

# **Young People and Active Citizenship: An Investigation**

**Jason John Wood**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of Doctor of  
Philosophy (PhD)**

**De Montfort University  
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# Abstract

The past decade has been witness to a growing concern with the political, moral and social capacity of young people to demonstrate 'active citizenship'. Alongside the introduction of citizenship education in schools there has been evidence of increased political and public anxiety about how young people integrate within their local communities. All of this has taken place in the context of broader social policy debates about how individuals demonstrate social responsibility in late modern, advanced liberal democracies.

This study investigated how young people define and experience active citizenship in their everyday, real world settings. It comprised workshops and focus groups with 93 young people aged 14-16 living in the East Midlands. Using an adaptive theory design, the investigation utilised definitions generated by young people to build an applied theory of active citizenship.

Young people in this study defined active citizenship in terms of membership and status, social responsibility and to a lesser extent, political literacy. Through a process of deliberation, they determined six concepts to be most important in thinking about active citizenship. These were 'rights'; 'responsibilities'; 'care for others'; 'control'; 'making decisions', and 'respect'. These concepts were explored in relation to the everyday experiences of young people.

Young people experience active citizenship differently within and between each context of their lives (proximate, community and institutional levels) showing high degrees of related skills and awareness. Whilst communities and institutions offer some opportunities for young people to test and develop citizenship identities, they also present significant barriers.

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# Contents

<b>INDEX OF TABLES AND FIGURES</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF OUTPUTS FROM THIS PHD</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT</b>	<b>1</b>
The research question	3
What is citizenship?	6
Guiding themes in this thesis	28
Structure of the thesis	32
<b>2. CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL POLICY</b>	<b>34</b>
The new right: a challenge to social citizenship	35
New Labour and the Third Way	39
Communitarianism and citizenship	43
Citizenship, community and responsabilisation	59
<b>3. THE YOUTH PROBLEM</b>	<b>65</b>
Youth and transition	66
The transition to citizenship	80
Problem one: democracy in crisis	82
Problem two: respect and anti-social behaviour	91
The youth problem and responsabilisation	106
<b>4. ACTIVATING YOUTH CITIZENSHIP</b>	<b>110</b>
Citizenship education in schools: the Crick Report	110
Citizenship education beyond the school	117
Young people's experiences of citizenship education	122
Summary	131

<b>5. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>133</b>
The study design	134
Ethical issues and considerations	147
The staged methodology	160
Application of methods	169
Data management and procedures for analysis	175
<b>6. FINDINGS: ESTABLISHING THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>190</b>
Pen picture of participant groups	191
The focus groups	195
Brief commentary on overarching themes and questions	209
Developing concepts for stage two	211
<b>7. FINDINGS: THE EXPERIENCE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP</b>	<b>226</b>
Pen picture of participant groups	230
Responsibilities and care for others	238
Decision making and control	258
Engagement with institutions	275
Conclusion	286
<b>8. FINDINGS: UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE’S ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP</b>	<b>288</b>
The importance of context	290
The relationship between awareness and activity	294
<b>9. CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>299</b>
The significance of young people’s voices	300
Acceptance and rejection of policy definitions	301
Rights or responsabilisation?	303
The need for a sensitive framework	305
Taking forward citizenship research	307
Concluding comment	310

<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>342</b>
Appendix 1 – Fieldnote template	342
Appendix 2 – Information sheet	343
Appendix 3 – Consent form	346

# Index of tables and figures

## Tables

TABLE 1 - THE THIRD WAY.....	41
TABLE 2 - HOME OFFICE TYPOLOGY OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR .....	96
TABLE 3 - BEHAVIOURS REPORTED WITHIN THE ONE-DAY COUNT OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR.....	97
TABLE 4 - NATURE OF BEHAVIOURS EXPERIENCED IN INCIDENTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE HANGING AROUND IN THE LOCAL AREA (BCS 2004/05) .....	98
TABLE 5 - WHERE DO YOU SOCIALIZE WITH YOUR FRIENDS? .....	101
TABLE 6 - POSITIVIST APPROACHES TO RESEARCH INVESTIGATION .....	135
TABLE 7 - POSITIVIST APPROACHES TO CITIZENSHIP RESEARCH .....	138
TABLE 8 - TWO POSITIONS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH .....	140
TABLE 9 - CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO RESEARCH ISSUES .....	141
TABLE 10 - CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO CITIZENSHIP RESEARCH .....	141
TABLE 11 – USE OF GATEKEEPERS.....	156
TABLE 12 – EXAMPLE OF LINE BY LINE CODING: WHO IS CARED FOR? .....	184
TABLE 13 - WHY SHOULD CARE BE GIVEN? .....	185
TABLE 14 - HAVE YOU HEARD OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?.....	195
TABLE 15 - PRIMARY DEFINITIONS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.....	197
TABLE 16 - THE ATTRIBUTES OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP .....	209
TABLE 17 - FINAL CONCEPTS BY GROUP.....	212
TABLE 18 - FREQUENCY OF TYPES OF RESPONSIBILITY.....	240
TABLE 19 - ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TO BE AVOIDED.....	241
TABLE 20 - FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION PRACTICES BY GROUP .....	248
TABLE 21 - SUB-CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN EXPERIENCES AND DEFINITIONS OR EXAMPLES.....	248
TABLE 22 – SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES OF GENERAL SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTARY WORK.....	249
TABLE 23 – INCIDENCE AND TYPES OF CONDITIONALITY ATTACHED TO CARING FOR OTHERS.....	253
TABLE 24 – FREQUENCY OF TYPES OF DECISIONS MADE (PERSONAL AND PROXIMATE) .....	259
TABLE 25 - COMMON FORMS OF CONTROL.....	267

## Figures

FIGURE 1: BASIC CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP.....	14
FIGURE 2: MULTIPLE CITIZENSHIP .....	15
FIGURE 3 - SHARED VALUES IN COMMUNITARIAN THOUGHT.....	52
FIGURE 4 - DETERMINATES OF LIFE CHANCES ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE AND INTER-GENERATIONALLY .....	77
FIGURE 5 - FOUR APPROACHES TO CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS .....	123
FIGURE 6 - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDUCTION, DEDUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE.....	146
FIGURE 7 - THE INDUCTIVE-DEDUCTIVE SPIRAL .....	161
FIGURE 8 - DATA TRANSFORMATION PROCESS.....	177
FIGURE 9 – WHO IS CARED FOR?.....	185
FIGURE 10 – WHY DO YOU CARE FOR CERTAIN PEOPLE?.....	186
FIGURE 11 - CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF CARE FOR OTHERS .....	188
FIGURE 12- FIRST COMPLETE DIAMOND.....	216
FIGURE 13 - SECOND COMPLETE DIAMOND .....	220
FIGURE 14 - FINAL COMPLETE DIAMOND.....	224
FIGURE 15: INVESTIGATING WHO IS CARED FOR AND WHETHER CONDITIONS APPLY .....	250
FIGURE 16: WHO DO YOU CARE FOR? .....	251
FIGURE 17 - TRIANGULATING AUTHENTIC CONTROL.....	273
FIGURE 18 – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP ACROSS CONTEXTS .....	294
FIGURE 19 - LEVELS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP (AXIS).....	297

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This study would not have been possible without the scholarship awarded by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences for which I am grateful.

### ***Dedication***

This thesis is dedicated in memory of those who we have recently lost.

**Professor Brian Williams**, my second supervisor, whose untimely death represents a dreadful loss to academia and practice, but whose influence is evident in this work and our continuing efforts.

**Norma Casciani-Wood**, a very loving Grandma who made me really feel like *the* number one grandson.

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## List of outputs from this PhD

### Publications

Material from chapter three (*The Youth Problem*) has been used for the introductory and concluding chapters in: J. Wood and J. Hine (Eds.) *Work with Young People: Theory and Policy for Practice*, London: Sage (published March 2009).

In the same book, chapter 12 (*Education for Effective Citizenship by Jason Wood*) has been informed by findings from this thesis.

The thesis (with the exception of methodological detail) is currently being edited and prepared for publication as a solo-authored book *Young People, Active Citizenship and Youth Work* (currently under review for publication).

The thesis has also informed a chapter entitled *Young People as Activists: The ethics of promoting and supporting young people's active citizenship* to appear in S. Banks (Ed.) (2010) *Ethical Issues in Youth Work (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, London: Routledge.

Some findings and aspects of the literature review around social policy and the youth problem have been reproduced or reinterpreted for publication in:

Kemshall, H. and Wood, J. (2008) 'Risk and Public Protection: Responding to involuntary and taboo risk', *Social Policy and Administration*, 42 [6]: 611-629

Wood, J. and Kemshall, H. (2008) 'Risk, Accountability and Partnerships in Criminal Justice: the case of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)' in B. Stout, J. Yates and B. Williams (Eds.) *Applied Criminology*, London: Sage

Kemshall, H. and Wood, J. (2009) 'MAPPA: Learning the Lessons for Young Offenders', in A. Sutherland and K. Baker (Eds.) *Multi-Agency Public Protection and Youth Justice*, Bristol: Policy Press

### Conferences and papers based on this thesis

Speeches, papers and presentations have been delivered at: Federation for Detached Youth Workers annual conference (2009 and 2008 keynote; 2005 workshop); Gloucestershire Youth and Community Service annual conference (2009, keynote); British Educational Research Association (BERA) seminar series (2008, paper); Rural Youth Work Network annual conference (2008, keynote); EU and its Established and Emerging Migrants conference, Leicester (2007, paper); International Human Rights Education Conference, Roehampton (2005, paper); South West Regional Detached Youth Work conference, (2005, keynote); British Sociological Association, annual conference (2005, paper); Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain seminar series (2004, paper).

### Other outputs

- The main findings of this study were submitted as evidence in September 2008 to the *Youth Citizenship Commission* established by the Ministry of Justice.
- The research student was a member of the *Active Learning for Active Citizenship* working group. The report was launched by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett in 2004 (Woodward 2004).
- The findings of this study, and the literature underpinning it have informed the development of specialist modules at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at De Montfort University, and visiting lecturer contributions at University College Antwerp.

# 1 Introduction and Context

In 1998, the government appointed Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC) set out a series of recommendations for the teaching of citizenship in schools. The report, and the subsequent adoption of the recommendations by the New Labour government, marked a watershed moment in political and social education. The ambitions were bold:

“We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves.”  
(Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998: 7-8)

In the ten years that followed the report, a country previously uncomfortable with notions of British citizenship (Annette 2008) became witness to the biggest expansion of initiatives designed to strengthen the moral, political and social character of young people (Wood and Hine 2009). It is this generation of young people that are can now take citizenship as a GCSE and A-Level subject. In wider youth policy, they can make significant decisions about the funding of youth work and services through the *Youth Opportunities Fund*. They can elect their peers to serve as Members of the Youth Parliament. They are arguably the first generation to have a grounded familiarity with the teaching of human rights and the conventions on the rights of the child.

It now seems commonsensical to advocate for the greater, active involvement of young people in public life. But from what foundations do these endeavours build upon? What is the basis for arguing for greater involvement? What is this ideal of active citizenship, when it is understood in relation to young people?

For if it is true to suggest that this generation do in fact have the most opportunities to engage with public life, so too is it true to say that this generation is the most regulated, tested, incarcerated and excluded group of young people in British history (Jeffs and Smith 1999a; Hine and Wood 2009). Despite taking the ‘long view’ (Kemshall 2008a), there is no other time that young people and risk have been so intrinsically intertwined. An expansive youth justice system coupled with extensive targeting at those ‘most at risk’ determines the landscape of youth policy (Kemshall 2009; Kemshall and Wood 2009). It is within this context that young people are identified, targeted and educated towards responsible adulthood, what Kelly terms ‘preferred futures’ (Kelly 2003).

The result is policy ambivalence towards young people (Williamson 2009). On the one hand, children and young people are to be listened to, engaged and encouraged to participate (Hine 2009). On the other, an ‘institutionalised mistrust’ (Kelly 2003; Stephen 2006) of their capacity to grow up independently of intensive surveillance and support, has tightened the welfare net around young people (Hine and Wood 2009; James and James 2001). In the context of such ambivalence, citizenship education is almost instantaneously problematized and like other governmental initiatives, is open to necessary critical interrogation.

This is a thesis that contributes to the debate about young people and active citizenship. It documents a study that investigated how 93 young people aged 14-16 define and experience active citizenship in their everyday real worlds. This study was first proposed at the very time that schools were ordered to begin teaching citizenship education at key stages three and four in English secondary schools. The Citizenship Order (2000) became enacted in the national curriculum in 2002. Debate at this time concentrated on the rationale and justifications for instituting formal citizenship teaching. Declining voting behaviour and party membership amongst the 18-24 year old age group (Mori 2001) together with increasing attention to issues of anti-social behaviour (Burney 2002) contributed to a negative assessment of the capacity and capability of young people to contribute meaningfully to their political and social worlds – either at the ballot box or in their obligations at a community level. Much of

the research at the time, reviewed in chapters three and four, adopted an approach that highlighted ‘deficit’ qualities in young people that needed education to repair.

Parallel to this dominant focus on deficits was an early body of work that sought to understand how young people *already* engage in political and social practices that could be defined as citizenship (reviewed throughout this thesis). Notably, work by Roker and Eden (2002), Osler and Starkey (2003) and Lister et al (2002) challenged claims that young people were somehow politically and socially redundant. They were able to provide counterclaims through an investigation of how young people themselves experience active citizenship through an analysis of their everyday, real world experiences.

This opening chapter introduces and establishes the context of the research that is reported within this thesis. Firstly, the research question is introduced by examining what was set out as the proposed research and why the question was chosen. Secondly, in order to sensitise the reader to the subject matter, a brief introduction to the concept of citizenship is offered. Thirdly, the theoretical and personal philosophical framework that guides the thesis is reviewed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis to guide the reader through the remaining document.

### **The research question**

Young people’s citizenship and their capacity to be ‘active’ in social, political and moral behaviour has been of paramount concern for youth policy makers over the past decade. As with other areas of youth policy, this concern has been informed by an evidence base that has relied on the presumption that young people are lacking defined attributes. Generalised anxieties about social and economic membership (see chapter two) together with age-specific concerns about political literacy and anti-social behaviour (chapter three) have underpinned the policy initiatives outlined in chapter four of this thesis. As a result, citizenship education is framed as a policy ‘solution’ to a number of problems and these concerns are often located at the site of the individual. Social policy has always responded to identified social problems and social groups (Alcock 2008) and citizenship education is no different in this respect.

Thoughtful study of social policy must ask some critical questions though. How is the social policy problem defined, and by whom? What is the evidence base for the presenting problem? What is the proposed solution? How will it address the problem, and in whose benefit? What is the relationship between the social policy and the broader social construction, or even the lived experiences of young people?

It became clear to this researcher early on in the design of the investigation that the problem definition of active citizenship was very much *external* to the lives of young people. The issues of political literacy, anti-social behaviour and community involvement that underpinned the Advisory Group recommendations were (and still are) concerns defined by adults (and a particular grouping of adults at that). In order for the concerns to be justified, certain forms of evidence were relied upon.

In a recent chapter reviewing how youth related research informs policy, Hine suggests that most policy understandings of the lives of young people are based upon adult perceptions and interpretations which have often have little cognisance with the lived experience of young people (Hine 2009). The continual reproduction of positivist or neo-positivist research has contributed to a body of work that frames young people as individual sites of concern. Whether in health research (the number of teenage conceptions; risky sexual behaviour; misuse of substances), in criminal justice (re-offending rates) or in education (rates of attrition from GCSE to A-Level), a unifying theme is one of research that attempts to explain problems through wide-scale analysis of how young people live their lives today (see France 2007; 2008; 2009; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). This is true in the case of citizenship research. As chapter three demonstrates, young people's political literacy, their social and community orientated activities and their moral attitudes have all been quantified and used to explain the 'deficits' of young people, largely based on age and risk profiles. The result is that policy tends to be informed by this rather narrow research evidence base. As Hine notes, policy categorises young people and deals with them within these dichotomous categories (in this case, active/passive). This disguises and misrepresents the complexity of young people's real lives (Hine 2009; see also France 2008). Whilst these issues are more fully addressed in chapters 2-4, they are referred to in brief here since they were a guiding concern for undertaking this study.

The aim of this research is to address the knowledge gap in terms of how research represents the ways in which young people themselves experience an important set of policy concerns. As a consequence, such beliefs influence the design of the research, the methods chosen and the ways in which the findings are presented.

This study aimed primarily to understand how young people themselves *define* and *experience* active citizenship in order to offer comprehensive and thoughtful contributions to our growing knowledge base around the social worlds of young people. It is a work that draws on the everyday meanings and experiences of active citizenship that are identified and articulated by young people, a group who have been subjected to the greatest social policy emphasis on the subject. In attempting to do this, the researcher established the following research question:

“This research will investigate what young people understand to be the values, skills and knowledge required for citizenship and its relationship to their community involvement and political literacy. It will explore whether concepts of citizenship have any bearing on the social and local political decisions and action that young people take within their communities. In doing so, the research aims to work towards a theory of ‘active citizenship’ as understood by young people in everyday, real world situations.”

