discussed in turn in the following chapters.

5. Political Socialisation: Developing Political Identity and Political Literacy

5.1. Introduction

Political socialisation is a conceptual tool used in political science and developmental psychology (Sapiro, 2004) to explain how people become interested and active in the political and democratic process. Political socialisation is the informal learning processes that takes place as young people interact with the world around them and in particular their interactions with a range of socialising agents (see Neundorf & Smets, 2017). Using political socialisation as a conceptual tool, my analysis of the data has identified that some of the socialising agents cited in the literature were of significance to these young activists specifically: parents and Family; peer relationships; schools and education. I also identified another, less commonly noted agent, music.

The role of parents, the extended family and growing up in a political household is clearly significant but not surprising. For instance, the majority of the young activists involved grew up in political households that were interested in politics and with parents who were politically active or had been. They cite this as either an important or crucial source of their activism. The social learning models of 'accumulation and 'identification' are drawn on here.

I also identified the role of peer relationships as having an influence, particularly for three of the four activists who did not grow up in a political family. Music is the other important socialising agent I identify, yet this does not feature

prominently in the literature on political socialisation. For four of the activists it was a vital or significant socialising agent. The activists' school and educational experiences did feature as a significant theme in the data. But, as the role of educational experience features as a core research question, and that my analysis reveals a complex set of issues in relation to this socialising agent, then I shall address this in another section of the thesis (see chapter 7). My analysis not only reveals the importance of individual socialising agents, but like Quintelier (2015: 52), I also show how these individual agents inevitably interact with other agents to bolster and maximise the socialisation process. Furthermore, I discuss the ideas of socialisation as praxis. That is this socialisation process does not simply act on a passive young person in a linear or unidirectional way. Rather, my findings demonstrate that socialisation needs to be understood as a reciprocal process where young people can play a more critical and active part in the process that shapes their political identity. I will explore each of the socialisation agents I discovered below.

5.2. The Political Family: Transmitting Political Identity and Nurturing Activism

The fact that the family can be an influential political socialising agent of young people is mostly undisputed, and so any study of the development of young people's political participation would be expected to encounter the role of the family and take it into account. Yet whilst its influence is recognised in the literature, its relative importance as an agent of political socialisation is contested. Some studies present the family as the most important whilst other studies highlight different agents such as the school as key (see for example Verba *et al.*, 200, Jennings 2000 or Quintelier 2015). Of course, the outcome

of any research study in this field, and the relative importance of any socialising agent, will depend, to an extent, on the range of experiences and circumstances that characterise the people making up the sample involved. For instance, research evidence suggests that parents who are themselves interested and active in the political process, will also be more likely to create a politically stimulating home environment where politics and current affairs are discussed and young people are encouraged to take part. Subsequently, young people growing up in these environments are also more likely to have access to resources such as books, newspapers, or social networks which will support their political development. Taken together it is argued this political family background stimulates awareness and interest, builds knowledge and develops a positive attitude to politics that can lead young people on to active political participation (See Verba *et al.*, 2000, Jennings, 2007, Casciano, 2007).

Some of my findings clearly support this view of the role of the family, and the political family in particular, on political socialisation. To illustrate, the majority of young activists in this sample clearly grew up in political households, as they describe a vibrant family background of interest and activity in political affairs and civic involvement. Ten of this twelve specifically cite this family upbringing as a crucial or important socialising agent. Yet interestingly, two of these twelve activists clearly grew up in families that were politically interested and active, but they do not claim this background as a crucial or decisive feature of their activism. Of the remaining five activists, two do not describe any overt or significant political activity or interest in their household or wider family other than supporting and voting for a political party. Nevertheless, they do see their

family as an important influence on developing their political socialisation and move to activism. Specifically, they see the values and views they developed from their family as important such as, fairness, equality and social justice. Only the three remaining activists in this sample describe their family backgrounds not only as non-political, but also that they did not play any role in their developing an interest in politics or their activism.

Therefore, my findings confirm that for the majority of the activists in this sample, their family was an important socialising agent. Yet the particular characteristics of each family, such as the extent of party membership or political activity are different. For example, the context of the young people who see the family as important ranges from Willie, whose family has a multi-generational history of membership and activity in Communist Party politics and the Labour and trade union movement. At the other end of the spectrum is Eleanor, a member of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and whose family has no history of party membership or political activity other than being Labour supporters, voting in elections and being passive members of trade unions.

Nevertheless, within the family context, there is clear evidence that the accumulation and identification learning models feature as an important socialisation mechanism for some of these activists. The accumulation model describes the impact on young people of parents or other family members talking about politics and their political orientation in the home. The identification model relates to the way young people identify with and go on to emulate the

political activities of family members. To illustrate, Willie, a member of the Young Communist League (YCL) and Communist Party of Britain (CPB) states:

...it's a family thing...it was growing up, like going round ma Grandpa's house and seeing portraits of Che Guevara on the wall and a statue of Lenin beside his tv. And so, you grow up in that environment and kind of you know you don't even question it, that's just the done thing, this is where my politics comes from.

Anthony, a member of Scottish Labour Young Socialists (SLYS) and the Scottish Labour Party (SLP), also sees his home life as crucial in developing his awareness and interest in politics. For instance he says; "Yeah, the news, all these, like, politics programmes, it was always discussed. So, it was sort of, you know, even at, like, a young age...it's in your mind, it's, you know...you're being socialised to that way of thinking". These two insights illustrate the politically stimulating home environment that Willie and Anthony grew up in, and as the accumulation and identification models assume, some key ideas, values and propensities were transmitted to them as a result. Keir, another member of SLYS and SLP, is also clear about the relationship between his family background and the development of his political identity and what political values were transmitted to him:

Keir: I mean I always hear my gran telling me about my auld grandfather who was a [laughs] Communist... I'd always hear, I was always getting inspired by the kinda, us and them kinda thing. The miners against it. When I kept on hearing about the eighty-four miners, how we got beat. I used tae get fuming, how did we manage tae get beat? I just loved, I like the romantic side a' politics. That's what kind of, I always had an interest at that rebellion.... The earliest I can actually remember is when my gran and granddad at a time when we'd just moved hoose. And granddad was a miner and we'd just be sitting in the living room. We were staying wi' them until we found a new hoose. And I can always mind Tony Blair would come on the news. And they actually liked him at the time until about 2005

Stuart: So how old would you be at that time?

Keir: You're talking between the ages a' like six and eight. I can always remember actually just no having a great in-depth

conversation but being interested. Seeing this kinda like hipster Tony Blair on the news [laughs]. And we'd just have a chat about what's happened and how they're broke away fae the unions. And I mean aye it just came fae general chit chat.

Keir: See my family background made me politically aware. And I was, I'd say my political...my whole basis comes fae class politics. It's what I'm passionate about. It's my strong point. When I'm talking about things, it's always bring class intae it.

Like Keir, Eleanor also describes how her family background and growing up in an ex mining community shaped her political development. She is a member and lay official in the PCS Union. She describes her upbringing as typically working class. Her parents are Labour supporters but, other than voting and being members of a trade union, they have never been politically active. Nevertheless, Eleanor describes herself as a socialist. As she explains:

...I think that I was always a socialist and just didn't realise that that was what it was called, and then when I was more involved with the trade union and met people who were openly like yes, "I'm a socialist and this is what I want", and I was like aw, that's me.

Yet, whilst there is no history of overtly Party-political activity in her family, she sees a key relationship with her grandparent as a cause of her political socialisation and contributing to the formation of her socialist identity:

Eleanor: I don't know whether this is relevant actually, but a lot of when we were growing up was in the church cause me grandma's very Christian.

Stuart: "Right.

Eleanor: And I wonder if that's, that's linked as well, cause...

Stuart: Well, you tell me...

Eleanor: Yeah. Cause a lot of me grandma's type of Christianity is very much about looking after everyone and trying to make the world a better place, and making sure everyone can eat and afford to live. So, I wonder if that's why.

Stuart: I mean how did that, say a wee bit about your memories o' that then, in terms of what you thought you drew from that?

Eleanor: It was very much sort of, rather than my experience of other churches and being very much like serve God, and do this, and do that, it was very much about looking after each other and being kind to each other. And, like we had a, a food bank that ran

out of the church, and my grandma would always, like, make sure that we were like nice to everyone, no matter who they were or whatever. See, I would imagine actually now I'm thinking about it a lot of that would've come from me grandma and the church.

Eleanor's experience described above is another example of the 'accumulation' and 'identification' mechanisms for socialisation working to help raise her awareness of issues and develop a sense of values which go on to shape her emerging political identity. This example also illustrates that mechanisms of political socialisation do not need to be related to traditional party political activity to create a political socialising experience. In this case Eleanor's description of her grandmother's activity is in a church organisation working in wider civic society. Furthermore, along with Keir and Willie's experiences noted above, it also widens the network of family members, beyond parents, who can play an important role in socialisation. In all three cases interactions with or stories about grandparents played a crucial socialising role. This is also the case with Rosa a member of the YCL and CPB. For Rosa the most important consciousness raising moment that conditioned her activism was, "...my granny, what she went through, and...Yeah, I think that was the big one." The following extract sets out the context for this socialisation and concerns her learning about her grandmother's experience during the second world war as part of a primary school project:

Rosa: Well I'd always been into anti-fascism for quite a long time since hearing my grandparents' stories about the war and things. And my grandmother was in a concentration camp in Indonesia and was very nearly sold as a comfort woman... But the, but the fascists had basically thought of her as capital, they thought she was like an object to sell.

Stuart: ...thinking politically, so what, so you heard the story when you were kinda primary seven...just say a wee bit more about, you know, how that affected you...

Rosa: I hadn't realised how severe things like sexism and commodification were. I'd sort of been broadly aware of stuff like page three and, you know, sort of porn stuff, but I'd thought well that was a choice that people made... but to hear of it used as something that's meant to be that nice and, like, where people come from and meant to be, sort of, you know, a shared nice experience and everything, being used as a weapon of war against half the population was really terrifying. And to hear about people being sold like animals, or like a sort of, like at the Highland Show⁶, like selling an animal or something, it was really scary. Like, handing an animal over to its new owner or something and...it was really horrifying...

Of course, these key individual politicising moments, important though they are, do not always emerge on their own, but are the result of growing up in a fertile family context where political knowledge and interest is already being nurtured. For example, in Rosa's case her relationship with her mother had created an environment where discussion about current affairs and the development of critical thinking was common. Rosa gives glimpses of this socialisation process at work here:

I guess we'd talk about it at the dinner table and stuff with my mum. After school, I'd come back and I'd be like "*hey, how was your day, ma?*"...we'd watch the news together and we'd talk about it. Or she'd be reading the paper and I'd be reading bits of it, and I would say "*this isn't right*".

And it was like my mum had always said to me, whenever we were watching adverts on kids' TV she'd say "*oh look, it doesn't really fly*", or "*do you think that really is the best thing ever*", and I was like "*oh, yeah*". She'd try to get me to think critically about things. I think that was, that was incredibly useful.

The importance of parents who have an interest in politics and who nurture their children's awareness and engagement with current affairs is also revealed by

⁶ The Royal Highland Show is Scotland's biggest annual agricultural Show

Robin's experience. Robin is a member of SLYS and the SLP. In explaining why he developed this early interest in politics he states:

I think it kind of stems from probably like my parents, they were always kind of, like, politically interested. So...the first, sort of, political event I remember was, like, the Iraq war. I mean I don't...actually remember it but I remember it being, like, mentioned in the house and, like, my parents talking about why it was bad and, and then when the next election came...why they would be voting for a certain party, it was because, you know, because of the Iraq war, or because of this and that. So...politics has always been kind of something that I've been at least vaguely aware of.

Later in the interview he concludes the discussion about his parents and home life by saying:

...I wouldn't say they were politically active, possibly they were in their younger days. But, but yeah, they are, like, broadly left-wing so I had that sort of influence as well...had a sort of, yeah, political, like, so political talk in the house, like, from a young age I guess.

As the experiences of some of the young people shows, the accumulation model does not necessarily presuppose the need for the civic or political activity of parents to facilitate political socialisation, but just the presence of political talk and interested parents and family members. However, the political activity of adults in the family is a key characteristic of the identification model. According to Jennings *et al.* (2009) parents who have strong political identities and are very active politically are more likely to transmit these particular attitudes about politics and civic engagement to their children, who in turn can emulate them. So, as well as the political learning that takes place within a politicised home through discussion and political talk, young people's political socialisation can be developed and enhanced if their parents include them in their activities. Seven of the respondents spoke about how their childhood experience of being taken on demonstrations, attending political festivals like

May Day, or accompanying their parents on picket lines influenced their developing political consciousness and future behaviour. The following two examples from Willie and Nan are characteristic of this. Firstly Willie, a member of the YCL and CP whose wider family are active members of the CPB. Here he highlights the effect attending rallies and demonstrations had on his political awareness and political identity:

...then just growing up in that environment you're taken to like May day every year from knee high and just you don't even think of it as political event it's just like a family day out when you are that age. But being in a place where you are hearing people like Tony Benn speaking every year...get a little bit older and when I was nearly about 10, 11 years old you start to kind of realise and thinking for yourself and that was about the time when the Iraq war started I remember going on these huge demonstrations, err, anti-war demonstrations which was, I've got really vivid memories of that. And around about the same time there as the make poverty history campaign...I guess like putting all these things together it's kind of got to the point where from not really thinking for yourself but just growing up in that kind of environment you were like ok that's this is...where ma political consciousness comes from which is really important actually.

Another example of the identification model in action is Nan, a member and lay official of the PCS Union and a Member and activist in the Scottish National Party (SNP). In the following quotation she describes the impact her father's industrial action had on her subsequently joining a trade union at her workplace:

He's been an FBU member for years... And I remember him kind of being on picket lines and stuff when the fire brigade went out on strike, and that was my first sort of, like "hold on a minute, why is my dad no going tae work, why is he standing outside his work?" I [Laughs]...I did'nae really, I was quite young, I did'nae really understand it, but we got tae stand next tae an oil brazier which I thought was quite cool...So, that had always stuck in my mind as, you know, if that's something that my dad does, that's something I want tae, I want tae do that. And so I joined [The PCS]. You get the opportunity to join within your induction [in her workplace] so it didn't even, the question of whether or not to join didn't even cross my mind, it was automatic.

Whilst family background was a crucial or important socialising agent for the majority of young people in this study, three out of a sample of seventeen claim that their family background was of little or no significance to developing their interest in or attitude to politics, as the following quotations show. First Freddy and John, members of the YCL and the CPB, followed by James, a member of SLYS and the SLP:

Freddy: ...no my parents aren't very politically active, quite progressive Left-wing Liberals but not particularly politically active.

Stuart: But that wasn't a dominant ...

Freddy: No.

Stuart: So you wouldn't say anything in particular about your family upbringing was...it's not, it wasn't kind of definitive or formative feature?

Freddy: Not particularly

Stuart: ...you never got that activity, that interest from, from you family.

John: No-one at all...no, in no way was I pushed by my family to have any political views or be politically active at all. And I think the fact that I am in the Communist Party really surprises them and they don't really understand it either.

James: ...I've not got any family members that are really involved.

Stuart: ...so your parents, your kind of household weren't, your Mum and Dad weren't certainly political activists...

James: No they weren't, still not political at all

Stuart: They didn't have political debates or discussions at the dinner table, you know responding to the news or stuff like that?

James: No, no, I mean like not that I can remember...

What seems to be common to Freddy, James and John's home life is that interest in and discussion about politics and current affairs did not seem to have been a major feature of their family life or a characteristic of their relationships with their parents and families. Additionally, there is no evidence of any active civic or political participation, beyond voting, for them to be influenced by. It seems their home life lacked the political stimulation, the individuals and the resources, that the literature suggests would develop their political socialisation

and cultivate a disposition to activism. Yet they all underwent some form of political socialisation which promoted their current engagement in political and civic activity. Consequently, one would have to look elsewhere to account for their political activism. For Freddy, James and John, a key socialising agent for them was the relationships they developed with their peers.

5.3. Peer Group Socialisation: The Importance of Friendships in Supporting Activism

As discussed above the literature suggests that there is a strong relationship between some young people's political socialisation and the interactions and relationships they have with their parents and other family members. The fact that the findings from this study also makes this link is not a unique or surprising revelation. Not least as during their formative years young people would be likely to spend considerable amounts of time with their parents and family. Furthermore, there is also a dominant social expectation that part of the parenting role is to support, nurture and guide their children (Quintelier, 2015). However, as young people grow and develop most will move out beyond their family relationships and construct important peer relationships. As noted above peer relationships feature as an important socialising agent in the literature and for some young people these relationships can facilitate powerful political learning experiences that promote civic and political activity (Klofstad, 2011, Ekström & Östman, 2013 or Lee, 2016).

The importance of peers for their early political socialisation was identified by seven of the respondents in this study. It is noteworthy that three of this seven

were the same young people who did not refer to their family background as being of significance to their early political development. For these three young activists, their peer relationships were crucial in their socialisation and developing interest in political activity. For example, James, now a SLP and SLYS member, had been an independence supporter at the 2014 Scottish referendum, but identifies his friends and the peer groups he joined at university as significantly developing his political attitudes and understanding. As he explains:

... one of the first people I met in university, my friend Neil, he was an active Labour Party member...So we would often talk about politics and I would present like the SNP style case and he would present a kind of like liberal Labour style case and we'd argue it out and, eventually he won the arguments (laughs). But I also went along to politics society events...which was something I got quite involved in...but I think that's how I met a bunch of the kind of Labour people that I talk to a lot now...

John, a CPB and YCL member also cites his experience at university and the friends he met there as developing his interest in politics and his political analysis. The following quotation illustrates this as he refers to the impact the political discussions he had with one politically active friend. He says:

So, he talked about his activity quite a lot and I listened to him. But it wasn't until...we started having these discussions about how the Scottish independence referendum, whether we voted yes or whether we voted no, was it really gonna solve issues of inequalities in Scotland. And the answer that we came to through the discussions was no it was not. And we needed to, almost the Scottish independence question was the wrong question completely [laughs]. It was irrelevant. We needed to focus on giving working class people and making working class people more active in politics and standing up for themselves. So that would have been, that would have been a crucial moment.

In explaining his left wing political identity, John links his developing political socialisation at university with earlier formative experiences with his peers, as he states:

...Probably because of being at university and being in a situation where...it would never have been acceptable for me to have, to have taken on right wing views. A lot a' my, my peer groups...my friends from when I was younger...their families were very dyed in the wool Labour voters. So that had an effect on me as well. Friends from, backgrounds from East Lothian. Miners, real working-class backgrounds.

Peer relationships were crucially important for Freddy, a YCL and CPB member. He presents a revealing account of the strong link he saw between the friends he developed in primary school, their experiences of racism, and his early political socialisation. The following interview excerpt follows on from an exploration of the roots of his developing interest in left politics and Marxism:

Stuart: I'm wondering then how, you know what was the process that lead you to read Marx then?

Freddy: Well it's a complicated one, this is a little chain of events. So, when I was growing up it...was quite a working class Scottish town and I started to mingle with the Middle-Eastern immigrant crowd growing up so I was hanging around with them and you know really hearing about their struggle and things like that, it was different to ours. So that was what pushed me into Leftism as opposed to either Centrist or you know Right wing politics or Liberal left wing politics. [further on in this same discussion]

Stuart: ...did you have that sense that you were political before that?

Freddy: Not particularly, obviously there was always an influence of Leftism growing up, obviously being around these kids in a working class Scottish area before we, you know we're a lot more diverse now than we were when I was growing up. So obviously I've always been surrounded by the racism that they were experiencing and you know obviously because they were my friends I made the instant connection "*that's wrong, you shouldn't be doing that*", and so you know that extended into a lot of the Leftist politics that I show an interest in.

James, John and Freddy say their political socialisation did not take place in their family environments. But it seems that their peer relationships have gone

some way to compensate for this deficiency, as it is clear that the social learning process implicit in the *accumulation* and *identification* models were at work in their peer relationships described above. For example, they developed awareness and attitudes about politics and current affairs through discussion, as well as, having peers who were already active and socialised who they felt influenced their behaviour and encouraged their activism.

The other respondents who noted their peer relationship as an important feature of their socialisation all share a similar family background. They all say that in some way their family developed their awareness and interest in politics. Discussions on politics and current affairs took place in the home and these activists were encouraged to participate in these discussions. Yet they did not grow up in households where people were party politically active, beyond voting or trade union membership. So, what is the nature of the interaction between their family background, their developing political socialisation and their peer relationships? For these four people, it seems that their early socialisation predisposed them to develop their political interest and this led them to seek out and developed peer relationship with like-minded people. These social relationships then created informal learning environments which further enhanced their interest in and understanding of political issues and also nurtured their desire to become active. The following discussion of Louise's experience illustrates this process. She was schooled in France, although is currently studying in Scotland. She is a member of SLYS and SLP. Here she describes the political element of her peer group discussions at high school:

... so you can do different options in high school and most high schools have like specialties and mine was like arts and humanities.

So, most people there were broadly left wing and some, most a' my friends ended up being, and so we talked about it [politics] quite a bit.

Her move into activism was also influenced by friends as she reflects here; *"...I guess my friends who I know in Aberdeen who...actually are political. And that's what they were involved in. And so that's kinda how I knew about it and how I got involved in it."*

Eleanor, a member and activist in the Labour Party and PCS Union emphasises the important influence of her peer relationships on her growing political interest and awareness. Reflecting on her experience of both the formal curriculum and the social aspect of further education, she says she:

...met lots of new people, so I moved away from my sort of school friends and made a new friendship group, so that meant that I did know more LGBT people, and people who were actively, like, attending demos against racism and things like that. I think that, the education itself gave us a basis for understanding things, but then also the social aspect of it gave us the sort of access to the sort of anti-fascist world and what people are doing.

Jim, a member of SLYS and SLP, did have a home life where politics was discussed, but for him it was not crucial to his development and activism, as he explains, *"...it was probably a background noise rather than something that was directly present."* Instead he points to seeking out and joining with his friends the activities of political groups as an important political socialising agent, as he describes here:

I probably learned more outside the school...I started going tae different meetings, reading left wing publications...I really started going tae things actually...we got involved with the Hands off Venezuela campaign and other things kind of associated with that. And yeah started reading Marxist books and going tae discussion groups...and then I became kinda, yeah and then I kinda bumped

intae these different groups that were doing things. But yeah that was where it came from...

Therefore, peer relationships are an important socialising agent for some of the young activists involved. Certainly, for those activists whose families were not political, these relationships helped to compensate for this deficit and these peer relationships offered an alternative vehicle for political socialisation. For others, who did have some political socialisation in the household, the peer relationship they entered into maximised the effect of the primary political socialisation in the family by further enhancing their knowledge and interest and this led them to seek out individuals and networks which then became the gateway for activity.

5.4. The Formative Power of Music: A Catalyst for Political Socialisation

The role of music in the initial development of political awareness and attitudes was significant for four of the young activists in this study. Yet music as a political socialisation agent is absent from most of the literature on socialisation. As Jackson (2009) argues, music, as part of the entertainment media, has not been taken seriously and so has largely been overlooked by scholars of political socialisation. Yet, if political socialisation, according to Sapiro (2004: 6), is a *'...processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning, constructing their particular relationships to the political contexts in which they live...'*, then for some of the young people in this study their engagement with music assisted this process. Whilst the significance of music is overlooked by social scientists who study political socialisation, other scholars, who study the interaction between music, democracy and for example

politics, psychology and sociology, recognise the important transformative role music can play in people's lives (see for example, Street, 2012, Esteve-Faubel *et al.*, 2019 or Woodford, 2005). As Nuxoll (2015: 5) argues, music can aid in the political socialisation of people through raising awareness of issues and offering new perspectives to help people make sense of their experiences.

For some of the young activists involved in this study, music helped to raise their general awareness of politics and social issues. My analysis of the data also indicates that music stimulated their intellectual curiosity and helped to develop their critical consciousness and so fuel their capacities and motivation to become active. This analysis can be demonstrated in the reflections of the following activists. For example, Rosa, a member of the YCL and CPB. Here she describes how some anti-fascist influenced punk music developed her political socialisation:

...I think it was something to sort of hear a different view.... it's like a lecture but... it's like a polemic, it's something that you can sing along to, and yell, and, like, sort of stick your fists in the air and things like that. Well...there's an energy behind it ...it's something you can, it's something you can, like, sing along to and shout at protests and things... Yeah, gives you more energy as well. It's sort of something to rally behind, it sort of gets you pumped up

Hugo, a member of the LP and full time official of Unite the Union also sees music as a crucial factor in raising his awareness of politics. Hugo's family are politically engaged. His parents are active members of their trade union, his father is a shop steward, who had also been an elected local councillor for the Labour Party. Hugo describes his family as '*... socialist, and heavy socialist*'. However, despite what is clearly a politically stimulating and active household, he does not see his family background as the important feature in his political

development and activism, as he states; *'...I wouldn't say it was the definitive.'* It is difficult to accurately evaluate, in the third person, the consequence of his upbringing on his political socialisation and the relative influence of other agents. Yet when asked what influenced his activism he identifies his experience with music as a crucial factor. As he comments here:

...there was a music group turned me on tae kinda movements. There is one band that I can honestly say I think changed my whole aspect of what politics was about, which was a band called the MC5, Motor City 5 they're called...I can remember just being gobsmacked at the type of music they were doing was the type of music that I was in tae, but they actually had a social conscience, they spoke about revolution openly.

He goes on to comment on one particular song, called 'Kick out the Jams'. Here his comment reflects a more active intellectual engagement with the music; *'...that's a good song, and then when you actually read kick out the Jams, what they were talking about was everything that gets in the way of social progress.'* Hugo does not explicitly connect his family background to his awareness thorough an interest in music.

Yet for Mick, there is a clear relationship between his family background and music. Mick is a member of the YCL and CPB. He does not see his family background as being central to the development of his political interest and activity, but does cite music as an important socialising agent. For Mick, his family *"... were'nae pretty particularly political..."*, with no history of political activity, their interest was limited to being Labour voters and supporters. However, whilst it appears Mick's household environment did not have the political activism characteristic of the *identification model* which would fully promote his political socialisation, he does feel his family background helped

him develop some key values which became important in his political development, as this exchange demonstrates:

Stuart: But would you be interested in things like fairness and equality and injustice?

Mick: Oh aye, well... Aye, I'd say that's probably...too sophisticated for my understanding of politics at the time. Like, very vague notions o' equality, I wanted everybody tae be okay and do well and the access to opportunity...I think that's obviously, in terms o' how they've rubbed off on me, that's impacted my values, the idea that you treat people wi' fairness. And that's, I'd definitely say that was instilled by my family, tae treat people how you'd like tae be treated, that whole thing.

The result of this enculturation process on Mick's political identity was that he became '*...vaguely left, vaguely idealist, wanted the best for everybody, wanted everybody tae dae well, everybody tae get by, have access tae things.*' A link can be made between his developing sense of values and political identity, and the music he was attracted to. Mick became interested in what is known as Irish Republican or rebel songs associated with the football team he supports, Glasgow Celtic. However, this genre of musical expression is controversial, particularly in the context of Scottish football, as it is associated with sectarianism in the wider Scottish society between Catholic and Protestant communities. In fact, in an attempt to challenge this sectarianism, the Scottish Government passed legislation in 2012 that made the singing of songs deemed to be sectarian punishable by a fine or imprisonment (See Miler, 2015).

Mick does recognise the controversial and sectarian nature of some of these songs. As he acknowledges; '*...I make a distinction between Irish rebel tunes and the sorta, the bigoted ones, cause I know there's a few out there that, to be honest when I was younger I probably did sing as well...no very proud o' that*

now.' Yet many of the songs Mick listened to and that developed his political awareness depict the history of the Irish people and their relationship and struggles with the United Kingdom. For some, these songs draw on and deal with themes such as injustice, inequality, anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, sedition and the struggle for freedom (See Millar, 2016). The following two quotations both hint at a developing intellectual curiosity and highlight the impact that this music had on his political socialisation:

But, you know, an interesting thing, I wondered this as well. We, all my family were big Celtic fans...my brother as well, as he was growing up he was listening tae a lot o' Irish rebel tunes. Now, that's not necessarily synonymous wi' being left wing but looking in tae the sorta Irish Republican history sorta painted a picture o', and even it's a stereotype, and not a very accurate one, but at the time Celtic were on the left and I don't know if that's maybe played a part.

...a lot of the tunes I like just had a lot o' history behind it and I liked to read about history and I read about the history of the IRA, and I read the history about the troubles. The impact that the British Empire had had across the world. And that, towards the later stages crystallised my view o' imperialism and crystallised my view o' how we're perceived in the world and again how the class differences and...that really, really sorta opened things up tae me. And as I say, when I was younger that's probably maybe where I got a lot of the sorta vaguely idealist left, like, struggle for freedom...

Although Rosa, Hugo and Mick's formative experiences in their households are different, their encounters with music help to illustrate how different socialising agents can interact to enhance their political socialisation. For example, as well as music being seen as an agent of socialisation for Rosa, she also identifies her family background as important. Whereas Hugo and Mick do not rank their family background as crucial, they did have politics in their household. Nevertheless, the family background of all will have made them more likely to be open to the awareness raising possibilities of some politically informed

music. Yet one young activist's experience shows that if a politically nurturing family environment is not present in their lives, then music can be an important and primary source of political socialisation.

Freddy feels he was not politicised by his family background, but cites music as a crucial factor for him. His introduction to this influential music was as a result of the peer relationships he developed at school, further demonstrating the interaction of a number of socialising agents. Speaking about this introduction to influential music through his peer group he explains:

...you know I grew up with them [his peers] so to speak and so what's quite relevant here is not so much their personal political leanings but actually strangely enough the music they were listening to. So, they were the only ones in our school that were listening to a type of music called Grime Rap, which obviously I got into as well...

One of the rappers he and his peers listened to and discussed most, and who was important in Fred's politicisation, was Akala, the stage name of a male British rapper, poet and political activist, Kingslee James Daley. In these two quotations Freddy explains how this political socialisation process worked sequentially on him:

...Akala raps quite a lot about Malcolm X and his influence on him. So eventually I started to read Malcolm X and I think that was the first ever politically active writings that I started to read, so I think that was really the start of my political awakening so to speak.

...the person who radicalised him [Akala] actually is Malcolm X ... he continually rapped about it and so I went to go on, about twelve, thirteen I think, to start looking more at the Black Panther party and then Marxism, Leninism and stuff like that, and you know that's eventually how I got into reading Marx. When I got into my book reading phase 'cause I think I was trying to learn just as much as possible at this time...So I was looking at that and obviously from reading Malcolm X, Marxist books were right up on my list, so I got into those and then the rest is history so to speak, I'm a Communist now.

For all four of these young people the themes and ideas portrayed in the lyrics of the songs they listened to stimulated their intellectual curiosity and for some inspired an autodidactic process. So the music acted like a gateway leading on to the development of their political awareness. Unlike some of their peers, they moved from just listening to the music, to being interested in studying the text of the songs and the themes and ideas that the music was introducing them to. The following quotes demonstrate this hermeneutic and autodidactic process. Firstly Freddy; *'...You know I used to sit and just read the lyrics not even listening to the song, just read them and you know have a look at what he was saying, I could analyse it like it was an actual text.'* Mick also offers a good example of this process at work when he reflects:

...the Irish rebel songs I'm thinking of, the ones that tells you a story, and you want tae go and read it. And obviously now we have access to the internet, to being able to Google or Wiki things, reading a whole history, a lot of the tunes are about the emancipation and about revolution...I was able tae go and check these things out. And used tae get lost for ages just, and quite often it was just Wikipedia...I'm just talking about a brief history o' events, of organisations, of what they believed in, and quite often it was just a click...onto the next subject, how that was related to that. And it was just dead interesting.

Not only was their political awareness developed by listening to this music, but it helped them, in the Freirean sense, to begin to 'read the world'. It introduced them to social and political issues that were of relevance to them, and helped them to explore and better understand these issues, leading to a process of 'conscientization' and identify formation. DeNora (2010, p17) recognises the transformative power that music has as she draws on the work of Adorno to argue that music can also be a *'...resource for the instigation of critical consciousness'*. Eyerman and Jamison (1998, p161) also explore the political

influence music has on people's political learning and their identity and argue that *'The construction of meaning through music and song is, we claim, a central aspect of collective identity formation...'*. They make the point that music can help a listener more easily connect to feelings and thoughts that are also shared by wider political and social movements, leading to the identification with and perhaps membership of these movements.