Questions that place primacy on the lived experience of young people are methodologically and philosophically important, not least in response to those issues explored in the preamble set out so far. They challenge us to think about the sometimes disjointed relationship between policy objectives and the ‘real world’ (Hine and Wood 2009). Rather than understanding young people in dichotomous categories or broad labels, we accept that young people’s lives are inherently more complex: their subjective experience of the everyday worlds they occupy may not always lend itself to easy, external classification. Actions, behaviours or experiences that may, to outsiders, be seen as irrational or ill-considered may in fact be subjectively rational to the young people (Ungar 2004; 2007). For practice to appreciate the nuances and gradients of the experience of young people, it needs to

take account of research that considers *their* perspectives on *their* experiences. Connected to this point is the question of how we can better understand the lives of young people through an engagement with young people's localised worlds. In a discussion about subjectivity in youth studies research, France argues that an understanding of the everyday, real worlds of young people can help us to understand their interaction with global, national and social policy influences, for:

“Locality...remains an important site in shaping young sense of place in the world. If we are to grasp the complexity of young people's lives and the choices they make we therefore need to understand the influence and interplay between the local and the global.”

(France 2007: 157-158)

Such debates appeal to the researcher in attending to questions of 'practice'. As a qualified youth and community work practitioner, the researcher subscribes to certain personal and professional values and beliefs about the place of young people in the world. Particular importance is placed on developing disciplined dialogue with young people 'about values and moral principles, and the practice of virtue, through their own action, reflection and learning' (Young 1999: 121). Put simply, to understand how to best work with young people, one must listen to them and engage with them in an analysis of how they experience and interpret the worlds they occupy. This thesis therefore comes from a starting position that accepts the need to prioritise meaning and experience in order to better understand the broad discipline of social policy. This argument is developed further on in this chapter and in chapter five.

## **What is citizenship?**

This study concerns how young people define and experience active citizenship in the context of a contemporary social policy emphasis on 'communitarian citizenship'. Chapter two is therefore dedicated an in-depth analysis of the links between welfare, community and citizenship in contemporary Britain. Similarly, chapter three concentrates on the 'youth problems' that have necessitated renewed interest and development in citizenship education over the past ten years: some of which are



explored in chapter four. However, in order to set the context for these discussions it is necessary in this chapter to briefly set out what the broader idea of ‘citizenship’ means.

Citizenship is difficult to define. It can ‘carry significantly different meanings. It has no “essential” or universally true meaning’ (Crick 2000: 1). It is what philosophers call an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Lister 2003: 14) subject to a number of contextually specific interpretations (Faulks 2000; Riley 1992; Storrie 2004). In its usage today, it concerns ‘membership’, usually attached to a state. It is also a ‘normative ideal’ (Coffey 2004), a ‘set of practices ... which define a person as a competent member of society’ (Turner 1993: 2) and here there are qualifying, associated rights and responsibilities. It concerns a *status*:

“bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.”

(Marshall 1950: 28-29)

Whilst it is not the intention of this thesis to offer a detailed exploration of the history and development of citizenship, there is some need to contextualise the study in terms of the key ideas that underpin the concept. There are two broad traditions that, whilst in the way in which they are reviewed here perhaps oversimplify citizenship, do serve to neatly conceptualise the concept. Several key writers (e.g. Heater 1999; 2004; Faulks 1998; 2000; Lister 2003; Dwyer 2004a) have adopted this approach to set out the key tenets of citizenship thinking. They define citizenship in terms of ‘liberalism (rights)’ and ‘civic republicanism (obligations)’ (see Lister 2003: 16-34). Dwyer advises that when ‘considering the two traditions it is best to consider each as an ideal type’ (2004a: 19) as opposed to seeing them as crude dichotomies. Each of these traditions is now briefly reviewed here.

### Liberal traditions: citizenship as rights

Modern citizenship is characterised mostly by its roots in the liberal tradition, an ‘inherently egalitarian’ establishment of individual rights (Faulks 2000). Whilst the following discussion demonstrates that civic republican perspectives are drawn from classical antiquity and have a longer historical basis, it is the ‘liberal form that has been dominant in the past two centuries and remains so today’ (Heater 1999: 4). Stemming from seventeenth century political thought, the liberal political perspective favours a legal model of citizenship that recognises and promotes individual rights and guarantees these in law. It is essentially in favour of equality amongst full members, and sees the state as performing a minimal function. Historical writers contend that the development of modern citizenship is tied very closely to the development of capitalist societies (Faulks 2000; Heater 1999). Power relationships changed between state and individual towards more participative forms of democracy and market economy. Heater argues that:

“The decay of a feudal or quasi-feudal society and its suppression by a market economy did introduce changes that were, if no more, at least conducive to the emergence of a liberal form of citizenship.”

(Heater 1999: 7).

There are three key changes that Heater outlines. Firstly, pre-capitalist society was built around ‘personal subservience’ between the master and apprentice, and the subject to the prince. In contrast, capitalist initiative and entrepreneurialism rely more on the individual exercising free choice. Secondly, the feudal structures were more ‘socially hierarchical’ and thus in order for the first kind of change to be realised, the logical conclusion is of status-equality – ‘a citizen, is a citizen, is a citizen: no differentiation’. Finally, the provisional fragmentation characteristic of earlier societies halted economy evidenced by ‘internal customs barriers’ that ultimately restricted open and free markets. With the rise of capitalism, so too came the rise and consolidation of the ‘nation state’ (see Heater 1999: 7-9).

The argument that the rise of capitalism did in fact precipitate the rise of individual autonomy through citizenship cannot be questioned. However, such a picture conjures up for the reader a transformation in social relations that ignores the very real continuation and institution of new inequalities, characteristic of unfettered capitalism. As Turner explains:

“The growth of modernity is a movement from de-jure inequalities in terms of legitimate status hierarchies to de-facto inequalities as a consequence of naked market forces where the labourer is defined as a “free” person.”

(Turner 1986: 136)

It is necessary therefore that the state cannot act as a neutral observer ‘when the interests of capitalism and citizenship collide’ (Heater 1999: 10). There are several actions that minimise *absolute freedom* in markets and evidence of market regulation in whichever political ideology is dominant (see the emerging responses to the credit crunch as evidence that even free market trumpeters will advocate greater state controls, albeit reluctantly). There is also the taxation of higher income and wealth to fund welfare. However, whilst it is true that the state can mitigate against these economic inequalities it is also true that capitalism weakens citizenship ‘by giving primacy to economic relationships’ (1999: 10). Managing these tensions becomes the task of analysing state intervention in securing and upholding rights – effectively ‘taming’ capitalism.

#### *Taming capitalism: Marshall’s analysis*

The influence of sociologist TH Marshall (1950/1992) on our understanding of citizenship rights in the British context cannot be overstated. As Lister notes, ‘most modern accounts of citizenship take as their starting point Marshall’s celebrated exposition’ (2003: 16). Marshall’s lecture, delivered at the LSE in 1949 and published in 1950 marked a ‘highly influential’ (Dwyer 2004a) account of the development of post-war welfare and citizenship. Marshall’s ‘equal status’ definition’ attempted to resolve the tension between capitalism and citizenship. He argued for:

“A general enrichment of the concrete substance of civilised life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalisation between the more and less fortunate at all levels – between the healthy and the sick, the employed and the unemployed, the old and the active, the bachelor and the father of a large family.”

(Marshall 1992: 33)

‘Equality of status’ would be ensured by the state provision and advocacy of three sets of interlocked rights. Bringing together classical and social liberal citizenship, the tripartite formulation of citizenship was in civil, social and political rights:

“The civil element [...] are the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice [...] By the political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a body invested with social authority or as an elector [...] By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being.”

(Marshall 1992: 8)

The essence of Marshall’s work is the tying together of an unequal economic system (capitalism) marked by continuing class divisions and inequalities with a set of common duties and rights that would mediate the impact of such conditions. As Marshall said ‘we are not aiming for absolute equality’ (1992: 92). Marshall’s work was of course contextualised within the post-war welfare consensus and captured a significant ‘moment in time’. Whilst some of the principles stand to date in informing how we conceptualise citizenship, many have come under challenge and these are explored in chapter two.

The focus on rights in its liberal form has enabled distinct social groups to claim access to equal rights – the ‘extension of citizenship’ (Faulks 2000: 3), evident in movements based, for example, on ‘race’, gender, disability, class and sexuality. Key

moments in history point to a continuing debate about assuring an egalitarian citizenship definition. Arguments about civil partnerships and marriages for gay and lesbian couples are a recent case in point. This perspective sees citizenship as a ‘momentum concept’ (Hoffman 1997) that necessitates that benefits become more universal.

### **Civic republicanism: citizenship as public obligation**

Whilst the liberal interpretation has had the most influence on the development of British citizenship (Heater 2006), it is the civic republican traditions that have a longer heritage. They are not simply a matter of classical study either: key political advocates of citizenship point to these traditions as important to a modern framing of the relationship between individual, community and state (see for example, Blunkett 2003a; b). At the heart of its differentiation from liberal models is a commitment to primacy of the ‘public interest’ (Dwyer 2004a: 21).

The concept of citizenship can be first traced back to ancient Greece and in the city states of Athens and Sparta during the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Citizens were defined by their involvement in public duties usually centred around common commitments to civic duty in governing and defending the state (Heater 1999; 2004; Faulks 2000; Dwyer 2004a). In this tradition, the citizen is ‘constituted as political actor’ (Lister 2003: 25) underpinned by the ‘submission of individual interest to that of the common good’ (Lister 2003: 24).

The question of what makes a citizen is extensively discussed in Aristotle’s *The Politics* through a series of deliberations about the constitution, the state and the role of the public. For Aristotle, man [*sic*] is by nature a ‘political animal’ and only through participation in the affairs of a *polis* (city-state) could his full potential in life be realised. The translator notes that Aristotle ‘is inclined to think of citizen as a kind of species and to look for the marks by which it may be recognised’ (in Aristotle 1992: 167-168) and this is an accurate description of the ways in which Aristotle examines the constituent parts of the ‘citizen proper’. Book three of *The Politics* is headed ‘how should we define the citizen’ with recognition that ‘there is no unanimity, no agreement as to what constitutes a citizen’ (Aristotle 1992: 168). A

citizen is bound to the constitution and is therefore defined against what state he lives in. In his pragmatic definition, a ‘citizen is defined as one of citizen birth on *both* his father’s *and* his mother’s side’ (p171-172). However, being born into membership is not in itself the defining feature since being ‘resident in a place [does not] confer citizenship: resident foreigners and slaves are not citizens’ (p169). Heater notes also that ‘it was neither a right to be claimed by nor a status to be conferred to anybody outside the established ranks of the [privileged] class’ (Heater 2004: 5).

Aristotle moves *beyond* the pragmatic definition in order to set out his beliefs about what constitutes the activities of a citizen. The perfect citizen is very clearly defined:

“What effectively distinguishes the citizen proper from all others is his participation in giving judgement and in holding office. Some offices are distinguished in respect of length of tenure, some not being tenable by the same person twice under any circumstances...Others such as members of a jury or of an assembly, have no such limitation.”

(p169)

The element of *holding office* denotes an ideal form of political or civic duty. This participation is closely tied to Aristotle’s vision of the *best* constitution – that of a democracy since in other constitutions ‘there is no body comprising the people, nor a recognized assembly, but only an occasional rally; and justice is administered piecemeal’ (p170).

The question of *who* is entitled to hold office raises further questions. Workers, for instance, were not entitled to participate and slaves, women and children were excluded. Simply, they were not trusted ‘with the affairs of the state but they were, nonetheless, essential to its maintenance’ (Dwyer 2004a). Despite high talk of ‘Athenian pride in their political maturity’ (Heater 2004: 5), citizenship was essentially an inherited status. As a consequence, privilege reinforced privilege with wealthy young people attending legal and democratic institutions as preparation for adult, active citizenship (see Heater 2004). Exclusion was also maintained with property rights afforded only to those defined as citizens.

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*Civic republicanism and modern citizenship*

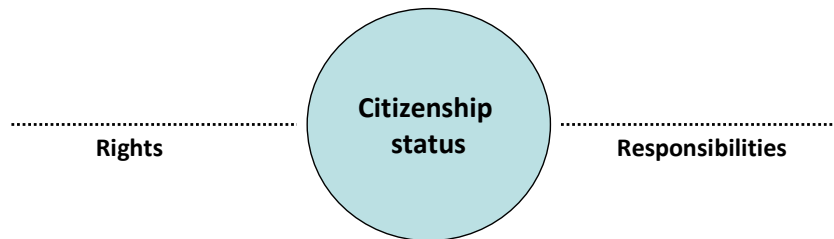
Aristotle took his mentor Plato to task over the ideal size of a city state (with a population c5000) claiming this to be far too populous to engender meaningful citizenship (Aristotle 1992). What might his views be on modern democratic representation? The structures and systems for democratic representation and involvement in the early twenty-first century bear little relationship to visions of a ‘citizen proper’ who holds office. This poses some deliberation amongst modern civic republicans. David Blunkett, who’s *Civil Renewal Agenda* (2003a; b) draws on the Greek traditions of citizenship to establish a programme of policy reforms acknowledges ‘it is self-evident that our globalised society is vastly different from those found in Ancient Greece’ (Blunkett 2003a: 2). The ideals however are taken as principles for a renewed interest in civic republican citizenship.

Our appetite for initiatives that widen and deepen democracy remains unfettered. As Blaug notes, the ‘sheer variety of democratic initiatives currently on offer is extraordinary’ (2002: 102). Our relationship is not necessarily one always with the State, but increasingly ‘towards the local, civil and the grassroots’ (Blaug 2002: 102). In the new public sphere, citizenship as an obligation has taken in new strands that extend beyond *the political*. Increasingly, republicans emphasise a more fluid notion of participation ranging from local democratic activity to volunteering (Crick 2002). Public services are encouraged to better facilitate the ‘relationship between citizens and public service providers’ (Andrews et al 2008: 225) with an increasing emphasis on citizenship engagement. Oldfield’s (1990) analysis of modern interpretations of civic republicanism necessarily emphasises the ‘localness’ of decision making and in doing so argues that citizenship is closely aligned to the concept of community. According to Oldfield, people ‘choose where to be active and, when and where they are active, they will create a sense of community’ (Oldfield 1990: 174). The relationship between ‘community’ and the obligations we have to ‘it’ are further explored in chapter two.

## Modern citizenship: a working definition

Modern citizenship draws heavily from these traditions (Heater 2004) and a basic conceptual definition of citizenship entails an understanding of three interrelated components. The *status* of the citizenship, and what this status ensures by way of *rights* upon those who hold it. It also concerns the *responsibilities*, duties or obligations that the state expects from its citizenry (illustrated in figure 1).

**Figure 1: Basic concept of citizenship**



However, modern citizenship status offers further complexity. Contradictory social processes at local, regional and global levels are underway and these have real implications for the notion of citizenship (Ichilov 1998). These forces, characteristic of late modern and advanced liberal societies call into question the relationship between citizenship and the state: in late modern society we are locally and globally bound to rights and responsibilities. Citizenship is therefore ‘multiple’ in its composition (Heater 2004). We are citizens with status, rights and responsibilities at different levels. Held claims that:

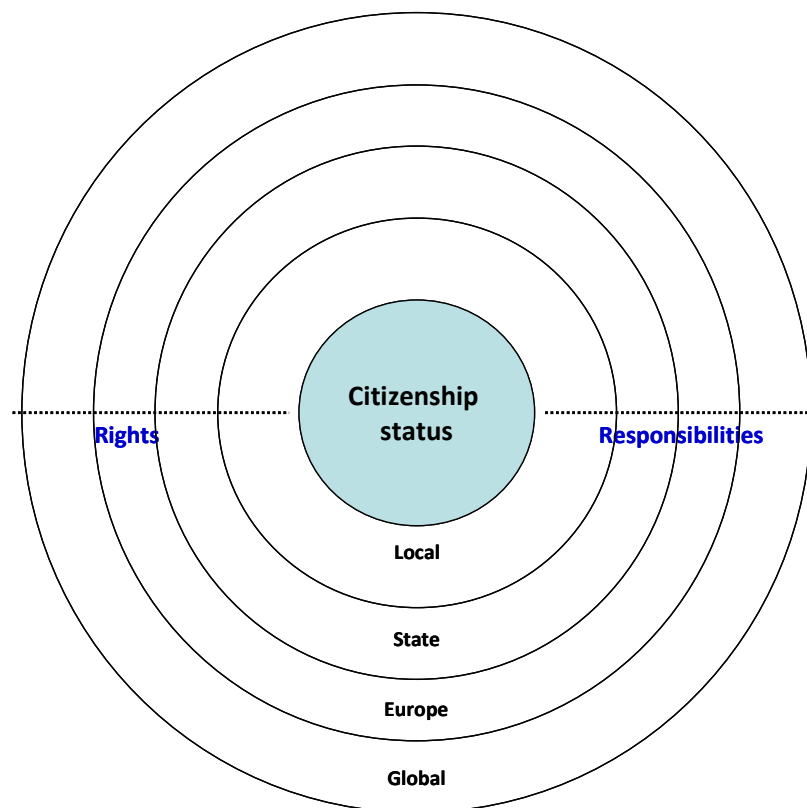
“People can enjoy membership in the diverse communities which significantly affect them and, accordingly, access to a variety of forms of political participation. Citizenship would be extended, in principle, to membership in all cross-cutting political communities, from the local to the global.”  
(Held 1995: 272).