Yet as Jackson (2009) argues, it should not be surprising that music has this transformative political power, as music involves feelings and emotions as well as fostering cognition, and it is a combination of all of these factors that help some people develop political beliefs and to move to political activity (see Jackson 2009). Jackson (2009) offers an appropriate example of how this process works to illustrate this point. He states:

...whereas the work of Karl Marx makes for a far more intellectually compelling argument for socialism than the music of the Clash, a British Punk band with socialist leanings, the written words of Marx do not muster the sensual and emotional wallop that results from hearing the angry words of the Clash or...other passionate socialist singers.

5.5. Political Socialisation as Praxis: Young People as Active Agents Not Passive Objects

As noted above, political socialisation is framed in most of the literature *'as an appropriate conceptual tool'* (Sapiro 2004, p4) for describing and understanding the developmental processes involved in how young people acquire the knowledge, behaviour and values required to be politically active. However, some claim that the process is more complex than the simple 'top down' transmission implied in some of the literature, which too often frames young

people as passive recipients of a socialising agent, such as parents or the school. Rather, young people are and should be seen to have a more active role in this process. They have the ability to be a critical and ‘...*active agent ...[in their] environment...*’ (Haste, 2010: 162) interacting in the socialisation process and helping to construct and confirm their developing interpretation of the world and their political identity (See for example Gordon & Taff, 2011 or Amna, 2012). The findings from this study offer some evidence of this more critical and active role. Certainly, the young activists involved all point to the role of important socialising agents such as family or peer relationships in the development of their interest in politics, their values and their political identity or choice in Party membership, but my analysis shows that at times this process is not always a ‘top down’ transmission, as the young activists demonstrate some awareness of, and critical engagement with, this socialising process.

My analysis reveals that this critical engagement is related to a strong sense of intellectual curiosity and auto-didacticism which characterises a significant number of the young people involved. For example, nine of the young activists refer to their growing interest in politics in part coming from them seeking out literature to help them develop their understanding of politics, and of key ideas or thinkers. I have already discussed this in relation to the role of music and how some young people engaged in self-directed research to look behind the lyrics of songs to enhance and deepen their political understanding. However, other young people in the sample, for whom music did not feature as important, also demonstrate this intellectual curiosity. For example, Jim a member of SLYS remembers; “*You know, I think I got the Communist Manifesto out the*

library when I was fourteen". Robin, another member of SLYS, grew up with parents who were interested in politics, and his comments here illustrate how a political household can provide the resources to nurture this intellectual curiosity:

Yeah, I was always curious, because of the news or because I'd hear them [parents]...you know, talking about stuff and be like oh, what are you talking about. I think I just sort of maybe understood...why, like, things were important maybe...and I quite like to read as well, since I was young, so I was, like, you know, reading books. I think that probably helped my, sort of, imagination and want to sort of find out things as well I think.

George, is also member of SLYC, and his comments here show how his reading influenced his development:

After having read History you read about these historical figures and you want to read more, so I had that brief understanding. I honestly think that, like, the development is catalysed I would say is the best word, by me doing this various different reading, taking what I've learned from that and applying it to my own experiences.

Like the majority of participants, George grew up in a politically active household and sees that as important in his becoming political. However, within this context, his comment above also illustrates the role he played in his socialisation as he makes the link between the knowledge gained from his reading and his lived experiences. This link between lived experience and reading is also demonstrated by Mick, a member of the YCL. He did not grow up in an active political household, but his family background did help shape his basic values. Yet here he demonstrates the active role his intellectual curiosity played in his own socialisation by stressing the important relationship between reading, his developing political identity and a critical reflection on his lived experience. Referring to his reading of Marx he stated:

I started reading it and I thought d'you know a lot of that's interesting...Which was really wow. D'you know what I mean, I sort of felt d'you know what, this answers a lot o' the questions I had as I was growing up, like why after working should you be in poverty...why should we be worrying about bills if you're working...And then more general questions as why is society set up the way it is? And that was really sorta the in if you like to my political education and realising that, well, Marx, Lenin, spoke about the impact trade unions can have on just obviously society, workers collectively organising. I thought well do you know what, I really like that idea. It was really, I became a trade unionist before I became a Marxist if you like.

These examples are typical of the experience of many young people in this study who demonstrate that they were more than just passive objects in their political socialisation. The majority of those who came from families who were interested in or actively involved in politics certainly see their upbringing as an important formative experience that has conditioned their political development. Yet there is also evidence that the young activists engage critically with this enculturation to come to their own conclusions about and confirm their political identity. There is also evidence of this more active role in the choice of respondents' party affiliations. Some of the literature (Verba, 2003 or Jennings, 2007) stresses a strong correspondence between the political partisanship of parents and their children. As Cross and Young (2008: 353) comment about the results of their own findings, '*...partisan political activism is handed down from generation to generation*'. This is also reflected in my analysis. Whilst all the young activists identify as left wing, for those whose family background was important to their development, their family's political allegiance was also characterised as broadly left wing. Yet my analysis provides some evidence that this is not a simple passive and uncritical acceptance of their parents' views and political orientation.

The following perspectives illustrate the more nuanced and reflective process that the activist underwent in developing and confirming their political identity. These two quotes from Robin, a member of SLYS and SLP, demonstrate this process of critical engagement as he talks about his parents' views and his reflections on them and his own experience and reading:

...when you asked about politics and then, you know, your parents would say, you know, oh this means this and, like, this is good because, this is bad because, you know. You sort of get, you get those ideas in your head and you start to believe that ideology, then when you get older you can see what they've said and then sort of apply them yourself and things like that. So, when you, like, look at an election you can see the party's policies and go yeah, I think that's a good idea, or that's a bad idea, or, or whatnot.

I mean I certainly do, I certainly do believe in left-wing economics and all that. So, I think I guess when I just read it I thought, like, yeah it's true...I like to think as well that, like...You know, when you see, or when I read about, you know, like Conservative ideology and Thatcher, and sort of individualism and things like that. I think I, I don't think it's just I didn't believe it, I also, like...I don't think I wanted to believe it either, so I think that's probably partly the reason as well.

Willie, a member of the YCL and CPB, also demonstrates some consciousness of his socialisation in a political household and the effect it has on his political orientation and activism. For example, he talks about his involvement in the Communist Party being linked to the family tradition of membership and activity in *'the Party'* and so his activity is seen as being informed by a *'...kind of sense of family...'* or duty and he speaks about his *'pride'* in this family tradition, in particular of participation in the Spanish Civil War. Yet the following quotation also indicates that he has been able to reflect critically on this political socialisation process and assert some control over it to help him confirm his developing political identity. As he comments:

...I mean I don't walk around with blinkers on thinking, the only reason I'm joining this is cause my family. I can see the inequality there is in society and why there is a need for a more socially just society and why there is a need for socialism. Yeah, so that's what I mean tying that with the party's programme, which I've always been familiar with, it just kind of made sense. I mean there was never, I've often thought would my enthusiasm for politics or would my kind of interest in politics be better served being in the Labour Party for instance. You could argue I would be a lot more active in getting things done rather than being in the Communist Party. Definitely had thoughts of that before, but the Party does have an important part to play in the movement...but yeah, I've never really had any thoughts of joining any of the other kind of left parties at all.

5.6. Conclusion

Previous research indicates that a young person's initial awareness and interest in politics, their political identity and their likelihood for civic activism are promoted by the process of social learning embodied in their involvement with and experience of key socialising agents. The important socialising agents identified in this thesis and discussed in this chapter are: parents and family, peer relationships and music. Formal schooling was important for some activists and is discussed in chapter 7 . It is also clear from my findings that whilst each of these agents was important on their own, for many activists their political socialisation was enhanced by the way that the effects of these individual socialising agents built on, interacted with and complemented each other. The findings also show that the young activists were not just passive objects in this socialisation process. Many of them demonstrated an awareness of this socialisation and reflected critically on it and engaged in an autodidactic process of reading and research which helped to confirmed their political identify formed through this socialising process. This chapter therefore lays out how these young activists developed an interest in politics and created some of the conditions to become politically active. Yet on their own, the findings in

this chapter are not enough to account for the activism of these young people. Other factors need to be introduced and examined and the next chapter will introduce and explore these other factors.

6. Becoming Active and Critical: From Political Interest to Political Activism

6.1. Introduction

The last chapter discussed the concept of political socialisation. Yet, whilst discussing this concept can help to indicate how people developed their basic knowledge of and interest in politics and democratic affairs, it is limited. As Owen (2008: 3) points out, political socialisation can be '*...a messy, in some ways elusive, process...*' and it focuses largely on the internal developmental process at an individual or 'micro' level of analysis (see, Sapiro, 2004). For Owen (2008: 3) what is under-emphasised in this analysis is the '*...larger historical, political, and situational contexts within which socialization takes place.*' Therefore, to fully understand why people take the vital steps to become a political activist, a range of other factors influencing their motivation need to be considered as well. And so a more developed explanation for political activism needs to also take into account external macro factors such as the relevant social, political and economic context present in wider society which acts on and influences a young person's move to political activism.

Summing up some of the key debates in the literature on political socialisation, Quintelier (2011 :4) argues that there is agreement on the '*...unidirectional process from political socialisation to political participation*'. Yet whilst the relationship between socialisation and participation is self-evident, she also points out that '*...not much information is available on this relation...*' (ibid). My findings offer insights to help illuminate this relationship. I identify two important macro factors which were crucial in the development of these activists and

which encouraged them to move from being knowledgeable and interested in politics, but inactive, to becoming critically conscious political activists, participating fully in political and civic affairs and in movements for transformational social change. One factor is the need for activists to have a sense of political efficacy or the '*...inclination to participate in the political process and trust in the political system...*' (Schugurensky, 2000: 7). But, I also argue that to fully understand the motivation of these activists to become politically involved, then a fuller conception of political efficacy needs to be developed. This conception of efficacy involves an emphasis on critical consciousness linked to a firm commitment to social justice, fuelled by anger at the capitalist status quo as it is and this is underpinned by a sense of critical agency and praxis. The other macro factor is the influence of critical moments. These are influential and political events or 'period effects' (Norris, 2003 or Neundorf & Smets, 2017) specifically two: the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader and the Scottish Independence Referendum. I will address each of these macro factors in turn.

6.2. Political Efficacy

In my work as a community educator, an element of my job was focused on voter education and promotion, principally with groups of young people and adults who were socio-economically marginalised or excluded, but also at times with the wider public. In this work, I frequently encountered people whose view of politics, politicians and the wider political and democratic process reflected a deep cynicism and or apathy. For others, their views were characterised by a self-declared ignorance and/or lack of interest in political affairs. For example,

in the process of encouraging people to think and talk about the political issues that affect their lives, or when encouraging them to register to vote, I would frequently hear phrases such as, *“it’s not worth voting, they’re all the same”* or in reference to candidates or politicians, *“They are just in it for themselves, they won’t help the likes of me/us”*. Sometimes the comments were also characterised by fatalism such as *“There’s no point in voting, nothing ever changes”* or *“they’re all liars, they never do what they say they are going to do anyway”*. Other people would decline my offer to register to vote or to learn more about a forthcoming election claiming a lack of interest and knowledge, saying for example *“I don’t watch the news, ah ken nothing about politics”* or *“it’s too complicated, I don’t understand it”*. Others would claim political issues lack relevance to their lives for example, *“no, I’m not voting, it’s nothing to do with me”* or *“I’m not interested in politics, it doesn’t really affect me”*. These comments relating to a lack of relevance are perhaps the most troubling for me given that they were in part expressed by people who were from excluded or marginalised groups and often were reliant on welfare benefits, had experienced some form of discrimination or for example, were homeless.

In recalling these comments, I am drawing on a range of experiences and encounters throughout my work as a community educator. They are drawn from my memory of these encounters, some are generic or composite, others are clearly remembered, word for word. Although anecdotal, taken together they do reflect and capture my experiences accurately. However, in support of this anecdotal account, there is a significant body of literature which also reflects these same sentiments and views about apathy or lack of interest in politics

(For example see Hay 2007 or Morrell, 2003). Yet whether it is cynicism, apathy, fatalism or ignorance which they are expressing, these comments relate to an important concept in understanding peoples' level of political awareness and engagement, that of political efficacy.

Political efficacy is crucial for political activism. It has a dual character, internal and external. Internal efficacy describes an individual's sense that they should take part in political affairs and that their involvement can lead to change. External efficacy is having the confidence that the political system is responsive to influence and can be changed (See Schugurensky, 2000, Beaumont, 2010 or Watts *et al.*, 2011). For the individuals discussed above that I encountered in my work; their lack of trust in the political process and politicians, their lack of knowledge and the apathy or cynicism they displayed, reflects a deep lack of political efficacy. This can help account for their non-engagement in political affairs. Conversely, I have identified in the young people in my sample, the required desire to get involved in political affairs and the sense of confidence in the potential for change which demonstrates strong evidence that they possess an overall sense of their political efficacy.

This desire and confidence in change are clear from their accounts of why they became active. For some, this sense of political efficacy emerged early in their lives for example at school, for others it came later when they had entered the labour market. For most they reveal this sense of efficacy whilst reflecting on a critical moment in their lives, for example a particularly difficult experience or a perceived injustice that made them make the choice to respond in the way they

did. Put simply, they chose to fight and be active rather than resign themselves to these difficult experiences or situations and retreat into inactivity. For example, Anthony, a member of SLYS, got involved with his pupil council as a response to perceived injustices within his school. His sense of political efficacy, both internal and external, comes across clearly in this exchange:

Anthony: Then, you know, like, well it just naturally clicked, like, the pupil council. It's no good sitting griping about it, like I was sort of like if I'm, you know, really angry about what's going on here I have to change it and I suppose, like, the pupil council was, like, in my mind, like, an avenue to this. I suppose it was just like you were past the stage, like you'd seen, like, these, like, injustices, to the stage of I want to actually do something.

Stuart: So that's a sense of why you did it, so again it was that thing, there's an injustice, I can't sit about doing nothing.

Anthony: Yeah, and that avenue's there, so I'll just go for it, yeah.

Eric is a member of the YCL. He got involved in the representative structures of his school in the hope of making changes to particular issues in his school:

Stuart: Did you see that kind of rep's role as being as important?

Eric: Yeah because in my past as a pupil when I saw the School Captains a lot of them tended to be people who were very friendly with staff, got along with staff but didn't have any connection with pupils. Whereas in 5th year I was with everyone in my year arguing against the Senior Management Team, it was me all on the side of the pupils saying "no you can't do that, that's wrong, we deserve this...", so I think for me it was well, no one is listening to us before when we had rubbish School Captains who disagreed with us so I may as well do it and actually try and put forward the views of the people who I actually know agree with me in terms of everything from the Common Room to lunch time to everything

Stuart: So you saw yourself as a kind of voice of the people, a tribune?

Eric: Yeah, [laughs].

Stuart: ...So your motivations for becoming active in that area was...because you thought you could make a difference ...

Eric: I could actually make a change in a way that other people didn't.

Stuart: ... there had been injustices in the past ...

Eric: Yeah, yeah.

Eleanor's significant experience came slightly later in life than Anthony's or Eric's, in her case on entering the labour market, rather than at school. Yet the same sense of efficacy is displayed here. Eleanor is a trade union activist and here she reflects on her reasons for moving from an inactive trade union member to a PCS shop steward:

I just think because I had experienced the sort of managers taking the piss out of the employees and getting away with it, I just thought it's not gonna get better unless we try and make it better, and there's gonna be other people who are gonna go through probably exactly the same things as what I've just had to deal with, so we could at least try and improve it.

The views of Anthony, Eric and Eleanor clearly reflect both internal and external efficacy; a sense that change is possible and that their actions can influence it. In the following quotation, the experience of Nan, another PCS trade union activist, also demonstrates her sense of efficacy, as well as a certain resilience:

Nan: I went to, like a meeting with...I think it was just kinda like reps and whoever basically wanted to turn up, and I was quite interested in what the chair had to say, and wanted to ask him questions, and he just put his hand up in front of my face and just said 'nah, dinnae want tae hear fae you. Dinnae want tae hear fae stupid young lassies'. So, I said 'right, okay, well that's fine, knock me on your committee'. So, I stood for election and got on his committee, and eventually challenged him for the position and got voted into, and did'nae take the position but got voted into his position.

Stuart: Wow.

Nan: But that, instead o' kinda turning me off, kinda just made me think well, there's a reason that he's maybe saying things like this. And, like, I thought that this person had this experience because he was in this position, and it turned out he didn't and he was just kinda a bit o' a, bit o' a freeloader and wanting a bit o' a jolly. So, I thought well, that's no really good enough, that's no why I pay my subs, it's no why anybody pays their subs for it. We're a massive union, we cannae really afford anything like that, so I'm gonnae, you cannae change it if you're just sitting being a member. Well, you can have a limited amount of change but you cannae sit and moan about it if you're not willing to stand up and put your head above the parapet. So I went home and got upset, and says to my dad I was raging, and

wisnae happy. And he says well go in and, go in and join it and be part o' it. So, I have. I dinnae, I would'nae say that I have'nae ever looked back, but I'm glad that I did, very glad that I did.

The young activists I have discussed so far have also noted that their family was a key socialising agent in their political development. This demonstrates the link suggested in the literature between the levels of interest and activity in the family household and the likelihood of young people growing up in these households becoming active and in doing so demonstrating political efficacy (see for example Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014). This link is clearly evident in Nan's comments above in relation to her Dad. It is further illustrated by looking at the experience of Eric, a member of the YCL.

Eric's parents are both politically active and his father is a long-term activist in both the CPB and the wider Labour and trade union movement. In the interview, Eric discusses his political socialisation in the family household, for example, being taken to demonstrations or events and listening to political discussions in the home. He then makes the link between this socialisation and his decision to become active and join the YCL. He explains his motivation as follows:

Eric: Kind of just had enough on the side lines, I'd had enough of just going to things 'cause my dad was going, I wanted to actually do something to actually make a change myself as opposed to doing something as 'James' son'. So, I think it was that kind of fundamental change in belief as opposed to, you know May Day every year, or something in October, like twice a year maybe going to a demo in George Square as opposed to maybe not week in week out but you know just about you know you can actually make a difference, you can do something if you actually do it, as opposed to just going to these mass things, marching and that.

Stuart: So, there's something there about you felt a kind of growing responsibility ...

Eric: Yeah.

Stuart: ...to move from just being as you say on the side-lines...

Eric: Yeah.

Eric's sense of political efficacy, his desire for change and a belief in its possibility, come across clearly in his comments above. As does a sense of civic responsibility and the role his family played in shaping this attitude. However, whilst family background is important for some, a sense of political efficacy can emerge in non-political households. For example, this was the case for John, also a member of the YCL. Whilst John's political efficacy is clear, he frames this in a different way and it is expressed in frustration as a result of the lack of political interest and engagement in his household. Speaking about his parents he says:

Yeah just centrist people...wouldn't watch the news. Are bored with the news...*"This is the way it is and we can't change it"*. And I dunno if that maybe had an effect on me and thought, and made me think, *"well I'm not gonna accept that because I find that quite defeatist"*.

John states that his political socialisation came through his interaction with his friendship group, particularly at university during the Scottish independence referendum. However, he is unsure about how he developed his sense of political efficacy. Here he suggests that rather than his family nurturing it, it is perhaps a consequence of a personality trait. Firstly, referring to his sister and then his parents he says:

...we couldn't be more chalk and cheese. She is not interested in politics whatsoever. Very much like my mum and dad, I would say, more. I dunno, maybe it's just the sorta person that I am. I'm quite...dynamic. I'm quite, once I get my teeth into something I'm, I'm determined tae see it through.

As has been shown above, a person's attitude to politics and in particular their political efficacy can emerge as a result of difficult circumstances, conflicts,

confrontations or injustices that people encounter in their lives, either in school or the labour market. Yet some research studies suggest that the development of political efficacy and a motivation to become active can be developed or bolstered as a result of more positive experiences in their lives or that their early participation activities had been successful (See for example Valentino, *et al.*, 2009). This is reflected in the experience of some of these young activists. For example, Anthony and Hugo both demonstrate how their sense of efficacy and activism came out of their constructive experiences of the work trade unions do in the workplace. First Anthony, a member of SLYS and the PCS, describes his experience:

So, in a way I felt, you know, like I'd seen the good that trade unions can do to people, particularly my family, and I suppose it was again like naturally connected to my values...and I thought, you know, if I get involved, like, they can help others like us, you know. So, it was sort of like a natural step to join the Labour Party on the one hand but also the trade union movement on the other.

Hugo, a member of the LP and an officer for Unite the Union, illustrates in the following quotation how the development of his sense of efficacy came out of his early experience of working in a factory in which the workers enjoyed good conditions as a result of the efforts of the trade union. As he reflects:

Then, you know, you go how is it like this, and then it's like well it's the union that's actually went in and negotiated and actually thought outside the box. And from then, like, I've kinda got ideas, how do I get my ideas in tae they meeting rooms to actually change things? So, we had changed things like...attendance bonus

Hugo also demonstrates how his sense of political efficacy was strengthened and develop from the successful experience of activity. For example, in this

exchange, he reflects on a campaign he was involved in to keep school busses running in his local community:

Stuart: ... you're becoming interested in the trade unions was your lived experience in a factory where it was working.

Hugo: Yeah. And I think it's... how amazingly fast things can change when you actually get enough folk shouting about it...I would say one of the things that really got to me or really made me go fuck, we can really change stuff, you can actually make a massive difference, was in the factory we had...school buses were getting taken off.

I would argue that all the respondents in this study have already demonstrated their political efficacy, simply as a result of their joining and becoming active in political organisations. However, some of the young people, explicitly display this political efficacy, particularly the external kind, when commenting on their reasons for joining a political party. In these cases, they joined their organisation in a purposeful attempt to make fundamental changes to it. For example, Mary a member of SLYC describes her motivation for joining the Labour Party as follows:

I was like, 'well I think I would be more useful joining the Labour Party because maybe you need people like me who have been critical and kind of want tae change things within the Labour party tae make them more electable or more being able to kind of win things again...I could kind of like influence the views of people within the Labour party and try and bring round people to support them and vice versa.

Three other SLYS and Labour Party members, James, Robin and Anthony, express this same sense of external political efficacy and desire to join the Party and get involved in trying to change its political orientation more to the Left. The following comments show this. Firstly, James is referring to the formation of SLYS within the Labour Party:

I joined the Labour Party and...it really came of the back off the Neil Findlay for leader campaign, which also prompted me to join the

Labour party because there was actually left-wing people in there. So, it was a kind of a loose network of people who got to know each other through that campaign and then kind of formalised over the course of Jeremy Corbyn's run for Labour leadership. We formed...off the back of that, and began to like work towards changing various structures within the Scottish Labour Party

Robin's sense of efficacy comes out clearly in this comment about his motivation to join Labour:

I wanted to join in to try and...bring socialism...back to the Labour Party in the first place. So, I think that's why, and then I think I joined after the election because I realised how, how important it actually is for the Labour Party to be socialists and how important it is for there to be...a left-wing option in Scottish politics.

The opportunity to contribute to change was also Anthony's motivation to join the Labour Party. Anthony's teacher played an important role in this process and this role of the influential teacher will be discussed more fully in chapter 8. Nevertheless, in relation to Anthony's sense of efficacy, it was the discussions he had with this teacher that played a role in the development of his efficacy and political identity. As he states; *'My political identity was, you know, predominantly just I am Labour'*, but his perspective changes as a result of these class discussions, as they:

...started to shift my views from, you know, I'm Labour and this is me, to more I am wanting to be associated with the Labour Party, but I want the Labour Party to be something more. So, I suppose that was, you know, partially contributed to, you know, my desire to join the party in 2010, cause 2010 was the opportunity for change, Labour just lost an election, it was out of government after thirteen years and there seemed to be a mood that people wanted to move away from that type o' politics.

6.2.1. Anger at the Way Things Are: The Fuel for Activism

As the discussion above illustrates, the findings show that this sense of political efficacy is clearly something that these young activists possess. I am

conceptualising political efficacy as a form of political capital which gives people the cognitive resources and confidence required to engage in the political process to influence decision making, to challenge power relationships and to make changes to the world around them (See Valentino *et al.*, 2009 or Schugurensky, 2000). This efficacy has in part developed in response to some of the positive or difficult experience these activists have had in their lives. Yet my analysis also uncovers a powerful motivating emotion transforming this sense of efficacy into activity. This motivating emotion is the feelings of anger at injustice expressed by these activists. It is argued that political efficacy and subsequent activity, particularly in young people, can be triggered by anger as a reaction to the difficult situations or social conditions they experience or witness. As Valentino *et al.* (2009: 312) state '*...anger readies citizens to fight in the political arena*'. In the context of anger at injustice leading to activism, an aphorism attributed to St Augustine is relevant here; '*Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are*' (quoted in Smyth *et al.*, 2014: 141). This notion of anger and courage is strongly connected to the motivations for activism cited by the young people involved in this study. A number of the activists in this study use justifications relating to '*anger at the way things are*' and a commitment to change them to explain their reasons for becoming politically active. To illustrate, this sense of anger, its underlying cause and a desire for change is concisely exemplified by Jim, a member of SLYS and the LP when he says '*...I was angry and it maybe crystallised things, that there was clear injustices in society... But probably also just a feeling that ... there probably is a better way to run the world*'. This motivation for activism

as an angry response to injustice leading to a commitment to social justice is what I will explore in the next section.

6.2.2. It's Not About Me! Solidarity and Activism for Social Justice

My findings show that a key motivating factor in the activism of all of these young people is a reaction to a range of injustices that they see in their communities, in society and the world around them. Furthermore, I would argue that the organisations they are members of, for instance, political parties and campaigning or solidarity organisations, signifies a desire to do something to challenge these injustices. Therefore, their motivation to be active can be understood in relation to their commitment to work for social justice. What is meant by social justice is complex and contested and so clarifying how I understand the term in this thesis is important. Benjamin and Emejulu (2012, p 34) offer a useful brief definition which is consistent with how I understand the term here. For them social justice is '*...a theory and practice that fosters democratic relations and social solidarity in order to build a society that is based on equality, liberty and respect.*' Importantly for this thesis, Carr (2008: 131) adds to my understanding by emphasising an educational dimension claiming that critical and political literacy should be seen as key elements of social justice.

How does this idea of social justice relate to political activity? There are a range of motivations to help explain why people engage in political activity and join political organisations (see for example Clark & Wilson, 1961, Costantini and King, 1984 or Granik, 2005). Some are '*me orientated*' motivations (Costantini

& King, 1984: 88) that relate to the pursuit of selfish material gain such as developing business contacts, building a political career or gaining status. Others relate to more social and solidary motivations, like opportunities to socialise, developing friendships or belonging to an organisation you support. In an important contribution, Clark and Wilson (1961) also identify a category of motivations they call purposive which frames the stimulus to get involved as a desire to change society for the better. An important and noteworthy finding in my research was the centrality of the purposive motivations and an absence of expressions of individual self-seeking, me orientated motivations in young people's accounts. A significant theme identified in all interviews is the activists' own direct experiences of injustice or inequality, or expressions of empathy and solidarity with those they see as experiencing injustice or inequality, and how this feeds their own motivation and purposes for their activism; that is to change the world for the better. Their activism is a response to what they see as injustice and inequality and reflects their eagerness to make things better. Consequently, I frame this as these activists developing a strong commitment to social justice.

A commitment to social justice as described above, and the complex inter-relationships between, injustice, anger, political efficacy and activism is demonstrated clearly in all the interviews with the activists. As this selection of quotations illustrates. For instance, as Mary, a SLYS and LP member, says:

So, things like the student protests were because like the ... new Tory Government had just put the tuition fees up tae like £9,000 a year...I felt a justified anger for that. So, I suppose in a way that's what was going on at that time kind of led me more towards the Labour party as a kind of let's get involved and change things...

The sense of solidarity in response to inequality and injustice is also highlighted powerfully by Eric, a member of the YCL and the CPB. Here he identifies some of the values that drive his activism:

I'd say equality and also solidarity. So yeah okay these problems might not affect me, but they affect someone else and that's wrong. Okay I'm probably, hopefully never going to be affected by homelessness but that doesn't mean I shouldn't fight against it just 'cause it's not going to affect me. You know I would probably lose out by arguing for raised taxes but I still think we should raise taxes you know rent controls, things like that. There are so many things that you fight for that are never going to affect you but the point is they affect someone else and that's wrong

George, SLYS and LP member, sees his political identity as linked to a sense of injustice, he comments, *'I would say I'm a socialist because, in an actual sense that the way we're living the now isn't fair'*. He goes on to reflect on the values that inform his political activity and says:

...fairness is a good one I would say, it's democracy, it's equality, it's the ability to actually enjoy life without being told oh, here by the way pal, you're gonna have to slave away the rest of your life. It's cool, when you die you'll go to heaven, you'll be fine.

John, a member of the YCL and CPB states *'I've always noticed inequality in society.'* For John, this perception grew out of the discussions he had with a close childhood friend. The friend is from a traditional mining community and John was made aware of the experience of unemployment and economic hardship that his friend's family experience as a result of the economic changes brought about by the aftermath of the miner's strike and pit closures.

Anthony is a member of SLYS and the LP. Here he demonstrates how his sense of empathy with those experiencing injustice links with his reasons for

aligning with the Labour Party. This quotation also highlights his early political socialisation and how that shaped his sense of empathy. As he reflects:

...if I see a homeless person on the street I feel really sensitive and...bad and I want tae...help that person...that partially comes from the public-sector sort of ethos, it's obviously my parents were always ingraining...help people...you don't try to further yourself at the expense of others. Then obviously through Catholic education as well you're getting that reinforced through the messages so, you know, helping the disadvantaged and the worse off and that. So, I suppose my world and societal view was...coming back to the Labour Party, was the Labour Party sort of shared that view that...you have to help the disadvantaged, you've got to help others, it's not just all about you as an individual, it's about the collective. I suppose that sort of, you know, naturally chimed, probably without me knowing it, with my view you know, in the world.

Eleanor is a member of the LP and is a PCS local branch office bearer. This quotation explores how her political identity has developed out of her growing critical awareness of what she sees as injustices in the world. In explaining why she identifies as a socialist she says:

...I've always thought oh, this isn't fair, why can't everybody be able to eat, why can't everybody have a home, why can't everybody be warm, why can't everyone be educated, why haven't we all got access to these things. I think I've always thought that. And I think as well just sort of assumed everybody else thought that [laughs], and then found out when I was a bit older that that's not the case...I think just as I sort of grew up and saw things, like I remember me dad having to explain to us when we were visiting London why there was homeless people. And I remember, like, not being able to grasp it, and being like 'but dad, aren't there empty houses?' 'Like, why can't they live there?' And him being like, 'cause they can't' [laughs]. And me not getting it.

Like many young activists in this study, Eleanor then goes on to account for her activism as a response to these injustices and locates the cause of them in the structures of contemporary capitalist society. As the following exchange demonstrates:

Eleanor: I think just mostly how unfair and horrible everything is [laughs] under capitalism, and seeing that on a first-hand basis every single day. And then at least wanting to think that there's some hope that it might change.

Stuart: ...what drives that then? Have you got any personal values that kinda drives...these kinda thoughts?

Eleanor: I dunno. I think I just want everything to be a bit nicer for everyone is all. I think...it makes us quite angry people who are only looking after themselves, and I think especially with being involved in the trade union movement where everyone's trying to work together and make things better together, I think it makes us more frustrated at the people who don't think like that and only think about themselves.

Stuart: So, would you say you're driven by, you know, kinda issues like equality, or... ...you know, social justice?

Eleanor: Oh definitely.

Fred, a member of the YCL and CPB, also sees his political identity and his move to activism being shaped by his developing critical analysis of the injustices he perceives under capitalism:

Stuart: So, when did you begin to identify yourself as a Communist then and why?

Fred: I think it would have been, well I think it was only really in the past couple of years to be honest with you. I'd read Marx quite early on about thirteen, fourteen and I fully agreed with his principles...I fully agreed with it, you know things like that but I was never really pushing for it. I think it was just slowly learning more and more about, you know, the failures of capitalism and the inequalities under the system we've got now that I sort of started to get less and less '*I just agree with this*' (Marxism) and more and more '*we need to change to this right now*' ...

Whilst most of the young activists in this study do not cite a direct experience of injustice as the motivation for their move to activism, two of the young activists do. Both Keir and Hugo would share the views and critical analysis of contemporary capitalist society as indicated above, and this does have an influence on their move to activism. However, for Keir and Hugo it is a direct experience of injustice in their formal schooling that helped shaped their motivation to become active. This experience also developed a sense of

empathy and solidarity leading to a desire to ensure that, whilst they may have suffered, things don't '*remain the way they are*' so others don't suffer what they did. Keir, a SLYS and LP member, is clear that a key source of his activity comes out of an injustice he experienced at school relating to the perceived lack of support he got when his mother fell ill. His anger and sense of injustice are clearly demonstrated here. He states that this experience '*...actually got me into politics*' and he continues:

I mean I've got a burning hatred for the system [laughs] essentially. As somebody who was relatively alright at school until events changed things in the sense that I was probably top a' my class first tae third year. Mother fell ill around about Tory austerity time and that's what kinda made me think, 'well this doesnae work for me. So now I want tae change it

Hugo is also a member of the LP as well as a Unite the Union official. He is dyslexic and for him, his experience of school was formative in developing both his sense of injustice and a desire to become active and change things. Here he describes evocatively his experience of being dyslexic in school; '*...it's like going in tae a torture chamber. That's the best way tae put it, is you know you're showing up for something that is not set up for you, they're not able to handle your needs and your abilities*'. This experience developed his awareness of injustice and helped form his political identity, as he comments:

I think it was...my schooling that kinda turned me on tae kinda injustice and wanting tae do stuff. I had... trouble in school, it was just like well, I'm dyslexic, never done well in school, but my kind of...my kinda self-worth was always sticking up for the other person in my class that was getting bullied or getting a hard time, or whatever injustice I seen. And school was actually where I seen myself getting in tae trouble for standing up for other folk.

Hugo's experience of perceived injustice at school and the memory of it helped drive his growing involvement in the trade union movement. For example, he

became involved in his union's disability committee so he could speak up on dyslexia issues, as he reflects, '*...I remember thinking...I think this is what happened in school...it was that hurtful and that painful in terms of feeling crap about not being able to do stuff that I never wanted anybody else to feel the way that I felt*'.

From my analysis it is clear that all the young people in this study have developed a strong commitment to social justice and this drives their activism. They are both angry at the way things are, the existing unjust structures and relations of capitalist society, and want to do what they can to challenge and change them. However, this commitment to social justice and a desire to challenge and transform existing social relations appears marginal to the focus of much of the research on activism and participation. As Watts *et al.* (2011: 44) comment '*...youth social action aimed at the roots of social injustice is near the periphery of theory and research on civic engagement*'. Most of the literature in this field appears '*conservative*' (see Kane 2013: 875,) and ironically apolitical (see Bang 2009: 128 or Marsh & Akram, 2015: 524). Norris (2011: 4) argues that the prominent research paradigm influencing the field relies too much on a '*methodological individualism*' based on individual behavioural survey analysis and as such under examines the '*macro-contextual*' factors that help account for activism. This literature tends to focus mostly on the less demanding repertoires of political activism that young people chose to deploy such as voting or lobbying politicians, government officials or other decision makers. In this literature, the scope and ambition seem to be limited to framing activism in the political process by the ways it '*...establishes*

the legitimacy of the democratic state and the accountability of elected officials' (Norris, 2011: 6). The outcome of the form of activism framed by this literature is limited to making incremental changes within the structures of the established political, economic status quo, rather than that which challenge and changes it. This is a passive activism, resembling the minimal conception of citizenship outlined by McLaughlin (1992).

This way of thinking about and framing political activism is too limiting for my purpose in this thesis, as for example, it does not deal sufficiently with issues such as the unequal distribution of wealth and power in society and in particular how this elision inhibits the opportunity to think about political activism as contributing '*...substantially to the equalization of the political world'*' (Schugurensky, 2000: 2). As noted above, from my analysis of the data, all the young people in my study have in some way claimed their activity is a response to the deep inequalities and injustices in the material conditions of the economic, political and social system of capitalist society. This description of the ontology of the activist in this study also has a strong similarity to the characteristics of what Westheimer and Kahne (2004: 242) term justice orientated citizens, and using this term to frame citizens '*...calls explicit attention to matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social justice.'*' It is to these matters that I turn now.

6.2.3. Beyond Political Efficacy: Critical Agency and Critical Consciousness

This commitment to social justice is presented in this thesis as a way of understanding why these young people became active. Yet, by doing so, I also

need to develop further the meaning of another concept I have used to explain activism; political efficacy. In a fundamental way, political efficacy relates to the ontological notion of human agency, the potential capacity we all have as human beings to act autonomously in the world. That is, to think critically about our social world and our place in it and, based on these reflections, take the necessary action to make changes to it (Stetsenko, 2016). There are different theoretical approaches to the concept of agency and it is a contested idea (See for example Giddens, 1984 or Callinicos, 1985). My understanding and use of the term here are drawn from the Marxist tradition (See for example Allman, 2007 or Banfield, 2016). From this perspective, human agency has to be understood dialectically in relation to the prevailing structures of society. The starting point is Marx's famous aphorism that, *'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past'* (Marx, 1990: 300). Therefore, whilst agency is seen as describing an individual's power to act, it is important to note that there is a caveat to this idea of agency; our ability to act is linked to and bounded by the wider structures of society. Agency and structure are related in tension, and so whilst the structures of society can and do shape and condition our views of the world and the social relations that exist, our sense of agency, expressed individually or in joining with others, can empower us to make changes to these structures and relations.

It is clear that political efficacy, as a concept, has ideas about human agency and change at its core. Yet the discussions of the concept in the literature on

political socialisation and efficacy do not unequivocally foreground agency or how it is conceptualized. Nor does the literature make clear the nature of the change to be brought about by the application of this efficacy, beyond taking part in the political process and voting. This is problematic. For instance, drawing on Allman's (2007) concepts of reproductive and critical praxis, political efficacy could imply change which does not fundamental challenge the existing power relations and structures of society, or alternatively, one's efficacy could be applied to directly challenge these structures and relations as they are seen as the source of injustice. In general, the use of the concept of political efficacy to explain activism is useful, however on its own, it fails to fully describe and account for the motivations and dispositions of the participants in my study. Therefore, to fully understand the motivations of these young activists I think political efficacy has to be set into the wider concept of Allman's critical praxis and incorporate what Freire (1990) describes as critical consciousness. I think this concept helps to provide a fuller and more accurate account of the motivations and dispositions of the activists in my study. Drawing on Freire, Watts *et al.* (2011: 45/46) offer a useful definition of critical consciousness that identifies its three key components: '*critical reflection*', social analysis that embodies a '*moral rejection of societal inequalities*'; '*political efficacy*', and '*critical action*', civic and political action aimed at changing society.

The sense of political efficacy that these activists clearly demonstrate has strengthened their agency. However, this agency has to be understood as critical agency informed by a critical consciousness and critical praxis. Importantly, Watts *et al.* (2011: 42) argue that people with a critical

consciousness are more likely to account for injustice in the structures of society rather than deficiencies in individuals. Consequently, this agency is critical in the sense that it refers to an ideological critique of dominant social relations and power structures (Brookfield, 2010: 12/13) and such critical agency is focused on changing perceived injustices and inequalities (Rebughini, 2018). Furthermore, as agency relates to structure then I understand this agency/structure relationship from a Marxist perspective. As Banfield (2016) argues, whilst structure embodies '*objective structured interests*', agency relates to '*the powers of agents to know and realise their interests*'. This way of conceptualising agency and structure opens up the possibility of human agents changing oppressive structures. Additionally, Banfield (ibid) also argues that this possibility of change is '*impelled by real, interest driven human needs*'. In the case of these young activists, their agency is therefore driven by their structural analysis of and anger at the injustices and inequalities they experience or have witnessed around them. Their drive for change is underpinned and informed by this conception of critical agency and praxis that helps explain the commitment these young activists have to social justice and which leads to their activism.

6.3. Critical Moments: "Oh, Jeremy Corbyn" and Indyref

The second important macro factor that helps to explain the activism of some of the young people in this study is the importance of what are termed critical moments. I used a 'life history' approach (Miller, 2000 or Holford & Edirisingha, 2000) in my interviews with these activists to help identify critical moments that contributed to their activism. For Thomson *et al.* (2002: 339) a critical moment

is an '*...event described in an interview that either the researcher or the interviewee sees as having important consequences for their lives and identities*'. I identify three of these critical moments, the Scottish Independence referendum and the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the British Labour Party were the most frequently cited and for one young activist it was the Iraq War. These moments were experienced and had an effect on each of these individuals, but they were of course not just moments that affected these young people alone. As such, these critical moments also resemble what the literature on political activism describes as period effects. For Norris (2003) these events can be a '*...major historical event which had a decisive impact upon all citizens in a society at one point in time*'. This concept therefore accounts for the political attitudes or behaviour of people being influenced by a particular and distinct economic or political situation or event in a society at any one time (Neundorf & Smets, 2017: 14).

As noted above, the Iraq War was cited as a significant politicising event for one activist. When asked what he thought got him interested in politics Jim comments; '*I think...the Iraq War was quite important and how I thought about politics, yeah.*' For him this was '*...obviously unjust in my eyes at the time*'. Jim goes on to illustrate how the Iraq war influenced his developing political awareness, as he says:

...yeah it probably crystalized things a lot more. And I was probably aware of a lot of other things before that but...I remember...the Iraq War was a moment where discussion of, also it was a moment where politics was being discussed, I suppose. Everybody had an opinion on it...

Jim's comment above draws attention to two of the ways that a critical moment or period effect shapes people's political development; they help latent political views mature and take shape, and their influence comes from the ubiquity of political discussion the moment or effect provokes. The Iraq war only featured as important for one young activist. However, these key features of critical moments or period effects are echoed by other young people in this study. But as the result of two other significant political events; the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party in 2015 and the Scottish Independence referendum of 2014. Both of these events, whilst not limited to the involvement of young people, had a significant effect on some of the young people involved in this study and for some they were a key impetus in their becoming active.

6.3.1. "Oh, Jeremy Corbyn"

Turning firstly to the Corbyn effect, six of the young activists explicitly stated that their move to activism was inspired or bolstered by the emergence of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party. It is important to note that these young people were already socialised politically and had a clear socialist political identity. The following selection of quotations is representative of the views of these activists. For example, as Robin states, *'I think I joined them because I think it was ...probably largely to do with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the Labour leader. So, he...got elected as the leader, he was sort of bringing left wing politics back to the Labour Party.'* This relationship between Corbyn and the re-emergence of left-wing politics was also vital for Louise; *'I think it was more to do with the fact that there is like an active, it's not just about*

like Jeremy Corbyn being elected but it's about realising that there is like an active left.'

Referring to discussions in her workplace, Eleanor highlights how she developed an awareness of the Labour Party and the effect Corbyn had on her activism:

So, we would talk about what the Labour Party was doing quite regularly just in, like, social conversation. And then obviously Corbyn got the vote to become, well to run for leader, and then our trade union got involved backing him. And...then I just joined because I thought well this is a different Labour Party and I would support this and like to see Corbyn do well.

Keir is also in no doubt about the influence of Corbyn on his reason to become active and how he sees his political identity being consistent with Corbyn's:

It was just like, "well wait a minute, I want tae get involved in politics for this guy"... He seemed like this normal politician [laughs] stood on every picket line wi' a' the workers. I thought, "this is my guy", and that was it... But the election o' Corbyn in the sense o' making me active is definitely number one. I mean if there was no Jeremy Corbyn I reckon I'd still be working a full-time job. I wouldnae be having this conversation.

Keir not only demonstrates how his move to activism was influenced by the arrival of Corbyn, but also a much more profound transition and this echoes a theme in the literature (see Breeze, *et al.*, 2017). In this case his decision to change career and move to further education:

...but just the election a' Corbyn definitely a pinnacle for me I'd say, in the sense that I'd probably still be sitting in a full-time job. I wouldnae have wanted tae go intae further education cause I wouldnae have wanted the career in politics. It was probably a doon tae kinda Corbyn bringing the socialists back oot...

The election of Jeremy Corbyn has certainly been a significant political event in the United Kingdom and not just for the members of the Labour Party. Undoubtedly the Party's membership has doubled (Waugh, 2017) to 552,000 since his election indicating that he has, for some, stimulated an interest in politics (Keen & Jackson, 2018: 3). But his influence can be detected beyond the Party. For example, the Party's general electoral performance in 2017 and the political position of Corbyn and his allies, expressed in the manifesto '*For the many not the few*', is seen by some to indicate a decisive shift, not only to the political direction of the Party, but the political discourse of the country, creating a credible counter to free market, neoliberal capitalism and its underlying assumptions. Mason (2017: pix) for example argues that Corbyn represents a '*...new politics and economics...*' and that Corbyn poses a serious challenge for the '*...political and social elite that runs Britain...*'. Some of the young activists in this study who already had a strong left-wing political identity have clearly been directly influenced by the Corbyn effect and enthusiastically made the move from being interested in politics to being active as a result. Unsurprisingly all six of the activists joined the Labour Party. In addition, echoing the notion of external efficacy already discussed, they joined because they wanted to help Corbyn transform the Party and move it to the left and help create a more socially just society.

6.3.2. Indyref: A Victory for Participation

The 2014 Scottish Independence referendum was also a significant political event (Mullen, 2016, p3, Hill *et al.*, 2017). It was the first time in history that the people of Scotland had the opportunity to debate and then vote on secession

from the rest of the United Kingdom. More relevant to this thesis, the referendum was also significant in relation to political participation, as it saw ‘...unprecedented levels...’ (Breeze *et al.*, 2017: 774) of electoral registration and turnout; 97% and 85% respectively. It was also noteworthy as the minimum voting age was reduced to include 16 and 17 year olds in the franchise. Despite fears of youth disengagement in politics, 89% of this age group registered to vote with 66% estimated to have gone on to vote in the referendum (Hill *et al.*, 2017: 63). The Scottish independence referendum is therefore seen by many as a ‘...victory’ of participation and engagement with electoral politics’ (Breeze *et al.*, 2017: 775).

Nine out of the 17 activists in this thesis, barely referred to the Independence referendum in their interviews, and certainly not in relation to it being a factor in their becoming politicised or active. Furthermore, these nine had already been politicised and were active before the referendum. One of these nine, Eleanor, lives in England and so did not have any involvement with the referendum. Of the remaining eight respondents, the referendum featured as a significant experience. However, for one activist, Nan, the independence referendum was an intense period of political activism for her as she was heavily involved in the Yes campaign, and is an active member of the Scottish National Party. But again the referendum was not the catalyst for their activism, having been active before. As she illustrates here; ‘*It was important cause it was like a kinda monumental thing for Scotland, and I’m glad that I was a part of it, but it wasn’t the, like it wasn’t a turning point thing for me.*’ Although not the reason for her becoming active, she does cite it as important in enhancing her knowledge and

skills as an activist and campaigner, as she states, *'...it probably taught me how to have difficult, very difficult conversation wi' people, mainly cause a lot of them were in the pub, and a lot of them were...where people were absolutely against it.'*

Anthony was also someone who had already become active before the referendum campaign. Yet, as a member of the LP, the significance of the referendum was to induce inactivity due to his strong left socialist identity and the particular politics of the cross Party Better Together No campaign, that the Labour party was part of. For many on the left in Scotland who were against independence, Labour joining with the Conservatives in the Better Together campaign was not seen as an appropriate or welcome strategic decision. For instance Jackson Cullinane, a leading Scottish trade unionist and Labour left figure commented that participation in Better Together was a *'...source of frustration...in particular the fact that the Labour Party leadership appeared to bounce the party into that position'* (quoted in Gordon, 2013: no page number). This alliance with the Conservatives in Scotland was seen as being *'toxic'* and would damage Labour's electoral fortunes in the future (Simpkins, 2015: 5). Commenting on the impact of the referendum on his activism Anthony states:

Well, truthfully, I had become quite inactive in the Labour Party during the course of the independence referendum because, like, I know that was kind of a period where a lot of young people were getting involved in politics for the first time, but I felt really disillusioned with Labour's participation and the Better Together Campaign... So I'd become quite inactive...people on the left who were backing no were basically, you know, side lined.

The remaining six young people all cite the referendum as a significant event in their political development that influenced and facilitated their move to

activism. Although it is important to note that there are some differences among this group such as the extent of the effect the referendum had on their political development and also some subtle differences in their level of active involvement in the campaign. For example, for four of this six, Eric, Robin, Keir and George, their political socialisation had already taken place and they had developed an interest in politics. So the referendum presented them with their first participation opportunity, both to engage their political interest actively, but also as voters. As George, a member of SLYS and the LP comments; *'Before I wasn't active whatsoever, the referendum was what got me into active politics, which was frightening but exhilarating as well...'* And, reflecting the idea of a critical moment he continues, *'...There's defining moments that happen to people. The Iraq War happened for these people...Mine was the referendum, and various other people's was the referendum.'*

For James a member of SLYC and the LP and John, a member of the YCL and the CBP, the impact of the referendum was also profound. Like the other six in this group, it did provide their first participation opportunity, but it also acted as a key political socialising agent. Additionally, it is important to note that they did not come from political households and did not cite their family as a source of their political interest or activism. As James comments, *'...I was vaguely politicised around the Scottish independence referendum, I know many people were.'* For James, this politicisation process was facilitated within the context of his involvement with an extra-curricular debating club at school. However, although the referendum was important in his political socialisation and he engaged in debates at school and amongst his friends, he did not see himself

as an activist at this point, as he comments; *'...I never campaigned for independence or anything like that , I wasn't active back then, I just read the news.'* For John, the referendum campaign coincided with his first years at university. It was the campaign events or debates taking place on campus and the informal discussions he had with peers, that developed his awareness and interest in politics as well as helping to form his left political identity. As he comments here:

...yeah it was at university when I really started becoming politically active because I started to, I think it had been the time when I was...coming of age as an adult. It's a really tumultuous time in terms of politics with the Scottish independence referendum especially. And that really got my attention. And that's when I started looking into politics a lot more, in a lot more detail...if there's one crucial moment in my life that made me take that plunge and go for the more critical politics, it's the Scottish Independence referendum.

The idea of the referendum being influential due to its ubiquity also features prominently amongst the comments of this group as the following from James and John typify. For James *'...it was a big, big political discussion...it was almost unavoidable...something to like talk about...to get involved and to have an opinion'*. John mirrors James' comment as he reveals the impact of the referendum on him, *'...It just...hyper charged everything...because everyone was talking about...you couldn't avoid it...without that I wouldn't have been where I am today.'*

The range of the activity in the referendum campaign among this group varied. For example, George was heavily involved in the Yes campaign, *'I had grass roots activity with the Yes Campaign, from about 2012 up to 2014 where I was doing stalls, I was doing leafleting, I was doing meetings and talking wi' folk.'*

Whereas Keir, like many of this group, certainly recognises the influence the referendum had on his move to activism, but he sees his involvement as more minimal, *'...I wouldnae say I was an active campaigner...in the yes vote but I did vote yes. And I was...in the sense I would speak at my school and stuff about it but I wasnae like involved in the campaign per se like going round the doors and stuff.'*

It is important to note the role of the school that Keir highlights here, as for some of the group this was an important site in helping them understand the referendum, and this is consistent with other research findings (see Hill *et al.*, 2017 & Eichhorn, 2014). Robin, James, Eric and Keir were all at school during the referendum campaign and all talk about being encouraged to discuss the issues raised by the referendum, either in the formal setting of a classroom, mainly History or Modern Studies, or in more informal extra-curricular opportunities like a debating club. For example, Robin's comment here is representative:

...well the teachers...were always quite engaging. They always knew what they were talking about. So, they knew about politics, they knew about history, they knew what was going on, and so that helped me anyway. And yeah, they always...tried to get...class involvement and things like that as well.

There is also clear evidence that through their engagement with the referendum these young people took part in activities that developed a key set of *'knowledge, skills and attributes that constitute political literacy'* (Lockyer 2003: 133) crucial to activism. A politically literate person for Crick (2000: 62) is *'...not merely an informed spectator: he or she is someone capable of active participation and communication...'* in the political process. As a participation

opportunity, the referendum enabled these young people to vote for the first time. Yet voting in itself is not a demanding repertoire of activism and is only one element of political participation. As, Lockyer (2003) points out, an electoral process also opens up the opportunity for people to engage in a range of activities which can support the development of political literacy, activities such as; researching, debating, persuading and lobbying. The referendum then provided the opportunity for these young people to take part in these activities and develop their political literacy, as the following selection of comments indicate:

Keir: I just, I saw it as my duty to convince my friends. I actually think I did...

James: ...I obviously had to do research and such into the issues surrounding the referendum so I could formulate an argument and make a case.

John: It's a really tumultuous time in terms of politics with the Scottish independence referendum especially. And that really got my attention. And that's when I started looking into politics a lot more, in a lot more detail.

Eric: I was fairly new to kind of political activism but I was fairly confident in school and things like that in terms of my activity in terms of what I thought was right in terms of telling other people, talking about it to other people. It was a mass political change for young people.

Robin: I mean obviously the referendum did help people to become engaged and it certainly generated...a lot of discussion and things like that, which is quite good for me cause it did help, you know, give me some things to, like, talk about stuff.

It is clear that the independence referendum was a '*victory for participation*', in particular for the way it facilitated the engagement of young people in the political process (see for example The Electoral Commission 2014, Hopkins, 2015 or Mackie & Crowther, 2015). Yet despite this level of engagement by

young people, some doubts have been raised about the long-term sustainability of this activism (Eichhorn, 2018a). Baxter *et al.* (2015) for instance, suggest that *'Key questions remain about whether the activism and interest reported will be sustained, or whether the 'referendum effect' turns out to be 'a flash in the pan'*. These doubts were similarly expressed by some of the young people in this study. These interviews took place more than two years after the referendum and the activists who became active during the referendum are still engaged in the political process. However, James and Eric claim that there has been a drop in the level of activity they witness. Both acknowledge the way the referendum politicised and engaged young people in politics. Nonetheless, from the perspective of their political activism in particular parties, they recognise that for some, this activism has not lasted. These are only two anecdotal comments and it should be noted that they are members of parties that are opposed to independence and they support this position, but their comments add to the research knowledge already collected about the sustainability of referendum inspired activism noted above. The following two comments illustrate this perception of diminishing activity:

James: ...I think that it got a lot of people interested in politics, don't get me wrong like, I think there is a myth around it that politicised so many young people and they are all active and they all want change...OK so the Yes campaign wanted to do it, motivated a bunch of young people in that particularly a bunch of working class people to go and vote to go and campaign and where did that go? Like it's disappeared so, I don't know...I think calling all these young people really politically active is a bit of a lie...I mean I'm very critical of this...In my circles in school like I think I only know one person who would go out and like man a street stall or something for an hour (laugh) it was really the height of the Yes movement and yes they might still be more interested in politics, but I really don't think they are active in the same way that me or my peers are yeah.

Eric: ...it definitely changed things in terms of...youth politics. Sadly, I think it died away all too traumatically because people weren't able to work past independence, which I think is another of the flaws in terms of 'I'll fight for this and I'll go out four days a week' but do it for nothing else. Whereas the YCL we're there against independence, talking about that but then the other 6 days of the week we're out fighting other issues, fighting for other things we believed in...I think people are still engaged but the amount of people I know who talk about their political activism and like they'd go round knocking doors, giving out leaflets for Independence but then as soon as that finished you didn't see any of them campaigning for the General Election (2017), you didn't see any of them campaigning against inequality, that they were so proud to stand up against in Britain. So, I think as soon as that died they lost so much hope and all the rest of it without addressing the fact that they always said 'this is just the first step, once we get Independence we can do all these things.

In relation to the Scottish Independence referendum, this thesis complements other research findings (Breeze *et al.*, 2017: 775), by showing that the referendum had a significant effect on the political activity and awareness of some of the participants discussed here. Yet, my analysis of the data suggests that for the young activist involved, their engagement with the referendum can be seen as being more instrumental, rather than the more visceral, ideologically driven and longer lasting impact that the Corbyn effect had on some activists. By that I mean four of these activists: George; Robin; James; Keir were all supporters of independence, but they had also developed, or were in the process of developing a clear left wing political identity. Yet, despite the importance of the referendum to their developing activism, none have gone on to join and be active in independence supporting organisations or movements. In fact the opposite is the case, they all joined the Labour Party.

Robin's comments below illustrate and support this analysis:

...like, during the referendum it was always...socialism or left-wing beliefs, it was always more important to me...it wasn't about

nationalism or which government, or which country you were run by, it was always sort of about...socialism or left wing... So yeah, then obviously it [a Yes win] didn't happen...then obviously Corbyn and stuff came along and I thought, you know...this is our chance now...a genuinely left-wing politician that's hopefully gonna be able to, you know, come and bring socialism back to the Labour Party.

James also illustrates how his left wing identity seems to be the dominant element in his developing political awareness and move to activism rather than independence. His comments here also reinforce the role of peer relationships in developing his political identity:

Like most...young people who were vaguely left wing, I backed yes in the independence referendum... I become disillusioned with the SNP and at the same time was becoming educated on a socialist base...and that transition along with...the influence of people I know within circles within the university who were all labour party members, I talk to as well but that transition I changed from the SNP towards Labour.

James goes on to emphasize the influence of Corbyn on his move to activism as he comments; *'...I think like the point where I would consider myself an activist was after I joined the Labour Party around when Corbyn was running for leader the first time.'*

Therefore, I would argue that although the referendum was undoubtedly a 'critical moment', for some it was the opportunity for engagement that the referendum offered, rather than any deep seated ideological commitment to independence and nationalism that accounts for their activism. In particular their left wing identity seems to have been more dominant and influential in their thinking than independence.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified the key factors that explain how these young activists transformed from being interested in politics and emerged as politically socialised and committed political activists. I drew on the concept of political efficacy to show that their activism is inspired by a confidence that change is possible and that they have a desire to make changes, either in the organisations that they joined or to challenge and change the inequalities and injustices they encounter in the world around them. Furthermore, I have argued to expand the concept of political efficacy to encompass the notion of critical agency, in that these young activists have developed a critical consciousness of capitalist social relations and their response has been to develop a commitment to action for social justice. The influence of some critical political moments, particularly the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader and the Scottish Independence Referendum, were also highlighted as contributing to this move to activism, framed by a left wing political identity. Whilst what has been presented so far explains some of the key reasons why these young people have chosen to become politically active, one key socialising agent has been missing from my analysis. That is, the role education played in the socialisation process and their development as activists. My analysis of the data reveals the complex, and for some, the significant role education played in shaping the political lives of these young people and the next chapter will explore this role in detail.

7. Education and Learning for Democracy: The Relevance of Educational Experiences

7.1. Introduction

The last two chapters identified and explored the influential factors that helped these young people become politically active. Importantly for this thesis, this act of becoming; the process of developing the suitable dispositions of, efficacy, political literacy and critical agency to become engaged in democratic life, is also self-evidently and inextricably educational. As Stetsenko (2016) claims, *'...education is indispensable in providing the tools of activism and agency...'*, particularly in the context of activism for transformative social change. Therefore, this chapter will examine how and to what extent their educational experiences, formal, non-formal and informal, scaffolded and encouraged their emergence as political activists.

For some of the activists, non-formal or informal education provided outside the formal schooling environment, for example by political parties, trades unions and social movements, or through more informal peer discussions, raised their awareness and knowledge of politics and developed their confidence and capacity to become active. Although this was not the most significant influence on their becoming active. Nevertheless, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the age group of the sample, their formal schooling experience does feature prominently, but not always positively, in all the participants reflections. As a result my findings reveal a complexity in relation to the role and influence formal schooling had on these young people.

Of all the socialising agents cited in the literature, school is identified as important in studies. For example, in their review of the research literature Pontes *et al.* (2017: 2) state that:

...school experience has been found to exercise particular influence on the development of young people's democratic knowledge and political literacy skills, of building an informed young citizenry, and of preparing them for participation in democratic life.

Furthermore, Pontes *et al.* (2017) show in their own study that young people who undertake a discrete programme of citizenship education are more likely to become politically active than those who have not. Yet, Neundorf and Smets (2017: 8) conclude from their review of the literature on political socialisation that, '*...the precise way in which schooling influences students is unclear*'.

My findings offer some insight and clarity and therefore, in order to help illuminate the role of schooling, a key question to be addressed in this chapter is, to what extent did the young activists' experience of formal schooling and in particular the Education for Citizenship initiative, create their '*...capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life*' (LTS 2002: 11)? The 2002 LTS document set out what the outcomes for Education for Citizenship should be and in what I think is an important passage for this study, the LTS document also sets out how these outcomes should relate to each other. This suggests a dynamic understanding of citizenship education in which young people should not just engage in abstract learning to build capacities and political literacies, but also that these capacities and literacies should be applied thoughtfully in concrete situations in their own lives. As the document states (*ibid*: 11):

Being a capable citizen is not just about possessing knowledge and skills. It is about being able and willing to use knowledge and skills to make decisions and, where appropriate, take action. Nor is effective citizenship just about having the capacity and disposition to be active. It is about being able to take action and make things happen for ends – and by means – that are infused with respect and care for people and a sense of social and environmental responsibility.

This statement, stressing the relationship between learning, reflection and action, could be interpreted as a description of critical praxis as formulated by Allman (2007). Within this conceptual framework, it is important to note that all the young people who contributed to this study undertook their formal schooling in the context of education for citizenship being a priority for educational policy in Scotland. Furthermore, if you compare the skills, knowledge, political literacy, dispositions and the actual activity of the young people studied here, with the stated purpose and outcomes of Education for Citizenship, then these young activists have developed a critical praxis and become the kind of active citizen that the policy rhetoric suggests the citizenship education initiative is aimed at creating.

Nevertheless, given the research evidence and in the context of the priority of citizenship education in schools, it is striking that from my findings only one of these activists considered their experiences of the planned formal school curriculum, or any citizenship education, as being a determining socialising agent for their activism. However, that is not to say that the experience of formal schooling or the curriculum were not important for the others. In analysing their formal educational experiences, four distinct categories can be distinguished. As noted above, one young activist identified his schooling as the crucial element in his move to activism; one group of six who thought school was

supportive but not a crucial motivation to their activism, one group of two who cited their general school experience as significant in contributing to their activism, but in an unintended and negative way; one group of eight who did not see it as a cause of their activism or even supportive to it.

It is also relevant that for those who thought school was supportive, their encounters with any form of citizenship focused education in the formal curriculum was almost exclusively within three subjects, not across the curriculum: principally Modern Studies, but History and Philosophy were also noted. In addition, those young people who did not see the formal school as supportive to their activism also had little awareness of any specific citizenship education. Overall their view of their school experiences was that it was focused on employability, not a wider education and that the experiences they could relate to citizenship education were focused on personal responsibility such as rights and responsibilities and drugs or sexual awareness. This would suggest that a minimal conception of citizenship education was prominent in their schools.

This chapter will proceed as follows. The participants' experience of the formal school curriculum will be examined first, followed by an examination of the significance of the informal extra-curricular opportunities that were encountered within the formal setting. The chapter will close with a brief exploration of some of the participants' experiences of non-formal and informal education.

7.2. The Role of Formal School Experiences: The Formal Curriculum

7.2.1. The Formal Curriculum as the Crucial Socialising Agent

Anthony unequivocally cited his formal school experience as positive and supportive to his activism, but he is the only respondent who viewed it as the decisive socialising agent leading directly to his activism. Like all the activists who thought their schooling was supportive, Anthony grew up in a political household. His parents are supporters of the Labour Party and active members of their trade union. So, for him, discussion about politics and political ideas were part of the *'family culture'* with politics being *'...discussed on an almost daily basis, extensively and still is to this day'*. Growing up he would also go with his parents to Labour Movement events and political demonstrations. For instance, the protest against the Iraq war in 2003 is an important childhood memory for him. For Anthony, this immersion in a political household and the accompanying Labour and trade union culture, conditioned his developing political identity and contributed to him joining the Labour Party at 15 and the youth wing of his parents' trade union at 16. As he says, *'...it was sort of like a natural step to join the Labour Party on the one hand, but also the trade union movement on the other'*. Consequently, Anthony can be seen as someone with a propensity to be interested in and receptive to any citizenship learning on offer at school. Additionally, as will become clear below, the interaction between this household political socialisation and his school experience was mutually supportive. The subject area of Modern Studies features as important for Anthony's development. Particularly the course content and pedagogical approach, which included taking part in mock elections and being encouraged to discuss current political affairs and to take a view on them. For Anthony this

experience reinforced his developing political identity as a left wing Labour supporter. The supportive influence of Modern Studies is demonstrated here as he comments:

...cause you had to read current affairs and that from the homework...I didn't find that a chore like other people, I actually already enjoyed doing that, so it did sort of help me develop in that sense, it was just, you know, like, sparking an interest that was already there...