Thus we are local citizens tied to our neighbourhoods or communities. We are national citizens, compelled to obey laws and participate in the democratic structures that govern us. We are European citizens and are further governed at a supranational level by those whom we do and do not elect. Finally, of increasing significance, we



are global citizens: individuals increasingly subject to the macro determinates of globalisation, and correspondingly required to take individual action to mediate impact. Together these represent multiple memberships, compelling us to exercise responsibilities and also to secure our rights, visually represented as layers in figure 2:

**Figure 2: Multiple citizenship**



*Layer 1: The local citizen*

As local citizens, we are members of our immediate communities and with that membership come the rights that we expect in order to support the sustenance of our economic and social capital. Our rights to protection and freedom are secured by national government to be sure, but it is at a local level where these rights are upheld. Our responsibilities are constituted as moral and social obligations to those we share public and communal space with. This is by far one of the greatest developments in citizenship theory and policy over the past ten years, with increasing emphasis on 'community' as a site where interactions of a social and moral kind can be played out and regulated both by the government and by fellow citizens. The 'local' is now more

of a social and moral domain, rather than a political one (discussed extensively in chapter two) where the qualities of proto- and actual citizens are tested, reinforced and assessed by systems of public and professional verification. These processes take place at the level of ‘community’: a site where local interactions of a moral and social kind are most evident. Other more formalised citizenship practices do exist, of a political nature – for example, voting and being a representative of local government or paying locally specific (council) tax.

### *Layer 2: The citizen and the state*

It is the relationship between the state and citizen that has driven much of the political rhetoric, policy initiatives and media concern in recent times. What rights should be upheld at a state level, and what duties are expected of citizens towards the British national interest are of perennial concern. The modern rights debate focuses on the extension of universal social and civil rights, through the levelling out of employment conditions in respect of gender, for instance. Government continues to institute rights that, whilst in a different climate from Marshall’s analysis, support welfare as a model for taming capitalism. What is apparent in the new allocation of welfare entitlements is an increasing emphasis on ‘conditionality’ (Dwyer 2004b): rights very much subject to responsibilities. Chapter two explores this relationship in more detail.

An equally powerful debate in UK social policy and one which has specificity to young people is the extension of rights to ‘be consulted’, ‘have a say’ and ‘be involved’ (Children and Young People’s Unit 2001; Fleming and Hudson 2009; Hine 2009). Whilst many of the debates around increased participation are ultimately linked to the political deficit model outlined in chapter three, the opportunities and capacity of young people to be consulted about and to shape public institutions are often framed as rights and these stem from Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (of which the UK is a signatory) that states:

“State parties shall ensure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all

matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

(Article 12 of the UN Convention the Rights of the Child)

At the state level then initiatives abound to increase young people’s participation. As France et al note:

“Many national initiatives have evolved and major resources have since been directed towards increasing opportunities for the young to participate in decision making and for new facilities to be developed in local communities that are built according to young people’s decisions.”

(France et al, forthcoming).

For instance: The UK Youth Parliament, which was launched in 1999 and is run by young people for young people, aims to give young people aged 11-18 a voice which will be listened to and heard by local and national government (UK Youth Parliament, undated). A consortium of leading children’s charities formed ‘Participation Works’ in 2003 which took Article 12 as its starting point and focused on strengthening the capacity of the third sector to strengthen youth participation (Ward et al 2009).

Human rights are a powerful framework for strengthening citizenship, not least because they are a momentum concept (Hoffman 1997) but also an international legal guarantee of participation. Indeed, Lundy (2007) argues that the case for the increased involvement of young people in decision making is most compelling when framed within a human rights perspective. Article 12:

“Can make a unique and powerful contribution to the creation of a children’s rights culture...one way of sustaining the existing momentum [of involvement] might be to reframe the discourse to reflect the fact that pupil involvement in decision making is a permanent, non-negotiable human right.”

(Lundy 2007: 940)

The extent to which the relationship between human rights and citizenship education has been realised is discussed in chapter four.

Responsibilities to the state are of many forms. Many are linked to welfare conditionality, the obligation to work and participate in democracy. Increasingly however the issue of national identity has framed the responsibilities debate. This is particularly acute in increased measures to assess the ‘worth’ of newly arrived immigrants through forms of allegiance testing. *Life in the United Kingdom* (the citizenship test) together with citizenship ceremonies are designed to nurture belonging, expectations and normalisation amongst those who seek to live and work in Britain. The ongoing *Goldsmith Review* into citizenship illustrates this point well with key debates focusing on how better to integrate newly arrived immigrants<sup>1</sup>. During his time as chancellor, one of Gordon Brown’s speeches captures this quest for a stronger sense of ‘Britishness’:

“We the British people must be far more explicit about the common ground on which we stand, the shared values which bring us together, the habits of citizenship around which we can and must unite. Expect all who are in our country to play by our rules...It comes back to being sure about and secure in the values that matter: freedom, democracy and fairness. The shared values we were brought up with and must not lose: fair play, respect, a decent chance in life...Here is the deal for the next decade we must offer: no matter your class, colour or creed, the equal opportunity to use your talents. In return we expect and demand responsibility: an acceptance there are common standards of citizenship and common rules. And this is the British way: to say to all who live in our country there are common standards and rules to be upheld.”  
(Brown 2006)

The backdrop to this debate is of course the supposed increased fragmentation associated with the new risks of a cultural divide in the UK. Terrorism, the rise of the British National Party (BNP) and the state analysis and diagnosis of community cohesion have all contributed to a dominant idea that Britain has common standards that not all are living up to. This in turn has resulted in challenges to the multicultural ideal in contemporary British society. Multiculturalism has long faced challenge from

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<sup>1</sup> See the ongoing work of Lord Goldsmith’s Citizenship Review at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/reviews/citizenship.htm>

all sides of the political and academic spectrum. For some on the left, multiculturalism has been challenged for favouring a focus on celebrating difference through cultural exchange at the expense of tackling racism (see Ashrif's 2001 analysis): the 'romantic' form of multiculturalism (Osler 2008a). Rather, those involved in anti-racist practice should seek to challenge the structural, cultural and personal dimensions of oppression (Ashrif 2001) and accept that such a process is necessarily uncomfortable since it is 'far easier to celebrate the exotic, than challenge the problematic' (Wood 2001a).

At the other end of the critical spectrum and often emanating from those on the right, multiculturalism represents a challenge to a version of British identity where certain traditions are upheld as the defining characteristics of hegemony. At its most pronounced, this reading of history and contemporary identity prioritises a white social structure with emphasis on a dominant culture underpinned by common language and religion (Parekh et al 2000). At worst, the state 'promotes a single national culture and expects all to assimilate to it' (Parekh et al 2000: 42). Any challenge to hegemony interprets 'whites as the new losers' (Apple 1998: ix) and an ultimatum is issued to visibly different communities: 'if you are here, be like us, if you cannot, go home' (Sivanandan 1982: 136). As a consequence, strategies are deployed by government to help 'people understand British values and [the] way of life' (France et al 2007) and this invariably leads to a limited acceptance, if not total rejection, of cultural difference (Howson 2007). Inevitably, the public debate about multiculturalism finds voice when key events influence public discourse. Recurring examples abound: a story of a girl who is told by a school that she cannot wear the hijab; the rise of the BNP in areas where poverty and visible immigration have both seen an increase; the furore that is generated when a BBC official calls for the greater presence of ethnic minorities in mainstream outputs. All of these pressing debates received greater urgency and legislative attention in government responses to violent extremism, most acute after the terrorist attack in the USA in September 2001 and in the London bombings on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005. As Osler notes:

"These events and their aftermath, including the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, have shifted the focus of political and media discourse on race relations in

Britain and have given an international dimension to public debate about diversity and belonging.”

(Osler 2009: 85)

Despite a plethora of significant events in relation to ‘race’ and racism in the British landscape prior to the London bombings, there was ‘little evidence of leadership in promoting race equality’ from politicians between 2000 and 2005 (Osler 2009: 94). At the expense of recognising structural racism and the need to challenge its potential impact, politicians after July 2005 instead emphasised the need for British Muslims in particular to ‘integrate’. Social cohesion was framed not as a recognition of structural difference, but one where ‘anxieties have arisen over the perceived lack of willingness and potential danger some alienated youth might pose to the social order in the UK’ (France et al 2007: 303). These anxieties reflect a longstanding concern with young people characterised by ‘otherness’ (Sallah 2007) and underpin the assumptions about ‘race’, diversity and inclusion outlined in the proposals for citizenship education contained in the Crick Report, discussed further in chapter four.

### *Layer 3: The European citizen*

Yet more formalised government can be found at the European level, with increasing direction not only in terms of abstract economic policy but in terms of the everyday governance of health, welfare and wellbeing needs and responsibilities of the individual citizen.

Of all layers, it is the concrete responsibilities to the European level of government that seem hardest to define. Citizen elects Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to represent them in a supranational form of democracy that has very real implications for the exercise of responsibility, and the assurance of rights. Many key legislative developments in terms of ‘race’, gender, sexuality and so on have arisen not from social movements in locally or nationally based contexts, but in terms of European social directives often delivered outside of democratic procedure (Cohen 2006). Given all of these critical interplays between the personal, local, national and European rights and responsibilities, there has been extensive discussion about the

political aptitude and awareness of citizens. ‘Eurobarometer’ polls frequently show that a significant number of European citizens do not feel informed about European issues and do not understand its political system. Turnout in European elections is consistently much lower than in national elections (Hix 1999) and the most recent European elections in the UK took place on the back of virtually no reporting about European issues. Attempts to stimulate increased civic participation in European politics have been stifled by attention to ‘*the involvement of active citizens and groups in some precise procedures, [whilst not addressing] the general level of civic consciousness and participation*’ (Magnette 2003: 148).

#### *Layer 4: The global citizen*

In an era of increased globalisation, it is almost a common phrase that we are all global citizens now. Developments in communication technologies, the transformation of trade, and increased migration have all altered our sense of the world we live in and have opened up new challenges to the way we live our lives (Aubrey 2009; Sallah and Cooper 2008). The challenges to the state/citizen relationship that emanate from fears about multiculturalism and violent extremism certainly gain greater prominence as a result of shifting global interconnectedness. Whilst ‘Western society has long tended towards globalisation’ (Giddens 1996: 70), the processes of reshaping our global interactions have intensified:

“Globalisation increasingly intrudes into the core of day-to-day life and causes profound shifts in the texture of everyday experience...they produce an accentuating of local identity, alter the conditions even of personal identity and transfigure many forms of localism.”

(Giddens 1996: 71)

The result is of greater awareness and execution of our individual responsibilities in a global world. Illustrations from recent news help crystallize this point. Global warming, now almost universally accepted as a real consequence of industrialisation, represents a significant risk to sustainable life. Yet, by far the biggest response by governments is not on the scaling back of industrial development. It is in the

education of its citizens to make more prudential choices about their energy use. Similarly, global inequalities stem from issues of trade. In June 2008, news was revealed that cut-price clothing chain *Primark* had used suppliers engaged in child labour practices. Whilst there are undoubtedly moves to campaign and eventually outlaw these practices, it is more often than not the individual consumer who is charged with making ‘the choice’ between participating in fair (or unfair) trade. In sum, global responsibilities are recast as localised individual responsibilities.

Rights too have global reach. United Nations (UN) conventions underpin many universal rights declarations in terms of refugees, children’s rights and human rights. National governments are expected to fulfil their obligations under such declarations and are often held to account where they fail. For instance, the most recent report from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child declared that Britain was ‘failing to meet standards on improving children’s rights’ (BBC 2008a). This advancement of universal human rights is often advocated positively by liberal commentators. In assessing the many impacts of globalisation, the political commentator Polly Toynbee accepted the world domination of corporations if it followed that Western liberal human rights would also transfer to other parts of the world (Toynbee 2001).

Despite the very real challenges of globalisation, and its impact on everything from economic stability and employment to the environmental conditions of our lives, democracy is still very much rooted in national traditions. This has led to a new form of ‘democratic deficit’ where territorially bound political communities are still favoured over international decision-making bodies (Archibugi 1998). The paradox then is whilst rights and responsibilities increasingly take a European and global form, our engagement in formalised structures to respond democratically continue to be very limited indeed.

Together, these multiple layers of citizenship ensure that complexity and contradiction will remain in any discussion about what it means to be a *good* citizen. Some concepts relate relatively easily across the layers: the values of respect, fairness and equality can transcend borders (even in spite of governments). Others have no



such translation: the political capacity of local decision making is invariably defunct when global forces shape our very individual lives.

### The Cosmopolitan Citizen

Re-conceptualising the global nature of citizenship and examining the changes in the different layers at a localised and state level are two themes captured within the literature around ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’. This perspective of citizenship is not entirely new: the ‘notion that an individual was a citizen of the cosmos (world) can be traced back to the stoics of ancient Greece’ (Dwyer 2004a: 170). However, with the increasing pace and impact of globalisation, ‘the state is no longer the exclusive reference point of sovereignty’ (Delanty 2000: 53). For Delanty, cosmopolitan citizenship offers ‘new possibilities for participation and rights within and beyond the state (Ibid.) where ‘post-national’ forms of inclusion take precedence over traditional criterion such as birth and residence. Dwyer suggests that at a ‘personal level’:

“Cosmopolitan citizenship enables individuals to make links between personal patterns of consumption and worldwide concerns about global resources, the future of the planet and the welfare of subsequent generations.”

(Dwyer 2004a: 172)

Delanty argues that the challenges to the state/citizen relationship are found within three important developments:

- **Internationalism and legal cosmopolitanism:** where international law governs the ‘citizens of the world’ through common humanity. Concrete examples might include the role of the United Nations in mediating global dispute and securing international rights and obligations. Internationalism is also evident in multi-lateral attempts at addressing challenges, such as Europe-wide initiatives aimed at challenging climate change or terrorism.
- **The spread and impact of globalisation:** as discussed above but with particular concern around four strands: (1) the fluidity of identities that lead to cultural pluralism; (2) the development of ecological citizenship; (3) the

evolution of global civil society and; (4) seeing citizenship as post-statist and supranational.

- **Transnationalism:** particularly evident through increased mobility and changing migration patterns, where attention may need to be directed to new forms of world governance.

(Delanty 2000)

Cosmopolitan citizenship therefore suggests a requirement to restructure global governance with a decreasing reliance on states and the institution of ‘new flexible frameworks based on the rights of the global citizen, freed from territorial restrictions’ (Chandler 2003: 334). To quote Archibugi:

“If some global questions are to be handled according to democratic criteria, there must be political representation for citizens in global affairs, independently and autonomously of their political representation in domestic affairs. The unit should be the individual, although the mechanisms for participation and representation may vary according to the nature and scope of the issues discussed”

(Archibugi 1998: 212).

There is little doubt that the sovereignty of national states is being challenged by globalisation and much evidence to suggest that global governance is an important strand in how rights and responsibilities are conceptualised at a personal, local, national and global level as already discussed. However, ‘national governance is still one of the most importance levels...with respect to social rights there is no equivalent model on either the sub-national nor the transnational’ (Delanty 2000: 135). Hence Heater’s criticism that cosmopolitan citizenship remains a ‘vague concept’ that lacks legal or political status (Heater 1999). He goes further:

“World citizenship is nonsense; active world citizenship is nonsense on stilts...The state...is a reality, performs vital functions and therefore its preservation is in the interests of mankind. Conversely, world government has neither reality nor expedience. And since world government would be

incompatible with the existence of separate sovereign state governments, world citizenship would be incompatible with state citizenship.”

(Heater 2004: 234-235)

Whilst the legal and political models of governance may not have kept pace with the changing nature of globalisation (Archibugi 1998; Held 1995), we cannot be forced into a narrow conception of citizenship as purely a legal and structural force for determining social rights as Heater may be suggesting. In contrast, commentators argue that the discourse of human rights cannot be divorced from a cosmopolitan definition of citizenship, pointing to universal declarations as an important challenge to state guarantees of rights and responsibilities. For example, in an era of increased globalisation, it is highly problematic to suggest that the rights of an individual consumer can be easily separated from the rights of the individual producer only on account of the spatial difference between the two. It follows that state action alone is unlikely to resolve the tensions in this relationship as any meaningful response would require international co-operation. At an individual and governmental level, we are required to ‘acknowledge, and where appropriate, to defend, the dignity and rights of our fellow human beings across the globe’ (Osler 2008b: 456). Transnationalism has also shaped communities that are:

“increasingly diverse, and we live alongside people with many different belief systems. Cosmopolitanism requires us to engage with difference, rather than create the illusion that it is possible to live parallel lives.”

(Osler 2008b: 457)

The cosmopolitan response is one that rejects the dominant cultural model set out above in the discussion around violent extremism. There, the state promotes a single national culture and expects all to assimilate. Pluralism, a concept more aligned with cosmopolitanism, recognises that:

“There is both unity and diversity in public life; communities and identities overlap and are interdependent, and develop common features.”

(Parekh Report 2000: 42)

Despite the recognition of the importance of human rights, and the universal declarations that underpin them, Osler notes that Britain ‘does not acknowledge human rights as the value bases for citizenship education’ (2008b: 462) instead favouring an emphasis of socialisation into British values. Osler also highlights the lack of emphasis on pluralism in the Crick Report that in turn fails to address issues of racism and ‘reflects a lack of familiarity with the everyday realities of multicultural Britain’ (2008b: 462). On both counts, the cosmopolitan project appears notably absent from formal citizenship education guidance.

Demaine (2002) has argued that global citizenship education must necessarily be ‘concerned with economic, social and political inequalities between citizens both within and between nation states’ (2002: 117). This is the essence of good global youth work (Sallah and Cooper 2008) where educational practice is no longer ‘confined to the local, or even national context, it needs to address the global community’ (Aubrey 2009: 46). Global youth work ‘starts from everyday experiences and critically links their personal, local and national realities to the global’ (Sallah 2008: 6). However, this form of education is not merely about raising awareness of global issues or installing a charitable ethic: it requires serious, reflective and critical engagement with issues of global inequality especially when it manifests or is impacted upon at the local or personal level (Aubrey 2009; Sallah, forthcoming).