Nevertheless, unlike those who found their schooling supportive to their activism, for Anthony it was the school that was the decisive factor, as he demonstrates clearly here referring to his experience of the Modern Studies and History classes:

...I don't think, you know, I would've been as geared towards, you know, political activism...And I do attribute them to my education cause although my family background was important, like that alone I don't think would've changed cause I would've just been a Labour voter, I might not have actually become an activist if you know what I mean, like be voting Labour but you wouldn't be engaging in the Labour Party.

Another group of activists also saw their schooling as positive, yet although they did see their experience of school as helping to nurture their emerging political identity and supporting their development as citizens and activists, it was not crucial in their socialisation. I will now move on to discuss the views of some of these activists.

7.2.2. School as a Support to Activism

Six of these activists found their experience of the school's formal curriculum as supportive but not decisive to their development as activists. Jim is one of

them. He offers this view about the role of formal schooling in his political learning and development, as he says:

I think at school, it helped. I mean I don't think it was the pivotal factor but it helped. It enabled the conversations, thinking about things a bit more. A bit more structure maybe.

Although Jim came from a political household and cites this as contributing to his politicisation, it was the Iraq War and the political discussions about this with like-minded peers, both in and out of school, that were formative and important for his activism. Nonetheless, he also refers to some school subjects as helpful, again particularly Modern Studies and History feature here. Jim felt the pedagogical approach experienced in these classes, and the wider school environment, helped him. Referring to discussion about the politics of the Iraq war he says:

...there were people having these discussions around the school and there were probably a couple o' teachers that were amenable to kind of facilitating discussions and like running History and Modern Studies classes in a manner that...was amenable if you want to, to having these debates which was useful.

As he came from a political household then Jim's experience of these classes would have been enhanced as he was already interested in politics and therefore more receptive to the citizenship learning opportunities presented at school. In fact, all of the six respondents who said their school experience was supportive, cited their home and family as being formative and crucial in their political socialisation and move to activism. This is consistent with the literature for example, Torney-Purta *et al.* (2004) makes the link between young people discussing political affairs with their parents and future participation in politics. Furthermore, the propensity of young people growing up in political households

being interested and engaged in politics at school was found by Quintelier (2015) who points out *'Children of politically active parents are more likely to engage in political discussion, not only at home but also at school and with peers.'*

Willie's experience supports this claim by Quintelier and also further reflects the way different socialising agents can complement each other, maximizing the socialising effect. Willie was politically socialised through growing up in a household and extended family that was active in the British Communist Party, including a great grandfather who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. His family background, particularly his great grandfather's activism, was clearly formative as he demonstrates here; *'...so I was aware of it and eh and I used to write stories in my books in school about it, just about wee comments about the Spanish civil war and that kind of thing so I was like definitely aware of it...'* Willie then goes on to say that *'...I was always a bit of a history geek when I was younger and the political history kind of came into that as well so it was marrying the two was quite good...'* Willie feels that as he was already interested in politics, he was therefore more attuned to any citizenship learning on offer at school, for example as he claims here *'...I had this background in politics anyway and it just kind of made me develop it even further'*. For Willie it was particularly his Modern Studies class that contributed to his development, for example as he explains:

I mean modern studies class certainly gave you the actual education, knowledge to become an active citizen, it gave you the tools, the communication skills, how to talk to people, how to actually have a political discussion without resorting to shouting at somebody to win your point. So that was interesting. How to possibly tolerate other opinions that you might disagree with, like wholeheartedly...

Although Willie refers to his school as being 'rough' he still found it supportive:

...the reputation would be quite rough, but when you are there it's just the environment you are living in and you just grow up with that, but yeah, the education I got I would say was great, there was a lot of great teachers...despite its appeared reputation...I don't really have any bad words to say about it...

It is clear Willie's family background developed his interest in politics. He was therefore receptive to, and made the most of, any citizenship learning opportunities presented to him at school. Robin was also someone whose interest in politics and his political identity came through his family. He grew up in a political household which was rich in resources to support this development such as experiencing regular political talk with his parents and the ready availability of books on politics and history in the home:

...I was always curious...because of the news or because I'd hear them, like, you know, talking about stuff and be like oh, what are you talking about. I think I just sort of maybe understood...why...things were important maybe...I quite like to read as well, since I was young, so I was, like, you know, reading books.

Like Anthony and Willie, Robin's stimulating political home life interacted with his experience at school. This is further evidence to illuminate how they are mutually supportive of political development. For instance, his parents' bookshelves were full of books on British politics or history and he points out here how this supported his learning at school; *...so you'd learn, like in school...like British politics...then I'd go home and, you know, find British politics books. So, you know, read about it and see what's happening, yeah'.*

Unlike the school Willie described, according to Robin his school was in a *'well to do area'*. Although both are state comprehensives, Robin's was *'...a very highly regarded state school and...it's one of the best in Scotland actually...'*. Yet Robin also characterises his school as not *'...the most political of schools'*. It seems what Robin is reflecting here is that there were few students like himself who were interested in politics. As he comments *'I mean certainly there was...like, myself and a few others that were probably... individually quite political...But, but yeah, other than myself and a few other individuals it wasn't the most political.'* So, despite not being in a political school, with few students interested in politics, there was some citizenship learning on offer, which he was receptive to and he felt his experience was supportive. Again, History and Modern Studies feature prominently as key subject areas that supported his developing political literacy and activism, as he explains here:

...I enjoyed learning about the subjects and hearing what the teachers had to say...well Modern Studies I think I was especially quite good...it does help you to become aware of issues and exactly what's going on in the news, the sort of things that's going on here...or just around the world really. So, I think it does...help you to understand issues. And then...History does that as well because a lot of the things that are happening now are stuff that's happened before, and history can give you, sort of, a good understanding and a good background of why things are happening...

Like Willie and Robin, Eric also saw his childhood as being politically formative, with a vibrant home life of political discussion and activity such as accompanying his family to a range of Labour Movement events, for instance, May Day rallies or trade union demonstrations. He sees his positive experience of school combining with this family background to support his development:

I think consolidated is a good word 'cause for much of my childhood...although I was on these kinds of things none of my peers' parents were, or none of the other people I knew cared about it.

Whereas I think going to secondary school where you know people were talking about trade unions, people were talking about strikes things like that, things which had been a part of my childhood but no one else's I kind of realised "okay so there are normal people who do this" [laughs], normal people who care about inequality and things like that.

Eric goes on to claim that, amongst other things, school bolstered his confidence in his developing political identity. He felt it gave him '*...confidence to not care what other people thought essentially. I mean there's always going to be people calling you a 'nutter' and all the rest of it, but if you actually believe firmly in what you believe in then you should stand up for it and stand up for other people.*' Modern Studies and History also feature prominently in Eric's school experience as the teachers involved made these subjects '*...relevant to normal life*'. In the following quotation Eric offers further evidence of how family and school experiences can be mutually supportive and so in relation to his developing political literacy and activism he thinks the content of History and Modern Studies were important as they:

...became a lot more relevant in terms of talking to teachers about politics generally, about their views and things like that. But then obviously by that point I'd already been politicised but I think it was definitely relevant in terms of just general like looking at the way things worked...

For this group of young activists their formal school experience was largely positive. As a result of their family background they were already interested in politics and as such they had a propensity to be receptive and respond to the range of citizenship learning offered in their schools. Although not the decisive motivation for their activism, their school experience, particularly Modern Studies and to some extent History classes, helped develop their political literacy and supported their move to become politically active. For these

activists their school experience was overall positive and contributed to their political development.

Another two activists also thought their schooling had some influence on their emergence as politically literate young activists. Yet, compared to those who thought schooling was positive and supportive, for Hugo and Keir, there are clear differences in the nature of the experiences they had in school and how it shaped them. Whilst their schooling is seen as significant, it was the result of negative affective experiences. I will now discuss the views of these two activists.

7.2.3. School as a Negative Experience

Hugo and Keir's experience of school and its influence on their activism was briefly discussed in the last chapter in relation to the development of their commitment to social justice. Like all those who cite their schooling as a contributor to their activism, both grew up in political households and this helped to shape their political identity. Yet it is their experience of school, and in particular a sense of injustice at their treatment in school, that they see as playing a more crucial role in shaping their values and dispositions and in their motivation to become political activists. I will briefly represent Hugo views, before going on to explore Keir's experience in some detail.

For Hugo it was the challenges of being dyslexic and the lack of appropriate support offered to meet his needs that was a significant motivation in his desire to become active. His view of being dyslexic in school was likened to '*...going*

in tae a torture chamber. His response was to act out and he got into trouble at school. The importance of this experience at school in contributing to his activism is evidenced by this quotation; *'Yeah, if it wasn't for being dyslexic at school I would'nae have looked for another channel...'* Consequently, the channel he found was to eventually becoming active in the trade union movement. His motivation to do so was this negative experience of school. This experience formed both his political identify and his 'self-worth', defined by Hugo as a sense of solidarity and *'sticking up for other folk'* experiencing injustice. It is clear that Hugo's experience of school had a profound effect on him and his move into activism. Therefore, despite a profoundly negative experience of school, on reflection, Hugo was able to draw from this some positive features which he channelled into his development as an active citizen.

For Keir the critical incident was his mother's illness in his 4th year at high school. Keir perceived the school's response to this illness and the support offered as inadequate. As a result, his behaviour deteriorated and he started to experience problems in his relationships with teachers and the school. This was evidently a difficult situation for Keir and as a reaction to the school's response he says *'...I started rebelling at school in their failure tae kinda recognise what was going on in my background...'* This ultimately led to him having to move schools. As Keir explains, whilst he wasn't excluded he felt he was:

... pushed oot the door... And I was sitting, I'd say, four, five Highers at the time, but they failed tae recognise what had actually happened. And then when they were actually told it was as if they didnae care. So, I thought there was nae something right there.

The following excerpt demonstrates how this difficult experience had a profound formative effect on his developing political identity, his political analysis and his motivation to be active:

Stuart: ...so then you're rebelling against the school, I'm just wondering to what extent has that inspired your activism?

Keir: It does kinda, it's always something in the back a' ma mind. It's no like something I can forget easily. It was probably one o' the most difficult times o' my life but...there is a sense o' kinda wanting tae beat the system. And that's what is maybe a part o' it that burns over... I dunno how tae really kinda put that into words. It's just kinda I knew that the system was being unfair towards me so I've just kinda thought, 'how many other people is there oot there that's actually had it worse than me or just as bad'. And then I kinda put it doon tae class as well. If I was maybe a middle-class kid and that would never have happened tae me.

For Keir, this experience of injustice shaped his motivation to be active, rather than any outcome of the planned formal curriculum. The following exchange demonstrates this, but it also reaffirms his sense of efficacy, the role of anger in fuelling political activism and his commitment to social justice:

Stuart: Did it help or hinder you, this kinda education experience?

Keir: It helped in the sense that it gave me an anger tae go and change things. But I wouldn't say education played a massive part in why I became political, well apart fae that kinda one, it gave me the kinda...I dunno, like the fuel tae go on and dae things...

Stuart: So, is there something that's driving you, about issues about fairness?

Keir: Mmhmm, fairness and equality. Social justice as well [laughs].

Stuart: ...so would you say these are some a' the core kinda values that are driving you?

Keir: Mmhmm defo...But the school problems just gave me a bit a' fire tae go on and dae things.

Like Hugo, Keir's response to his challenging experiences of school fuelled his activism, in part by creating a sense of empathy and solidarity, as he demonstrates here. *'... It makes me want tae kinda, no in the sense that like I kinda want tae just say, 'well yous wrote me off'... But it's no about that. It's*

about kind of stopping it fae happening tae anybody else'. For Hugo and Keir, the intended outcomes of the formal school curriculum did not support or nurture their interest in politics or activism. Instead it was their difficult experiences in school that led to their development as activist.

Thus far, this chapter has focused on how school has featured significantly in the development of activists, both positively and negatively. The positive influence is echoed in some of the research literature on political activism that posits formal schooling as a key socialising agent for political participation. Yet many activists in my study, including Hugo and Keir discussed above, do not cite the formal planned curriculum as significant or formative. I will therefore turn to explore the views of those activists now.

7.2.4. Formal Schooling not Influential to Activism

Of those eight remaining activists who thought the formal school curriculum was not influential or significant to their development, what is striking from this data are two things. One is their general lack of awareness of experiencing any planned teaching or learning that was designed to promote political literacy, citizenship or activism. The other, echoing the concept of uncritical or reproductive praxis, is their feeling that part of their school experience functioned to reinforce the status quo in society.

The following comments are representative of the experience of this group. For instance, John feels his school experience did not enthuse or prepare him for

activism at all. It is important to note that John is an early career high school History teacher. He says this about his school experience:

...it was devoid of social connection which looking back I...didn't realise it at the time...But it didn't make me active. The education I received in history and modern studies, where I would see as being the main points for a teacher to really instil this active citizenship...it didn't happen. It did not happen. Maybe it was because o' the topics we did...it was very content driven and it was very much about getting through exams. Rote learning, not really having much of a view on it. If you could give the teacher the answer they wanted that was fine...

John's experience is in stark contrast to that of Jim noted earlier and there seems to be two key differences. One relates to the pedagogical approach they experienced. John refers to rote learning but Jim emphasised a more dialogical approach. However, the other significant difference between them relates to their families, values and beliefs in relation to politics and political activity. Jim grew up in a political household and developed an interest in politics at an early age. Yet John did not grow up in a political household and did not feel he was interested in politics at school.

In addition, John, like Jim, makes reference here to History and Modern Studies, where students would be more likely to learn about democracy and engage with social, economic and political ideas. Whilst Jim felt he did engage with these topics, John said he did not. Yet it is important to note that Education for Citizenship in Scotland is conceived as being cross curricular and so it should be '*... part and parcel of every area of study and of all teaching and learning*' (LTS 2002: 7). Those who framed this approach to citizenship education recognised some of the problems that might arise as a result, and so they state '*Asserting that education for citizenship should be seen as the*

responsibility of all runs the risk of it becoming, in reality, the responsibility of none...' (ibid: 8). To guard against this, a framework of key learning experiences and outcomes was established to guide schools and teachers in their planning and practice, and so ensure that citizenship learning experiences happen across 'every area of study'. Nevertheless, like John, some of these young activists did not perceive their school experience in this way, as these exchanges with Fred reveal. Asked about the relevance of school to his activism he replies:

... personally not at all...I don't think there was ever anything in school. I think school for me was just a get through it and do well sort of thing, I never really absorbed any life lessons or political lessons or models or anything like that from the lessons themselves.

As discussed in chapter 5, Fred saw the cause of his activism coming from his introduction to music and the exploration of the political topics expressed in song lyrics, not his schooling. Furthermore, the following exchange suggest the chance to build on Fred's lived experience and informal learning by exploring it in the formal curriculum of school was overlooked or missed. As Fred continues:

Fred: Yeah, so these guys got me into Akala, but it was me listening to him really intently that then got me into Malcolm X and things, studying his lyrics got me into Malcolm X, sent me on that chain or whatever.

Stuart: ...so you never had the opportunity to bring this kind of learning into school...or talk about it within the formal curriculum, there was nothing in the formal curriculum that connected to your interests?

Fred: Not as far as I'm aware. There might have been but not as far as I'm aware.

James is as clear and unequivocal as Fred and John about his school experience and the lack of citizenship learning. Additionally, whilst, he cites a

range of subject areas that are not easily associated with citizenship education, there does not seem to be any indication that the need for citizenship education to be 'across every area of study' was evident in the formal curriculum of his school. As he reflects here:

...when I think back to my classes in terms of like proper curricular stuff that I studied for exams and whatever, there was very, very little to get me even remotely interested...I mean I studied maths, physics, chemistry computing, subjects like this...I feel I learnt very little about politics, about history about really how I think the world works now through my time at school...

The following quotation from Hugo recounts a similar view about 'learning very little about politics.' But he also surfaces the idea of education being just for employability. When asked a question about his school experience reflecting the key aims and outcomes of Education for Citizenship, Hugo's response was '*...Nah...I never got any, like, not saying I never got any of it, it would've been very, very little of that. Education is just setting you up for that exam at the end of fourth year, and when, you join the workplace*'. Keir, responding to a similar question about recognising any of the key principles of education for citizenship in his schooling responded as follows:

...it definitely wasn't my school experience. Citizens a' today, not citizens in waiting. I mean they kinda just treated...us as if they wanted tae pass an exam in school, that was it. I never really seen it as a learning experience, it was just how tae pass an exam at the end a' the year...I didnae have a clue how tae take [laughs] responsible action in political, economic [life]...

Echoing this apparent lack of a focus on citizenship education, Anthony, whose own engagement with school was in general very positive, gives further evidence that his experience is not universal. Commenting on the school experience of some of his friends in the labour movement he says:

I suppose my school is the exception to the rule. Like, I know a lot of people who went to other schools don't have, don't even have a pupil council, for example, or I suppose I was lucky in the sense of I got a good teacher who, you know, was able to make that connection. I had a school that had those structures there, you know, for me to participate in.

Furthermore, even in his school, his engagement with an education designed to encourage participation in democratic life was restricted to specific classes. Referring to his Personal and Social Education classes for example he says, *'...they touch more...societal issues like...on the age of drinking and all that...they don't actually click people to participate in the political process, so I suppose...it's a failure in that sense...'*

Whilst these activists could not explicitly identify or were aware of any specific citizenship education in their school experience, we need to treat with caution the view presented by them. Just because they did not perceive any citizenship learning it does not mean it was absent. For example, when participants were able to review the information sheet that presented the five key principles of education for citizenship, nine out of the 17 activists could make some connection between these principles and the content of some of their schooling. The following quotations are representative of the views expressed. Rosa commented, *'I think some of it, yeah. I mean they did things like...bring in local politicians or local candidates to chat to us...and I think that was interesting. And we would, like, ask them questions.* For John, *'...fairness and justice jumps out at me because...That was definitely...pushed by the... all the teachers that everyone had a say and everyone's...voice was there to be heard. And everyone should be treated equally.'* Nevertheless, the other common theme

amongst this nine was that they did not think these ideas were presented to them in any coherent or clear way as relating to citizenship education. Robin's comment here is representative; *'...I think yeah, we were encouraged to sort of, we were encouraged to do things like this, it wasn't, I don't think we were told explicitly this...was about citizenship education.'*

A lack of clear and coherently presented citizenship education opportunities might explain why some of these young people didn't feel they experienced it at school. Nonetheless, Nan's experience suggests that some activists were not really prepared for, or receptive to, any learning experience that was focused on encouraging citizenship or activism. For example, referring to citizenship education in her school her view was, *'Yeah, I don't think it had a massive kinda push on it, because at that point I was...I wasn't really...as receptive to it, is probably the right phrasing, because...I was kinda focusing on trying to study and trying to do my exams and things like that.'* Nan cites her family background, particularly her father, as the key political socialising agent and reason for her becoming active. And it seems in her case this actually played a role in undermining the relevance and utility of any citizenship learning that may have been offered at school. As she reflects here, *...I think I got enough of that from my home life...if I got any more of that at school I probably would'nae have paid attention.*

Mick's reflections further highlight how the receptiveness of students is important to consider. When asked 'Did school develop your activism?' his response was:

No, really...I was class clown, I liked tae have a laugh and jump about and things...I did'nae take things very seriously, so it was unlikely for me tae go and get involved in groups that...dealt wi' serious matters.

Nonetheless, Mick also struggled to identify anything in his school experience that related to encouraging activism, as he points out:

...I don't think there's anything at school that I would say...directly led me...tae being active...Some teachers I think were just jaded and just dealt wi' course curriculum...nothing's jumping out at me saying it was because of them that I've developed.

So far, I have focused on the Scottish context for Citizenship Education, yet the reflections of Eleanor, although schooled in England, are relevant to this analysis. Citizenship education in England is a compulsory subject in the national curriculum. Unsurprisingly its aims and outcomes broadly echo those of the Scottish version (see Department of Education, 2013: 1). Nonetheless, although it is a compulsory programme of study, schools have been given flexibility over how it is taught and so the approach to teaching citizenship varies across England, with some schools teaching it as a discrete citizenship subject area and others integrating it into other subjects such as Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) or through assemblies. According to Burton and May (2015), more schools apply the cross curricular approach, and this was identified as a possible 'pitfall' by *Ofsted*, the Office for Standards in Education in England. For example, in their report on the progress of the implementation of Citizenship Education (*Ofsted* 2006: 28) they state '*...Only a few schools, paying great attention to detail, have created a full and coherent programme which pupils can recognise as an entity*'. This lack of pupil awareness of a coherent taught citizenship programme has already been noted above in the Scottish context, and it is clearly reflected in Eleanor's school experience.

When asked if the aims and outcomes of citizenship education broadly matched her experience of school she responded that she did not feel she was treated *'like a citizen of today'* and she continues, *'No, not at all...I assume this must've been what life skills was supposed to be, but very much nothing got done...Not unless I've somehow managed to completely blank it out of my mind...'*. The exchange continues:

Stuart: ...what was your experience of school then?

Eleanor: ...well it was a very rough area, so it was very much a lot of sitting and waiting for people to calm themselves down [laughs]... So that we could actually do some work. And it was all academic focused, it was all just learn this and then do your exam...I think because it was such a rough area the teachers were, like, unnecessarily aggressive with everyone...Which is understandable when you've got screaming kids every day.

Eleanor's family background and school experience presents an interesting contrast with that of Willie's noted above. Both see their family background as a significant socialising agent and from what they say, their schools were both in 'rough areas'. But, whereas Willie found his school experience supportive for his activism, Eleanor's schooling clearly was not. Furthermore, Eleanor's description of her school and her experience in it, clearly parallels the working class schools described by Anyon (1981) in her important paper *'Social Class and School Knowledge'*. Anyon argued that these schools are characterised by the low expectations teachers have of their pupils and the dominant theme of resistance in the *'student teacher interactions'*, with pupils demonstrating both *'...active and passive resistance to teachers' attempts to impose the curriculum'* (Anyon 1981: 11). Furthermore, Anyon argues that in these schools, knowledge was impoverished in comparison to middle class or elite schools, for example pupils in working class schools *'... were not offered what for them would be*

cultural capital-knowledge and skill at manipulating ideas and symbols in their own interests' (ibid: 32). For Anyon, these schools perform a reproductive function, that is, providing an education that suits working class children who are destined to fit uncritically into the world around them as low skilled and paid compliant workers. As Anyon argues, working class schools '*...provide little or no conceptual or critical under-standing of the world or of their situation in the world'* (Anyon 1981: 32) and so the similarity between the schools Anyon analyses and Eleanor's school experience is strengthened, as the following extract demonstrates:

Stuart: ... you did'nae feel like you were given any chance to think about fairness, you know, or you kinda developed an understanding of fairness and justice, nothing like that?

Eleanor: No. I remember learning in geography when we were very young about sort of poverty around the world and stuff, but even that was taught as a sort of global problem that was far away rather than 'and also this happens in our very country'. It was all very oh, look at all these horrible things in Africa and Brazil...And that's the only example I can think of, of anything to do with any sort of social issues...I think it's interesting as well that we were never sort of made aware of the fact that the reason it was so rough and poor around where we lived was because the mines closed [laughs]. It was sort of made to look as if oh, when the mines were open everything was exactly the same, just we had miners. Whereas when you're old enough to sort of make the connection you're like well, of course it turned into a rough sort of council area, no-one had a job anymore.

Stuart: So, none of that, there was no connection made within the school.

Eleanor: None whatsoever.

This idea of the school experience being uncritical and so reinforcing the current dominant status quo is also evidenced in the comments of other activists. This is clearly demonstrated by James in the following quotation. When asked if his school experience promoted the capacities of citizenship he responded:

I think the school, the discipline of school, the hierarchy within school, this is all through primary school, all through high school, does the opposite, I think it reinforces just like being subdued, reinforces that

discipline. And this isn't anything conscious by the teachers, in any sense it's just when you're brought up and you're not taught to think critically. The only class I was taught to think critically was English and that was about the Great Gatsby, like there was no critical thought of the way anything in society works.

Mick questions the aims and outcomes of citizenship education, in particular problematising use of the term 'responsible citizen'. His view also relates to the concept of praxis, both reproductive and critical. In relation to 'responsible citizen' he says, '*...what does that mean, do we just want people to be responsible in how they vote and how they engage wi' the political process as it is...*'. He goes on to compare this with what I interpret as an example of critical praxis, commenting '*...or do we want to encourage that saying, how do we change the political system to better represent us?* He questions if his schooling actually encouraged the development of a critical view commenting, '*Cause I don't think that's done very well at all, I think...you'd be forgiven for thinking, this is the system, this is how it is, this is how it's gonna be forever*'. George is also unfavourable in his assessment of his formal educational experience and how being a citizen was framed at his school, as he expresses with some criticality here:

I would say I felt like I citizen because a citizen today is someone who gets talked down to and disregarded. That's what a citizen is, and I think that was reflected in the school. It was, you weren't involved, you weren't a part of it, you were consulted but you weren't actually properly engaged, nor did you care. That's what citizenship was in school, and I think that that was natural that that would happen the way it did because it's a reflection of what citizenship is today in society.

For these eight young people, their formal school experience did not seem to nurture their development as citizens or activists. Despite the priority given to education for citizenship in the curriculum, and the need for it to permeate every

area of study, they were unable to identify any clear learning and teaching opportunities to support these policy priorities and the descriptions of most of their experiences have characteristics that are consistent with a personally responsible minimal citizenship and the development of a reproductive praxis.

The discussion thus far has focused on the activists' experiences of the formal school curricula and to what extent the planned teaching and learning effected their development as activists. For some their feeling was that it was of little or no significance to them, for others it was. Like the experiences of the young activists here, the research literature on political activism also has different views on the exact role of school in promoting political literacy and activism. Nevertheless, for many, schooling is seen as an important socialising agent as it is at the '*...centre of the most formative developmental years*' (Amna, 2012: 618/9). Therefore, full consideration needs to be given to the wider role of schooling, including beyond what is taught in the planned curriculum. My analysis shows that some of the activists who benefited from their engagement with extra-curricular activities also thought the formal curriculum supported their activism. Yet some of those who felt the formal school curriculum was not supportive did think they gained from extra-curricular activities. I will now turn to examine the role these extra-curricular opportunities played in the development of the activists.

7.3. The Role Extra-Curricular School Opportunities

Like many writers, Hooghe (2004) argues that school has an important role in the political socialisation of young people and their preparation for activity in

civic life. In particular, he argues school matters, not just because of any citizenship education included in the formal curriculum, but also in the way school provides informal opportunities to enable pupils to take part in other forms of learning, participation and association. The importance of informal extracurricular opportunities, such as volunteering in the local community or adult supported informal activities like clubs, is also stressed by Cicognani *et al.* (2012). They point to the relationship between involvement in these activities and the propensity for political participation in adult life. In addition, of particular relevance to this thesis is research conducted by Neundorf *et al.* (2016). They identify the important role that formal and informal opportunities provided by the school, especially those focusing on civic education, can have on young people who do not come from political households. For Neundorf *et al.* (2016: 291), these activities can compensate '*... for inequalities in family socialization with respect to political engagement.*'

The influence that informal extracurricular opportunities had on these activists is mixed. Nine did not cite them at all, or if they did it was in a negative and dismissive way. Nonetheless, for eight of the activists these opportunities did feature as important in their political development. In particular debating societies, volunteering in the community, and participation in pupil or youth councils were seen as important. Pupil councils will be explored in more detail in chapter 8 section 8.5. There is also good evidence of the compensatory nature of these activities from one activist, James, who did not grow up in a political household and who thought the formal school curriculum was not

supportive. I will begin an exploration of the role of extracurricular activities by discussing this compensatory effect.

James does not come from a political household and does not ascribe his political socialisation to his family or upbringing. For most of his time at school he wasn't concerned about politics, as he says, his interests were '*... just things that weren't political: video games, like high school boy stuff*'. For James the decisive agent in his developing an interest in politics was his school, but not as a result of the taught formal curriculum. As he states:

...the way I got into politics was that in my...final two years of high school I started to go along to, like it was just a lunchtime debating club, run by two teachers. It was completely extracurricular.

James's experience illustrates the way that existing peer relationships can interact positively with informal opportunities at school. The debating club was set up by two teachers and met during the lunch break, so student attendance was voluntary. James became involved when he accompanied some of his friends to one meeting after being told that it was '*quite fun*'. As well as the fun element and being with his friends, the growing attraction for James was that the club, although set up and facilitated by the teachers, developed to the point where the students' interests led the activities, as he illustrates here; '*...we would just suggest something in the end, so it was mostly driven by us and they would just chair or moderate the debate*'. It is clear that for James, getting involved in the debating club supported his development as an activist, as he states; '*Yeah I think the extracurricular within school certainly helped a lot...*'. James' involvement in this debating club is also evidence of how these opportunities can compensate for a lack of political socialisation in the family.

Furthermore, the debating club not only got him interested in politics, but it also had a wider influence, as his involvement also changed his academic interests as a result. For instance, he had been studying Maths and Science subjects until he got involved in the debating club, as he comments, '*... I mean in high school to be fair I didn't pick Modern Studies till my last year and that was only after I started debating.*' It also shaped his choice of degree programme at university as he went on to study politics and economics as a result of his growing politicisation.

Four other activists spoke about being involved with a debating club at their school, yet unlike James, these other activists were already politicised through their families and had all described the formal school curriculum as supporting their activism. Furthermore, three of these activists all saw their involvement as worthwhile whereas the remaining activist had a more negative experience. Being involved in a debating club helped build the capacity of Rosa, Eric and Robin as it developed confidence and a range of skills and knowledge which they feel they are able to draw on in their political activism. For example, the following two quotations from Rosa and Eric illustrate this learning and development and are typical of the views expressed:

Rosa: ...if you were particularly passionate about something you could volunteer and then you'd go and research it and then you'd come back and talk about it. And having to look at an issue from a perspective and try and find those sources about it I think were interesting...and then sitting and listening to the debate and trying to convey that view, which you didn't necessarily agree with but you could try and understand. That was good, it was like a sort of dialectic I guess, you were hearing all the sort of possibilities and then trying to work out for yourself which you personally believed and which was the better argument.

Eric: ...I think it helped me to articulate in front of people on a formal basis, helped to develop arguing, well not arguing skills, but like debating skills things like that. And I think it helped me immensely in terms of trying to get my point across in a way which other people to this day I think still struggle to do in terms of presentations things like that.

Whilst the debating club can be seen as positive and influential for some, Jim's experience of the debating club at his school and extracurricular activities more generally, was less supportive and his views are more critical than the others. In relation to the debating club, he disapproved of the structure and format of how it was organised. In addition, he was already becoming interested and active in politics and so the format and the awareness raising potential was blunted. Yet it also appears his view was shaped by issues of social class and culture. As he explains, his school was '*...socially marginalised and excluded compared to a lot of other schools. And that probably affected things as well*'. He felt he might have been more interested if he had attended a school in a more affluent area or a private school. Therefore, the view of debating clubs for him and his political peers was:

We just kinda thought they were crap to be honest wi' you. And they were. It wasn't really the culture of the school to get involved in them so maybe that...maybe that actually...in a way pushed us into doing other stuff. Things that I probably think are more meaningful...

The apparent weakness of the debating club at his school appears to have created the motivation to search for something else to channel his already growing political interest and critical awareness. These more 'meaningful things' for example, included trying to organising pupil led campaigns against the school uniform policy and the privatisation of school buildings under the

Private Finance initiative (PFI). Seeing the pupil council structure as tokenistic,

Jim and a friend initiated and led some grassroots activism. As he says:

Well me and my friend organised meetings and then it...gained popularity particularly in our year but also elsewhere. And there were folk that were supporting the idea of building an organisation...The idea was we'd start wi' this [uniform] but we were then gonnae advance it to discussing privatisation which was a particular problem. My school was PFI built and it was one a' the schools recently affected. We were aware a' that and we knew it was a total shambles and we knew that kind of we were getting ripped off.