In summary, cosmopolitan citizenship recognises the reality of social change that has been accelerated by significant shifts in globalisation and transnationalism. As a result, the relationship between nation states and citizens is changing. There is recognition that international systems may not have kept pace with this change, but universal declarations of rights and responsibilities inarguably focus attention on a new global citizenship. It is therefore incumbent on educators to place primacy on universal human rights and to enable citizens to understand the link between the personal, local, national and global.

## Active citizenship

The entitlement to rights and the discharge of responsibilities, particularly in respect of political and work obligations suggest an *active* component to citizenship.

However, definitions of what constitutes ‘active citizenship’ are intimately bound to the political, social and economic context in which the ideal is framed and advocated for. As Lister notes, active citizenship can take both radical and conservative forms, with collectivist and mutual activity on the one hand, and a narrower engagement with work or market-orientated contributions on the other (2003: 23-24).

In the UK context, active citizenship has been in use since around the second world war and the expansion of the state welfare system. Voluntary action was seen by Lord Beveridge as ‘improving the conditions of life for [the individual] and for his fellows’ (1948: 8) and a necessary counteraction to the power wielded by the State:

“Vigour and abundance of voluntary action outside one’s home, individually and in association with other citizens, for bettering one’s own life and that of one’s fellows, are the distinguishing marks of a free society.”

(Beveridge 1948: 10)

The sentiments expressed then are very similar to those espoused today. David Blunkett, the former education then home secretary, was one of New Labour’s leading citizenship advocates. He saw active citizenship as a necessary condition of freedom:

“Individual freedom if achieved in its fullest sense depends on *participation* in the government of the community or self government.”

(Blunkett 2003a: 4)

Crick (2000) argues that active citizenship is a focus on both the ‘rights to be exercised as well as agreed responsibilities’ (p2). Active citizens are ‘willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting’ (p2). They demonstrate ‘activity’ through

volunteering, engagement with public services and democratic participation (Andrews et al 2008; Crick 2000; Heater 2004; Lister 2003).

In the context of this thesis, active citizenship concerns those qualities, behaviours, attitudes, values and activities that are expected of young people living in contemporary Britain (AGC 1998). To determine precisely what is meant by contemporary active citizenship requires more substantive discussion and chapter two attends to an in-depth critical examination of the rise of active citizenship and how it is currently manifested. The idea of ‘active’ suggests a polar opposite of ‘passive’ and chapter three considers the deficits related directly to young people’s supposed passivity in particular. Chapter four examines the policy processes used to stimulate active citizenship in young people.

### **Guiding themes in this thesis**

This thesis is offered under the primary discipline of ‘social policy’. Social policy students investigate the intensions of social policy objectives and the outcomes of certain interventions (Baldock et al 2003). More importantly students recognise that social policy is an ‘intensely political as well as ideological enterprise’ (Kemshall 2002: 15). How to approach a social policy investigation depends on what is of interest to the researcher. This is not a study about the *impact* of a specific social policy initiative (in this case, citizenship education) on young people. Nor is it a study of the ways in which citizenship education is designed, organised and distributed. It is a study of the relationship between a social group, social issues and social problems (Alcock 2008). In particular, it is a study of how (in late modern welfare) young people are *governed*.

It will be argued throughout this thesis that the study of citizenship necessitates a study of government, but not in the narrow sense of analysing state apparatus. Citizenship is a normative concept, intimately tied to the social, political and economic context in which it operates (Lister 2003; Frazer 2008). In order to become active citizens, young people are subjected to a series of governmental practices that steer them towards these norms (with citizenship education the most obvious

example). Therefore, questions of what it means to be a good citizen and how a good citizen is to be moulded become questions of government: defined by Foucault as the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Foucault 2002a). This thesis is therefore presented with attention to Foucault’s notion of governmentality, and in particular how it has been developed in the context of late modern, liberal democracy by Mitchell Dean (1995; 1999) and Nikolas Rose (1996; 1999a; 1999b; 2000; 2008). In his landmark text on the subject, Dean suggests that ‘government entails any attempt to shape with some degree of deliberation aspects of our behaviour according to particular sets of norms and a variety of ends’ (Dean 1999: 10). Given that active citizenship is a desired end for young people, the processes and attempts to shape behaviour require some degree of interrogation.

Foucault’s work around governmentality concerned the study of the government in its many forms. Rather than tackling ‘received ways of thinking...largely derived from ideas clustered around the ubiquitous but difficult and somewhat obscure concept of ‘the state’’ (Dean 1999: 9), Foucault became increasingly concerned with the wide range of control practices that underpinned ‘the art of government’ (Foucault 2002b). This was not simply about instruments of government or State controlled power and rule but rather the elements that make up a totality of government: the government of the self, ‘that ritualization of the problem of personal conduct’ (Foucault 2002b: 201).

These become ‘historically constituted assemblages through which we do such things as cure, care, relieve, punish, educate, train and counsel’ (Dean 1999: 30). Questions of government are thus epistemological, moral, ethical and technical. Citizenship raises critical and thought provoking questions about *how* governmental power is exercised, and to what end:

““How?” not in the sense of “How does it manifest itself?” but “How is it exercised?” and “What happens when individuals exert (as we say) power over others?”

(Foucault 2002a: 337)

Dean (1999: 30-32) sets out a number of factors that warrant consideration when analysing government, each of which are attended to here.

### *Visibility of government*

First, there is the consideration given to the nature of the problem under investigation. Dean calls this the ‘examination of fields of visibility of government’ (1999: 30), where it becomes possible through analysis of how the problem is defined to ‘picture’ the nature of the problem. Who is to be governed? How is the relationship of government (between agent and state, for instance) to be designed? The term visibility is most appropriate, and Dean makes a comparison with those in the medical profession who consider the patient’s body to be a field of visibility. In governing a problem, it is incumbent on the investigator to visualise this field as fully as possible. For citizenship, this means mapping the problem of young people within the social, political and economic context of their lives (see chapter two), exploring their transitions and the associated problems (chapter three) and identifying their interaction with various agents of the state (evident throughout the thesis). Moreover, it requires us to attend to *where* the governing will take place: in the instituted formal sphere of schools or within the less formalised, but powerful ‘third space’ of community (Rose 1999b). These contexts are examined in detail in chapter seven.

### *Technical aspect of government*

Questions here literally concern the governmental techniques deployed in order to fulfil the realisation of its values: ‘by what means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies is authority constituted and rule accomplished?’ (Dean 1999: 31; see also Dean 1995). These form the conditions of governing, but also limit what is possible. In the context of this study, this commands an analysis of the approaches taken to foster active citizenship through education, welfare and criminal justice (see chapters 2-4). In order to manage young people’s behaviour and to map the preferred futures, instruments and techniques are required and those used are those that are most preferable: methods are not merely means to an end, but worthy of investigation themselves.



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*Government as a rational and thoughtful activity*

The third consideration concerns the ‘episteme’ of government (Dean 1995): the forms of ‘knowledge that arise from and inform the activity of governing’ (Dean 1999: 31). There is a relationship between ‘thought’ and ‘government’ (hence the hybrid term, *govern-mentality*) that helps us to understand what knowledge, expertise and rationality are used to explain practices of governing. Thought, in this case, is produced within the limits of time and space, and is presented in material form. For young people and citizenship, this means the representation of certain forms of ‘truth’ about their behaviours in the context of contemporary advanced liberal democracies. Using this idea, we can determine how the problems and solutions of citizenship are rationalised. In chapter three, an illustration of this is present in our understanding of anti-social behaviour. The legislative framework establishes anti-social behaviour as a defined problem. This in turn is measured and calculated using official police data and public surveys. Forms of anti-social behaviour and their incidence become ‘truth’ and the response in the form of state intervention becomes rational and justified.

*The formation of identities*

In this final point, Dean invites us to consider the ‘forms of individual and collective identity through which governing operates and which specific practices and programmes of government try to form’ (1999: 32). Identity in this sense is multi-faceted and concerns not just the objects of governing (i.e. young people) but also the agents of governing (teachers, the community and so on). For citizenship, new collective identities are constructed. Young people become identified by their political, social and moral character. Communities become reconstituted as collective entities in pursuit of the common good (Tam 1993). Teachers, and other employed agents of the state, are reconstituted with the expertise to support the development of these identities. The formation of identities is probably of most importance to this present study and is discussed throughout.

The governmentality thesis underpins the discussion in the further chapters of this thesis. As a broader theoretical framework, it enabled the researcher to locate aspects

of the active citizenship agenda within the mentality of rule. The questions established by Dean, set out above, are attended to throughout.

## Structure of the thesis

Having established some basic definitions of citizenship in the introductory chapter, drawn from its two most significant origins, **chapter two** explores further how citizenship is defined in contemporary political and social discourse. The dominant definition – underpinned by the political thesis of communitarianism – is examined in critical detail. We are reminded that communitarian citizenship offers much in the way of solutions. Every solution, however, must start with a problem. **Chapter three** critically reviews the recent development of the ‘youth problem’, taking at its core two themes: political literacy and anti-social behaviour. The key question that guides this chapter is why young people have become the subjects of such intense scrutiny. If we are indeed witness to a new rise in interest around citizenship, this is matched only by a decade of intense preoccupation with the lives of young people growing up in contemporary society. The problems identified and critically examined in this chapter are the foundations for the expansive policy developments, some of which are outlined in **chapter four**. Here, the developments in education are discussed and recent research is used to interrogate these developments further.

In **chapter five**, the design and methodology is reviewed with a theoretical exploration of the research paradigm that underpins this study. The chapter comprehensively sets out the methods chosen, their application to the study, the analytical protocols followed and the ethical principles used in the research.

The findings for this study are presented in accordance with how the study was carried out, in two stages. **Chapter six** presents the findings from stage one of the study which aimed to define the concepts that young people associate with active citizenship. **Chapter seven** develops the discussion further by examining definitions in greater detail and investigating these in relation to the everyday experiences of the young people involved in the study. Each of the chapters presents the findings in an

analytical discussion and in thematic form. Two broader themes emerge from the findings that are examined in **chapter eight**.

**Chapter nine** offers the conclusions of the thesis. It reviews the key contributions of the study in terms of how it builds upon the existing knowledge base of young people's active citizenship. It also considers the future research questions that arise as a result of this study.

## 2 Citizenship and Social Policy

As the introductory chapter identified, there are two broad traditions commonly found in any analysis of citizenship: the liberal model associated with citizenship rights and the civic republican model of political participation. It is in the former model that citizenship has most commonly been understood in the history of its usage in a UK context (Heater 2006): particularly in the tripartite set of rights set out by TH Marshall in his analysis of post-war social citizenship. However, this analysis comes under challenge as we begin to conceptualise contemporary definitions of social citizenship and their application to social policy and welfare.

In this chapter, the author attempts to locate citizenship in the context of contemporary social policy and there are two significant areas of discussion that are required in order to do this. The first is in an analysis of changes to the provision of social welfare, a theme intimately related to Marshall's definition of social citizenship. Evident in a series of challenges to the post-war welfare consensus is a re-imagined relationship between citizen and state in relation to the provision, uptake and utility of welfare.

Second: an interrelated discussion concerns the shift in the relationship between rights and responsibilities in a broader sense and in this respect, welfare is but one domain in which this changing relationship is realised. The broader question in advanced liberal democracies is one of how to govern social and civil relationships between individuals in an increasingly fragmented and polarised society (Rose 1996). It is the notion of community that politicians of all major parties turn their attention to, invoking as it does inclusion, security and stability (Delanty 2003). As members of communities, the government seeks to activate our social, moral and economic competence and in the final section of this chapter, the author locates this activation in the context of Rose's (1996; 1999a; 1999b; 2000) work around 'responsibilisation'.

## The new right: a challenge to social citizenship

Marshall's seminal analysis of citizenship contained a distinct commitment to 'social rights' (Marshall and Bottomore 1992: 8). In his historical analysis, the alleviation of poverty had been considered somehow separate to any notion of rights but the nineteenth century saw the first major advance in social rights and this 'involved changes in the egalitarian principles expressed in citizenship.' (Marshall and Bottomore 1992: 28)

This advance saw the birth of universal rights to 'real income' (Marshall and Bottomore 1992: 28), a state guarantee of the 'minimum supply of certain essential goods and services...or a minimum money income available to be spent on essentials' (p32). Marshall's particular point was that:

“What matters it that there is a general enrichment of the concrete substance of civilised life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalisation between the more and the less fortunate at all levels...Equalisation is not so much between classes as between individuals within a population which is now treated for this purpose as though it were one class. Equality of status is more important than equality of income.”

(1992: 33).

A key phrase in the above quotation is 'equality of status': the central argument in Marshall's conception of social rights. Here, he was particularly eager to illustrate a civil/social relationship. As Heater notes: 'gross economic and social inequalities are incompatible with civil and political egalitarianism' (Heater 2004: 271). For Marshall, social welfare is intrinsically linked to political association and civic collectivism. Spicker suggests that 'part of the aim of 'welfare states' has been to invest citizens equally with a status entitling them to draw on the resources of society' (Spicker 1995: 29-30). This notion of universality avoids what Titmuss argued as 'any humiliating loss of status, dignity or self-respect' (1968: 129).

Marshall's analysis, when delivered first as a lecture in 1949 provided as best an assessment of the emerging post-war welfare state as any other before him (Heater 2002). However, this assessment was also problematic. Writing in such a context enabled him to develop an enthusiasm for the achievements of this emerging welfare state with key social reforms in welfare (The Beveridge Report, 1942), education (The Butler Education Act, 1944) and health (the founding of the NHS in 1946) all having just occurred. Heater argued that he:

“underestimated the perhaps tentative nature of the social citizenship which he saw the welfare state as consolidating. He gave no thought to the possible future need to advance the social element in citizenship status, let alone defend it against retrogression.”

(2002: 19)

The most significant and lasting challenge to this post-war welfare enthusiasm came with the growth of 'neo-liberalism' most advanced in the UK with what we now term 'Thatcherism' or the 'New Right'. The new right drew on both libertarian liberalism (characterised by individual freedom, a 'free market' and property rights with limited government interference) and a 'social conservatism' stressing the government's role in maintaining moral order (Faulks 1998; Dwyer 2004a). This enabled a governmental project to both restrict interference in certain domains, and effectively expand it in others. In one episode of the US drama, *The West Wing*, a character - Josh Lyman - accuses neo-liberal conservatives of wanting a government, just 'small enough to fit inside your bedroom'. He of course implies the moral nature of neo-liberal concern: brutally effective in regulating sexuality for instance (through the imposition of the infamous Section 28, see Bamforth 1997 and Wood 2001b for further discussion) but seeing the 'reduction of the state's welfare role [as] both positive and progressive' (Dwyer 2004a: 61). Instead, welfare needs must be addressed by individual and familial responsibility, with only conditional and residual provision by the state (Dwyer 2000; 2004a; b). As a consequence, Marshall's analysis came under criticism largely for his preference for collectivism and the New Right came to abandon the notion of social rights altogether (Pratt 1997). This rejection also manifested hostility

towards social welfare as a tool for social justice (George and Wilding 1994). Thus, the welfare state was recast as:

- Inefficient and ineffective: serving the interests of bureaucrats and professionals over the needs of clients.
- Economically damaging: reducing the ability of the free market, and increasing taxation.
- Socially and morally damaging: reproducing a ‘dependent underclass’.
- Politically damaging: where government deals with self-interested rights claims as opposed to pursuing the ‘common good’.

(George and Wilding 1994; Dwyer 2004a).

It is the third of these criticisms that centres particularly on the role of the social citizen, the social and moral consequences of so-called welfare dependency. Of all its vocal proponents, Charles Murray is credited with the development of an ‘underclass’ discourse in Western societies. The two principal assumptions he put forward were that extensive, state-funded welfare entitlements or rights create and reproduce an ‘underclass’ of welfare dependents and that dysfunctional behaviour, rather than economic inequality is what distinguishes the underclass (See Murray 1994; 1996).

Welfare was therefore a moral issue:

“Britain has a growing population of working-aged, healthy people who live in a different world from other Britons, who are raising their children to live in it, and whose values are now contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods, which is one of the most insidious aspects of the phenomenon, for neighbours who don’t share those values cannot isolate themselves.”

(Murray 1996: 25)

Three features that helped identify an underclass are ‘illegitimacy, violent crime and drop out from the labour force’ (Ibid) and the solution that Murray proposed is nothing short of total abolition of social rights:

“We have available to us a programme that would convert a large proportion of the younger generation or hardcore unemployed into steady workers making a living wage...It would reverse the trend in the break of poor families...[It] consists of scrapping the entire federal welfare and income structure for working-aged persons...It would leave the working aged person with no recourse whatsoever except the job market, family members, friends, and locally funded services.”

(Murray 1994: 227-280)

Murray’s influence on new right thinking was considerable, with a policy emphasis emerging that prioritised ‘self-help’ and individual reliance. Consequently,

“Policies sought to diminish the state’s welfare role, reduce or at least contain public welfare expenditure, challenge the power of the welfare state professions [and] promote a residual welfare state.”

(Dwyer 2004a: 65)

The ideological reframing of welfare inarguably took force with the election of the Conservative government in 1979, though as Hill notes ‘changes had been gradually emerging before that date’ (Hill 2003: 36). The cross-party consensus on welfare spending had raised economic concerns about its inflationary power, resulting in a Labour minister warning that in terms of public expenditure increases, ‘the party is over’ (in Hill 2003: 36). What distinctly marked out the new right approach was its faith in the monetarist school of thought advanced by Friedman (1962; 1977).