Jim's voluntary grassroots activism would appear consistent with some of the aims of Education for Citizenship and they are redolent of Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) justice orientated citizen, that is citizenship activity which is critical of the way things are and works towards transformative change. Yet Jim's school did not encourage his activities, as he comments:

Well they were antagonistic. I mean they didn't like the idea of a student organisation that was self-assertive and was gonna conflict with them on various points...we were handing out leaflets organising for meetings and for this day and not wearing uniform. And I got hauled into the headteacher's office and it was like, "why you doing this?"

Whilst Jim's voluntary activities were not fully supported by his school, the experience did help him develop as an activist. Other activists also got support from taking part in voluntary activities, but unlike Jim's, these activities were supported and sponsored by their schools and so they resemble the personally responsible or participatory citizen, rather than the more justice orientated citizen represented by Jim's voluntary activities. Robin, Anthony and Willie all speak positively of taking part in some form of voluntary activity, either in their school or in the local community, and how this was a positive influence on their development as activists. The following discussion is representative of their

views. For instance, facilitated by his school, Robin took up a volunteering opportunity, in a local additional needs school which involved offering a range of social and academic support to the pupils there. He is certain that as a result of this opportunity, he gained knowledge and skills which supported his development, as he states:

...it's made me a bit interested as well in, like, disability politics and disability representation, and things like that...it's made me more aware of that and why, and why it's important.

Willie also identifies a supportive volunteer opportunity. When he was in his last years at High School he took part in a buddying system and teaching assistant project designed to support 1st year students. He is also clear what skills and attributes he gained from it in relation to supporting his activism:

I mean it didn't particularly give you any further political knowledge, but it gave you tools and skills again how to communicate with people...like it was all about a little bit more kind of compassionate and how to treat people I guess was important.

Although Willie felt that the help these projects gave to 1st year students was worthwhile, he is also realistic and critically conscious about some of the reasons why the school promoted these activities and what students could get out of it by taking part, as he says '*...it's all about how you sell yourself to university or an employer so you've got more things on your CV.*' This instrumental and extrinsic purpose of school-based volunteering is also noted by James. Although volunteering is not cited as important to him in his development as an activist, he did take part in a school sponsored Catholic Church volunteering award, but here he points out somewhat cynically:

I did it for my CV...it was 20 hours volunteering within school and 20 hours volunteering within the parish so me and friends figured

out if we went to 5 four hour car boots sales that would be us, that's all we did.

The mixed views and experiences of these activists also reflect the discussions in the literature which presents the role of school sponsored volunteering and citizenship learning as being contested. For example, Barber (1992) compares two approaches to volunteering in schools. One approach promotes volunteering in an effort to promote and strengthen individualist traits in the volunteers such as altruism, philanthropy and self-reliance. Yet Barber also suggests that another approach can bring together this self-interest and the public good for a greater benefit to all and enhance citizenship learning. Vital in this approach is that there is no coercion involved in participating and volunteering is framed as '*...a dimension of citizenship education and civic responsibility in which individuals learn the meaning of social interdependence and become empowered through acquiring the democratic arts...*' (Barber, 1992: 249).

Nevertheless, From the experience of these young activists, the role of volunteering, its relationship with citizenship learning and what they gained from it is mixed. For some their volunteering did not contribute to any development of their activism, it was mostly about individual extrinsic gain such as improving their CV. Yet for others the driving force for getting involved reflects the commitment to social justice noted in the previous chapter, as their involvement was a genuine desire to help and make a difference. For example as Anthony notes, his volunteering offered '*...outlets for my beliefs*'. The views expressed also point to the intrinsic benefits they got as a result, such as skills,

knowledge and a growing awareness of the issues involved and these did feed into their development as activists.

Thus far the discussion has been about the activists' formal and informal educational experiences within the formal school setting. However, some activists noted the positive experience they had of education they engaged with outside the formal school environment. I will briefly discuss these experiences.

7.4. The Role of Non-formal and Informal Learning

Whilst all the activists made reference to the role of their school experience in their formation, only six of the activists identified and discussed their experience of non-formal or informal learning. Although this is a small proportion of all participants, their views do offer some useful insights that help to explain how these educational experiences supported their development as activists. For my analysis of the data, the role of non-formal political education provided by trade unions, political parties or social movements was important as was the more informal learning that takes place in peer relationships. In addition a significant theme in these discussions was the distinction participants often made between the pedagogical approaches used in school and in the non-formal settings.

Turning first to trade union education, Nan explains, '*...as soon as I became active I went into training...to become a shop steward.*' Nan grew up in a political family and was socialised as a result. Although her school education was not supportive, her experience of her trade union education was. This is

evident in the following quotation and she also draws out what she sees as the pedagogical difference between school and trade union education. She comments:

...it feels like it's more on a peer level even if it's not...so I've ran courses for other people, and that's the kind of feedback that we've had is they feel it's better if you feel like you're on a level playing field with that person. Now, that's never gonna happen when you're at school, you're never gonna feel that.

Furthermore, from Nan's comments there is some evidence that her experience of informal trade union education went beyond just promoting her activism, to changing the way she feels about education, particularly that encountered at school. This is demonstrated by the following comment:

[the course was]...done on a kind of informal basis by one of the other guys who was on the committee...He was a, like, tutor, which I found really good. But I think generally it's not turned me off the education, I'm not unreceptive to it now...I think I have got a bit more of a positive attitude towards it now. I just wish I had that back then.

Reflecting on the learning gained from trade union education Willie, also highlights the peer learning and informal pedagogical approach, as he says; *'...I was learning from other young workers who were in a position of authority within their own union structures...'*. And for him the benefit was clear, as he comments; *'...learning about trade union history...and how to be an activist... So I would say that has had a quite a big impact on my very recent political education'*. James, a member of SLP and SLYC makes explicit reference to how he benefited from a weekend training school organised by Unite the Union. Although he was already politicised, the benefit he gained was clear to him and again the pedagogical process and content are emphasised as being important. He comments: *'...it was friendly it was on an equal footing...it was really one of*

the best events I've probably been to in terms of lefty stuff... being around a group of people who were similar interest to you and also enthusiastic to learn helped...'

Mick is a member of the YCL, the CPB and an active trade unionist. He cites his further education teacher and engagement with music as the key socialising influences on him. Yet, his move to get active was in part instigated by the political education and peer learning on offer by CPB members and the Party. He had already joined and was active in a trade union and was becoming more interested in Marxism and the CPB. He began to attend the Party's street stall and would discuss the party programme and contemporary political issues with those staffing the stall. He joined the Party after a few weeks of these discussions. The importance to his development of the complimentary and cumulative effect of the interactions between the informal learning and the more structured non-formal learning he took part in are show in the following comment:

...through structured education classes, though, more so than the structured education classes was the just talking to older, more experienced comrades in the Party, because they'd been able to give me a broader perspective and an understanding of where the trade union movement's at, where sorta politics is in this country... The level o' education I got within the Party was second to none in comparison to formal education, without a shadow o' a doubt.

James, like Mick, illustrates the significance of peer learning to his development, as he says; *'...just speaking to friends and people within the movement I learned a lot.'* Recognising the importance of political education he also noted that he is involved in trying to organise and facilitate peer political education in SLYC as he points out here:

I'm now trying to organise various different political education events, we did...a political day, me and [another member] we've run a book club...We've done a few sessions of them every fortnight...it's me that and other people are trying to facilitate this education but I also fully recognise that I've got a lot to learn from it and it's something that I'm quite passionate about now.

Eleanor, thought that her political education only began once she had attended FE college where she gained a general grounding in government and politics. She felt this gave her '...the structure to then start having opinions about things because I had a better understanding of how everything works.' Whilst this was her formative political learning, in the following quotation she highlights how her political education has been developed through the influence of the non-formal and informal education provided by her trade union and from a political organisation called Newcastle Counterfire⁷:

...I think loads of courses that the trade union's put us through, even just will hold a seminar for young members every year, and that in itself, the first one that I went to taught us loads about just sort of society and stuff, and sociology as well... And then that Newcastle Counterfire that I'm talking about as well, they run sort of, like, an explanation of socialism, or an examination of communism in Russia...and stuff like that. And they've been helpful.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how and to what extent the educational experiences of these young activists supported their political development. Out with the school, the role of informal or non-formal education, was seen as wholly positive and considered important but not decisive for some in their move to activism. Their experiences of formal school education was much more complex. Some of the activists cited their school experience as important, and in once case

⁷ The Facebook page of Newcastle counterfire describes the organisation as follows 'Counterfire is an organisation of revolutionary socialists, founded in March 2010', see here for further information. <https://www.counterfire.org/component/tags/tag/235-newcastle>

decisive, in helping them learn about democracy and become active. For these young people it was both elements of the formal curriculum and a range of extra-curricular activities that were important. For others, the planned curriculum of school played little or no part in their activism, but extra-curricular activities were supportive to some and crucial to one activist. Their awareness of citizenship education and its influence on them within the formal curriculum was explored and revealed to be mixed. Young activists who found their schooling important to their development could identify forms of citizenship learning as contributing to their socialisation and activism. However, these were limited to a small number of subject areas, principally Modern Studies, and not as the policy context suggests, across the breadth of the curriculum. Furthermore, the majority of activists did not cite awareness of any clear or sustained encounter with citizenship education, although some of them did acknowledge the benefits derived from taking part in the extra-curricular activities on offer. Nonetheless, evidence of the reproductive role of schools and the emphasis on employability was also identified, certainly amongst those whose activism was not influenced by the school. But also to some extent from those who felt school did help their activism, evidenced by the limited range of subject areas that provided their experience of citizenship education. Taken together this is an indication that the minimal and personally responsible conception of citizenship appeared to be prominent in the schools these activists attended.

The interaction between different socialising agents was explored further and in particular an important finding showed that there was an approximate

correlation between family background and how the activists viewed their experience at school. Those who thought school was important, also came from political households and so were more likely to be receptive to and maximise any citizenship learning on offer. Conversely, those coming from non-political households did not find the formal school curriculum supportive to their activism. Although only demonstrated by the experience of one activist, the compensatory role that school can have was evidenced. This activist did not come from a political household but he was socialised through engagement with a lunchtime debating club. Lastly, in the context of their informal educational experiences, some of the pedagogical approaches that either supported or hindered their activism was highlighted and discussed. For example, peer learning, open discussion, critical content and more democratic relationships between participants was seen as helpful as opposed to the more traditional hierarchical relationships and uncritical content that they encountered in school. It is to a deeper examination of these pedagogical approaches, relationships and content which could inform the curriculum of a critical education for social justice that I turn to next.

8. What Can be Done? Really Useful Knowledge for a Critical Citizenship Curriculum

8.1. Introduction

The last chapter explored the extent to which general educational experiences, particularly in formal schooling, were factors that influenced the development of these young political activists. In this chapter I will deepen this exploration into the role of education by drawing out and discussing the particular pedagogical relationships, processes and content that the young people thought were important in their emergence as political activists. In doing so this chapter will also offer insights into what some of the key elements and characteristics of a critical citizenship education curriculum for social justice should be. Four of these elements will be discussed in turn here. Firstly, an important source of support and inspiration for some of these young activists was the role of the teacher. In my analysis of the data, there is obvious evidence supporting the argument that schools can be places for reproducing the dominant capitalist status quo, but my data also offers some evidence for the argument that this reproduction process is not totalising. Some young people highlight the role of influential teachers in their development as critically consciousness political activists, indicating that some radicals can operate in and escape from the reproductive process of the school (Erben & Gleeson, 1975). Although it should be noted that the balance of evidence in the data is with the reproductive role. Secondly, a significant number of the young people were able to identify the approaches to teaching and learning that they felt either nurtured or hindered their development. These approaches echo Freire's (1985, 1990) well known pedagogical dyad of 'banking' and problem posing. In

particular the young people identified a democratic relationship with teachers, opportunities for open classroom discussion and chances to explore political ideas as supportive in their development. Whereas more traditional or authoritarian approaches to teaching, which were seen as having a narrow human capital purpose, were viewed as problematic and so did not nurture or encourage their activism. Third, and linked to these pedagogical insights, some young activists also highlighted the epistemological and pedagogical importance of connecting any citizenship education to the lived experience of students, particularly the social, economic and political injustices or inequalities they experience or witness. Lastly, there is some evidence from the data that demonstrates the contribution that participating in real life political activism such as school or youth councils can have on critical consciousness raising and political development.

8.2. Influential Teachers and the Development of Critically Conscious Activists

It is a well know leitmotif in Marxist social theory that a key function of schooling in capitalist societies is to reproduce the dominant capitalist relations of production. However, the extent to which this fully describes the nature of the relationships in schools is contested (see for example Sarup, 1982, Apple 1995, Rikowski 1996 & 1997, Boxley, 2014 or Small, 2017). An overemphasis on the suggested totalising nature of the 'ideological state apparatus' (Althusser, 2001) crushing any resistance to this reproduction process in schools is seen as too deterministic and limits the possibility of any counter hegemonic work. As Finn *et al.* (1977, quoted in Apple 1995: 150) argues, a deterministic analysis leaves little room for '*...that capacity for resistance which may be exercised by*

children and teachers in schools'. Althusser (1971) himself hinted at the possibility of resistance, arguing that whilst the majority of teachers may in the most part uncritically facilitate the reproduction of capitalist social relations, some do resist the crushing effects of the state apparatus and teach against it, and for him *'They are a kind of hero'* (1971: 106). However, he points out that this is rare and done under difficult circumstances. Developing this dialectical understanding of the role of schooling, Sarup (1982: 73) for example argues that whilst schools in capitalist societies can be seen as sites of capitalist reproduction, they can also, at the same time, be 'sites of struggle', where this reproduction of social relations can be challenged and undermined, and alternatives produced and transmitted (see also Apple, 1996). Developing this idea, Small (2017: 182), drawing on Marx, makes the point that teachers are not just *'...the passive medium of social control...'* but they can also carry with them into their interactions with young people in schools their own oppositional, critical perspectives and political positions. Therefore, the role of the teacher is more complex and not just deterministic. As well as having a reproductive role, teachers and their pupils, to paraphrase Rickowski (1997), can also be seen as capital's weakest link. That is, any analysis of the role of schooling and the people in these institutions needs to also consider the potential power teachers and young people have to *'rupture this (re)production'* process (Harvie, 2007: 5).

In the context of citizenship education in schools, the important role of the teacher is signalled by Lund and Carr (2008: 8) when they say that *'The fundamental core of democratic education at the classroom level is the*

teacher...'. I would agree with this claim, and my data offers some support to it. Yet I think the role of the teacher needs to be qualified as the extent to which their role is potentially emancipatory or reproductive depends on the teacher and their own ontological and epistemological position. My analysis of the data offers evidence for the critical role some teachers can have in developing alternative, emancipatory and critical pedagogical relationships. But at the same time just under half of the participants make no explicit remark about teachers, or if they do it is in relation to their reproductive role. Nonetheless, whilst encountering teachers with an emancipatory approach was the experience of just over half of the activists studied here, it tended to be a small number of specific teachers, usually those teaching Modern Studies or History, and so it was not reflective of their whole school experience and for two participants it was teachers in further education. Nevertheless, although limited, I think this evidence shows that there are opportunities where politically engaged teachers can challenge or disrupt the capitalist status quo and help develop critically conscious people. As Boxley (2014: 45) comments intervention can be possible to '*...offset the full force of ideological reproduction*'. In most cases, the teachers' practice can be seen to have helped develop or augment an already nascent left political identity in these activists. For instance, twelve of the young activists talked about a teacher or teachers who influenced their critical awareness in some way. In some cases, this influence was direct and significant and in which the motivation of teachers involved can be interpreted in an overtly critical or counter hegemonic context and which is informed by a maximal conception of citizenship. For some young activists the teacher was not as prominent or influential in their political

development, but nevertheless was deemed noteworthy by these activists and these examples shine a further light on the complex role of the teacher in formal school settings. I will turn firstly to discuss the experience of activists who cite influential teachers as a key contributor to their development and then move on to those activists who saw their experience of teachers as important but not significant as other socialising factors.

The clearest example of an influential teacher is the experience of Anthony. He came from a 'Labour family' and sees this as a primary socialising agent. Yet he also highlights how these political values intersect with what he sees as prominent values in his religious identity. Illustrating this he says of his early schooling; *'I went to a Catholic school and whilst...we weren't...actively practising Catholics...like school...you were always taught...to look after the disadvantaged and...to care for your neighbour, and I suppose that always sort of...impacted upon my view of the world as well'*. This background of the family's complementary political and religious values meant that he was developing a left political identity as he was growing up. His move to high school further developed this socialisation. As he says, he was *'...ingrained with the idea of, you know, helping the disadvantaged and the poorest. And obviously then moving onto a Catholic...state comprehensive high school, again those values continued to be reinforced there'*. This primary socialisation meant it was more likely that he would be interested in and receptive to school subjects which would feature political and social justice issues prominently. It was in this context that the role of the teacher is important here. The following quotations demonstrate the impact a particular teacher had on his development. The first

comment highlights the scale of the influence the teacher had and hints at the pedagogical processes which encouraged his interest:

...my History teacher...was quite a huge influence on...my political activism and engagement in the sense that he did shift my views, he...challenged and opened me to think to a greater degree, and I would credit him to quite a large extent with, like, how my views have developed to this day...so it was predominantly from, you know, engagement with a teacher who was taking an active interest in someone who was quite political at a young age. And...it was just through discussion and engagement

In this quotation the significance of the teachers' own political identify is noted:

... my History teacher...to say the least was very much on the left and there was only maybe a couple of us who...were interested in politics at such a young age, so he...sort of talked to us about...like Tony Benn and, you know, Nye Bevan, and I remember he actually gave me a book to read on Ralph Miliband's parliamentary socialism...and that was the sort of thing, like, that started to shift my views.

In this long quotation Anthony comments on the teacher foregrounding ideas about citizenship and activism in the content of his classes:

...in Modern Studies...when we first went to...high school I can remember his first class was very clearly a focus on citizenship, like people have died for the right to vote, you should use it. So, he was instilling a lot of... what you could call...values of citizenship in his students right from the start. And it was the same with history...the way the course was framed was always looking at what I would call, like, people's...movements. So he focused a lot on...the suffragettes, the chartists, you know, the trade union movement and these sorts of things, so it was always...he was coming from an angle that...changing society or...participation in society shouldn't just be reserved for those at the top, all of you have a responsibility, an obligation, you know, to go out there and try to, you know, participate and change things in that way.

Anthony's experience here seems to reflect a teacher who was willing and able to create a space where critical ideas could be introduced and where students were encouraged to engage with them. It is clear that Anthony sees his

experience of this particular teacher as scaffolding his developing activism and bolstering his political identity. Furthermore, reinforcing the role of extra-curricular activities, this development did not just take place within the formal classroom. This teacher was also instrumental in facilitating other learning opportunities outside school that were also crucial to Anthony's development and his commitment to social justice:

...the social justice thing did come out at school in a sense that I became quite heavily involved when I first went to high school with groups like Fair Trade and the St Vincent de Paul Society⁸, and that was sort of, you know, like outlets for my beliefs, and the school environment as well...so we did something through the school...and again that was with...that history teacher who's...very...political and orientated towards social justice. So, it was a good match in that sense, this was someone who was fostering... my views in that sense.

Anthony's formal and informal experience of school illustrates the evidence from some of the literature about the role of schools. As Hooghe (2004: 338) points out in relation to developing young people's political socialisation and civic involvement, schools do matter, '*...not just with regard to the formal inclusion of civic education in their curricula, but also in the ways that they encourage their pupils to get informed and to engage themselves in various forms of participation.*'

Like Anthony, Willie and Jim had already developed an interest in politics by the time they entered High School. For Willie, the family was the key socialising agent and for Jim, although he grew up in a political household, he cites peer relationships. Although they do not explicitly cite their teachers as the crucial

⁸ A faith-based charity whose missions statement states; '*...we seek to identify and combat all forms of poverty, by promoting social justice and actively working with those in need...*' St Vincent De Paul (2016) <https://www.ssvpscotland.com/mission-vision/>

agent in their political socialisation, their experiences with some of their teachers did seem to significantly enhance their political development and support their progress as activists. Like Anthony, the following two examples also make explicit reference to the political orientation of the teachers involved.

Firstly, referring to his Modern Studies teacher Willie says:

I guess [she] would be classed as a socialist, definitely left wing but she...cultivated an environment in the classroom where it was like...it was like quite in depth kind of political discussions...so it was a good environment to kind of learn from and then that's where you start getting introduced to like...I guess...maybe not in my case but for everyone else in the class it was probably the first time they learned about trade unions, or the Labour Party, Thatcher...just the political climate they are in...that was really important...for myself I had this background in politics anyway and it just kind of made me develop it even further.

Here Willie emphasises how teachers can nurture the development of students who are already interested in political affairs:

I'd say for people who already had a political background it definitely developed a consciousness and cultivated it and...gave them...the tools to take that forward, learning about trade unions...do I need to be a trade union member? Learning about...other activities, tenants' associations, local community groups, charity work a lot of us got involved in that kind of thing.

Jim also draws out the political orientation of his teachers and their attempts to encourage a critical engagement with the way things are and explore alternatives, as these two quotations demonstrate:

I think I had some good teachers. A Modern Studies teacher and a Philosophy teacher in particular at Higher level that were interested. They were...left wing socialists, they were interested in facilitating critical discussion and thought about the world, I suppose.

...I mean within the class he would often play right wings devil's advocate. It was just me and my mate...We were on the left and he was quite good at that as well...he was also willing to have a

critical discussion and he was willing to talk about like alternatives to capitalism or...the flaws of a capitalist society in general rather than in terms of particular policies or governments which actually at a time when those sorts a' terms and discussions were a lot less present than they are at the moment...that was quite important

Mick's move towards activism was also the result of an influential teacher, but in this case, it was in further education rather than in school. But as his comments show, the same themes of overt political orientation and the creation of opportunities to explore alternative ideas are present:

I think certainly it was the...education after I left school. I went tae college, and it was one person in college that actually really...put me doon the path that I'm on the noo in terms of my politics. He was a...history lecturer in college....And I would'nae say he was biased in his teaching but he just opened up, I think, his students to another perspective and that happened tae be on the left....very much straight down the line, but you could always pick up a sorta social justice element fae him.

Teachers overtly expressing their political orientation and partisan beliefs is of course controversial (see Britton, 2012 : 68/69). Discussing this controversy Hare (2007: 2) says this is particularly the case in relation to social justice and explains that critics see this as teachers '*...prescribing a set of ideological commitments on the left of the political spectrum*'. This therefore raises concerns for some over the potential or actual political indoctrination of students and the need for education to be unbiased (see also Sears & Hughes, 2006). This concern of indoctrination was also explicitly expressed in one of the interviews. John is now a teacher himself and his comments offer some insight into the issue of indoctrination from a teacher's perspective. Interestingly, for my analysis of John's comments, it was his relationships with peers that was the key to his political socialisation, not his experience of school or any teacher, despite having encountered politically orientated teachers. For example, he

says he had a ‘.....teacher who was very much a left socialist. And he made that very clear...He used to play like union songs...and stuff. And he used to ask us like, ‘would anyone consider voting for the Conservatives?’ Any concerns for this politically orientated teacher indoctrinating John seem to be unwarranted however, as he does not cite school as the motivation for his activism or political identity. In the interview John links his current experience as a teacher in a high school to his activism as a member of the Communist Party. I think his comments here shine some light on the challenges and possible limits an openly left leaning teacher might face in practice, but as in this instance, it is sometimes self-imposed:

I think as long as teachers feel worried about indoctrination that will always be a standpoint...I don't help out wi' the stall as much as I would like to but I'm worried that kids see me at a Community Party stall⁹. And I don't think it's right that I feel like that because I think I should have a right to be part of whichever political party I want to be but because...People would start making assumptions about me and I don't think I would be in my position...not having permanent work, it probably wouldn't be a good thing. And I don't know if a head teacher would be keen on, I don't think they would want...a teacher who was active, an active citizen because they...want someone that's just gonnae do the job. And that's sad that I'm saying that...

For those who advocate the theory and practice of critical education, this criticism of political indoctrination and ideological bias by teachers is viewed as naive and rejected on the grounds that no education can ever be unbiased or apolitical. As Freire (1985: 180) clearly states, ‘...there are no neutral educators’. Moreover, those who proclaim the need for neutrality are themselves being political and are either unaware or deliberately hiding the role that their own values and political orientation plays in their claims of neutrality

⁹ This is a Communist Party of Britain street stall that takes place every Saturday.

and their practice. Benade (2015: 45) reinforces this point when he insists that *'...teaching is political, and that curriculum and curriculum policy is loaded and is not value-neutral'*. Nevertheless, the notion of an ideological intervention in the processes of school is not new, as the concept of the reproduction of capitalist social relations demonstrates. Nor is it related solely to politically orientated left-wing teachers. As Marx and Engels (2004: 28) themselves pointed out a long time ago *'...Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education: they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class'*.

So far, I have discussed those activists who cite some of their politically oriented teachers as a crucial or important socialising agent. But there are a number of other young activists who also highlighted the role of an influential teacher in their development. From my interpretation of the interview data, Rosa, Louise and Mary do not make any reference to the political orientation of their teachers. Yet their experience does offer further insights on the role of teachers and their efforts to supplement or move beyond the dominant discourse framing the mainstream curriculum to find spaces to promote more political or critical educational opportunities. For instance, Rosa seems to have done well at school, gaining the qualifications required to move on to university. She was also able to identify some elements of citizenship education which she felt was helpful to her such as the following comments:

'...I think some of it they tried. I mean things like social education... it had some good stuff in it. It taught us stuff about...our rights and responsibilities in relationships, which I think was good... And there were certain things, like we talked about crime and punishment and interpreting news stories...that was good stuff...that was quite helpful.'

But she also comments; ‘... *they could’ve done with more about, like, things like our citizenship and our legal rights. I think things like rights at work would’ve been good...*’ Yet she did not cite her experience of the curriculum as a crucial factor in her developing activism. Nevertheless, she was able to identify some teachers who seemed to find the spaces or ‘small openings’ (Groenke & Hatch, 2009) to engage their pupils in a more explicitly political or critical education. As she illustrates here:

... some of the teachers really sort of went above and beyond, but it was really off their own back...I don’t know if it was so much the curriculum that did it, it was engaged teachers who were trying to get us to do that kind of stuff, and do this sort of thing, and sometimes give you sort of extra assignments or things to read if you’re interested

More importantly for Rosa was her sometimes difficult experience of coming out as gay in school and she identifies the actions of one teacher in particular which was supportive. Rosa’s comments should be understood in the context of the school functioning to reproduce dominate social relations. Rosa’s experience took place in the years immediately after Section 28 was repealed in Scotland in 2000. Section 28 was part of the Local Government Act which was introduced by the UK Conservative Government in 1988. Amongst other things Section 28 meant that local government, and by implication schools, could not intentionally promote homosexuality or ‘*promote the teaching...of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship*’ (Greenland & Nunney, 2008). This situation affected the practice of teachers and others working in education by creating uncertainty, discomfort and a lack of confidence about what educational or pastoral work was permitted in relation to LGBT issues in school.

The result was that Section 28 was a barrier to good practice and severely limited the teaching and support educators could offer to young people. Furthermore, according to Greenland and Nunney (2008) this situation continued to effect practice, even well after the act was repealed in Scotland in 2000 (see also Saunders & Sullivan, 2014). It was in this context that Rosa comments on the impact this situation had on her development and a teacher's response to homophobic bullying:

...in terms of social life there was an awful lot they couldn't talk about cause I'm just old enough to remember clause 28...It would've been so great if, like, the teachers or the school nurse could talk about this kinda stuff, and talk about all the historical and cultural implications as well...but they couldn't even speak about it. And then...we had one teacher who actually stood up and said 'I'm sick of homophobic bullying in this school'. And he was a married straight guy...he didn't have any...dog in the fight, but yeah, he stood up and did that, and he could've lost his job. I wrote to him and said thank you a few years later actually...

Louise, whose schooling was in France, was also someone who did not see school as a crucial influence on her political socialisation, but she was able to identify one or two teachers who would try to engage their pupils in some critical reflection and encourage action. Reflecting the pedagogical approach of her teacher she remarks; *'I had this one teacher who like tried to make us think about it. And so, he tried to have us like bring an article and present it, like in class.'* And here Louise illustrates how her teacher was making connections in the classroom to current events:

...some teachers sometimes let us know...the Government tried to deport these two students in my siblings' school. And so every student there kind of like rose up against that. And they like had demonstrations. And every student, they all like made placards together. So I think whenever that happens, some teachers let us know so that we could get involved.

Whilst Rosa and Louise comment on the relationships with teachers inside the formal classroom, Mary's experience can be located in the more informal, tacit 'hidden curriculum' (Apple, 1995). This example demonstrates that rather than acting exclusively as a site of reproduction, the hidden curriculum can at times also be counter hegemonic, creating a space where teachers can influence pupil's critical awareness, intentionally or not. This example again demonstrates the nuanced way in which one agent of socialisation, the family, can interact with and compliment another, the school, to deepen political and critical awareness. Mary discusses the reaction of her teachers to the impact of the 2008 financial crisis. Her comments clearly show the development of her critical awareness as it demonstrates how her more inchoate political awareness was developed and became more explicit and critical as a result of this particular experience. Mary states:

It was around the time where there was a lot of cuts getting made to education. And I remember quite a lot of my teachers talking about that, they were quite angry about it and there was quite a lot of, not disruption, there was quite a lot of hushed angry voices in school trying not to kind of speak to loudly about all the cuts getting made...And I remember having to pay for things like art material ...Things like having to pay deposits for textbooks that you have to take home and things like that. I kinda remember being like, 'should it really be like this...should we be having to pay for things at school?'

Mary's developing political awareness at school also went beyond these confines and seems to have fed into the development of a deeper critical analysis of the wider world and the existing status quo. As she comments:

I guess I had been made aware of the fact that there was something quite big going on...cause it was all over the news. And every single teacher, everyone was talking about this crisis and how...like the cuts...And I remember, because that time I would have been about sixteen...and me and a lot of my friends were trying to get part time jobs through school. And nobody could find a part time job. And...it's

quite funny cause your Mum and Dad would say “you need tae get a wee job”...And it’s like, ‘well there aren’t any jobs’ [laughs]....like every week there would be something on the news about x thousand people losing their jobs. And I think it was through that that I started to think, ‘well this, something’s just not right here. Like the country surely isn’t being run in the correct way’...But I didn’t really have a theoretical base for that. It was just more of a kind of why is this happening. Surely, you know, like there must be a better way to do things.

In general, the previous examples have all highlighted the overall positive and supportive relationship between these young activists and their teachers and how they helped to enrich the activist’s political socialisation. In particular, for some activists, a key factor in their development was a good and mutually respectful relationship with teachers who had an explicitly left or socialist political orientation which also matched the already developing political identity of the young activists themselves. These good relationships were characterised by the democratic and dialogical pedagogical approaches that these teachers fostered in their classrooms. Yet, whilst Keir also feels his political socialisation was enhanced as a result of one of his teachers, it was the opposite of the above examples. His experience was more negative and to an extent ‘*provoked rebellion*’ (Kane, 2013: 884) as Keir and his teacher had diametrically opposing political orientations. Keir feels strongly that his family was a significant primary socialising agent. He describes his family as traditional Labour supporting working class with strong links to employment in the mining community. In relation to his teacher he says; ‘*...I enjoyed Modern Studies...till I had a Tory teacher...I was always like relatively switched on. Like if somebody asked me a question on politics I’d be able tae dae, gie an answer*’. Keir then goes on to describe his relationship with and experience of this teacher and its effect on his political development:

She used tae infuriate me! I used tae get on wi' her...I used tae get on wi' her until I found oot like, she openly told us she was a Tory but I wasnae bothered about that at this time...I kinda knew anyway...when she was crossing picket lines when the schools were on strike. But no she, I can remember when it was...sixteen year olds were getting a vote. And cause I was a bit chirpy in class...I can always remember [the teacher] saying tae me, 'people like you shouldnae be getting the vote'. I went...'what do you mean, people like me?' And she never had an answer. I just thought it was derogatory, just cause she was looking doon at me. And that, again, feeds intae that anti kinda establishment thing.

A strong finding in the data is that for a significant number of the young activists, the role of a teacher was, to varying degrees, influential in their political development. It is further evidence that educational spaces can be found or created within schools, in spite of the constraints of the ideological state apparatus. All be it limited and involving only some of their teachers, these young activists were given the opportunity to critically examine the status quo and explore alternatives to it. In so doing this helped to develop their political literacy, critical consciousness and furthered their motivation to play an active part in changing the world as they find it. This approach can also be seen as much more consistent with the maximal conception of citizenship education than the minimal one. Nevertheless, whilst the teacher played this instrumental role, what they did in the classroom, their pedagogical approach, was particularly important. I will now go on to discuss the activist view of these pedagogical approaches.

8.3. A 'Really Useful' Pedagogy for Critical Citizenship Education

When analysing how these young activists describe their experience of the pedagogical processes that assisted their political socialisation and development of critical consciousness, what is striking is the repeated use

of terms like 'open discussion' or 'critical debate'. In addition, comments suggesting a more democratic and egalitarian relationship between student and teacher and the opportunity to discuss political issues also feature. The positive contribution this approach can have on the development of political literacy, efficacy and critical awareness is also noted in the literature (see for example McIntosh & Youniss, 2010 or Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, in many ways this approach seems to echo some of the policy rhetoric of Education for Citizenship in Scotland such as fostering critical evaluation and developing knowledge of social, political and economic issues. Yet whilst the activists were certain about what helped them, they also recognised the pedagogical approaches that did not support their political development. Their comments here are a reversal of the positive points above, such as more authoritarian relationships, the lack of opportunities for critical engagement and debate, rote learning, top down uncritical transfers of knowledge and an over emphasis on the purpose of learning to pass exams for employability, rather than border civic engagement or human flourishing.

These characterisations of the pedagogical approaches they encountered can also be interpreted as resembling the two broad pedagogical categories that Freire outlines, problem posing and banking. I will offer a brief reminder of my understanding of these approaches and then present evidence from the data which exemplifies the activists encounters with each approach.

For Freire (1990: 45), education conceived as 'banking' is, as the metaphor suggests, '*...an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor...*'. Knowledge in this form of education is '*...a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing*'. Darder (2018: 108) offers a useful summary of the underlying purpose of a banking approach to education, '*Central to its aims is the need to conquer the mind and hearts of "deficient" students so they willingly adopt and adhere to the unjust mentality of the ruling order*'. In response to this 'domesticating' form of education, Freire urges any radical educator committed to human emancipation from injustice to reject it and adopt instead the problem posing or dialogical approach. For Freire (1990: 53) this conception of education, contrary to banking, is '*Liberating education...*' consisting of '*...acts of cognition, not transfers of information*'. It breaks the vertical patterns of banking education and students are no longer '*...docile listeners...*' but '*critical co-investigators in dialogue with teachers...*' and this education becomes the '*...practice of freedom – as opposed to the practice of domination...*' (1990: 54). For Darder (2018: 112) this approach to education is about the '*...generation of a living pedagogy for the establishment of a permanently free society*'.

I have identified approximate examples of both banking and problem-posing approaches in the responses of the young activists. For example, in a specific case, George actually makes explicit reference to Freire in the following quotation. To set this in context, the interview took place in

my office at the university where I work which has a number of Freire's books on the shelves. This response comes from a discussion in which George was asked about his experience of education for citizenship in his school and what educators could learn from his becoming an active citizen. Here he seems to be comparing his experience of a banking approach and offering the problem-posing approach as an alternative:

I don't think I was treated like a citizen, I think I was treated, I know you've got Freire over there, so I was treated as if I was something to be deposited into. That's what I was, I was a bank of knowledge as opposed to your own autonomous individual, you've got your own knowledge and experience, what can you bring to the table? Like, what experience can you bring to this classroom that him over there has'nae got that experience, what can you learn from that? And how can he get a better understanding of the citizenship that's going on.

The advocacy of more democratic relationships with teachers and a plea for more interactivity and discussion is reflected in the following two quotations from George. In both examples he is proposing how the teaching of citizenship education in school can be improved by including a more critical approach:

...when you do try and apply that, because of people's age they're sort of, like, sneered at...as if the pupils are gonna have any say in how they're educated or that. It's like naw, if you want to have a genuine relationship between teacher and pupil then the teacher has to learn from the pupil as much as the pupil has to learn from the teacher. And that goes in terms of how the classes are run, how things are decided, who controls what's, you know...but it is that sort of idea of having an interactive activity involved in it, or having everyone involved and no just being spoken down to...

As I kinda got older you had more interactivity in your class. I found that the classes I enjoyed the most were the ones where you had discussions. I enjoyed RMPS¹⁰ the most...because it

¹⁰ Religious, Moral & Philosophical Studies, is how George referred to this subject in his school.

was something that I could question, and in turn be questioned about, and it was much more of an interactive learning experience where through challenge, through debate you bring out ideas that you actually, you have a concern, you care about it, and you actually enjoy it...

James contrasted the predominantly banking approach he experienced in school with the extracurricular debating club he took part in. This was a more informal approach as *'You had the freedom to talk in that class, I don't even want to call it a class, ... you know you could really bring anything you wanted to the discussion...'* James is clear that the pedagogical approach adopted here encouraged his political socialisation as he claims that *'...it was always just in my mind the thing that got me interested in politics...so I'd say that's critically important...that kind of discussion, that kind of autonomous learning if you want to call it that.'* He goes on to say that, *'...I'd like to see that everywhere, you know in schools yes, but not just school, like you know, (laughs) I think like discussion, critical debate is healthy regardless of where you are.'*

James also makes positive reference to the effectiveness of open, critical discussion and equal relationships in education by comparing the debating club with his non-formal experience of trade union education. Starting with the debating club he says:

'Yeah, just based on discussion, and the fact that there was no set points to learn...I guess this was kind of reminiscent of...the same kind of relationship we had, like we had a tutor in that group in Unite [The Union], and it was friendly it was on an equal footing which I think it's the same for the debating group, the teachers were not above us, so yeah I mean like the trade union education has been good for me...'

A problem-posing approach is also touched on by Jim. When asked how educators could best encourage the development of active citizens, Jim was clear about the teaching methods to adopt:

I think I'd favour a more discursive pedagogy. One that was centred around debating ideas...I suppose I mean classes that revolve around the debates and arguments and the involvement of students in groups rather than simply being led by teachers... I think...that format's important. And also an idea from the outset that everything you read is fallible and, and deconstructable rather than something that is written in a textbook that is kinda just something you used on the exam...we should actually teach people to be confident articulate members of society that kinda, that can evaluate arguments and then come to their own opinion and...use what they've read to construct and defend their perspective rather than simply reflect it.

Mary also makes a distinction between her experience of an uncritical banking approach and a more dialogical problem-posing approach which she thinks would help develop young activists. In the first quotation, the banking approach is clear as is evidence of the reproductive role that this can play:

...I think the kind of quite prominent example that I remember, we were learning about China in Higher Modern Studies and I remember...our teacher, she was a really good teacher but I do remember her having very...distinct definitions of what capitalism was and what communism was. And I remember her describing them as two very different things and how capitalism, you know, was described as something that allowed people to start their own businesses and communism was kind of described as this awful ideology that kind of imprisoned people but...at the time...there was kind of no awareness that we could challenge that view. This is just it, like we'll just accept this as it is. And there was no appetite for anybody else to...challenge the view that was kind of being taught to us, I suppose...there was no real opportunity to challenge kind of prevalent ideas or key ideas...

Here the benefit of a problem posing approach are revealed:

I remember having discussions about abortion and euthanasia as well in my kinda philosophy class. And there was quite strong opinions kind of on both sides. And I, remember forming my own opinion based on discussions we'd had in the classroom. So, I

definitely think kind of more opportunities to explore more opinions as well.

Commenting on her developing political awareness, Mary highlights how the opportunity to engage critically with political ideas in school was constrained. Her reflections also further underline the problematic issue of indoctrination discussed above. Here she comments how she had a:

...kind of political awareness and interest in politics...things that were coming out o' the financial crisis were starting to kind of brew into something that I wanted to take further...I mean we certainly...learned about things like the 2008 [US] presidential election in school, but...on reflection of school, I always kind of thought that we didn't really get a chance tae form our own opinions on things. So, I always felt it, kind of looking back it was always very balanced and kind of two sided at school for kind of fear of offending anyone or fear of having...parents on the phone kind of saying, 'why are you telling my son or daughter this', you know [laughs].

Anthony's reflections likewise embody descriptions of both pedagogical approaches, but his comments also touch on the issue of indoctrination that are important to unpack. In relation to an experience of banking in school he says; *'... you have...a certain type of teacher who at the end of the day doesn't really engage with the pupils, they're just there...to sort of...transmit the information...just teach behind the book, they're not interested in, you know, fostering pupils as individuals or, you know, their interests.'* Whilst he is critical of the banking approach, his thoughts on problem-solving approaches discussed above do show how significant they were for his development. But his experiences with this left wing teacher could also be interpreted as attempted indoctrination by those who favour neutrality in education. Nonetheless, in my analysis, Anthony's positive experiences of a problem posing education stand more as a challenge or a corrective to the common

criticism levelled at overtly political educators who attempt to introduce political ideas and the development of critical thinking to their pupils. The problem-posing approach is often criticised for being *'too political'* (see Freire, 1996: 7) and potentially dogmatic, leading to indoctrination. Yet Roberts (1999: 23) offers a helpful caveat here. He suggests that; *'A distinction can be drawn between transmitting a political or moral point of view and doing this in a dogmatic way'*. Of course, Freire insists all teachers and their practice are informed by their values and political positions, and the key to avoiding dogmatism and indoctrination therefore is to be reflexive. To recognise the normative nature of education and so make these values open. As Freire (1996: 112) explains *'...the role of the progressive educator...in offering her or his "reading of the world" is to bring out the fact that there are other "readings of the world"... and so, encourage student's critical engagement with this reading and the many other readings of the world.* In the three quotations that follow, Anthony gives some examples of the problem-posing approach his teacher adopted, which I think also nicely illustrates a lack of dogmatism in his approach. In this first comment Anthony specifically discusses the open, dialogical space the teacher created:

...it wasn't like rammed down my throat, it was, like, challenging people's views...I think political debate and discussion, for example, in citizenship classes or political, well modern studies or history classes is healthy, and I think it should be encouraged...I don't think there's anything wrong with challenging pupils to think about politics, you know. Like, if we want to, like, you know, create, like, the citizens of tomorrow, like, we have to actually engage them in politics.

Here Anthony reflects on the relationship between the pedagogical process and the teachers' political position:

...the politics of the teacher...that teacher shouldn't be...enforcing their opinions and you must think this way or else, but there's nothing wrong I would say, like, my history teacher introducing his view and then, you know, also providing the alternative view and, you know, challenging people to think...about these different views, what, you know, connects to them...I think that's perfectly healthy.

In this quotation the idea of offering alternative 'readings of the word' is emphasised:

...it was to present alternative views...like he would never say 'I think this', you know. Like, it would be, for example, like 'left-wing historians or theorists think this, you know, which I might agree with but you make up your own mind, and here's the alternative views...

8.3.1. 'Merely Useful' Knowledge: Banking and Employability

Connected to comments about pedagogy, approximately half of the young activists noted a concern that, whilst they might have had some positive educational experiences at school, overall it was dominated by a narrowing down of the purpose of education. For these activists there was an over emphasis on accreditation for employability or 'merely' useful knowledge, rather than 'really' useful knowledge, the wider social purpose of full human flourishing and preparation for critical engagement in a democratic society. This concern is also reflected in some of the literature. For example, Wrigley *et al.* (2012: 98) warn against the priority given to the transmission of instrumentalist knowledge over helping young people become fully human. Furthermore, this narrowing posits a shift in the purpose of education from 'learning to be', to a 'learning to be productive and employable' (see Coffield, 1999, Crowther, 2006, Biesta, 2006b) as a result of the dominance of human capital theory on education policy. As Coffield (1999) notes, this is as a 'powerful consensus' dominating not only the educational agenda but also economic, social and political ones

too. The following discussion illustrate this 'powerful' consensus' at work shaping these activists' experiences and views of education. For example, reflecting on his own experience, Anthony clearly has a wider view of what education should be for, as he comments, *'I think, you know, schools...they just aren't about helping young people to find jobs, they're equipping young people with the skills to critically think and engage with other human beings on issues of politics and wider societal issues...'* Mick's perspective illustrates how a focus on employability may have crowded out opportunities for his political learning:

Well, at school...it just felt you were churned in tae, you were just there tae get the grades. And I just felt it was tae get you a job at the end. It did'nae feel...you were'nae there tae just be educated or improve your mind, if you like, it was just...get these grades cause if you get these grades you can go on and do that...But there's none who at that time I thought politically engaged me...

Keir draws on an idea from Paul Willis which he was learning at college to evaluate his own school experience and advocates an alternative to this:

'...Paul Willis, Learning to Labour aye...Maybe they should start teaching how not tae labour...Schools probably should move away fae this system that wants tae teach based on economic needs. [schools]...should allow people just tae go doon their ain path and learn what they're good at. Maybe no everybody's academic but at least they could follow their ain path. No be pushed intae a job at the age 'o sixteen...

The argument that the purpose of education should be about 'learning to be' rather than restricted to just 'learning to earn' is articulated very well in these two quotations from James:

...the purpose of education in my mind should be about...expanding your own knowledge, expanding like the way you think and developing yourself as a human being, you know, and becoming active through that, where as a think like the notion of education we get in society these days is about getting a job, it's about getting

decent marks, its about doing what you're told, it's about like cramming down and studying

At the end of the day I think you can shift class sizes and shift...like teaching methods and stuff around in high schools as much as you want, but I don't think that's ever going to work if and unless we...change everything because of the fundamental nature of like education as a commodity...rather than like a social good...the entire way that education is based needs to change in my opinion if you ever want...to really be producing people who can actually think for themselves...

In the discussion so far, I have shown that for these young activists, a problem-posing pedagogy was important, and in some cases crucial, in developing their political literacy, efficacy and critical consciousness. But, as well as highlighting the importance of this pedagogical process, my findings also reveal the specific nature of some educational resources and content that can be important in developing critical and active citizens. That is, students developing new knowledge by being encouraged to critically engage with and explore their own lived experience.

8.4. Problematising Lived Experience: Critical Content for Critical Citizenship

It is self-evident that as well as the process, the content of any citizenship learning is of key importance, particularly that which claims an emancipatory or social justice purpose. Yet the nature of the content and what should be included is the subject of a long standing debate in the literature. For the purpose of this section Weinberg and Flinders (2018: 578) neatly summarise the key ideas of this debate. Reflecting the literature, they suggest that effective citizenship learning takes place when both '*...declarative knowledge (i.e. facts, concepts and relationships between these) and procedural knowledge (i.e. how*

to carryout actions)...' are present. To help people learn about democracy and become active, it is therefore important to learn the abstract knowledge about how a political system works, how to vote and so on. But crucially, this has to be incorporated with the opportunity to critically examine this system and the wider world and put this abstract knowledge into action. Echoing the discussion on pedagogy in the last section, Weinberg and Flinders (2018: 578) comment that this learning is best done by '*...exposure to a democratic school environment and a classroom climate forged around deliberation and pupil voice...*'. In this form of learning students should be introduced to contemporary social and political issues and encouraged to explore and debate them. As a result, this approach '*...models the rough and tumble of participatory democracy, training students to appreciate conflicting viewpoints and engaging them at an early age in both political processes and political ideas...*' (Martens & Gainous, 2013). Nonetheless, like many, Weinberg and Flinders (2018) claim that despite the efficacy of teaching both declarative and procedural knowledge, most citizenship education practice emphasizes the former over the latter or exclusively focusses on the declarative. As a result, a minimal conception of citizenship is fostered and personally responsible, not active citizens are developed (see also Westheimer and Kahne, 2004 or Biesta 2013).

Turning to my findings, when asked directly, or as a result of other discussions, thirteen of the young activists in this study made some comments on the content that either assisted the development of their critical consciousness and made them active, or from their experience, what they would recommend as being important content to support critical activism. Their comments resonate

with the need for declarative and procedural knowledge and discussion in classrooms on political issues, but an important emphasis in their comments was the need to actively bring out and use the knowledge, material conditions and lived experience of young people in this process. An education that privileges the knowledge of the participants and seeks to use this as a resource for learning is central to the rhetoric of citizenship education, as Heggart *et al.* (2008: 357) argue, maximizing the use of lived experience:

...builds and develops on links within communities, and encourages social advocacy and positive social change. This is a conception of active citizenship that is performative; that is, young people learn to become active citizens by acting in such a way.

Using the lived experience and material conditions of people as a resource for education is also central to critical tradition of approaches to education, in particular ones that are focused on social transformation and social justice such as the historical movement for 'really' useful knowledge and critical pedagogy. In this sense any critical citizenship learning needs to be '*... generatively connected to students' lived experiences*' (Zyngier 2009: 273). Furthermore, for Freire (1990), using lived experience allows people to critically examine or 'read' their world, so they can go on to identify the oppression or injustice they experience and build the resources, individually and collectively, to take action to change the social conditions that create and sustain these conditions. These theoretical ideas, of engaging in critical reflection of lived experience, creating opportunities to discuss political issues and having supported opportunities to apply these in their own communities, are reflected in the comments of the young activists. For example, referring to some of the issues that should be discussed in classrooms Jim suggests; '*...discussing energy politics in North*

Sea oil and some might be more interested in discussing how we organise social care in society...it would be interesting to kind of look at how we can develop systems that allow that to happen.' Some of the activists recognised that engaging young people in political ideas can be difficult and so they offer ways in which this could be made more meaningful and accessible, particularly for those who feel that politics is of marginal interest or irrelevant. Anthony and Mick's thoughts are representative of these comments. Firstly, Anthony offers the approach adopted by his teacher where by the connection between their life and politics are made explicit:

... there was quite a lot of people in my Modern Studies class in particular who were, like...oh I hate politics...but he would still, try to find a particular interest for pupils...Cause he was saying, like, you might not like politicians but, you know, for example...the cost of you getting the train into town...that's influenced by politics because obviously the government has some role, you know, in determining ticket prices or, like, how much you pay for...your food in the shop...it was always...to try and put...real world examples and say it's not just politicians, everything is political in a sense. So, I think that's what did engage people because when, like, people think oh, I don't like political parties, I don't like politicians, but when they think about, you know, stuff that's happening in their own, like, immediate life, world, I think it brings it into...a reality that's easier to engage with and understand.

The following two quotations from Mick not only describe the need to make the connections between people's life experience and how these are shaped by political decisions, but he also hints at the way this can be connected to the possibility of building the capacity for taking action for change:

I would say...if I've just started a part-time job, I'm skint aw the time, well why do you think you're skint? Honestly, some basic information, like...is it maybe the wages are too low? Why are the wages too low? And then fae there it opens up in tae a broader, like that's why it is, so how do I change that?

...make the link between basic things, like the way the political system determines the price of a loaf, or determines the price of what you enjoy, whatever it is...that all can be related back to policies made at government level...And if you want we will change it. It's to highlight a child's agency, their ability to change things.

The idea of a 'performative' approach to citizenship learning, that is experiential learning through critical engagement with issues in communities is suggested by George as he offers this as an approach to support active citizenship:

Why not have something where you've got...people coming together to volunteer...whether that be raising money for the homeless or whatever. Something like that where that's showing people in practice here's what citizenship is, here's some of the problems that the citizenship of society today suffers from and ignores, how can you change that, how can you make sure that people aren't on food banks, well let's have a food gathering thing, we'll do a social event, we'll raise money, we'll raise awareness, we'll get the media...and we'll try and solve that problem. It's just a plaster on it but it's sort of guiding people in a way of saying right, you have power to do something, you're not just an observer to what's going on in society. And that's the problem, I feel as if students are far too often observers.

George's recommendation is reminiscent of a Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) participatory or justice orientated citizen in which volunteering in the community or critique of the status quo in order to take action for social change are emphasised. Yet Fred and Keir's suggestions are perhaps much more aligned with the Justice orientated citizen and their comments have an explicit class analysis and express a specific need to raise awareness of inequality and injustice. Fred argues:

I believe although obviously it's quite an important goal to get kids quite politically active I do believe it should be a voluntary thing. So, if kids are sort of slyly introduced to these concepts then they might

get more interested by themselves and they're way more likely to take the stuff on board if they do that...And getting kids sort of... slyly active just tell them a couple of things about the injustices in the world or anything like that or something that might interest them. But just little things, you know introduce them to the concepts so they can go and research it on their own – you're way more likely to make a lasting connection that way...Poverty in working class areas and you know the areas that affects sort of thing, you know this is something that the...Education system's probably not going to do but the actual reasons behind the poverty that you see in those areas, yeah.

Keir's comments perhaps have a much sharper analysis than Fred's and it's important to note that my face to face observation of the interview was that this was expressed with some passion, reflecting a deep held belief coming from his own life experiences. I think it is worth presenting his comments here at some length:

...at school there's a lot a' kinda class inequalities that naebody actually realises. You should probably teach people at high school about these inequalities. Why this happens tae people...But ...people should be made aware a' the inequalities so that they can be educated tae actually go oot and change things. Like make them aware. Are you happy wi' what's going on? Are you ... happy that somebody cannae afford the same stuff as you? I reckon it would go a mile better if schools started teaching kinda like that.

It might no inspire everybody but you'll have the person. I reckon if you're trying tae engage the working-class people, that's how tae get them in. Show them you're being treated unfairly. You can change it.

Showing people where they stay and then show them the kinda areas that always stay blue on the SIMD¹¹. So, they're the most richest areas. Show them how that's never changed in twenty years. So, people are just stuck where they are because a' where they live, where they are born...there is obviously several ways you could dae it but you've got tae make it simple and obvious that they are being treated unfairly. And I reckon that would encourage people.

¹¹ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). A Scottish Government tool used to identify areas of multiple deprivation. See here <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD>

These activists have become critically aware and active, in part, as a response to what they see as the injustice and inequality around them. As a result, they have a strong commitment to social transformation and social justice. As their comments above demonstrate, they also recognise that if injustice and inequality are to be revealed, understood and challenged then, in an educational context, part of that process has to include making connections between what they learn about citizenship and people's lives and experience in their communities. This is a key epistemological issue for citizenship education. Declarative and procedural knowledge are important, but the content of this knowledge is crucial, particularly if a purpose of citizenship education is to understand and value '*...social justice,*' and encourage people to take responsible action to '*...confront views and actions that are harmful to the wellbeing of individuals and communities*' (LTS 2002: 12). Apple (1990: 63/64) reminds us about the reproductive role of schools as he argues they; '*...not only control people, they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be legitimate knowledge, the knowledge that we all must have, schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups*'. So, to help avoid the reproductive implications of Apple's point, these young activists illustrate how some of this 'legitimate knowledge' has to be the lived experiencing of those suffering or witnessing injustice and inequality and this coupled with a critical engagement with this knowledge can promote activism. These activists also highlight another means by which people can become politicised and active. This relates to a particular kind of 'performative' citizenship, that is participation in youth or pupil councils. I

explore the contribution these representative structures can make in the next section.

8.5. Learning Activism by Being Active: The Possibilities and Challenges of Youth Representative Structures

There is a great deal of agreement in both the academic and policy literature that one of the most effective ways to help young people learn about democracy, citizenship and political activism is through encouraging and scaffolding their actual involvement in these processes. For example, as McIntosh and Youniss (2010: 36) note; *'...effective citizenship begins with meaningful participation in the politics that touches everyday life.'* The spirit of this aphorism also features in the policy document setting out the conception and approach to education for citizenship in Scotland (LTS 2012: 10). This document notes; *'...education for citizenship...should be informed by the awareness that...learning about citizenship is best achieved by being an active citizen.'* One of the key vehicles most referred to as the means of achieve this learning is to create and support representative structures for young people such as youth fora or pupil councils. The efficacy of these structures is highlighted in a range of literature, for example Torney-Purta and Amadeo (2011: 181) argue for creating of these *'emergent participatory spaces'* where citizenship skills and dispositions are learnt (see also Cicognani *et al.*, 2012). Regarding pupil councils, Brown *et al.* (2017: 15) note that *'Pupil councils are regarded as an important and tangible means of promoting 'pupil voice' in schools...'* and that *'...such processes can promote and enhance democratic awareness and skills in children'* (see also Maitles & Deuchar, 2008). In fact,

the importance of pupil councils has been recognised in Scotland as they are now enshrined in legislation as a result of the Scottish Schools Act (2000) (see Cross *et al.*, 2014: 628).

Nevertheless, whilst some of the literature argues for the development of these representative structures, there exists a body of literature which draws on research evidence to show that there is also a '*...fairly high level of cynicism regarding the efficacy of pupil councils...*' (Brown *et al.*, 2017: 15). This cynicism relates to the way pupil councils or youth fora often operate in practice. For example, Tisdall *et al.* (2008) and Maitles and Deuchar (2006) highlight a key problem being tokenism, in particular that young people are consulted in decision making processes, but this has little tangible impact on decision-making processes. Furthermore, Tisdall *et al.* (2008: 350/51) also point to another criticism in which these structures often '*advantage the already advantaged*' as the structures can be dominated by middle class young people having the effect of marginalizing or excluding those from subordinate social economic groups. The difficulties with pupil councils and youth fora raised in this literature matches my own practice experience of 20 years of working in schools in a role of supporting the development of pupil or youth councils. From first-hand experience I have witnessed this tokenism, for example by adult staff claiming a commitment to student voice but also organising the running of these councils by setting or limiting the agendas, chairing meetings and even hand picking the representatives. I also observed a widespread lack of understanding about or genuine commitment to ensuring these structures embody democratic principles so they can foster citizenship learning and civic capacity in young

people. In fact my experiences of these issues have led directly to the selection of the topic for this thesis.

The challenges and possibilities related to youth representative mechanisms are reflected in some of the data for this study. Whilst they provide further evidence to support the criticism of tokenism discussed above, they also suggest that if conceived of, organised and supported appropriately they can still provide those participating with opportunities to learn about democracy, politics and activism.

The assessment of tokenism relating to pupil councils is expressed unambiguously by George and Jim. For example, George's cynicism is clear here as he states; *'...representative structures in schools were powerless, therefore pointless. I thought they were full of people wanting, the main contention for it was always oh it'll be good on your CV, it's like who cares.'* Jim is able to give a view from the inside, in that he was a member of a pupil council. His critical view also illustrates this tokenism at work as he reflects on his own experience of a pupil council meeting. For him it was 'pointless', and he goes on to comment:

...there was a time when I remember being at a pupil council meeting...we were meant to be discussing...I can't remember if it was uniform policy or something else, but it was something that whoever was running the pupil council meeting, one of the deputy heads said, 'we're not discussing that. We're not discussing that'. And people kept bringing it up and they just left. And...me and my friend chaired and then convened the meeting until the period was out and then left cause we thought it was a complete shambles that they weren't gonna discuss these things.

It would be wrong to conclude from George and Jim's comments alone that these pupil councils were poorly structured and supported or to draw any critical assessment of the intentions or practice of the adults involved. For instance, it is possible that young people may not treat the process seriously, despite the commitment from adult staff. For example, in our interview, James was overwhelmingly critical of pupil councils, but he does acknowledge his own commitment and interest as a member of one was poor:

...I was a second year rep at one point which I didn't really take an active role, in that I just had my photo up on the wall and that was really it...I don't think I really treated it seriously...I can't remember the motivations for doing it, if it was that kind of thing like there wasn't much interest in it, basically talked in to saying this will look good...

The 11 young activists who discussed pupil or youth councils all had some experience reflected in the cynicism and tokenism noted above. Yet some were able to see beyond this negative assessment, finding the potential these representative structures can offer and suggesting ways in which they could be more critical and conducive to encouraging activism. In addition, two of the activists also had a more positive experiences and saw how this contributed directly to their political socialisation and activism. Echoing the negative view, Hugo's school had a pupil council, but he saw it as ineffective and not really dealing with important decision-making issues. His description resembles a minimal conception of citizenship. As he says, it was just a '*...pupils' council where you put on a disco at the end of the year, or, you know, you kinda...it's like a work's committee, you're in the teacher's pocket*'. Instead of this tokenistic approach he calls for '*...doing it in...a different tone...*' and conceives of a more challenging and active, maximal approach and one which develops links beyond the school:

I would make it that there was a proper committee of folk that are gonnae challenge things, and it would be delegates from maybe every year, or delegates on a sort of totally different committee for first year and totally different committee for second year. That might be a bit more complicated but then from there you have a delegate of the local council, or delegates to the local council from each school, or that, or a delegate from each school in an area meets to talk...

When asked about the role of pupil councils in activism, Jim reflected on his own experience of trying to developing a student led school and community wide representative organisation. Although ultimately not successful, he did think that this experience and the knowledge and skills he developed fed in to his interest and motivation for becoming active politically. Here he explains what he and his peers were attempting:

I think what we wanted was kind of a forum and a ...space with resources to have arguments about how the world should be ran. To a lesser extent, I suppose we connected it to, we had a short-lived attempt to build a school student organisation which had some success locally at my school. And we did have some connections to folk at other schools...the idea was a sort of...a union type organisation.

Whilst Hugo and Jim highlight the possibilities that could arise from developing ideal representative organisations that do not quite exist in practice, Eric and Anthony both highlight the positive contributions their involvement with youth or pupil councils had on their own development. Eric's experience was mixed. He was involved in a city-wide youth forum and as a 'school captain', a representative structure in his school. He felt he gained a lot from his participation, but was critical of the extrinsic motivations of some of the other people involved. For example, his comment here matches some of the other critical comments above; *'..., people who want a good thing for their CV and want to go to the top in life as opposed to people who want to make change for*

those at the bottom type thing'. Yet he also explains the positive impact his participation had on his development:

I think it's...not political activism but I would say it's community activism, definitely. I think School Captain probably less so than other things but it was basically a good way of representing people who you fundamentally disagreed with or had nothing in common with but you were able to talk to all of them...but as a school I really enjoyed it because...there were so many different people just from fundamentally different views and all the rest of it but it was a good way to be able to get access to so many different people of wealth, people of race, people of different thoughts, people of different politics, things like that.

Through his participation he gained an understanding of the limits of these structures, but also learnt some important lessons about the possibilities of activism and the need for collective action for change:

So, I think School Captain was good. I did very little with it in terms of actually making change, but I think it was good for me, especially to see how difficult it is to actually make a change by yourself without being in an organisation like the YCL. So, it actually helped me to become reaffirmed to the YCL because I realised that if I was to leave that there's no other Party that I would support and I was to leave that what am I going to do, sit on Twitter and spout nonsense to people.

Anthony's experience also exemplifies the learning and development potential of participation in representative structures. Although he was aware that his pupil council was tokenistic, he felt that if he was interested in having a voice and trying to help make change then he should take part in the mechanisms available. When asked if his involvement in the pupil council supported his activism he said the following:

Oh definitely, I think if I hadn't done, for example, the pupil council I wouldn't...have got...basic experience of what activism actually entails, you know, having to go out, speak to people...learn what the issues are and then be prepared to actually...stand up and raise those issues.

I suppose it educated me in a sense about...the way activism works...it was educating me that the way to change things is to actually...put in the work to try and change things. So, it was gearing me also towards...political activism in the sense that, you know, you were running for elections, you were having to make a case about why you were gonna take pupils' issues...to the authority on that, so in a sense it wasn't education in the sense of traditional education but it was education in the sense of, like, political education in that way. It was sort of...teaching you about the way, you know, political activism works.

Whilst Anthony recognised that participating in some form of representative structure is of significant benefit to learning about citizenship, democracy and activism, he also makes the point that the young people involved in these structures need to have their participation scaffolded to ensure that the learning can be effective. He reflects back on his own experience to highlight this need for training:

I think training would've benefited people because we got to a situation in...sixth year, where people from the younger years didn't speak out at all on issues and...either they didn't feel confident to do so, either due to lack of training or whatever....cause I think even if there was just...like a workshop to say this is what the pupil council can do, this is what they pupil councillors can do I think it would go a long way to help those who actually get elected to...be able to fulfil that role. But it might actually encourage more people to stand in the first place for, like, actual issues...