Techniques throughout the 1980s were employed to control the public sector borrowing rate and the money supply. Key to the formula was a willingness to allow higher levels of unemployment in a ‘war against inflation’ (Hill 2003: 37).

Alongside this economic transformation was a rising hostility to state social policy. Favouring privatisation, an end to Union power-blocks and the pursuit of curbing social expenditure, the government engaged in a programme of ‘roll back’. However, despite this commitment, ‘they found social policy expenditure very difficult to curb’ (Hill 2003: 37). Some notable changes throughout this period included:



- A reduction in the value of contributory benefits, with greater emphasis on employer coverage of sickness benefits.
- Pension reform to encourage rapid private pension growth.
- The increase of means-testing, replacing more ‘universal’ policies.
- A weakening of benefits for the unemployed, including support for under-18s being conditional on training.
- The renaming of unemployment benefit to ‘job-seekers allowance’ to emphasise required behaviour.
- Reduction in state-support for single parent families.

(Hill 2003; Dwyer 2004a)

What then for the social citizen? We return to Marshall’s comparatively romantic vision of a social citizen, entitled to universal rights and ‘equality of status’. Social policy as envisaged by the New Right project ensured a swift end to such characterisations. Where there was once universality, this was replaced by increasing levels of conditionality and, in many cases, withdrawal of entitlements. The economic case was bound to the monetarist versions of welfare distribution (though these were later abandoned in the 1990s) characterised by decreased public spending, greater primacy of private sector welfare services and an emphasis on the free market being allowed to run its course.

### **New Labour and the Third Way**

By the time that New Labour was taking power in the UK, the post-war welfare consensus was effectively over (Newman 2001). The nature of welfare states were challenged from above by globalisation, the influence of Europe and wider questions about the validity of the state (Beck 2002; Johansson and Hvinden 2005). The idea of a Third Way forged ‘a new political settlement fitted to the new conditions of a global economy but attentive to the importance of social cohesion’ (Newman 2001: 40). Across Western Europe, this shift was realized as left wing parties developed new strategies for delivering and managing welfare programmes. Critically, in Europe there was a ‘need to shift from ‘passive’ to ‘active’ policies, meaning that the primary goal of social protection schemes should be to promote labour market participation’

(Johansson and Hvinden 2005: 103). Pressures also came from below with the observed trend of greater individualisation and a growing rejection of tradition (Beck 1992; 2002; Giddens 1991; 1998; Johansson and Hvinden 2005).

The intellectual heritage of the Third Way is often argued to be located in the New Right. Commentators have therefore described its rise as a process of left wing parties disavowing their heritage proposing policies that are ‘virtually indistinguishable’ (Page 2001) from those of the right (Hall 1998; Powell 2000). Others, usually the architects of the third way, are less dismissive suggesting that the movement represents a critical repositioning of parties, in an otherwise consistent commitment to social democratic values (Blair 1993; 1998a). This process is therefore a modernization rather than rejection of social democracy (Blair 1993; 1998a; Giddens 2000). In reality, this has meant (for Britain at least) a distinction between ‘new’ and ‘old’ Labour, and a rejection of the worst ‘excesses of the neo-liberal politics of the ‘new right’ (Newman 2001: 41).

The Third Way encompasses an ‘ideological heterogeneity’ (Weltman 2004) embracing a range of potentially contrasting positions: communitarianism, Christian socialism, neo-liberalism, traditional conservatism and the rhetoric of modernization are all found within its scope (Driver and Martell 1998; Finlayson 1999; Weltman 2004). Perhaps for this reason, it is even easier for opponents to level criticism that, as a position, it lacks substance as a ‘political marketing strategy’ (Morrison 2004: 167) designed to secure power. Where it can be argued that in fact the Third Way is ‘anti-ideological’ (Weltman 2004) is in its declarations of realistic responses to complex social changes. Giddens himself has stated that the Third Way is in fact a ‘pragmatic attitude towards coping with change’ (1998: 68), relying on a balanced dialogue between traditionally opposed positions of left and right. Such pragmatism was the hallmark of a discourse that ‘contrasted with the dogma and sleaze of the Conservatives’ (Morrison 2004: 168). In this sense, the Third Way is proposed as the ‘progressive’ choice, a preparedness to engage with the complex issues of late modernity, shedding the ideological entrenchment of historical partisan politics.

Giddens (1998; 2000) has been credited as the primary articulator, if not architect, of the third way as imagined in Western Europe. According to Giddens, traditional distinctions between left and right were unhelpful in addressing contemporary problems and as a result, social democratic parties needed to address the concerns facing ordinary citizens (Giddens 2000: 5). The changes in social democratic values translated into a reframing of social policy delivery. Table 1 captures these shifts:

**Table 1 - The Third Way**

<b>Social democracy (the old left)</b>	<b>Neo-liberalism (the new right)</b>	<b>Third Way (the centre left)</b>
Class politics of the left	Class politics of the right	Modernising movement of the centre
Old mixed economy	Market fundamentalism	New mixed economy
Corporatism: state dominates over civil society	Minimal state	New democratic state
Internationalism	Conservative nation	Cosmopolitan nation
Strong welfare state, protecting from 'cradle to grave'	Welfare safety net	Social investment state.

(Giddens 1998: 18)

### **Reshaping Rights and Responsibilities**

Whereas the New Right had attempted, and ultimately failed, to roll back the welfare state, New Labour had become associated with modernizing it (Newman 2001; 2005). Since their 1997 election victory, public services have seemingly undergone continuous significant changes, in part a continuation of the new right widespread restructuring and repositioning of the welfare system (Banks 2004; Flynn 1997). This has led to some distinction between old and new ways of managing public services. According to Flynn, 'in all cases, the 'old' is presented as bad and the 'new' as good' (1997: 3).

For Blair, the challenges of the new world indicated a need to 'define a new relationship between citizen and community' (Blair 1993: 11). The basis for a 'modern notion of citizenship' (Blair 1993: 7) is linked to two important threads: economic effectiveness in respect of providing welfare 'opportunities' (Morrison 2004) and new forms of social cohesion in terms of a renewal of civic and civil life.

The social welfare of New Labour was to be realised through the extension of ‘conditionality’ (Mead 1982; 1986; 1997; Dwyer 2004a; b) and the promotion of the ‘active society’ (Walters 1997; Weatherly 2001). Together they would provide a ‘social investment state’ (Giddens 1998) instead of a welfare net characterised as ‘good enough’ welfare provision (Williams 1999).

Conditionality had long been advocated by Mead who, like Murray, had framed the underclass as a matter of welfare dependency and moral concern: ‘The troubling behaviour and condition of disadvantage is due to social programs on which so many are dependent’ (Mead 1982: 22). Whereas Murray had advocated the abolishment of the welfare state altogether, Mead was by some small degrees more charitable! In first putting forward his argument for conditional welfare, he stated that:

“Government must now *obligate* program recipients to work rather than just entice them. What is obligatory cannot simply be offered as choice – it has to be enforced by sanctions, in this case the loss of welfare grant.”

(Mead 1982: 28)

Conditionality is therefore defined as eligibility to welfare entitlements dependent on the fulfilment of compulsory duties or patterns of behaviour (Deacon 1994). Dwyer’s (2004b) assessment of ‘creeping conditionality’ in the UK reveals an increasing redundancy of the notion of welfare (social) rights: ‘a *qualitative* shift is ongoing within the UK welfare state. The idea of welfare rights is being superseded by one of conditional entitlement’ (Dwyer 2004b: 269). Whilst conditionality has probably always featured in some respect or another, and ‘notions of ‘genuine need’ and of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor are not new’ (Kemshall 2002: 27), there is now a key prioritisation of *responsibilities* before *rights* (Dwyer 2004b). Examples abound: Income support was effectively replaced by job-seekers allowance, awarded only upon evidence of actively seeking work and being able to provide evidence of this. Social housing is provided *subject to* evidence of desisting from anti-social behaviour through contracts (see chapter three for further discussion).

This is set within a re-focused, social investment welfare system where:

“Need is recast as social exclusion and inequality, and posted as dysfunctional to both wealth creation and social democracy. Meeting need through economic maintenance (for example, through Income Support) is seen as less socially and politically desirable than promoting greater social inclusion through the labour market.”

(Kemshall 2002: 28)

### Summary

In what is considered to be the most influential account of British citizenship; Marshall put forward the proposition that social rights were critical to ensuring equality of status amongst citizens. His work was presented in a climate of a post-war welfare consensus, capturing the enthusiasm for universal social provision. In more recent times, this consensus and enthusiasm has been challenged not least through the rise of market economics and the new right. Economic and moral concerns have redefined the role of welfare, particularly in the characterisation of recipients as a dependent underclass. As a result, New Labour’s welfare ambitions have firmly entrenched the principle of conditionality, suggesting the primacy of responsibilities over social rights. The reform of welfare services is but one element of the recasting of the active citizen in late modern society. The other important and interrelated discourse concerns how active we become in our own communities.

### Communitarianism and citizenship

“All that is distinctly human is only realised when human beings interact with each other as members of shared communities.”

(Tam 1998: 220)

At the apex of advanced liberalisation in western democracies came the unbridled power of free markets, individualisation and the uncertainties characteristic of the risk society (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; 1998). Governments faced a challenge: how to instil moral and social obligatory connections between individuals whilst at the same time trumpeting wealth generation and individual consumerism? Attempts to encourage citizenship in this climate were open to criticism. With its emphasis on market rights and in casting the citizen as consumer, the New Right project was

charged with making ‘happier subjects, not true citizens’ (Liberal Democrats 1991: 1). Economic and moral arguments were too aligned to individual choice (Widdicombe 2001) famously captured in Conservative Prime Minister Thatcher’s declaration that ‘there is no such thing as society’ (cited in Dorrell 2001). The liberal model of citizenship had reached its limits, with criticism directed at its simplistic separation of the individual from the public, a dualism that unhelpfully characterises public issues as private ones (Faulks 2000). New communitarian thinkers emerged, reframing the individual as the sum of social connectedness. These philosophical challenges to the liberal consensus found linkage to a political interpretation of communitarianism. Communitarianism has become the central political embodiment of the third way. In this section, communitarianism is defined and examined in relationship to governance and citizenship.

### **Defining communitarianism**

Elements of the thesis that we now call communitarianism are not new ones. Like citizenship, the importance of community as a significant strand of political thought dates back to the ideas of Aristotle, through Rome and later to the work of Rousseau. Many commentators chart the development of communitarianism as an opposition to the individualism associated with the liberal political philosopher John Rawls. Key thinkers Michael Sandal, Alasdair McIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer and John Macmurray are all credited with offering philosophical positions that proposed alternatives to the individualism associated with liberal political and philosophical traditions (Hale 2004). In mainstream political thought, it was in the 1970s and the 1980s that a ‘general theory of communitarianism gradually emerged’ (Avineri and De-Shalit 1992: 2). Communitarianism developed at frenetic pace in political thought both in the USA and the UK. In reviewing the growth in literature and policy, Frazer (1999) helpfully offers an analytical distinction between three types of communitarian thought. These are termed ‘vernacular communitarianism’, ‘philosophical communitarianism’ and ‘political communitarianism’.

Vernacular communitarianism is illustrated by activist calls for the increased participation of local people in decision making and public life. Often suggesting

‘community above all’ (Frazer 1999: 10), claims are made about the need to involve people through community development and other forms of local action.

Philosophical communitarianism concerns the academic arguments and debate centred on the limitations of individualist liberal thought. Whilst abstract and technical, there are three central claims made:

- Communitarians reject the idea that individuals stand in direct unmediated relationship with the state and society.
- Communitarians dispute the place of a free unregulated market as the key social institution with free market exchanges as ultimate rights or even a pattern of human relations.
- Communitarians promote a distinct set of values.

(Frazer 1999: 21-22)

Political communitarianism, which this discussion is in the main concerned with, takes the ideal of community and offers ‘prescriptions about the political and social institutions that could realize this ideal’ (Frazer 1999: 11). Political communitarianism has grown in both the UK and the USA, with different applications in each country. In the UK, it is possible to determine two key strands. The left of centre communitarianism employed by New Labour draws from political and philosophical roots in ethical socialism, Christian socialism, the co-operative movement, and working class practices of mutuality and solidarity. Conservative communitarianism is that which embodies the principles of the New Right, certainly under some degree of challenge in recent times. In the USA, the philosophical critique is of the individual excesses of liberalism, claiming to be ‘beyond left and right’ and drawing on conservative political and social thought. There is a distinctive analysis of the family (more of which below), an emphasis on duty and obligation and an appeal to religiosity (see Frazer 1999: 33).

There are key shared themes in each of the varieties of political communitarianism, notably an emphasis on ‘civic spirit, responsibility for self and for the community, mutuality’, the emphasis on participation and that the ‘strength of families and the

strength of communities are mutually reinforcing’ (see Frazer 1999: 35-38). There is also a consensus on what threatens the community ideal including ‘selfishness on the part of individuals, ineptitude and betrayal on the part of bureaucratic government, [and] crime’ (Frazer 1999: 38).

### *Community beyond territory*

The notion of community has gained significant weight in recent political history. New Labour in particular is responsible for recasting it as not merely a ‘soft and romantic’ concept, but as a ‘robust and powerful idea’ (Mandelson and Liddle 1996: 19). For Blair, community ‘acknowledges our interdependence; it recognises our individual worth’ (2000a) capturing both the need for individualism and social bonds. As a narrative, it enabled Blair to distinguish Labour from the previous Conservative administration particularly in attempting to define key ideological differences and to stress loyalty to the left-wing roots of the party (Goes 2004). If community carries multiple meanings (Frazer 1999) this was certainly true in Blair’s application of it. He ‘articulated different ideas on community, depending on his immediate political needs’ (Goes 2004: 114). These meanings were built around the balancing of rights and responsibilities (Giddens 1998), the fashionable but short lived ‘stakeholder society’ (Hutton 1996), both as a critique of Old Labour and in support of it (see Goes 2004: 112-113). Hale (2004) notes that in one speech, and indeed within one paragraph, Blair presents multiple assumptions and definitions of community, presented here with my insertions in bold:

“I don’t just mean the villages, towns and cities in which we live [**location**]. I mean that our fulfilment as individuals lies in a decent society of others [**synonymous with society**]. My argument to you today is that the renewal of community [**as diminished, and open to renewal**] is the answer to the challenges of a changing world [**as an antidote to late modern society**].  
(Blair 2000b)

David Blunkett, in his role as Home Secretary, also utilised community as a key instrument of social change (see Blunkett 2003a; 2003b). Blunkett accepts that



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community as we now understand it is different. He concurs with the American sociologist Sampson who stated:

“we do not need community so much to satisfy our private and personal needs, which are better met elsewhere, nor even to meet our sustenance needs...Rather, local community remains essential as a site for the realisation of common values in support of social goods, including public safety, norms of civility and trust, efficacious voluntary associations, and collective socialisation of the young.”

(Sampson 1999: 247)

Accordingly, Blunkett accepts that communities have changed in their function and that we rely on them for ‘basic order, decent behaviour; the socialisation of the young into community norms’ (Blunkett 2003a: 14), things that ‘generally come unstuck in disadvantaged communities’ (Ibid). Thus the task of government is to build community capacity to make local decisions in order to promote ownership over social order.

Both Blair and Blunkett, and many others after them, in their continuous references to community represent it as a ‘given’ ideal, and these views mirror those of many communitarians who:

“*begin* with the concept ‘community’: community is a valuable thing and the theoretical and practical problem these communitarians try to tackle is, crudely, how to get it, and how to secure it once it has been got.”

(Frazer 1999: 42)

Community is thus understood by communitarians as more than a mere territory where human relations are conducted through encounters and interactions. Communitarians emphasise sharing: ‘shared fate, shared social identities, shared practices (language, religion, culture), shared values’ (Frazer 1999: 43) with ‘*attachments* not simple interactions’ (Ibid.). The inferences that result from this are that:

- Political or social systems that emphasise above all the freedom and rights of the individual as the best solution to moral and social dilemmas are likely to fail.
- Conversely, the state itself is seen as less salient ‘than a variety of social organisations and institutions’ such as neighbourhoods, fellowship groups, parties, religious organisations, corporations etc (Frazer 1999: 43).
- These mediate institutions can and should be ‘the building blocks of community’ (Frazer 1999: 44).