As the literature demonstrates, the role youth representative structures can play in the political socialisation, preparation and emergence of political activism is contested. This is also reflected in this study. For some, these structures are viewed with cynicism due to the individual extrinsic motivation for participation in them. Furthermore, the opportunities they provide are limited and compromised due to tokenism in practice. Yet for others, playing an active part in representative structures did offer deep and meaningful learning and development opportunities that promoted and sustain activism. For example,

Macintosh and Youniss (2010) draw on J. S Mill to illustrate this idea; *'We do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by merely being told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only in practicing popular government on a limited scale, that people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger scale'*. Although it was only a positive experience for a small number of the activist in this study, their experience does offer some evidence that if conceived of and supported appropriately youth representative structures can contribute to the socialisation and development of political activists. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that as these are representative structures, then self-evidently not all young people can participate in them. Also, whilst ineffective and tokenistic structures may still offer some development opportunities to individual representatives they can also generate cynicism in them and lead to the alienation of others from getting involved. Furthermore, as Tisdall (2013) argues, as they can also 'advantage the already advantaged' then they are unlikely to lead to significant changes that can be enjoyed by all the young people that are represented by these structures.

8.6. Conclusion

A central idea informing this thesis is that in order to explain why some young people become politically active, and to identify what approach to education supports this, then you should ask the activists themselves. This chapter has drawn on the experience of these activists to highlight four inter-related key elements that helped promote their activism and that could inform the content of a critical citizenship education curriculum. The important role of the teacher was discussed. This emphasised that whilst the school can be a site of

reproduction, where teachers work uncritically to maintain the current status quo, it can also be a site of struggle, where awareness of alternative ways of seeing the world are presented, students are invited to engage critically with these ideas and this approach can support the development of critical consciousness and activism. This chapter has shown that the pedagogical approach teachers adopt is crucial, and that a problem posing approach in search of 'really' useful knowledge is more likely to support the development of a critical activism. This education, which fosters 'learning to be' fully human, was shown to be effective in promoting activism and a commitment to social justice. The utility of an education that focused narrowly on developing human capital and employability was rejected by the activists for anything other than facilitating the reproduction of the status quo. In support of the problem posing approach to education, it was highlighted that the use of the lived experience of participants as a curricular resource to explore their world would also enhance their learning and development. Lastly, there is clear evidence to support the performative idea that young people learn about democracy, citizenship and activism by taking part in these processes and so the opportunities to engage in school and youth representative structures is beneficial and should be supported, provided they are not tokenistic. In the next chapter I will bring these ideas together with those discussed in other chapters to offer an overview of my findings and make some conclusions about the implications of what I have found on how educators and others can best support young people to become critical and engaged citizens who are committed to helping create a better world rather than accepting the status quo.

9. Concluding Summary and Implications

9.1. Introduction

I set out in this thesis to identify why the participants became politically active and to establish the extent that their educational experiences, particularly citizenship education, supported their development as activists. Furthermore, it is driven by my commitment to a maximal conception of citizenship education as I want to do what I can to challenge and overturn the dominance of a minimal form of citizenship education and the unequal and unfair capitalist status quo that it sustains and perpetuates. Therefore, to pursue this purpose and explore this topic, I chose to adopt a qualitative critical research approach and recruit young people whose attitudes, knowledge and commitment to action seem to broadly reflect the outcomes set for a maximal citizenship, that is they are already active, critically conscious citizens committed to social justice. I chose to work with these young people in this way to see what we can learn about their development as active critical citizens so that this knowledge can inform and help improve the content and practice of any effective citizenship education for social justice.

My findings provide comprehensive answers to these questions and while some findings reflect existing knowledge presented in the literature, other findings offer new knowledge and insight. For example, findings that reflect and confirm existing knowledge include the important role that the family and peer relationships play in political socialisation, particularly how they can interact to maximise this process. In other words, I wanted to explain, how key political events can politicise people and encourage activism. I also offer some

evidence and qualitative detail on how schools continue to perform the hegemonic and reproductive function ascribed to them in Marxist analysis, in terms of the prevalence of a banking pedagogy and the participants' experience of their education as having a narrow human capital purpose.

Nevertheless, my findings also address some gaps in knowledge in relation to young people, citizenship education, political activism and Marxist analysis of schooling. For instance, I identify how music featured as a significant socialising agent for some of these young people, something which is under represented or overlooked in the political socialisation literature (Jackson, 2009). In relation to schooling, Neundorf and Smets (2017) note that whilst the role of schools has been a focus of much research, little is still known about how schools actually influence young people's political behaviour and knowledge. For, instance, as Campbell (2008: 438) explains '*...there is limited understanding of how schools...foster political engagement...*' amongst their students. My thesis addresses this lack of knowledge by drawing on first-hand qualitative accounts from the young people themselves to present some insight and analysis of the complex relationship between schooling and political socialisation.

Furthermore, in relation to the wider political orientation of this thesis, I contribute to the debate and existing body of knowledge relating to the Marxist analysis of schooling. My thesis presents some unique empirical evidence and perspectives to support the theoretical idea that, in some circumstances, the hegemonic, reproductive role of the school in capitalist society can be disrupted. In particular, I show how some teachers can operate within the

confines of the Ideological State Apparatus to apply radical pedagogical approaches and content that effectively engages, socialises and inspires some students and promotes their development as critically aware political activists with a commitment to social justice. Additionally, the voices of political activists, who are members of political parties or trade unions and who have a left wing identity are underrepresented or mostly missing from the research literature on youth civic and political socialisation (Gordon & Taft, 2011, Rainsford, 2013). Consequently, by focusing on left wing political activists and presenting these voices, this thesis contributes to filling this gap in knowledge.

This concluding chapter will continue with an overview of my key findings, broadly structured in response to the research questions I explored. I will then turn to acknowledge and discuss some of the limitations of this doctoral research project. Finally, I will move on to offer what I think are some of the implications of my findings, relating in particular to the practice and content of citizenship education for social justice and for those practitioners with an interest in this approach to citizenship education and its potentially transformative purpose.

9.2. Research Question 1: What Factors Explain the Participants' Activism?

The family, peer relationships and music were identified as the primary political socialisation agents for these activists. The school was also identified as an important socialising agent for some, but its role was complex as participants had differing experiences. I will discuss this in relation to the next research

question (section 9.3). I have also shown that these socialising agents sometimes interacted with each other to maximise the socialising effect of each individual agent (Quintelier, 2015). Whilst these primary socialising agents and their interactions explain their developing interest in politics they do not fully explain the reasons for their move to activism. Political socialisation involves the individual internal developmental process at a micro level of analysis. To offer a fuller account, the effects of broader macro factors need to be considered such as the relevant social, political and economic context in wider society which influences a move to political activism. I identify two important macro factors. One relates to the strong sense of critical political efficacy and a commitment to social justice displayed by the activists. The other is critical moments, specific political events which gave some participants their first opportunity to be active. I will review each of these factors below, starting with the political family.

9.2.1. The Political Family.

Most of the research literature points to parents and the wider family as amongst the most important factors in the political socialisation of young people and my findings reflect this claim. From my analysis of the data, it is clear that the family background of the participants in this thesis features prominently in the reasons given for their activism. Only four of the 17 participants did not cite the family as important in some way. Political socialisation in the family is facilitated through different social learning models, two of which were identified in this thesis: accumulation and identification. Accumulation refers to the learning and development that takes place in a political household where

politics and current affairs are part of the fabric of family life, they are discussed regularly and young people are encouraged and supported to take part. As a consequence, awareness and interest in politics is developed and important values are also transmitted and a political identity is created. Moreover, this rich political environment can often have one or both parents and perhaps members of the extended family, being politically active in some way in a political party, a trade union, social movement or civic organisation. The adult activists model types of behaviour and young people become familiar with this political activity, often accompany their parents in these activities, such as attending meetings or demonstrations. This is known as the identification model of social learning.

The political household features in the reflections of most of these activists and examples of these socialisation and learning process in action are illustrated by the following three quotations from the data. For instance, Robin comments he had, '*...political talk in the house, like, from a young age I guess*'. For Willie his experience involved:

... growing up, like going round ma Grandpa's house and seeing portraits of Che Guevara on the wall and a statue of Lenin beside his tv. And so, you grow up in that environment and kind of you know you don't even question it, that's just the done thing, this is where my politics comes from.

Nan highlights being taken to a picket line by her father as stimulating her own interest in activism as she explains:

I remember him kind of being on picket lines...and that was my first sort of, like "hold on a minute, why is my dad no going tae work, why is he standing outside his work?"...I did'nae really understand it, but we got tae stand next tae an oil brazier which I thought was quite cool...So, that had always stuck in my mind as,

you know, if that's something that my dad does, that's... want tae do...

I also identify that whilst this transmission of political values and identity takes place, it is not simply a one way and passive process from parents to children. These activists show evidence of critical agency, by interacting in this socialisation process. They draw on their own life experiences and critical reading of the political ideas being transmitted to help confirm their developing interpretation of the world and to construct their own political identity.

9.2.2. Peer Relationships

Seven of the young activists identified their peers as a primary cause of their political socialisation. Quintelier (2015: 54) argues that, '*Political discussion among peers leads to increased political participation*' and for many the influence of peers on a persons' political socialisation is as important as that of parents (see Aman, 2012 or Ekström and Östman, 2013). The process of political socialisation within these peer relationships also involved the social learning models of accumulation and identification and so it replicated and compliments what happens in political households. These activists talked to their peers about politics and current affairs and at times the political behaviour and activity of one has be transmitted to the other. There are however some differences between the seven activists who cited peer relationships. For example, four of these seven activists said they developed the primary socialisation from their families, particularly a strong sense of egalitarian and justice orientated values. These households may have been supporters of political parties and talked about politics, but there was no one active politically

when they were growing up. So their peer relationships augmented what they got from their family and in particular their peers activity inspired them. The following two comments offer insights into the effect of peer groups on these activists and are representative of the participants views. Commenting on her peer group at school Louise says, *'So, most people there were broadly left wing and some, most a' my friends ended up being, and so we talked about it [politics] quite a bit.'* For Jim, his early political socialisation came from him, *'...going tae discussion groups...and then I became kinda, yeah and then I kinda bumped intae these different groups that were doing things. But yeah that was where it came from...'* For these four activists the early socialisation in the home seems to have developed their political interest which in turn generated a propensity for them to seek out and developed peer relationship with like-minded people. These social relationships then created informal learning environments which further enhanced their interest in political issues and inspired their activism.

Three of the participants came from non-political households and so their relationships with peers was crucial in their political socialisation. The following comments from John and James' are reflective of the experience of these activists, first John *'...A lot a' my...peer groups...my friends from when I was younger...their families were very died in the wool Labour voters. So that had an effect on me as well.'* And James says, *'... one of the first people I met in university, my friend Neil, he was an active Labour Party member...So we would often talk about politics...'* For those activists whose families were not political,

these peer relationships helped to compensate for this deficit and offered an alternative vehicle for political socialisation.

9.2.3. Music

Music was identified by four of the activists as a primary political socialisation agent. Although this is a minority of the participants in this study, it was significant for those involved. Despite this significance, music is overlooked in most of the literature on youth political socialisation and activism. However, others see its significance. For example Woodford (2005) points out that music's ability to influence and inform people should be taken seriously in education and Colwell (2005) makes the connection between music and the development of the attitudes and knowledge necessary for democratic citizenship and political identity formation (see also Everyman & Jamison, 1998 or DeNora, 2010).

My analysis of the data shows that there can be a powerful pedagogical relationship between music and learning about politics and citizenship. Music was the vital agent in the political awakening and socialisation of these activists. It also stimulated their intellectual curiosity and an autodidacticism. By that I mean they moved from just listening to popular music along with their friends to a deeper, hermeneutical engagement with the lyrics and the ideas represented in the music. This music therefore helped them make connections between on the one hand their own lived experiences and material conditions, and on the other the analysis and ideals of wider political and social movements for social justice that they then became members of. Thus, music helped

develop their interest in politics but also to become critically conscious, engaged citizens willing to become active in the struggle to make our societies more socially just. Mick and Fred's comments give a good summary of the views expressed by these activists and demonstrate the intellectual curiosity and hermeneutical aspects of their engagement. Mick comments; *'...a lot of the tunes I like just had a lot o' history behind it and I liked to read about history...that...crystallised my view...really sorta opened things up tae me.'*

Fred's comments on how music affected him:

...so Akala raps quite a lot about Malcolm X....So eventually I started to read Malcolm X and I think that was the first ever politically active writings that I started to read, so I think that was really the start of my political awakening so to speak.

9.2.4. Critical Political Efficacy, Agency and Praxis

A key factor in someone becoming politically active is the extent that they have political efficacy (see Schugurensky, 2000, Beaumont, 2010 or Watts *et al.*, 2011). Political efficacy is the confidence and trust we have in the political system which powers our engagement with it. It has a dual character combining internal and external efficacy. Internal efficacy is our own feelings that we can and should play a part in the political process and external efficacy relates to the confidence we have that the political system and its institutions are responsive to our engagement, in that they can be influenced and open to change. All the activists clearly demonstrate this sense of political efficacy. For instance as Mary's comment demonstrates: *'...I think I would be more useful joining the Labour Party because maybe you need people like me who have been critical and kind of want tae change things within the Labour party...'*. Nonetheless, whilst the activists all demonstrate a keen sense of political

efficacy, the concept does not fully explain the reasons for their activism. Political efficacy involves notions of change and relates to a sense of human agency, our ability to think about and act on the world. But some of the literature can present it as a neutral term. Having efficacy and becoming active could simply be about making small and self-interested changes within the existing structures of society leading to an uncritical acceptance of the status quo and the reproduction of it. This sense of efficacy does not reflect the motivations of the activists involved here. What is striking about the interviews is that they all express anger at the injustice and inequality around them. Therefore, their efficacy had to be reframed and understood as critical political efficacy which is underpinned by the concept of critical praxis. Their efficacy is informed by a critical consciousness which adopts a structural analysis of and anger at the injustices and inequalities they witnessed around them and they hold a strong desire to change these conditions. As such they have a firm commitment to social justice and so it is this which drives their activism and informs their efficacy.

9.2.5. Critical Political Moments.

One of the concepts social scientists used to explain why people become politically active is the concept of 'critical moments' (Thomson *et al.*, 2002). These are political or economic events which have historical significance. These events can shape and inform people's political lives and act as a socialising agent, presenting an opportunity to be active. For these activists, three events were noted, one referred to the Iraq War as a moment where they first became interested in politics. The other two events noted as being of

significance were the Scottish Independence referendum of 2014 and the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader in 2015.

The referendum had a significant effect on the political activity and awareness of some of the participants discussed here. Of the eight who mentioned the referendum one was already politicised and active as a member of the SNP. Another was also already active in the Labour Party, but actually stopped being active during the campaign due to Labour's involvement with the Conservative Party in the No campaign. The remaining six young people were socialised by the referendum campaign and it presented them with their first opportunity to become active. John's comment neatly sums up the impact it had on those participants who cited it as important, *'...It just...hyper charged everything...because everyone was talking about...you couldn't avoid it...without that I wouldn't have been where I am today.'*

The election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party in 2015 was the express reason why six of the participants became active. These young people had already developed an interest in politics and had a clear left political identity and it was the emergence of a clearly left wing leader that inspired them. Keir's comment here can sum up the views of these activists when he says; *'It was just like, "well wait a minute, I want tae get involved in politics for this guy"...'*

9.3. Research Question 2 & 3: Role of Education

Although the influence of schooling on the formation of pupils' political behaviour is contested (Neundorf & Smets, 2017) it is often cited in the

literature as amongst the most important political socialising agents. My findings reveal a complex relationship between schooling and political socialisation, offering some insight into the detail of how some schools influence some young people. For instance, my findings demonstrate the positive influence of both the formal and extra-curricular elements of schooling on the development of these activists. But the awareness these activists had of any specific citizenship education or its effectiveness is mixed. Moreover, my findings clearly show that the minimal rather than the maximal conception of citizenship education was prevalent amongst the participants experiences. I identify some evidence of the reproductive role of school and the focus on a narrow employability focus. But my findings also suggest that this can be challenged and undermined by providing some evidence of the crucially important influence some teachers, and the pedagogical approaches they used, had on the development of these critically conscious activists. I will review each of these findings in turn.

9.3.1. Role of Schooling: Formal and Extra-Curricular

These activists had a contrasting response to their schooling depending on their engagement with the formal curriculum or extra-curricular activities. Taking formal schooling first, in general, the activists can be split into two categories, nine for who school was influential and eight where it had no influence. Amongst those who found school influential, I think it is significant that in the context of the priority given to education for citizenship, only one of these activists saw their formal schooling as the key reason for their move to activism. Although six other activists thought that their formal schooling, in

some way was supportive, but not crucial to their activism. A unifying feature of these particular activists was that they all came from political households. I theorise that this means they would have a propensity to be interested in and have the capacity to make the most of any education that engaged them in issues of politics and democracy. For another two activists, school was seen as an important motivator in their move to activism but this was as a result of the negative experiences they had, rather than anything planned in the taught formal curriculum. Both of these activists also grew up in political households, but neither signalled any awareness of undertaking any identifiable citizenship education in their schools. For the remaining eight activist their formal schooling played no part in their political socialisation or motivation to become active. Although four of these activists also grew up in some form of political household.

Turning to extra-curricular activities, eight activists thought that these activities were supportive in some way to their political development. The specific opportunities noted were, debating clubs, supported voluntary activities and pupil representative structures. However, all but one of these activists came from a political household and had cited the formal school curriculum as supportive. So it is likely that their positive experience of the formal curriculum meant they could see the advantages of this extra-curricular activity. Nonetheless, for the activist who did not grow up in a political household, his participation in a debating club was the crucial socialisation agent for him. Whilst this was not part of the formal taught curriculum it does offer some

evidence of the compensatory effect school can have on those who lack the benefit of a political household (see Neundorf *et al.*, 2016).

9.3.2. Role of Citizenship Education

In relation to the role of citizenship education on the development of the participants, my findings are mixed and demonstrate some complexity. I did identify examples of practice that could be classified as a maximal approach, but these were the minority across the data. Additionally, even for these activists, who thought school helped them, their experience of any identifiable citizenship education was restricted to just one subject area: Modern Studies, and in some instances History. Not opportunities across the breadth of the curriculum which is an aim of the policy. Furthermore, whilst there may have been citizenship education opportunities in the schools all the participants attended, these do not seem to have been clearly or coherently presented to them and as such this might explain why some of these young people did not feel they experienced any citizenship education at school. For example, as Hugo comments when asked about any citizenship education he undertook, *'...Nah...I never got any, like, not saying I never got any of it, it would've been very, very little of that. Education is just setting you up for that exam at the end of fourth year, and when, you join the workplace'*. Despite some good examples of a maximal approach, the minimal conception of citizenship was dominant in the experience of most of these activists.

9.3.3. School as a Site of Reproduction

From a Marxist perspective schools perform a key ideological role by helping to sustain and reproduce the dominant capitalist social relations. Amongst other means, schools do this by providing a banking form of education, emphasising merely useful knowledge. This encourages the development of passive, compliant, autarchic citizens. These citizens may have a range of individual skills to help them enter and compete in the labour market. But they have not been encouraged to think critically about the world and so are less likely to actively engage with it and the political process. My findings show that for some activists their experience of school reflects its reproductive role, for instance James' comments here, mirror other activists, when he says:

...is the state really going to...actively fund subversive activities are they going to be challenging the status quo...No it's...not...the role of the state to reproduce the ideology that allows the state to function...that's not going to change...

Linked to this reproductive role other activists spoke about the narrowness of the curriculum and its employability purpose. This 'merely' useful knowledge they encountered is exemplified by Mick's comment here and is representative of participants views, *'Well, at school it was, it just felt you...were just there tae get the grades. And I just felt it was tae get you a job at the end. It did'nae feel very, you were'nae there tae just be educated or improve your mind...'*

9.3.4. School as a Site of Struggle

As noted above, there is clear evidence, expressed across all the interviews, that schools act to reproduce the capitalist status quo, even amongst the activists who thought school supported their activism in some way.

Nonetheless, a significant finding for me is that in some instances, schools can also be sites of struggle, where this reproduction process can be subverted. There is evidence that some teachers were able to introduce alternative readings of the world and create a pedagogical space that reflects the maximal conception of citizenship and so involve students in a counter hegemonic education that supports their development as critically conscious activists. This was the experience of nine of these activists who could highlight an influential teacher who engaged and inspired them and introduced them to 'really' useful knowledge. These 'heroes' introduced participants to a range of critical ideas such as, left wing and progressive politics, the struggle for and importance of democracy, the need for political activism and some provided opportunities to engage in volunteering which developed their sense of social justice. In most cases the work of these teachers complemented the participants' early socialisation and in one case it was seen as the crucial reason why a participant became an activist.

Additionally, what was also significant was that from my analysis of their accounts, these activists could identify the pedagogical approaches that supported their activism and those which did not. For example, all the activists who cited the school as being important clearly identified approaches these teachers used which supported their development. These were described as involving a more equal relationship with their teacher, the encouragement of open and critical discussion and the attempt to connect the topics of study and discussion with the lived experience and material conditions of the students involved. I have used the Freirean concept of problem posing or dialogue to

characterise this approach. Whilst these activists were clear about what supported them, equally, all of the activists identified the pedagogical approach which did not support their activism and I have used the Freirean concept of banking to characterise this approach. That approach is where the teacher/student relationship was more authoritarian, uncritical or involved rote learning and which was seen as having a narrow human capital purpose. I will now move on to present some reflections on my thesis and the approach taken.

9.4. Reflections on the Limitations of My Thesis and the Approach Adopted

A defining feature of this thesis is my adoption of a critical approach. One of the motivations for this can be found in the tasks that Apple *et al.* (2009: 4) outlined for critical educational research, in particular the need to '*...keep the traditions of radical work alive*'. And so, my critical approach reflects, in the words of the Gil Turner (1964) song, the desire and genuine duty I feel to '*Carry it on*'. Nonetheless, Apple *et al.* (1990) caution against researchers adopting this approach uncritically. Accordingly, I will offer some reflections on aspects of my approach to this thesis to acknowledge its limitations and examine some of the issues that arise from this. Specifically, in what follows I will discuss and clarify four aspects: the scope and content of my literature review; my research strategy and the self-disclosure of my positionality to participants; the claim I make about the lack of awareness of citizenship education by some participants; and my understanding of the concept of banking education in relation to issues of knowledge. I will also comment on potential future research topics that follow on from my approach and some of my findings.

In relation to the content and scope of my literature review, I will make two points; one relates to the size of my sample and the other to the status of music in the political socialisation literature. My use of qualitative semi-structured interviews produced a rich data set. Yet, the small sample size of 17 young people and the snowballing method of recruiting the participants from specific small organisations within the Left of the labour movement resulted in a sample that was relatively homogeneous and inevitably did not include an extensive range of opinions and experiences. For instance, my sample was overwhelmingly white, male and university educated.

Therefore, my interpretation of the data produced and the knowledge and insights I gained, could have been enhanced by making more use of recent quantitative studies that explored young people's attitudes to political participation or their levels political literacy. These studies (for example, Eichhorn, 2014, 2018a, 2018b, or Hill *et al.*, 2017) drew on a larger sample that reflected a broader range of social, economic and demographic characteristics. Some of these studies also drew on the views of adults and teachers, not just young people. The presentation of a more substantial review of this literature would have offered a wider context, upon which the similarities and differences between my sample and the broader population could have been brought into sharper focus.

In relation to music and the political socialisation literature, one of my findings highlights that whilst music was a significant political socialising agent for some of my sample, the literature relating to political socialisation largely ignores

music's role as a socialising agent. Yet other disciplinary fields and the associated literature, such as some sociology or popular music education, both acknowledges and fruitfully explores the intersection between music and politics and argues that there is a powerful pedagogical relationship between music and learning about politics, democracy and activism (see Eyerman & Jamison, 1998, Woodford, 2005, DeNora, 2010 or Jackson, 2010). My findings connect directly to this literature as they show that music was vital in the political awakening of some young people. These young people moved from just listening to music, to a deeper hermeneutical engagement with it. This engagement helped them make connections between their own lived experiences and material conditions, and the analysis and ideals of wider political and social movements for social justice. In the process, they became critically conscious, engaged citizens willing to become active in the struggle to make our society more socially just. For all researchers with an interest in how people learn about politics and activism, my findings indicate that there is a benefit to focusing attention on the intersection between music, politics and political socialisation and the literature from these different disciplinary areas can complement each other. I will now turn to reflect on elements of my research strategy.

As I have already argued, the positionality of the researcher will influence all aspects of a research project. I made my Marxist position and the transformative purpose of my research explicit to participants at the point of their recruitment and this self-disclosure will have produced a particular outcome. It follows then that any other researcher, with a different position,

explicitly expressed or not, may well have produced a different outcome with the same participants. I claim my self-disclosure was a crucial factor in developing a comradely rapport with the participants, helping me generate a rich data set. Nevertheless, it is important to reflect on the possible disadvantages my self-disclosure might have had on how the participants approached our interview and what they said. For example, there was a significant difference between our ages and the length of my membership and experience in the broad labour movement is greater. These factors, allied to the inevitable power differential that exists between the researcher and interviewee, could have framed the interview encounter in a particular way, perhaps making participants feel intimidated by my perceived power, knowledge and experience. Therefore, a possible desire on their part to impress or please me may have shaped how the participants' responded to my questions. Moreover, declaring my political position and the purpose of the research with participants who broadly shared my political position could also have created '*...a false sense of intimacy and encourage the participant to over disclose*' (Braun & Clark, 2013: 93). For instance, there is a potential risk that in responding to my efforts to build a rapport by declaring my politics, the participants felt the needed to perform or show off their radical credentials, rather than consider and respond specifically to my questions. I did feel that one interview had elements of this as the participant did go off on occasional long and sometimes opinionated tangents which did not relate to my research questions. Despite this I was able to bring the interview back to a focus on the research topic. Nonetheless, being solely reliant on individual interviews with a small sample of young people necessarily limited the scope of my data

collection. The incorporation of focus groups would have facilitated interaction between participants and so bolstered the data collection and my analysis, not only by verifying the data and my interpretation of it, but by potentially extending the range of views or ideas surfaced and the depth of their exploration.

Building on this discussion of my research strategy, I will now consider and illustrate a specific issue further in relation to the participants' experiences of education for citizenship and my interpretation of these experiences. Education for citizenship in Scotland is both a national education policy priority and should be delivered and experienced by young people as cross curricular. Furthermore, I maintain that the policy rhetoric of education for citizenship resembles a critical or maximal conception of citizenship education rather than a personally responsible or minimal conception. Yet, despite this national priority and cross curricular ambition, outside of Modern Studies lessons, the majority of my participants struggled to recall undertaking any clearly identifiable citizenship education in the subjects they took at school. My findings also reflect Biesta's (2013) analysis and conclusions that the personally responsible conception is dominant in Scotland. My conclusions here are principally drawn from my interpretation of the data collected from the interviews with young people alone. Whilst no claim of generalisability can be asserted from my small qualitative data set, I recognise that my interpretation of the participants' experiences of their schooling would have been strengthened if I had also interviewed a sample of teachers and drawn directly on their views. This would have provided a different dimension and enabled me to compare the experience of young people with the intentions and stated

practice of teachers. In addition, whilst I found a lack of a cross curricular approach, I acknowledge that this conclusion could have been supported more if I had pursued further questions about the participants' experience of citizenship education across a wider range of school subjects other than modern studies.

My last point of reflection relates to my understanding of Freire's concepts of banking and problem posing education and their relationship to forms of knowledge and the curriculum in schools. In this thesis I argue that the pedagogical process and the educational content that best supported the participants' development as activists resembles Freire's notion of problem posing approaches. Here, critical dialogue is encouraged and students' own knowledge of their material conditions and lived experience is drawn on as curricular content to help them develop a critical understanding of the way things are, so they can be challenged. Conversely, the concept of banking was cited as not supportive of a move to activism and was presented as an educational approach in which outcomes include prioritising learning which supports the economic needs of individual human capital development and creating in pupils an uncritical acceptance of the status quo. Marxist critiques of schooling would emphasise these reproductive functions which schools serve. Nonetheless, I would suggest it is also evident, at least at a rhetorical level, that education policy in Scotland is committed to promoting social justice and enabling schools to provide an education that raises the attainment of all pupils, allowing them to achieve their full potential, particularly those from social and economically marginalised backgrounds. Therefore, I acknowledge that

individual schools and the educators who work in them can face a challenge in managing the tensions between these reproductive, economic and social justice functions of schooling.

In this context, I want to make clear that whilst the problem posing approach is favoured in this thesis for the development of a critical citizenship that can support a counter hegemonic project, this is not to reject in full the banking approach or the range of knowledge schools provide access to. Rather this approach and its purpose should be problematised. Gramsci's (1991) perspective is important to my understanding here. He argues that working class students should have access to knowledge, not just that required for individual development, but also in order to pursue social justice and social change. They should be encouraged to develop both the functional skills and literacy that has currency in the labour market, but also be given the same opportunity and encouragement to develop the discipline to study and engage with the widest possible range of intellectual ideas and academic knowledge that is open to other less disadvantaged students. Denying some young people this opportunity, as in the working class schools described by Anyon (1981), would be to cut these young people off from the 'heritage of humanistic culture' which belongs to everyone and so renders this knowledge the sole property and concern of elites (see Small, 2017: 181). To do so would be to condemn young people to 'cognitively emasculated' curricular hovels inuring them to be only the *'hewers of wood and the drawers of water'* (see Alexander, 1994: 49). Apple (1990) reminds us that the content of any curriculum is a selective process representing the product of a relationship between knowledge and

power. Therefore, a curriculum and the pedagogical approaches that claim to support attainment and social justice must find a way to combine both the lived experience and knowledge of disadvantaged young people with engagement in the study of the widest vocational and academic knowledge possible. Allowing them to not only 'read the word', but also to 'read the world', enhancing their ability to advance individually, but also facilitating the acquisition of critical awareness to help young people engage in social and political activity for social change and social justice.

To conclude this section, I will highlight two future research projects which flow from this work. Firstly, as indicated above, my thesis would have benefited from the inclusion of the experiences and perspectives of teachers. Therefore, I would be keen to conduct research with school based teachers who are involved in teaching Citizenship Education (CE) in some way, including those who would advocate the maximal approach. Questions to explore would include: how do they conceive of their role in teaching CE?; what is their knowledge and understanding of the conceptual frameworks in relation to CE?; which conception do they apply when teaching?; what do they see as their purpose for teaching CE?; what do they consider to be the most effective pedagogical approaches? Secondly, I would be keen to conduct more focused research on issues of social class and CE, an area that was not explored in-depth in my thesis. For instance, all but one of my participants self-defined as working class using the Marxist definition, that is a relational interpretation of class derived from an individual's position within the social relations of production. This is important as some of the political socialisation literature

makes a correlation between social class and political participation. However, as I interpret it, this correlation is framed by drawing on a non-Marxist or gradational concept, where an individual's class is determined by categories such as their wealth, employment or educational attainment. In the political socialisation literature, the argument is made that the higher a person's social class, and particularly their educational attainment, the more likely that person is to participate in political and civic affairs. According to such an argument, working class people are more likely not to participate. Yet, my sample who mostly self-declared as working class, also had high levels of educational attainment, and were all actively involved in political activity. Exploring this possible contradiction will further develop and sharpen understandings of how conceptions of class, particularly relational ones, can be used as an analytical tool in political socialisation research as well as indicating what improvements can be made to the theory and practice of citizenship and political education that promotes the development of critical consciousness and social change. What follows is the final section of my thesis in which I discuss some of the implications of my findings.

9.5. Implications and Concluding Comments

A principle aim of this study was to engage these young activists in a dialogue that would explain why they became active. In particular, I wanted to uncover the educational approaches that supported their activism. This knowledge could then contribute to the existing theoretical and pedagogical resources that are available to critical educators, helping to improve the effectiveness of educational approaches that foster political socialisation, critical awareness and a commitment to social justice. My findings present some of this 'really' useful

knowledge, and they have some implications for our understandings of activism and in particular the education that supports it. In the following I will discuss three implications. These implications are inter-connected and relate to the context of schooling. Firstly, I want to make some comments about the factors that explain the development of these activists and what this means for educators interested in promoting critical activism. The second implication follows on from this and relates to how we think about citizenship education in the formal school context and what things can be done to improve it and support a critical approach. Lastly, I think my findings, in a small way, can offer some confidence to others interest in critical educational work in schools.

It is clear from my thesis that the reasons why these young people became active are the result of a complex mix of different factors including an interaction of one or more key socialising agents. Principal among these is the role of the family and how this combines with other socialising agents. As the literature suggests, if you grow up in a political family, then you are more likely to make the most of other socialising agents, especially school, and as a result become interested and active in the political process. If your family background reflects a particular political identity and set of values then you are more likely to adopt that identity and those values. Although as my findings show, this identity and these values are not necessarily adopted uncritically or passively, as political identity is confirmed through the critical reading of their experiences and engagement with the world beyond the family. Nonetheless, some of the participants became active and developed a political identity and values without the benefit of growing up in a political family. Other socialising agents therefore

became important and compensated for this deficit, in particular peer relationships, music, critical political moments and in one case the school's extra-curricular activities. There is also an emotional element that stimulated their activism. That is the anger and solidarity generated in these young people as a response to the injustice and inequality that is a characteristic of our capitalist social universe.

For those interested in promoting activism and in particular for educators, it will be useful to know the reasons why people become politically active. Yet, it clearly involves a variable, unique and idiosyncratic combination of different socialising factors at different times, that cannot easily be predicted and are difficult to create, develop or promote. For example, whilst the role of the political family is clearly important, how can this be fostered by those externally to the family? Nonetheless, my findings show that outside the family there are other opportunities to encourage and enhance the socialisation of young people. For instance, as I have shown, school can be an important socialising agent and a site where educators can make meaningful interventions in young people's lives to encourage their activism. Additionally, it can also help to compensate for the lack of a political family or other socialising agents and a place where critical consciousness can be raised. My findings indicate some approaches to citizenship education which have been effective in producing active and critically conscious citizens. These approaches have implications for this educational work in schools and it is this that I turn to now.

The ambition and outcomes of the Scottish education for citizenship initiative is to produce young people who have developed the capacity to become active and responsible citizens, who have critical evaluative skills, understand fairness and are capable of taking thoughtful and responsible action to promote social justice. I would argue that in the main the attitudes, dispositions and activism of the participants in this research reflect these outcomes. Yet, most of the activists in this study did not develop these attributes or dispositions primarily from their experience at school. An implication of my thesis therefore is to highlight effective ways in which these policy outcomes can be facilitated, promoted and maximised. If we are serious about meeting the outcomes of education for citizenship, then minimal conceptions of citizenship education, producing a personally responsible citizen, will not be sufficient. On the contrary, achieving these policy outcomes will only be achieved effectively by committing to a maximal conception and adopting suitable pedagogical approaches. The existing research literature already records some of what follows. Nonetheless, my findings add to this knowledge by highlighting the pedagogical approaches and experiences that were effective in helping these participants become political activists.

Those who work in schools and are interested in developing critical and active citizens should therefore aim to adopt a problem posing critical pedagogy approach. That is an approach that facilitates a more equal relationship between teachers and pupils, encourages open classroom discussion and draws on pupils own lived experiences and material conditions as curricular content to explore injustices and inequalities in the communities and wider

society around them. Attention should also be given to providing a range of extra-curricular activities that maximise the performative aspects of citizenship learning. Young people learn about democracy and maximal citizenship by being actively involved in the democratic and decision making process that effect their lives and so support to pupil councils and other forms of democratic and representative structures should be prioritised, both in school and communities. Although, tokenism should be guarded against. These structures will only work effectively if they are developed alongside young people, from the bottom up, so that they encourage genuine participation, democratic learning and decision making. Critical educators should also consider how volunteering opportunities can be developed that allow young people to develop the skills and dispositions that promote empathy and solidarity as well as critical awareness of issues and a desire for activism. My findings highlight the importance of these opportunities, framed by an emphasis on the intrinsic value they provide, rather than any individualist, extrinsic self-interest.

Lastly, I want to briefly discuss what my findings tell those interested in critical education about the possibility of critical and counter hegemonic work in schools and how when present, it can mean the reproductive role is not overwhelming. I want to make two points which I think offer a constructive and hopeful perspective. First, the very obvious point is that in response to the inequalities and injustices that they see and experience in their communities and in capitalist society at large, this group of young people have developed a left wing political identity. They are critically conscious, have a commitment to social justice and a desire to change the way things are to make the world a

fairer, more socially just place. They have developed this counter hegemonic view of the world, despite having attended school and lived in a capitalist social universe. For some this view was nurtured by their experience in school, for others it was not. But my point is that these 17 young activists demonstrate that the school's function to reproduce capitalist social relations was not overwhelming as they all managed to escape the crushing weight of the ideological state apparatus. They do not just uncritically and passively accept things the way they are.

My second point is addressed directly to those who work in and with schools and it is that my findings provide some evidence that counter hegemonic work can take place in school and that it can make a difference to some young people. I hope this can be a source of confidence to others to continue this work or inspire others to take it on. I recognise from my own working experience the enormity and challenges of taking on this position in school and wider educational contexts. The dominance of the current neoliberal hegemony limits the purpose of education to a narrow human capital function. Furthermore, this focus on 'learning to be employable', is accompanied by further constraints on the autonomy of critical educators as a result of a range of 'policy technologies' (Ball, 2003) including managerialism, the technical rationality of imposed outcomes and the resultant emphasis on performativity of both school and individual teacher performance measurement (see Biesta, 2006b, Hill, 2007, Tett & Hamilton, 2019). This creates a hostile environment for any critical work which can sap the confidence of educators thinking of taking a critical stance. Yet as Lynch (2019: xviii) reminds us, although it can be limited, educators do

have some autonomy to challenge the values, practices and effects of neoliberalism and human capital. Further, she states not only does this autonomy provide opportunities for resistance, but educators also have a '*...moral imperative to do so*'.

Consequently, to those interested in critical education in school contexts as a means to help make our world a better place, I would say this. The conditions within which counter hegemonic educational work can take place are problematic and limiting. Nonetheless, as a 'resource of hope', I would emphasise the oft quoted aphorism attributed to Antonio Gramsci; 'Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will' to help make sense this context. Antonini (2019: 42/43) points out that Gramsci developed this phrase as a conceptual tool and she describes its meaning as follows '*...the (seemingly contradictory) coexistence of a realistic description of the status quo, on the one hand, and a genuine commitment to the possibility of transforming reality, on the other.*' With the predominance of a minimal approach my findings do offer some evidence for pessimism, yet they also present a case for optimism. Although schools can be places in which capitalist social relations are reproduced and autarchic citizens created, they can also be sites of struggle where educators can work within them to help undermine and negate this reproductive role.

My findings show that some young people arrive at school with an interest in politics and democracy. Moreover, as my findings and the literature make clear, schools can also help compensate for those who don't come with this interest. Therefore, critical educators should use their autonomy to find the 'small

openings' (Groenke & Hatch) for resistance that exist to practice critically by promoting a maximal conception of citizenship education. For example, as was noted above, the policy context, which gives priority to citizenship education, provides a strong rationale for counter hegemonic work. The principles and outcomes that it sets can, if interpreted radically, all offer justification and support for the promotion of a maximal conception of citizenship education. I have also shown what pedagogical approaches and content are effective in engaging young people in an education that can spark or further develop their interest in politics and promote a critical consciousness. I would stress that I do not think critical work in school alone will transform capitalist social relations. This work needs to be linked and allied to wider political activism and struggles in communities, workplaces and in wider society. Furthermore, educators need to be engaged in these struggles in and out of school. Yet as Boxley (2014: 67) comments encouragingly, '*...there is always potential for damage to be done to the "bourgeois outlook" promoted by state schools through well struck sparks of intellectual challenge cast upon even damp gunpowder.*' So, despite the pessimism of the current status quo, as my findings show, there are always small openings to be found and cultivated where critical educators in schools can work with young people; developing their critical awareness of the world around them and supporting and inspiring their move to activism.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Research Proposal for Labour Movement Gatekeepers

HOW DO YOUNG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS LEARN FOR DEMOCRACY & CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP? TOWARDS A REASSERTION OF 'REALLY' USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

1. Aim of study

This qualitative study aims to identify the key factors that explain why some young people became politically active citizens. Of particular interest in this research will be the extent to which any educational experiences were formative. I am also interested in examining what implications the key factors and formative educational experiences of these young people might have on the content and practice of an education that focuses on promoting active citizenship and involvement in democracy.

2. Research Questions

My main interest in this study is to answer the question: how do young political activists learn for democracy & critical citizenship? To take forward this study and to meet my stated aims the following research questions will be addressed.

1. What are the significant factors the young people in the sample claim led to their political activity?
2. In what ways and to what extent did any educational experiences influence their becoming active?
3. What pedagogical processes or content did they think encouraged or hindered their becoming active?
4. How and to what extent did their experience of education for citizenship in their formal schooling influence their motivation to become active?

3. Research Approach

I will adopt a critical research approach in this proposed study. For the avoidance of doubt, my understanding and use of the term 'critical' in this paper does not refer to the commonly used meaning concerning the objective systematic questioning of knowledge claims. Rather, it is drawn from the theoretical and philosophical traditions of Marxism and critical theory (Horkheimer, 2002) which is deployed to critique capitalist social relations in the interest of those marginalised and disadvantaged by these relations.

4. Sample

In order to meet this research aim I plan to interview small numbers of young people (5-10 per organisation) who are currently active in the Young Communist League, the Labour Party Young Socialist and the Youth Committee of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. I intend to conduct interviews individually and in focus groups.

Appendix 2: Initial Email Invite to Potential Participants

Research Project into Education For Democracy & Citizenship

Are you between 16 and 27 years old? If so I'd like your help with my research into education for democracy and citizenship.

If you are interested in helping me find ways in which we can improve how people learn about democracy & citizenship then I'd welcome talking to you about your experience of becoming a politically active citizen.

For more details on my research please watch this short video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaWuaSI997s&feature=youtube> I've also attached an information sheet on my research.



[Stuart Moir](#)

If you want to get involved in my research or need more information, please contact me directly either by e mail: stuart.moir@ed.ac.uk or by phone on 0131 651 6266

I look forward to hearing from you,

Best wishes

Stuart

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Appendix 3: Research Information Sheet

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Research project title:	Learning for democracy & critical citizenship: Towards a reassertion of really useful knowledge
Research investigator:	Stuart Moir

1. About the Project

- This research project is part of the doctoral study of the research investigator named above.
- The aim of this research is to identify how the young people taking part in the study account for their active involvement in the democratic and political process. This research aims to recruit and interview a range of young people who are currently politically active citizens.
- Of particular interest is how their educational experiences contributed to their activity. Both their formal schooling and any informal learning such as in the community or workplace.
- It also aims to identify and develop with research participants' possible alternative educational approaches to education for citizenship, which can encourage more socially just relations and processes in both education and society.

2. What commitment is involved in this research?

- To take part in all or any elements of this research project participants must read this information sheet and sign a consent form.
- Participants will be asked to take part in individual and group interviews.
- The plan for this research is that participants will only be asked to be involved in one individual interview and at most two group interviews. However there might be occasions when the researcher will need to contact a participant, for example to seek clarification on an element of their contribution. This follow up contact will aim to be done by e mail or over the telephone and will be kept to a minimum. Participants are not obliged to respond to follow up requests.
- Individual interviews and focus groups will take place at a time and place negotiated between the researcher and the individual interviewees. In principle this will be at the convenience of the interviewee. It will always be within a public place.

3. What are your rights as a participant?

- Taking part in the study is voluntary. Whilst participants might initially agree to take part, they may choose to cease participation at any time.
- As far as possible a participant's contributions will be kept confidential. However for those participants under 18 years old, there are limits to confidentiality, and the researcher would have to inform someone if a participant gives them information that might present harm to them or to other people.

4. What are the risks involved in this study?

- It is not anticipate that there are any risks associated with participation in this research project, but participants have the right to stop an interview or focus group and withdraw from the research at any time.
- I have been very careful to make sure that my research is done in an ethical way. For this reason, I might discuss some possible risks with you before starting the interview, such as making sure that you understand what we will be talking about and reminding you that you can stop at any time.

- If any questions make you anxious or upset, I will stop the interview and if need be help you find someone who can help you.
- All participants will be given the opportunity to remove any information or images you have contributed to the research at any stage of the research process.

5. What are the benefits for taking part in this study?

- Taking part in this study will give participants an opportunity to help develop knowledge and understanding in relation to how people become actively involved in the democratic and political process.
- This knowledge may also contribute to improving the educational theory and practice of education for citizenship.

6. Will I receive any payment or monetary benefits?

- You will receive no payment for your participation. The data will not be used for commercial purposes. Therefore you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future.

7. Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

- Stuart Moir will be the only researcher in this project. He will be responsible for every aspect of the research project. He will be supported by two supervisors who are academic staff from the University of Edinburgh.
- The data collected in this research will come from individual and group interviews with those young people agreeing to take part. This data will be recorded and transcribed.
- The data collected will be stored securely and in accordance with Data Collection Act (1998). It will be stored until 1 year after the end of the research project (approximately Aug 2019) and then destroyed.
- Access to the interview transcripts will be limited to Stuart Moir, but they may also be shared with academic supervisors in support of the research process.
- All or part of the content of your interview may be used in academic papers and academic outlets that I may produce such as presentations or feedback events.
- Any summary, or direct quotations from the individual interview or focus groups that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymised so that participants cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify participants is not revealed.
- This research has been reviewed and approved by the Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee.

Contact information

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Stuart Moir

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You can also contact Stuart Moir's supervisors:

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or

Dr Jane Brown

Email: j.a.brown@ed.ac.uk

Tel: 131 651 6389

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact the Chair of the Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee via:

Shona Cunningham

RKE Office: Research Secretary

School Office

Email: s.cunningham@ed.ac.uk

Tel: 131 651 6388

Appendix 4: Participant Information in Advance of Interview (Research

Questions Consent form)

Example email text to participants in advance of interview showing the broad research questions

Hi Hugo,

Thanks again for agreeing to take part in an interview and I'll see you at 11.00 in...

I've attached a brief information sheet that if you have time it would help to read through as I'll have to get you to sign a consent form which relates to the information sheet.

My research questions are below. This might help you to frame your thoughts in preparation for the interview. But the interview should really be just a discussion.

Overall Research questions

1. What are the critical factors that people in the sample claim explains their active citizenship?
2. What role did education play in encouraging their activity?
3. How and to what extent did their experience of education for citizenship in school influence their motivation to become active?
4. How do active citizens think education for citizenship should be taught?

Best wishes

Stuart



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Moray House School of Education

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Research project title:	Learning for democracy & critical citizenship: Towards a reassertion of really useful knowledge
Research investigator:	Stuart Moir
Research Participants name:	

The information sheet and this consent form aim to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. It also ensures that you are aware of my role as interviewer, and how the information you share with me during our interview will be used in the research project.

Please tick the boxes beside the statements you agree with, and sign and date the consent form overleaf. I will leave you with your own copy of this consent form.

- I understand that I am taking part in an individual interview as part of the research project named above.
- I have read the information sheet and I understand the purpose of this research, and that I am able to ask questions about it at any time.
- I understand that I am taking part in this research voluntarily, and that I am free to stop the interview or withdraw from the research project at any time.
- I am willing for this individual interview to be digitally recorded and transcribed for use as part of the research project.
- I am willing for anonymised extracts from this interview to be used as part of the research.
- I understand that anonymised extracts from this interview may appear in publications relevant to this area of research.
- I understand that I will not receive any financial benefit for my participation in this research project.

		Date
Interviewee's Name		
Interviewee's signature		
Researchers Name		
Researchers signature		

DRAFT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE/GUIDE

Overall Research questions

1. What are the critical factors young people in the sample claim explains their active citizenship?
2. What role did education play in encouraging their activity?
3. How and to what extent did their experience of education for citizenship in school influence their motivation to become active?
4. How do active citizens think education for citizenship should be taught?

1. General introductory facts and reminders

- Intro to me
- Reminder about the interview being recorded
- Reminder of issues of confidentiality and that they can stop and leave at any time
- Sign consent forms
- Use of cards.

2. Intro to focus of interview

- General focus: I am interested in your political life history. Particularly in finding out about the things that you think affected or influenced you to become politically active. (give one example such as key events, situations, people)

3. Interview questions

Intro

- Ask them to give a brief biography in own words i.e. name, age, school, current status.
- Ask them to briefly describe the range of their activity? Membership, role etc.

RQ. 1. Starting where you are, why did you join the (use as applicable) YCL/LPYS/YCSTUC?¹²

- Then follow this through, working back.
- Explore the any other activity in any other organisations, in school or your community, not highlighted above?
- Use cards to record priorities

¹² YCL = Young Communist League, LPYS = Labour Party Young Socialists, YCSTUC = Youth Committee Scottish Trades Union Congress

RQ.2. How relevant/important was your educational experiences in you becoming active?

- Both formal or informal . I also mean informal or non-formal learning experiences where '*...informal education is the lifelong process in which people learn from their everyday experience, and informal education is organised activity outside formal systems*'
- What themes about the content or pedagogical process of the experience come out. If these themes don't come up I would ask about them.
- Such as was it the way it was taught? or was it the content? or was it the way the tutor/teacher behaved?
- Look here for positive examples of educational work.
- Who was involved, why was it important?
- Was it a positive or negative experience?

RQ.3. How important was any citizenship education in school?

- Were there any differences in experience between teaching here and in other areas noted above? i.e. in TU education? Why?

RQ.4. From your experience as an active citizen, how do you think education/educators should approach supporting young people to become active citizens?

- Link back to anything about pedagogical approaches noted earlier.

Appendix 6: Example of Reflections on Initial Reading of Interview Transcript

Reflections on initial reading of interview transcript

Name	Anthony
Gender	M
Age	22
Sample Group category	SLYS
Declared social class	WC based on family being from a working class background
Current status	PG student (Public Policy) UG degree politics
Educational background	State comp (denominational)
Parent's employment status	Both civic servants , public sector (passport office)
<u>Range of Activity</u> SLYS, Labour party (Also CFS & CFLPD), Youth committee PCS, CND, Anti Austerity, Anti Fracing, Better than Zero, volunteers at foodbank.	
<u>Summary of key points</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two key influences on activism, family background & school education. • Strong commitment to social justice values driving and sense of efficacy activism. • Influence of religion, or at least values instilled from denominational school informed development of values. • Is able to compare banking with dialogical education in his experience. • Makes significant criticism of CE in other schools based on his knowledge of his peers' experiences. • Indy ref was significant but became inactive due to LP and Better together. 	
<u>Initial reflections</u> Family background of interest in politics and membership of TU seen as an important primary political socialization. Although not members of the LP they are supporters and LP voters. Politics is always talked about in the house and the TV news and political programs always on. Lots of family discussion about politics. He has early memories of being taken on demos, the Iraq War sticks in him memory. Parents are members of their TU and Anthony joined the youth wing of PCS at 15. As well as this family background Anthony' experience at school was crucial in becoming active. This is for two reasons. Firstly, he had an influential Modern Studies and History teacher, who engaged Anthony' interest in politics further through open discussion in the classes. This teacher was on the left and was able to introduce more critical content into his lessons. Anthony welcomed this and through these discussions he developed a left identity. This would support the idea of 'school as a site of struggle'. However, Anthony was clear to point out this this was not indoctrination, but	

through the teachers use of pedagogical methods which were much more engaging and participative. 'This teachers style was not as a 'stuffed shirt'. Here Anthony is making the distinction between banking and dialogue and this teacher adopted dialogical approach.

The other key influence of school was his involvement in the pupil council. This is important for two reasons. Firstly he gives an example of his efficacy and his commitment to social justice as the driver for his involvement. In that he makes constant reference to seeing injustice in school and therefore he has a desire to get involved on order to change things. Hi experience in the pupil council is a good example of experience learning and he is explicit in saying that his pupil council experience led to his activism.

Whilst his experience of school seem to reflect the CE values were promoted in his school he makes a strong criticism of CE in general. He does support the values and policy rhetoric of CE but is critical of its practice. Firstly that in his school it was focused on individual issues like how you should deal with relationships or drug problems, or how the political system works. Rather than helping young people to not only understand how things work but how they can become engaged. He cites both his own school experience and the experience of his friends from different schools.

In this his critique matches mine, and the central hypotheses if this thesis. He discusses indy ref but only n the context that he was already politicized and active in the labour party at this time and was actually deactivated as a result of the LP's involvement in better together. He felt his left no perspective was not reflected in the mainstream campaigns and so he became inactive. He was then reactivated as a result of the Findlay and then Corbyn election campaigns.

Things To follow up	
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CODING FRAME

Research Questions

1. What are the significant factors the young people in the sample claim led to their political activity?
2. In what ways and to what extent did any educational experiences influence their becoming active?
3. What pedagogical processes or content did they think encouraged or hindered their becoming active?
4. How and to what extent did their experience of education for citizenship in their formal schooling influence their motivation to become active?

Code	Definition & Notes
1. Significant factors	
Motivation or reason for becoming Active (MRBA)	Descriptive code relating to where an explanation is given to explain the reason for activity.
Family background of activity and interest . (FBAI)	Descriptive code where the respondent is signaling the importance of family background in their reason for activity. Could be their membership/involvement with a political party and/or trade union. Could be a significant life incident of family member (involvement in Spanish civil war). Or a recognition that politics and current affairs was discussed in the household, or they remember being taken on demos etc.
Family background – no politics (FBNP)	An indication that the family played no part in their activity. Politics or current affairs wasn't discussed, or no history of interest or activity in family.
Family commitment to Social Justice (FCSJ)	An indication that the family, or a significant member, instilled the importance of specific values in the respondent. Such as fairness, respect, equality, justice etc.
Significant relationship (SR)	Code indicating interviewee cites a significant relationship is important in their move to activism.
Parental influence (PI)	Indicates where respondent has identified that their decision making process has influenced by a parent

	in their development. for example choice of degree programme, membership of trade union.
Declared left Identity (DLI)	Interviewee clearly declares their identify as a left winger. Often from a young age. And cites this as a motivation to become active.
Commitment to Social justice (CSJ)	Interviewee cites a commitment to values such as equality, fairness etc. as reason for activity. suggesting that they are active as they see a range of problems in society and want to make changes to make society better.
Commitment to Democracy (CD)	respondent has a commitment to democracy, based on an analysis of society in which the world is seen as un democratic or lacking in significant opportunities for democratic engagement.
Independence referendum (IR)	This indicates the respondent citing the 2014 indy reff as important in their move to activity. More the 'coming of age' moment or the first opportunity to move to activism as it was ubiquitous, rather than a commitment to independence per se.
Political Socialisation (PS)	Where an interviewee cites specific individuals and their relationship with them as a source of their activism. By being told stories about their community/class or being invited into discussions about politics. General code about political socialisation. Related to specific sub codes which specify the context for this socialisation. Could be family background or music for example. See the sub code descriptions on Nvivo.
Turn labour left	Code indicating the reason for current activity is to help turn the labour party back into a socialist party.
Oh Jeremy Corbyn OJC)	Specifically cited reason for move from bring interested in current affairs to activism is the election of Jeremy Corbyn and the need to joining and be active to support his leadership of the Labour party.

Relationship with Friends (RwF)	Relationship with friends seen as a significant motivation for activism. Both as the gateway to a particular organization, but also in discussion and learning from them about the issues and influencing their decision to join.
Influential teacher (IT)	Respondents indicate a teacher or tutor was influential in their political socialization. either in the pedagogical methods they used and or the content they introduced. This is specifically related to more critical content and links with the code 'Schools as sites of struggle'
Taking action in school (TAIS)	Respondent discussing taking action to campaign on issues relevant to them in a school context such as through the pupil council
Autodidactic – intellectual curiosity (AD&IC)	Indicates where a respondent is describing their development as self directed through reading based on their interests and intellectual curiosity.
Faith Perspective and values (FP+V)	Relates to discussion about how their values have been shaped and influenced by a faith based ideology. Specifically not from their own faith but through the influence of important family members who were committed to a faith. It is possible to emphasize this faith influence specifically on the development of values of social justice.
Debating society (DS)	Incidences where a debating club or society has been cited as a motivation for activism or political socialization.
Personal characteristics (PC)	Describes where a respondent is citing some personal characteristics as an influence of political socialization and activism.
Iraq War (IW)	Signifies the importance of the Iraq War on their political socialization and activism.
Ant New labour Perspective (ANLP)	Indicates where an anti new Labour analysis or perspective has caused move to activism. This is particularly relating to the SLYS respondents who see new Labour as the reason

	for joining the Labour party, in that they wanted to develop a Left/socialist alternative to the policy and ideology embodied in New Labour.
Early interest in Politics (EIP)	Signifies where respondents note their interest in politics and current affairs from an early age.
Further education Experience	
Non political at School (NPS)	Code indicating where respondents discuss that they were not interested in politics at school and gave no indication of being socialized in the family household.
2. Educational experiences	
Peer learning (PL)	Learning with peers cited as a significant development of their motivation to become active
Modern studies (MS)	Modern studies at school is cited as supporting activity
School education supported interest and awareness (SESIA)	Interviewees suggesting that their school experience developed consolidated their political socialization
Reading & experience confirms identity RECI)	Respondents cite their own research and engagement with literature, either key theoretical text (marx) or party programmes and comparing this with their own lived experience confirms their political identity and primary socialization.
Affective learning (AL)	Respondents talk about 'feeling good' about having political knowledge and being able to guide or teach friends/peers. on political issues.
Anti Establishment (AE)	Respondents talk positively of a sense of being different and gaining an identity by being a left winger and interested in politics.
School experience didn't cause activism (SDCA)	Respondents cite clearly that their schooling played no part in their activism.
Pupil Council (PCouncil)	Indicating where a respondent is referring to a pupil council.
Example of hypocrisy and contradiction in schooling (EHC)	Code relating to respondents citing school hypocrisy or contradictions in rhetoric and reality as source of developing critical awareness.

Trade union Education (TUE)	Descriptive code discussing their trade union educational experience.
Critical of Pupil Council or rep structures. (CPC)	Where a respondent is critical of school or youth representative structures
3. What pedagogical processes	
Description of school activity	General code indicating when a respondent is describing their school experience.
Pedagogy (P+/-)	A code to signify that the respondent is talking about pedagogical process, either in a negative or positive way.
Dialogue not banking (or reverse DnB or BnD)	Respondents are describing their educational experience and to what extent it was good or bad in the context of dialogue or banking. For example a respondent can talk about how a more discussion based and participative educational process helped them to understand the issues and engage more.
Non critical or neutral school experience (NCNSE)	Respondents describing how their schooling experience did not develop any critical engagement with the world.
Critical of neutrality in education (CNE)	Respondents speak critically about the notion of the schools attempt to be neutral or unbiased.
Content lacked relevance (CLR)	Respondents talk about the content of their school subjects lacked relevance to their lives.
Promotion of the Status quo (PSQ)	Respondents refer to moments or experiences when they identified the school was attempting to promote the dominate status quo. Either in the content of the topic or in a general analysis of their school experience.
Focus on employability (FoE)	Respondents make negative reference to the purpose of schooling being focused narrowly on issues of employability.
Modern Studies (MS)	Examples of where modern studies as a subject is referred to as being helpful in their development.
Confidence & knowledge encourage activism (CKSA)	Respondents links developing confidence and knowledge as supporting activism.

Development of critical thinking (DCT)	Respondents cite the importance of an education that develops people's critical thinking
Focus on the Individual (Fol)	Code indicating where respondents are describing their experience of education as being focused on the individual. Usually in a critical way.
Positive Teaching methods (PTM)	Where teaching methods are being described positively and as a source of their political socialization and development as an activist.
Education linked to lived experience (ELTLE)	Where respondents argue that the educational content required to help young people become active citizens has to be made relevant to their lived experience in some way.
Education to become Fully human (ETBFH)	Respondents discuss the need for education to be wider than it currently is and focus not on just passing exams or getting a job, but to help people become fully human.
Informal learning (IL)	Where respondents discuss their informal learning experiences. Usually in a positive context and in which the content is more critical of current status quo and where they gain knowledge and skills.
Importance of Political Education (IPE)	Respondents note how important political education is in their own development or in the development of active citizens
4. Experience of CE	
Curriculum for excellence (CfE)	Examples or where CfE is discussed.
Citizenship education values promoted (CEVP)	Examples of where respondents suggest the values of CE were a clear part of their school experience.
Criticism of curriculum for excellence experience (CCfE)	Examples of where respondents are critical of their experience of the curriculum of excellence.
Agree with Citizenship education principles (AWCEP)	Respondents make positive statements about and agree with the CE principles.
No awareness of school Citizenship education.	Respondents have no recollection of CE values being promoted in school.
Criticism of Citizenship education in practice (CCE)	Respondents discuss their criticism of CE in practice.
Need for representative's training (NRT)	Respondents suggest the need for and importance of training for young

	people taking on representative roles in schools.
Youth Forums – Youth participation (YF_YP)	Respondents discuss their experience of youth representative structures.
Proposals for Citizenship Education (PFCE)	Respondents make proposals for how to improve Ce.
5. More theoretically derived codes	
Key politicizing moment (KPM)	Example of respondents citing a particular moment or experience which led to their activism or politicized them.
Consciousness raising moment	An experience that developed a respondents critical consciousness.
Conscientization (C)	Examples of where a respondent makes reference to the process of Conscientization.
Development of knowledge interest and awareness (DKIA)	A code to indicate where respondents are referring to their political socialization and developing knowledge interest and awareness is key to this. This code relates to the theoretical ideas about political socialization.
Efficacy	This code relates to an example of a respondent becoming aware of their efficacy. Again this links to the theoretical ideas about participation and activity. that is you become active if you develop a sense of efficacy, that you can change or influence something.
Class analysis (CA)	Where respondents refer to or engage in class analysis.
Hegemony (H)	An example of where a respondent discussed what can be described as hegemony. Such as the need to maintain the status quo.
School as a site of struggle (SASOS)	A code to indicate where teachers have had the space to introduce criticality in both the content and the process of their educational experience. Such as overtly left wing teachers, or teachers introducing ideas such as trade unions or being able to facilitate critical discussions about current affairs.
Development of Political identity (DPI)	Respondents talk about the development of their political identity,

	but not specifically a left identity. Hence the difference with the similar code (DLT)
Gender perspective on political awareness (GPOPA)	Respondents make reference to their gender in relation to their political awareness.
Feminist perspective (FP)	Examples of respondents citing feminism as an inspiration on becoming politicized and in interpreting their development and activity.
Anti fascist work (AF)	Respondents make reference to their involvement in anti fascist organisations and how that caused/encourages their activism.
Participatory factors – money (PF+M)	respondents discuss issues effecting their participation in activism in relation to financial costs. This barrier is discussed in the literature (e.g. see Verba <i>et al.</i> , 2003 P11)
Fear of Indoctrination-Standpoint (FI-S)	Respondents discussing their fear of teaching with a political perspective and how this can be seen as indoctrination. This code is specifically related to one respondent who is a teacher. However it also relates to ideas about neutrality which has come up for others when discussing their experience of school as a pupil.
6. General descriptive codes	
Description of activity and Involvement	Respondents describe and discuss the range of their activity and involvement.
Biographical details (BD)	Respondents give their biographical details
Trade union activity (TUA)	As above but specifically their TU activity and involvement.
Description of university education background (DUEB)	Respondents give details of any university education.
Summary of Key points (SKP)	code indicating where I summarise key points. Including my summary and the confirmation or clarification from the interviewee. Can happen at different parts of the transcript. Either at the end of a discussion or at the end of the transcript.

Social class description (SC)	Respondents describing their social class position.
Conflict with parents (CwP)	Respondents discuss their conflict with parents over ideas. For example over religion.
Current Status (CS)	Respondents describe their current status i.e. employment.
Attitude of Siblings (AOS)	respondents discuss their siblings and their attitude to politics and political activity. Makes an interesting comparison with themselves in relation to they ere all brought up in the same household but took a different approach to activism.
Drift apart from Friends (DAF)	respondents discuss drifting apart from core friendship groups as a result of their developing activism and interest in politics. The core friends do not share this interest.
Becoming disillusioned and inactive (BD&I)	The respondent discusses how particular circumstances and experiences made them inactive and or disillusioned.
First Person at Uni (FPAU)	Indicates that the respondent was the first person to attend HE.