Communitarianism offers a particular sociological review of the consequences and potential remedies of late modern society (Hale 2004). It has often been trumpeted as ‘a response to practical issues’ (Selznick 1998: 15) such as ‘unbridled capitalism, drug addiction, crime, and citizenship’ (Ibid.). At its heart is perhaps the key argument that individuals are ‘*enlarged* as a result of social experience and [...] sustained by *rootedness*’ (Selznick 1998: 16). Often seen as a reaction to the excesses of liberalism, communitarianism offers remedy against:

“liberal premises [that] are overly individualistic and ahistorical; insufficiently sensitive to the social sources of selfhood and obligation; too much concerned with rights, too little concerned with duty, virtue and responsibility; too ready to accept a thin or anaemic conception of the common good”  
(Selznick 1998: 16)

Present day communitarian understanding is often attributed to one of its most vocal proponents, the North American sociologist Amitai Etzioni. Communitarianism, according to Etzioni, offers the necessary ‘balance between social forces and the person’ (Etzioni 1998). In essence, his assertions rest upon a central thesis:

“Americans – who have long been concerned with the deterioration of private and public morality, the decline of the family, high crime rates, and the swelling of corruption in government – can now act without fear. We can act without fear that attempts to shore up our values, responsibilities, institutions,

and communities will cause us to charge into a dark tunnel of moralism and authoritarianism that leads to a church-dominated state or a right-wing world.” (Etzioni 1993: 2)

If this reads a little evangelical, there is more to come in his ‘chapter and verse’ of a ‘movement’ dedicated to ‘the betterment of our moral, social, and political environment’ (1993: 2). For Etzioni, a conundrum is apparent where a major feature of contemporary American society is ‘a strong sense of entitlement’ (1993: 3) with a weak sense of obligation. Despite recognising that ‘the imbalance between rights and responsibilities... is a basic trait of the American character’ (1993: 4), Etzioni laments the recent developments in politics that have further widened the gulf between government and citizen, where the public can expect of the government solutions to social problems, with little fiscal cost to themselves: literally to ‘have their cake and eat it’ (p4). Tam, writing in the UK context, presents a thesis that is similar in tone and content: a consequence of market individualism is the decline in community ties and moral order, its ‘cancerous effect’ (1998: 3). With concerns ranging from political disengagement, poor parenting as a result of working longer hours, and the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, Tam concludes that:

“Selfishness becomes a moral creed. Individuals are encouraged at every turn to put their own interests first, and to demand the freedom to make their own choices regardless of the implications for civil order.” (1998: 4)

And so to Etzioni’s four points for correcting this imbalance. These are defined largely as the restriction of rights, both in their application and the accompanying discourse. Four points are put forward:

1. A moratorium on new rights.
2. Re-establishing the link between rights and responsibilities.
3. Recognising that some responsibilities do not entail rights.
4. Adjusting some rights to the changed circumstances.

(see Etzioni 1993: 4-11)

At the heart of the work of Etzioni is the claim that communities offer the opportunity for moral reconstruction. That is: ‘a general shoring up of our moral foundations’ (1993:11) realised through a ‘moral voice’. Respectful to advanced liberalism:

*“Free individuals require a community, which backs them up against encroachment by the state and sustains morality by drawing on the gentle prodding of kin, friends, neighbours and other community members, rather than building on government controls or fear of authorities.”*

(Etzioni 1993: 15)

To illustrate, Etzioni draws on examples of soft regulatory practices (or community prodding as he prefers) in local communities such as neighbourly commentary on the upkeep of gardens, or in not driving recklessly in the local area for the sake of other community members passing judgement. All such practices ‘reinforce the proper behaviour that members of the community acquire early’ (1993: 33). Without concern or irony, Etzioni is quick to establish that ‘when people misbehave in serious ways, the community’s response tends to be stronger, especially when the community is clear about what is right and wrong’ (p33). However, the ‘moral voice’ is not always negative: it also serves as recognition for acts of good will towards neighbours, charity and ‘we appreciate, praise, recognise, celebrate, and toast those who serve their communities’ (p34). The characterisation here is of rational communities, with an agreed, reasonable moral voice rooted in shared values, where issues of power, inclusion and exclusion are either understated or felt to be irrelevant enough for sidestepping.

Tam (1998) puts forward the communitarian alternative to both individualism and authoritarianism where social and political practices can be reformed. Tam argues for ‘inclusive communities’ built upon ‘questions about what collective action is to be taken for the common good’ (p7).

Inclusive communities require:

“citizens who can take part in co-operative enquiries determining a wide range of issues; who recognize that they share a respect for common values and accept the responsibilities these values imply; and who actively support the transformation of power relations for the common good.”

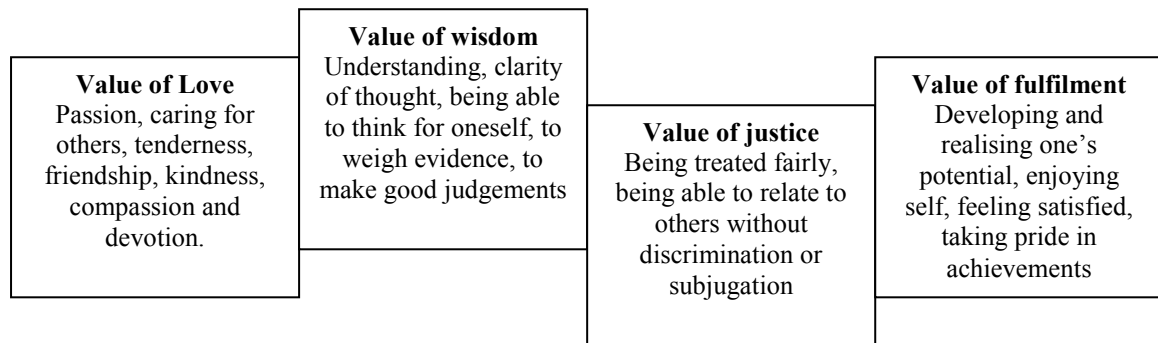
(Tam 1998: 8)

This ‘transformation’ requires several key communitarian reforms in education, economic relationships and law and order. Three guiding principles that underpin communitarian thinking are put forward as strategies for instigating reform. These are:

- **Co-operative enquiry:** defined as the process of discerning ‘truth’ through informed deliberation. In essence, this is an argument for more participative democracy away from elite led decisions and determinations to a more collective assessment of evidence. Citizens should ‘be allowed to put forward their views without intimidation, be allowed to question what others have suggested, and learn from their common deliberations’ (p13) to come to a common judgement on whatever claims are made. This proposal rejects both authoritarian decision making and its supposed polar position – ‘anything goes’ argued to be characteristic of individualist, relativist thought. Neither ‘dogmatic intolerance’ nor ‘blind tolerance’ (p14) enable a critical review of claims made.
- **Common values and mutual responsibility:** communitarians believe that ‘members of any community [should] take responsibility for enabling each other to pursue common values’ (p14). Again, rejecting the relativist claims that values are individual, Tam puts forward four shared sets that can bind a moral community. These are set out in figure 3 below, and depend on communities coming together to reject the prioritisation of distinct values over collective ones. Within his claims there appears to be a coded attack on multi-cultural communities, in essence: ‘individuals or groups who place their

distinctive values above the common values they share with others, run the risk of cutting themselves off from harmonious interactions with others’ (p15) whether at the level of ‘neighbourhood, tribe or country’.

**Figure 3 - Shared values in communitarian thought**



(Based upon Tam 1998: 15)

- **Communitarian power relations:** citizen participation requires equal participation in the given power structure. Beyond the ‘periodic allocation of power’ to the elites characteristic of democracy, communitarians argue that citizens can, together, ‘appreciate the dangers and opportunities they share’ (p17) and through considered deliberation make decisions about their lives. This calls for the removal of barriers so that ‘a strong ethos of sharing and volunteering’ may be a positive community feature.

(Tam 1998: 13-18)

How is communitarianism to be achieved in practical and political terms? Taking Tam’s values and principles as a starting point, let us explore three key components: the family, education and work.

*The family*

The bringing together of the concepts ‘family’ and ‘community’ is certainly not unique to communitarianism, representing in many ways conservative and socialist traditions. For Frazer it offers:

“*rhetorical effect* – it invokes pictures of stable happy families and well-ordered communities on the one hand, and chaotic dysfunctional families and run-down neighbourhoods on the other.”

(1999: 173)

What is evident from communitarian thought is the ‘conceptual connection’ (Frazer 1999: 173) between the twin concepts. Families are commonly seen as intimately connected with the success or failure of communities. They are termed or modelled as communities themselves (Etzioni 1993; Gutmann 1992; MacMurray 1961) and the meanings of both become ‘mutually constitutive’ (Frazer 1999: 174). Family is effectively the site where children are raised to perform in inclusive communities (Tam 1998). As Blair has said: ‘Strong families make strong communities’ (Blair 1998b).

Both Etzioni and Tam worry about the state of contemporary families. Tam is careful to adjust his comments away from simply branding single-parent families as unfit, recognising that there are conditions where parents can and should divorce. However, in becoming parents, individuals need to ensure that ‘clear duties are linked to the role of being a parent’ (1998: 71) and that having children impacts upon others. Etzioni suggests that threats to the community are the ‘product of poor parenting’ (Etzioni 1993: 69) over and above the role played by economic and social factors:

“The fact is, given the same economic and social conditions, *in poor neighbourhoods one finds decent and hardworking youngsters right next to antisocial ones. Likewise, in affluent suburbs one finds antisocial youngsters right next to decent, hardworking ones.* The difference is often a reflection of the homes they come from.”

(Etzioni 1993: 70)

For Tam, the real problem is not with the composition of non-traditional forms of family life. It is with parental behaviour in whatever form it takes:

“Where citizens should praise or blame is not particular family patterns, but the extent to which their fellow citizens carry out their responsibilities as parents.”

(Tam 1998: 72)

Thus,

“Where forms of neglect and abuse can readily be identified as being harmful to the development of children, citizens would be justified in seeking collective action to train potential parents in ways of avoiding such harm; giving children independent educative support where their parents do not provide it adequately; and remove children to new homes if their parents have clearly failed to discharge their parental duties.”

(Tam 1998: 72-73).

The argument of a golden age, bound to nostalgia is not uncommon in political discourses around community. For instance, when attempting to balance the need for both tradition and modernisation, Blair argued:

“When I think of the values and attitudes of my parents’ generation, I distinguish between the genuine values that underpinned the best of Britain and the attitudes we can safely and rightly leave behind. Old-fashioned values are good values. Old-fashioned attitudes or practices may simply be barriers that hold our values back.”

(2000a).

The template for Etzioni’s communitarian family is based a rose tinted image of the American community in the 1950s. The decade represented a period of powerful moral guidance from a dominant Christian religion, low incidences (or at least the concealment perhaps) of violent crime, drug misuse and other similar crimes together with a legal barriers to divorce suggested, for him, a social ideal (Etzioni 1997). Of particular note, the ‘roles of men and women were clearly delineated’ (Etzioni 1997: 61) and children undertook prescribed courses that reflected ‘the dominant set of values’ (Ibid: 63). Prideaux notes that ‘despite a passing acknowledgement that



women and ethnic minorities were treated as second-class citizens, Etzioni still enthuses over this past society' (2004: 130). This has led to feminist criticisms that communitarians too often hold a 'very traditional view of the family' (Voet 1998: 133) suggesting that 'their ideal of citizenship is not sex-equal' (Voet 1998:135).

### *Education*

The emphasis in Tam's work appears to be in reforms to how education takes place. This means that a wide range of vocational and academic opportunities can successfully co-exist but must be accompanied by a radical shift in how education is delivered. Here Tam cites the educational philosopher John Dewey as an example par excellence of such an approach. Dewey is credited with being one of the leading educational thinkers of the twentieth century. Amongst other elements of his philosophy, Dewey believed that education must engage with and enlarge experience, and that environments and interactions are necessary for learning (Smith 2001). Dewey's influence has been lasting, not least in informing a philosophy of youth work and informal education (Jeffs and Smith 1999b). These strategies of education prioritise learning from experience (Kolb and Fry 1975) in everyday, real world situations. However, this reflective practice is dependent on a recognition of the interplay of power in an experiential context. Here, youth work tradition tends to draw on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970; 1998). In brief, Freire's educational work was essentially focused on enabling the poor or disadvantaged to become *conscientized* (aware) of their oppression, and through *praxis*, take action for change. Central to the educational method is dialogue – a two way process of learning. Where communitarians fail to grasp the nature of true reflective learning as envisaged by Freire and Dewey, is in the seemingly accepted wisdom that young people need to be socialised into pre-defined community norms. Put another way, the ideals put forward in Etzioni's work tend to suggest a normative template for community, and the processes of dialogue are designed to further strengthen this. There is no indication in his work that communities can be places of conflict where power is unequally distributed (Staeheli 2008).

Another significant point is what Tam, in citing the USA reforms, calls 'the cultivation of character' (1998: 57). The argument is that rising criminal behaviour,

linked to individualism, can be offset by character (substitute with citizenship) education, particularly when seen in environments encapsulated by the shared values of love, wisdom, justice and fulfilment. To do this requires education for citizenship to be not merely another subject to be taught, rather it should be central to the school-child relationship. If reliant on mere volunteering or short-term exercises,

‘Unless [...] developed considerably, the young are not likely to attain any real appreciation of democratic citizenship’

(Tam 1998: 63).

Education for communitarian citizenship, essentially the character education set out here, is obviously central to this present study and is discussed further in chapters three and four.

#### *Economic relationships*

Tam considers the links between communitarianism and the economy at a number of levels. Two of his arguments are explored here. The first concerns the role of work in inclusive communities, the second how organisations should evolve to develop ‘participatory employment’.

The benefits of work for an inclusive community include the conversion of goods and services for the benefit of all citizens, the autonomy associated with income generation and the psychological benefits of self-esteem and ‘sense of purpose’ (Tam 1998: 85). Paid work enables all to have a legitimate share in the income, to think and act in autonomously ways and to remove the dependency associated with the goodwill of others. The twin interrelated problems of exclusion from productive work are the diminished pool of collective resources available, and the consequent draw on support resources (welfare) as a result. This position is of course very similar to those issues discussed earlier in the chapter.

However, the focus of communitarians is not only with the employed:

“Communities need to consider how anyone without paid work can most effectively be involved in working with those in paid employment in generating the output to enhance the quality of life for the whole community.”  
(Tam 1998: 86)

Rather than seeing this as a welfare or a workfare initiative, Tam argues that all citizens can participate in improving a community’s ‘collective economic strength’ (1998: 87). What quite constitutes the differences between the two, and indeed how to achieve such participation is conveniently left open to the ‘co-operative inquiry’ required of citizens. Communitarian perspectives of work open themselves to feminist criticism, not least in their exclusion of other activities. Prokhovnik’s (1998) central argument is that in framing citizenship as purely a set of activities in the public domain, we exclude those activities found elsewhere – particularly in the private sphere. However, ‘It is *not* that women need to be liberated from the *private* realm, in order to take part in the public realm as equal citizens, but that women – and men – already undertake responsibilities of citizenship in both the public and the private realms.’ (Prokhovnik 1998: 84). The position is bound by a ‘fetishism’ for the work ethic:

This fetishism is expressed through a discourse which equates work with paid work; elevates all (legitimate) paid work over other forms of citizenship responsibility; and gives the impression of devaluing caring and volunteering/community work as *alternatives* to paid work as opposed to adjuncts to it (when they then become the subject of warm words).  
(Lister 2002: 524)

Tam presents the idea of a participatory economy: one that is based upon the inclusion of all in determining how economic decisions are made, particularly in terms of their reliability and effectiveness. In advanced liberal democracies, the impact of globalisation and deregulated free markets enables new elites to act in their best interests at the exclusion of others: ‘with as little interference as possible from others who may question [these] trading arrangements’ (Tam 1998: 93). Returning to the

central theme of co-operative inquiry, Tam argues that such claims are not tested. Instead, workers should be provided with additional security through ‘options within organisations to make alternative contributions’ (1998: 94), with additional training on skills in enterprise. The onus here is on employers being responsible in helping it’s members. Removing a callous attitude towards employees will also decrease distrust and increase loyalty.

Tam argues for the building up of ‘inclusive community relationships at all levels of economic decision-making’ (1998: 97). This means thinking as much about ‘co-operative ‘processes’ as about their conventionally perceived ‘outcomes’ (Boswell 1990: 187). The argument put forward is that communitarians do not suggest an alternative economic model but instead encourage participative democracy to challenge ‘knowledge-claims’ (Tam 1998: 98). Boswell puts forward four processes that fit this convention including increased representation of sectional interests; the extension of statutory disclosure requirements which compel organisations to bare the financial, social and environmental impact of activities; inter-group relationship development with job training focused on working together for the common good and; the promotion of a culture of co-operation by increasing civil ceremonies and education (Boswell 1990: 190-201).

### Summary

Communitarianism is a philosophical and pragmatic strategy that seeks to challenge increasing individualism, seen as a consequence of advanced market economies. Moving beyond a traditional state/individual dichotomy, communitarians advocate that communities can offer the social connectedness necessary for civil and social order. In this respect, community is not merely an area of territory; it provides social stability and moral socialisation for the people who live within it through a ‘moral voice’. The most influential protagonists of political communitarianism offer proposals for how this vision of shared communities can be realised, but these are not without problems. Too many ideals are victims to nostalgia and reliant on the neutrality of community as a site of equal power-sharing. This has led commentators such as Hale (2004) to disregard a communitarian ‘philosophy’ altogether, suggesting in fact that it is a *particular* sociology of a weak and unsatisfactory kind.

## Citizenship, community and responsabilisation

Traditional definitions of citizenship have been under challenge in more recent analyses of the relationship between state and citizen, and the associated rights and responsibilities. This chapter has identified two key strands of change: the shifting role and function of social welfare and the renewed emphasis of community. Together these redefine the role of the active citizen in late modern society.

In the first discussion, we see a move away from entitlements or social rights towards an established principle of conditionality in the distribution of welfare (Dwyer 2004b). Conditionality reframes the citizen not as a passive recipient of welfare, but as an active participant who accesses distributed opportunities to perform in economically desirable ways. These developments have challenged traditional notions of welfare particularly in relation to the universality of social rights based on equality (Marshall 1992). The initial challenge came from the New Right, but it is in New Labour's Third Way that a continuation of reform has led to a discontinuity of leftwing principles. As Driver notes,

“The concept of social justice has been stripped of its radical egalitarianism, in place of which there is a concern with minimum levels of opportunity that will never challenge entrenched inequalities of wealth and income”  
(Driver 2004: 33).

The related discussion around communitarianism also frames the citizen not as someone directed by the state or left to individualistic chance, but as a ‘free’ individual who is subjected to social and moral regulation through the community (Etzioni 1993; Tam 1998). Here traditional definitions of community are redefined with less interest ‘in spontaneous, anti-structural community than in the normative theory of political community’ (Delanty 2003: 73). Communitarians see community as embracing a range of activities including loyalty, participation, solidarity and commitment (Selznick 1992). Through demonstration of these qualities, the active citizen contributes to a normatively based ‘social integration rooted in associative principles of a commitment to the collective good’ (Delanty 2003: 192).

Put together, both of these developments enable us to critically ‘question how ‘values’ function in various governmental rationalities, what consequences they have in forms of political argument [and] how they get attached to different techniques and so on’ (Dean 1999: 34). In this regard, the communitarian definition of citizenship can be interpreted as ‘an attempt to develop greater social cohesion within contemporary Britain while positively embracing the private sector and the market economy’ (Morrison 2004: 181) with the onus for this integration firmly rooted in the new, active citizen (Amin 2005). One governmentality theorist who has captured this shift in a critically significant way is Nikolas Rose, in his seminal work around advanced liberal democracies. For reasons of relevance, his work is discussed in some detail here.

Rose acknowledges that the past 50 years have been witness to significant changes in the legitimacy of the welfare state. These challenges call into question the state centred programmes of welfare that developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two significant challenges are noted. The first is that welfare became problematized in relation to its prohibitive economic and moral costs. The second is that, by its very success in the proliferation of ‘welfare expertise’, citizens are implanted with aspiration to pursue their own ‘civility, wellbeing and advancement’ (Rose 1996: 40). Thus, advanced liberal rulers:

“[Do] not seek to govern through “society”, but through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfilment. Individuals are to be governed through their freedom...as members of heterogeneous communities of allegiance, as “community” emerges as a new way of conceptualizing and administering moral relations amongst persons.”

(Rose 1996: 41)

In his analysis of the features of liberalism, Rose notes that mentalities of rule are invested in the ability of citizens to self-govern. The perspective is one that recognises individual freedom, with rights and liberty upheld through only legitimate state

regulation, but with a promise that disciplinary devices (schooling, family, prison and so on) will:

“create individuals who do not need to be governed by others, but will govern themselves, master themselves, care for themselves.”

(Rose 1996: 45)

Through social work and other social welfare interventions, the ‘everyday activities of living’ (Rose 1996: 49) become subject to expert anatomization. Interactions between child and adult, the daily hygiene practices of a family, eating, smoking and other private practices are ‘rendered calculable in terms of norms and deviations, judged in terms of their social costs and consequences and subject to regimes of education or reformation’ (Rose 1996: 49). These seemingly private behaviours are recast as social duties and ‘the political subject [is] thus to be reconceptualized as a citizen, with rights to social protection and social education in return for duties of social obligation and social responsibility’ (Rose 1996: 49). This art of government enables retention of the freedoms and privacy associated with liberal ideology, whilst simultaneously restraining it. Through indirect mechanisms of government, ‘the regulation of conduct becomes a matter of each individual’s desire to govern their own conduct freely’ (Rose 1996: 58) and those who fail to do so are excluded from the benefits of appropriate life choices. They are no longer the passive casualties of social inequality or other determinations, they are:

“People whose self-responsibility and self-fulfilling aspirations have been deformed by the dependency culture, whose efforts at self-advancement have been frustrated. And it thus follows that they are to be assisted...through their engagement in a whole array of programmes for their ethical reconstruction as active citizens.”

(Rose 1996: 59-60).

The management of the subjective experience becomes a key task for experts, filling ‘the space between ‘private’ lives of citizens and the ‘public’ concerns of rulers’ (Rose 1999a: 2) and this is achieved through three interconnected forms of activation.

The first is in the activation of new experts:

“a whole family of new professional groups has propagated itself, each asserting its virtuosity in respect of the self, in classifying and measuring the psyche, in predicting its vicissitudes, in diagnosing the causes of its troubles and prescribing remedies.”

(Rose 1999a: 2)

This development is most easily located in the discussion in chapter three, where the new expertise is underpinned by technical and scientific knowledge around risk factors. In modern day children and young people’s services, ‘teams around the child’ have been established to tackle interconnected problems based on the principle of ‘what works’. Established professionals (social workers, police officers) are joined by newer agents of the state (teenage pregnancy co-ordinators, youth prevention workers) to widen the welfare or criminal justice net around children or communities at risk (James and James 2001).

The second process is in the activation of the community, a theme at the core of this chapter. Community has been effectively instituted as a sector of government, where normative ideals can be realised through localised action (Amin 2005; Marinetto 2004; Rose 1999b). Tam (1998) argues for an educative dialogue that proposes the empowerment of citizens, but respectful to the conditions of advanced, capitalist societies (Shamir 2008). Community is thus an ideology of governance, an ‘institutional structure of society’ (Delanty 2003: 192) that is no more than an extension of government. Moral and social behaviour is regulated through Etzioni’s moral voice (Etzioni 1993) in the ‘third space of community’ (Rose 1999b) and the pursuit of shared values, cohesion and interaction are merely bit parts in the maintenance of an unequal social structure.

The attraction of a desirable community has enabled those who govern to locate the problems of social order at the local site and within local experience. With this remapping of the problem location, there is a definition ‘of the problem of social



exclusion as a problem of local origin and of the challenge of local regeneration as a challenge for local actors' (Amin 2005: 615). Taken one way, this is the time-honoured approach of localism, the favoured model of community educators and youth and community workers (Smith 1994) who favour local empowerment over centralised directive. Such celebration should be muted though. Practitioners and community members inevitably find themselves engaging a new form of localised action, they become: 'agents for the 'domestication' of local politics, charged to deliver a consensual and responsible citizenry that performs the regeneration expectations of ruling elites' (Amin 2005: 620). Even the so-named charity and voluntary sector is itself subject to such rules: a national lottery application for previously unrestricted voluntary youth work funding now draws on a requirement to fulfil objectives not dissimilar to those found within the *Every Child Matters* framework. Government itself terms these bodies as a 'third sector', all part of the mixed economy of welfare provision. With the arrival of increased competitive tendering, projects demonstrate their effectiveness in *making communities better* by demonstrating how they can effectively act upon the government's wishes. Perhaps too late, we come to realise that:

"Community participation will become an instrument of political conformity and control rather than a means for inculcating active citizenship without guarantees in a genuinely agonistic public sphere unconstrained by government fiat."

(Amin 2005: 621)

Finally, there is the third conception: that of the activation of the individual citizen. Rose propounds that the citizen in advanced liberal democracies is one who, having been directed by the state and through the community is 'autonomized' and 'responsibilised' to perform in line with the requirements of advanced liberal rule (Rose 1999b). According to Shamir (2008), responsabilisation is defined as the expectation and assumption of the reflexive, moral capacities of individuals and serves as 'the practical link that connects the ideal-typical scheme of governance to actual practices on the ground' (Shamir 2008: 7). The argument goes 'if only people were more trusting, cohesive, and socially engaged, they would live long, prosper, and put something back into the community' (Amin 2005: 614). Individuals are thus

required to act as independent of the state as opposed to being dependent upon it; economically active not passively in receipt of welfare; engaged in the community not outside of it. As truly *active* citizens, they become self-governing moral agents (Dean 1999) well placed to perform in the market economy. Ultimately, citizens are ‘governed at a distance’ (Rose 1996) and directed to exercise a set of free choices that uphold the morality of capitalism (Shamir 2008).

It is in the final of these three analyses of activation that reveals a tension at the heart of late modern societies. Characterised by plurality and diversity (Delanty 2003), the government faces a challenge: how to ensure social solidarity in an age of individualisation? Rose’s work is important, if for no other reason than it accurately captures how rights and responsibilities are reconceptualised in the new definition of active citizenship. No longer are we concerned solely with a liberal model of rights and individual freedom, nor do we understand responsibility only in relation to civic participation. Citizenship, located in the community context, is a normative, behavioural ideal that encompasses various social and moral expectations. These are measured in the uptake and use of welfare opportunities, and in the desired social relations between individuals at a community level. Rather than framing issues of economic inequality and community fragmentation as consequences of advanced liberal democracies, they are recast as individual responsibilities. And it is within the responsibilised citizen that the solutions are also vested.

One group subjected to increased anatomization by experts and responsibilisation by the state is defined by a period in the life course where turbulence and transition are considered to be significant determinates. In chapter three, this group is examined in detail as we explore the ‘youth problem’.

## 3 The Youth Problem

The previous chapter examined the concerns of contemporary thinkers reflecting on the social, political and moral characters of individuals living in advanced liberal democracies. The decline in tradition, increased individualisation and the consequent fracture of communities all led to a distinct political reading and redefining of citizenship. Thus, in recent times, the political response has been to institute a series of policies and proclamations about the need for ‘communitarian citizenship’: a rebalancing of rights and responsibilities, the emphasis on ‘localness’ as a site for moral governance and the exercise of policies that foster ‘shared’ experiences between different communities. All told, these developments have reframed citizenship for late modern, advanced liberal democracies.

An analysis of social policy over the past decade determines that those most targeted by measures to increase active citizenship are young people. They are subjected to measures in formal education, criminal justice, welfare and youth work – all arenas in which the question of ‘how best to develop the active citizen’ are played out. Some of these key developments are examined in chapter four. They are seen collectively as a solution to a set of problems that young people pose to communitarians.

What then is the youth problem? How does it contrast with a vision of communitarian citizenship as presented in chapter two? If there is a need for unprecedented levels of interventions both by the state and at a community level, what precisely drives these concerns? Put simply, if there is a solution offered in the form of citizenship education, why do young people need it?

This chapter considers the features and characteristics of the youth problem and contains three sections. The first of these attempts to offer a working definition of the period in the life course known as ‘youth’. Since citizenship is associated with adulthood, this relies on considering recent research and other literature around transitions. Transitions, simply defined, mark the period between leaving childhood and entering adulthood. This phase is characterised by elements of risk and uncertainty, where preferred futures (Kelly 2003) are subjected to potential derailment

that could lead towards more problematic outcomes. In this respect, citizenship education attends to two specific sites of anxiety.

These two specific problems are explored in sections two and three. The first concerns the political literacy of young people. Manifested in low uptake of the voting franchise, declining political affiliation and a general lack of interest in politics, concern about young people's political participation remains high on the agenda. The chapter engages with the most common diagnoses of the problem and explores various alternative perspectives put forward in academic and policy research.

The second problem concerns perhaps a more generalised anxiety about young people and in particular their social and moral behaviour. If symptoms of greater individualisation are the breakdown of social ties and the fracturing of communities then it is in young people that the greatest level of concern seems to be targeted at. To what extent young people engage as morally and socially responsible citizens is at the heart of most government youth policy.

The problems identified in this chapter, and the solutions proposed lend themselves once again to a critique from studies in governmentality and the chapter concludes with a further reflection on the responsabilisation thesis.

## **Youth and transition**

As Spence notes, youth is often defined as an 'unstable period of life between childhood and adulthood' (Spence 2005: 47) where various physiological, psychological, social, cultural and structural elements impact upon the period. Obvious physical and behavioural changes have long been used to act as signifiers of adolescence (see for example Spence 2005; Hine 2009) and these changes impact upon the individual's self-identity, awareness and personality (Youth Justice Board 2004). However, this period in the life course that we define as 'youth' is as much a social construction as it is a period of individual change: Mizen defines 'youth' as a 'socially determined category' (Mizen 2004: 5) and in this respect, it is little use to rely solely on the individual biological markers as a frame for understanding youth. In

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very simple terms, the cultural, social and political contexts into which young people grow invariably shape how we define what is childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Childhood is a contested and socially constructed period of the life course (Foley et al 2001; James and James 2004; Willan et al 2004). Like youth, childhood ‘cannot be regarded as an unproblematic descriptor of the natural biological phase’ (James and James 2004: 13). The experiences of a child growing up at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century compared with that of those doing so today will vary dramatically. Further complexity arises in any cross-cultural comparison of childhood, especially in the values we ascribe to certain definitions of childrearing practices as compared to ‘Western notions of what all children should aspire to’ (Sanders 2004: 53). These perspectives open up a challenge to claims of a neutrally defined ‘normal’ childhood since ‘childhood as a social space is structurally determined by a range of social institutions and mechanisms’ (James and James 2004: 213). These institutions and mechanisms reflect the dominant cultural and social adult expectations of childhood, either in response to the individual and collective behaviours of children or in the wide variety of macro determinates that influence the wider structure of society (James and James 2004). Take for example the recent proposals to extend compulsory formal education for children, with a school leaving age of 18 (BBC 2007). This proposal was argued as a response to the growing uncertainty and change in the global employment and trade markets and a need to emphasise skills and knowledge in the new economy. How a school leaving age of 18 will impact upon how we define childhood will be subject to close scrutiny in the next decade and beyond.

Adulthood is also subject to social categorisation. What is meant precisely by adulthood is highly contested. Market indicators would suggest full and continuous participation in the economy and the acquisition of property (Faulks 2000). Normative social indicators may include the formation of stable family units, characterised by the reproduction and socialisation of the next generation of children. Civil indicators would suggest political and civic participation, along the lines of Aristotle’s claim that full citizenship is conferred only on adults: ‘nature herself...has divided into older and younger, the former being fit for ruling, the latter for being ruled’ (Aristotle 1992: 432). All of these claims though can be subject to dispute. What constitutes a stable

family unit is invariably defined by a heterosexist norm (Wood 2001b) that subjects other family units to second-class status (Bamforth 1997). Similarly, if full economic participation and property acquisition are indicators of responsible adulthood, then the increase in uptake of education and the consequent debt surely indicate a ‘deferred’ adulthood (Arnett 2006).

If we accept that both childhood and adulthood are socially constructed, historically and culturally defined states, then any examination of youth as a transition between the two is problematic at the outset. Nonetheless, youth is dominantly characterised as ‘a journey from one state to another’ (Spence 2005: 48). For Coleman et al (2004), this is the ‘complex transition between the states of childhood dependence and adult independence’ (2004: 227) characterised by:

- Physical change: the movement through puberty and adolescence towards ‘physical maturity’.
- The development of a ‘sophisticated’ notion of the self, including awareness of self-identity, sexuality and personality.
- Changes in relationships: with parents/carers, friends and partners towards sexual, emotional and intellectual maturity characterised by empathy.
- Changes in the interaction with social institutions, in particular education, work, family and leisure.
- Political changes: including enfranchisement and social awareness.

(Coleman et al 2004; Spence 2005; Youth Justice Board 2004)

Given this period is characterised by almost inevitable flux, the interest in academia and policy has in most recent times been focused on the study of these transitions. Although this interest was markedly evident in Britain since at least the post-war period (Spence 2005), it was from the 1980s onwards that transitions research became a dominant theme for understanding youth. Empirical and theoretical interest has focused on, amongst other things:

- The interaction between personal capacity, biology and personality (‘agency’) and the systems and structures that influence young people (‘structure’).

- The ways in which institutions, social policies and systems intervene within a key stage of the life course.
- The ways in which other problems or situations emerge, particularly at the point of transition from education to employment. This is of particular interest to policy makers, often concerned with the interconnectedness of ‘social inclusion’ and entry in the labour market.

(See Bynner 2001: 6)

In the discussion above, the idea that childhood and adulthood are problematic concepts was put forward. In any discussion around transition as a journey, we perhaps must accept some sort of a destination. Whilst there has always been a great deal of confusion over what constitutes arrival at adulthood (Coleman and Warren-Anderson 1992; France 2007; Smith 2007), transitions that were once understood to be linear are now recognised as fluid, changing and increasingly without a fixed-end point (Dwyer and Wyn 2001). Later on in this chapter, certain aspects of the behaviour of young people are examined in relation to how the state responds to these. This relationship between individual and collective behaviour and the state response invariably aids an understanding of the social construction of youth. Another area of important influence and determination comes from a wider analysis of pressures from above in the form of macro determinates. Young people growing up in the late modern world ‘face new risks and opportunities’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 8) characteristic of the ‘age of uncertainty’ (Kelly 2000) and framed within the ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992).

### **Growing up in the risk society**

Most studies of contemporary youth transitions and the changing experience of this stage in the life course readily acknowledge the importance and utility of the ‘risk society’ thesis. In a landmark thesis, Ulrich Beck (1992) argues that the Western industrial world is undergoing a significant shift towards a new modernity. In sum, the ‘world is perceived as a dangerous place in which we are constantly confronted with risk’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 3). These risks derive from the ‘hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself’ (Beck 1992: 21) and can

often be located in a global context where risks are magnified. Giddens has termed this the runaway world (Giddens 2002), ‘the feeling of riding a juggernaut’ (Giddens 1991: 28) where employment, environmental and conflict risks are of global significance. The recent debates about the economy and the food supply crisis provide succinct examples of this. Both issues are of global reach and have very localised, personal consequences through rising food costs, the risk of unemployment and the rising costs of housing.

Whilst risks have always been present – ‘not an invention of modernity’ (Beck 1992: 21) – risk is now associated with global dangers and literally, threats to life on earth such as global warming, nuclear war, and other seemingly uncontrollable events. An individual life course becomes subject to uncertainty and ‘traditional securities are superseded by risk choices’ (Kemshall 2002: 6). However, the distribution of risks remains unequal and structural locations continue to impact upon life chances (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). For Beck, ‘poverty attracts an unfortunate abundance of risks’ (1992: 35) but ‘people...within the same “class” can or even must choose between different life styles, subcultures, social ties and identities’ (Beck 1992: 131). This calls upon a thesis of ‘reflexive self’ (Giddens 1991) – how ‘people are forced to put themselves at the centre of their plans and reflexively construct their social biographies’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 4).

If late modernity is characterised by extremes in risk and reflexivity, so too is the personal biography. Futures become ‘organised reflexively in the present’ (Giddens 1991: 29). In relation to young people and their transitions, it is no longer possible to reproduce models of adult life that were experienced by previous generations (Giddens 1991). Instead, ‘we each face the task of inventing ourselves, of deciding who we are and what we want to be’ (Henderson et al 2007: 19). This has necessitated a focus on how the individual becomes an effective navigator of risks. Despite evidence from Furlong and Cartmel (2007) that confirms that life chances are still severely restricted,

‘risks are framed, experienced and negotiated individually...[and] failure to negotiate a risk adequately is rewritten as an individual failure rather than



understood as a result of social processes outside of the individual's control' (Kemshall 2002: 7-8).

Such an approach has the danger of hiding social inequalities (Kemshall 2002) within a seemingly classless analysis of equal opportunity and supposed meritocracy.

This indicates a dangerous presumption associated with the risk society thesis that all risks are evenly distributed, and the wealthy are as susceptible as the poor. This may certainly be true in terms of nuclear fallout, but is arguably less true in terms of the transitions that young people make. According to Furlong and Cartmel, 'young people today are growing up in different circumstances to those experienced by previous generations; changes which are significant enough to merit a reconceptualisation of youth transitions and processes of social reproduction' (2007: 8-9). These circumstances are impacted upon by significant social change, particularly in the precarious nature of the labour market (Furlong and Kelly 2005) but also in respect of the continuity of class, gender and 'race' stratification (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Thus, the risk society is not one of equal chance, but 'a society in which the old social cleavages...remain intact' (2007: 9). Consequently, transitions are described as a mix of 'continuities and discontinuities' (Bottrell and Armstrong 2007: 354) where traditional stratification is further challenged by the problematic and uncertain employment and social roles open to young people (Giddens 2002; Bottrell and Armstrong 2007). The more complex transitions become, the more that young people are prone to a series of choices and gambles, navigating opportune circumstances of potential reward and/or potential despair. This makes the 'predictability of life chances' (Schoon and Bynner 2003: 23) for young people, both 'challenging and uncertain' (Kemshall 2008b: 21).

Government social policy becomes a mechanism through which opportunities are distributed to citizens and the individual is charged with taking these up in order to ward off risks. Youth policy becomes increasingly dominated by attention to the science of risk: determining those factors that will contribute to poor outcomes in adulthood, taking a reduced role in risk management and promoting 'personal and thereby collective flexibility and responsivity to risk' (Kemshall 2002: 41).

### Risk factors and early intervention

“Nowhere is the tension between the need to prevent risk and the necessity of learning to manage and take calculated risks more apparent than in the process of growing up from childhood to adulthood.”

(Thom et al 2007: 1)

The overwhelming consequence of complexity and fluidity in transitions is an increased feeling of insecurity and a desire for risk prevention and protection (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Kemshall 2002; 2003). This ‘culture of caution’ (Thom et al 2007) leads us ultimately to see risk through a negative lens and:

“Young people are often characterized as imprudent, irrational and hence vulnerable, by failing to calculate risks properly or to act wisely upon risk information.”

(Kemshall 2008b: 22)

Debates about the youth/risk dynamic abound in relation to social activities and debates around youth welfare, criminal justice, employment and sexuality (Mythen and Walklate 2007). Inquiries concern our expanding knowledge base about young people’s personal and social risks, with increasing attention in research to sexual behaviour (Hoggart 2007), substance misuse and the consequences of ‘binge’ drinking (Thom 2007) with grand but contested claims about alcohol misuse (see France 2007: 137-138) and the links between truancy and long term social exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 1998) to name just three examples. More entrenched social problems are linked to those behaviours detected in children and young people. For instance, it has long been recognised that there is a link between school exclusion and subsequent offending behaviour (see for example Ball and Connolly 2000; McCrystal et al. 2005) with the most persistent offenders representing often the highest number of school exclusions (Crowley 1998).

Recent longitudinal research has found that children excluded from school are more likely to demonstrate:

- Higher levels of drug use and anti-social behaviour;
- Lower levels of communication with their parents/guardians;
- Higher levels of contact with the criminal justice system and;
- An increased likelihood of living in problematic neighbourhoods.

(McCrystal et al 2007).

The dominance of risk based welfare policy has led to an emphasis on predictive techniques, preventative social policy and the reframing of children as culpable and potentially dangerous risk takers whose behaviour can result often in harm to themselves or to others (France 2008; Kemshall 2008b; 2009; Kemshall and Wood 2009). The preoccupation with risky behaviour mirrors our concerns with ‘risk factors’: literally what key determinates impact upon whether young people will grow up as integrated members of society, or as somehow deviant. Consequently:

“Since the late 1990s a new policy approach has emerged that ... encourages the development of policies that are preventative.”

(France 2008: 2)

France (2008) reviews the emergence of early intervention and preventative social policy as directed at young people in the UK. Central to the developments are an increased reliance on ‘targeted’ approaches to welfare reliant on increasing ‘research evidence’ drawn from several key scientific studies that attempted to introduce patterns of causality in understanding youth disadvantage. France examines the common methodological uncertainties associated with risk factor analysis. They are of three sorts.

### *Simplifying complexity*

First and foremost is the problem of attempting to redefine human behaviour, the life course and other aspects of personal and social development through a ‘neo-positivist’

approach to science. Essentially, all are reduced to risk factors ('social facts') that become 'objective and measurable' (France 2008: 4). The problems with such an approach are that behaviour becomes 'dichotomous, being one thing or the other' (Ibid.). As Hine notes, despite the apparent complexity of young people's lives:

"Policy tends to categorise young people into boxes and deals with them within those categories...These boxes tend to be dualistic and separate young people in ways that do not match the real world, for example they are an offender or they are not an offender, they are a truant or they are not, they are in need of protection or not, they are troubled and vulnerable or they are troublesome and a threat. In reality these categories are never as simple as this, nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive. These views of young people are based on Western middle class norms of a linear path to adulthood, a path which does not acknowledge gender, ethnicity or disability, nor the reality of young people's lives."

(Hine 2009: 38-39)

#### *Spatially and temporally fixed experiences*

The next problem lies in the tendency for evidence to be 'spatially and temporally fixed' (France 2008: 4). France illustrates using the concept of crime, citing West and Farrington's (1977) study on the criminal patterns of 440 boys in the East End of London in the 1950s. Despite the fact that crime, its context and experiences have radically changed not least in the types of crime that have emerged since, this study resulted in 'a wide range of claims [being] made about the nature of causes of youth crime' (France 2008: 4). Similar criticisms can be levelled at a study by Feinstein et al (2006) that analysed the 1970 British Cohort Study to examine the linkage between leisure patterns and consequent social exclusion. The authors concluded that young people who attended youth clubs are more likely to engage in problematic behaviour and to experience long term social exclusion. The minister with responsibility for young people responded to the findings with the claim that 'youth clubs are bad for young people'. This is despite the temporal and spatial nature of the study: youth clubs are markedly different to those found in the 1980s.

*False positives*

The third of France's methodological concerns is the issue of false positives. Risk factor research may indeed show causal evidence that leads to certain behaviour but alongside an often equally large number of cases where they do not. This has long been a problem of quantitative research, where the statistical evidence has 'general meaningfulness' but limited applicability to individual circumstances (Bryman 2004).

France cites the work of Smith and McVie (2003) who found that 'being an adolescent increases the risk of delinquency far more than having early signs of anti-social behaviour' (France 2008: 5). If the only problem with false positives is its mathematical inadequacy, it would be enough to be simply critical of the chosen methodology. However, the very real consequence is that if  $X$  number of the population displays certain risk factors, then all of  $X$  is potentially at risk of becoming  $Y$ . This leads to an intensification of welfare resources at those, for example, deemed high risk at the expense of supporting, say, those who are in some form of crisis or difficulty but may be deemed 'low risk'.

Despite methodological flaws, risk factor research has all but dominated youth policy in the last decade with increasing emphasis on risk prevention and management in social policy, determined by early identification and 'increasingly pursuing approaches to risk which pose the individual as responsible for his or her own risk management' (Kemshall 2002: 21). Of particular interest is in the increase in 'early intervention' strategies. Schoon and Bynner argue an almost commonsensical, moral case for early intervention:

"Policy directed at improving the life chances of children and young people needs to be directed at reducing the detrimental impact of risk factors and enhancing resilience through ensuring that appropriate protective mechanisms are in place."

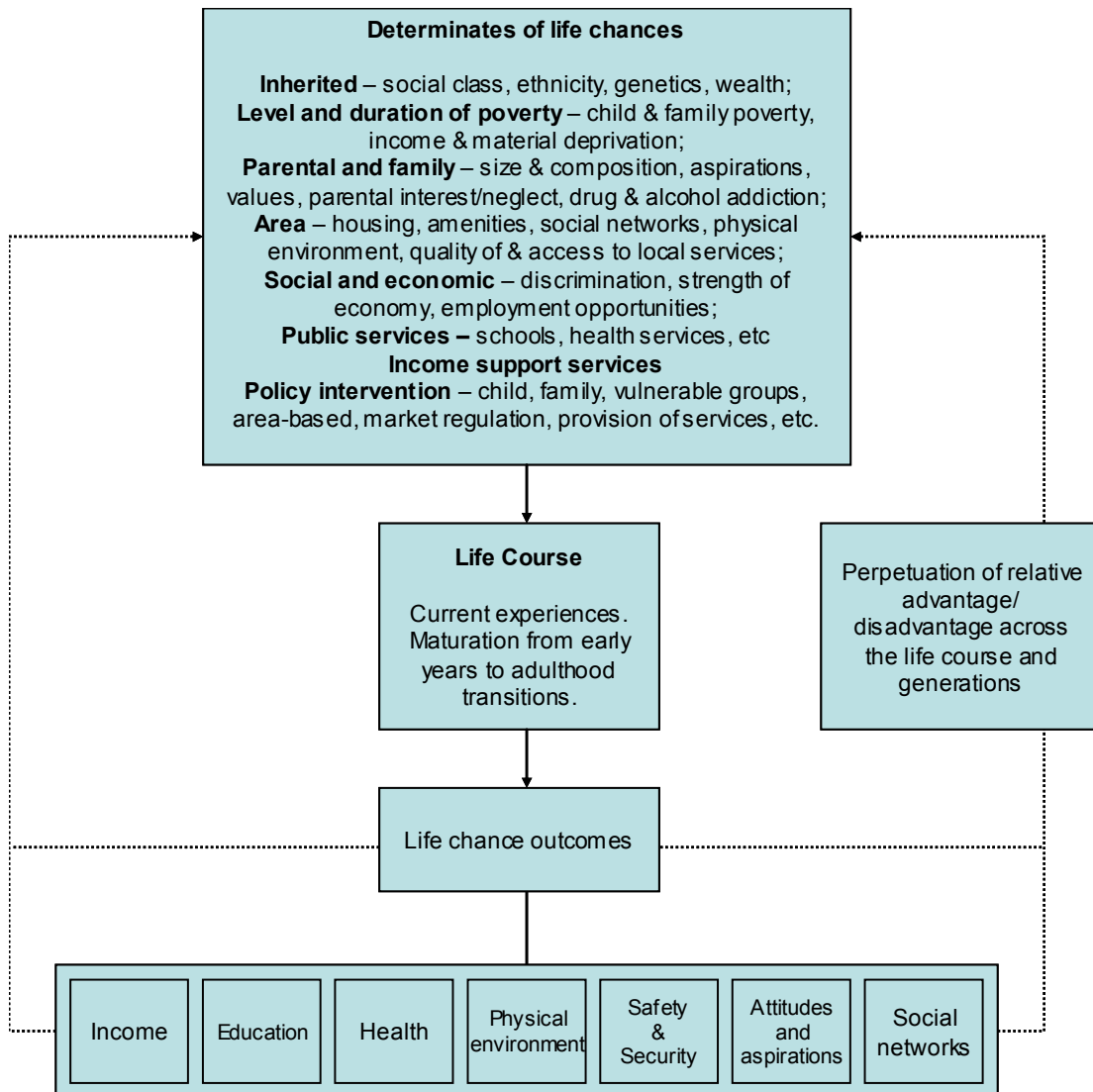
(Schoon and Bynner 2003: 22).

An economic argument for early intervention is also frequently established in terms of warding off greater costs to the state. In any welfare system, resources are prone to economic rationalisation, and targeting offers a politically attractive option for addressing the most pressing social problems (Kemshall 2002). Research around social problems suggests that the more entrenched a difficulty becomes, the more costly and less effective interventions become (Cabinet Office 2006). So policy responds by seeking to address early warning signs: the truancy, rather than the long-term exclusion from school; the cigarette smoking rather than the diseases that plague the individual in later life; the healthy eating of children in schools rather than the health consequences of obesity.

This emphasis on risk factors and precaution have ultimately led us towards a focus on early intervention, targeted policy and away from universal, open access welfare that deals with problems ‘in the present’ (France 2008). Risk factors serve as ‘targets’ helping to identify ‘populations at risk’ (Schoon and Bynner 2003).

Schoon and Bynner (2003) see the ‘risk trajectory’ as most important. Here ‘one risk factor reinforces another, leading to increasingly restricted outcomes in later life’ (p23). This is particularly acute in children since ‘the experience of early disadvantage ... weakens individual adaptation’ (p23). The recent *Fabian Commission on Life Chances and Child Poverty* (see Fabian Society 2005; 2006 and Bamfield 2007) has specifically focused on the opportunities and barriers affecting children’s development and the consequent outcomes. For the commission, ‘life chances is a more useful and more compelling concept than equality of opportunity’ (Fabian Society 2005: 13). Two reasons are put forward. Firstly, the commission recognises the adverse effects of childhood poverty on the long-term consequences, or ‘future outcomes’ (p37) and secondly, there is recognition of the disparity of outcomes faced by children from different backgrounds. This led the commission to propose policy responses that would recognise determinates on life chances, the interplay of poverty and the potential ‘reproduction’ of established inequality. They summarise these factors in a diagram, reproduced here as figure 4.

Figure 4 - Determinates of life chances across the life course and inter-generationally



(Fabian Society 2005: 42, fig 3.1)

The conclusion one can draw from this analysis is that determinates clearly impact upon various outcomes (illustrated in the lower boxes) in later life. Thus, the task is not simply to address these outcomes but to develop policy responses to determinates – in the guise of early intervention. Building on the work of the commission, Bamfield's (2007) analysis in particular raises important questions about 'how early' early intervention should be. Drawing on analysis of risk trajectories, her report determines that low birth weight heralds poor outcomes in later life, including higher rates of disease and incidences of emotional and behavioural problems in early childhood (Bamfield 2007: 24-26). As Bamfield explains 'without undermining

notions of maternal responsibility, this analysis recognises the potential contributions of a range of [f]actors (*sic*) – individual, social and institutional – to foetal well-being’ (Bamfield 2007: 22). Bamfield’s analysis thus demonstrates that structural factors have determinate impacts that ‘move [us] away from an approach which focuses solely on the pregnant women’ (2007: 23).

The work of the commission was influential on the New Labour government at the time. Blair announced plans to intervene in families where these factors were most prominent in order to ward off the implications of low birth weight. However, as with other early intervention strategies, the political emphasis was on intervening in ‘problem families’ before children are even born to ‘stop them turning into troublemakers later’ (BBC 2006).

“I am not talking about “baby ASBOs”, trying to make the state raise children, or interfering with normal family life. I am saying that where it is clear, as it very often is, at young age, that children are at risk of being brought up in a dysfunctional home where there are multiple problems, say of drug abuse or offending, then instead of waiting until the child goes off the rails, we should act early enough, with the right help, support and disciplined framework for the family, to prevent it. This is not stigmatising the child or the family. It may be the only way to save them and the wider community from the consequences of inaction.”

(Blair 2006)

The response reveals much about wider government thinking towards the curious response to risk. Despite assurances that policy approaches will not ‘stigmatise children or families’, risk responses are not framed as humanitarian. They are argued to be preventative against the potential disorderly conduct that children will present to themselves and their wider communities.

The most recent policy developments concern further expanding intensive support programmes for young people displaying behaviours that may indicate later anti-social behaviour. The proposed introduction of good behaviour contracts will be



supplemented by an ‘assertive and persistent’ key worker who will enforce the contract, provide support and referrals to key agencies where problems need addressing, for example in substance misuse (BBC 2008b). Even opposition to such approaches rely on initiatives framed within a state early intervention paradigm: Shaun Bailey, a youth worker and Conservative parliamentary candidate declared the initiative to be another ‘government edict’ but proposed instead ‘parenting classes for children as young as ten so that they can realise parenting is a privilege not a right’ (BBC Radio 4: *Today* 18/03/08). This at a time when serious debates occur about the practical viability and ethical basis of including primary school children on the national DNA database if they exhibit behaviour that may indicate later criminality (Townsend and Asthana 2008). In outlining the plans, Children, Families and Schools Minister Ed Balls claimed that early intervention strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour would not be seen as a ‘soft option’, instead framing the work almost entirely punitively (DCSF 2008). The idea that children should receive love, respect and attention to their problems purely on account of it being a morally worthy thing to do, seems lost amongst the ramped up rhetoric of criminalising them.

The most telling example of relying only on risk factors at the expense of the ‘personal biography’ is illustrated beautifully in the Philip K. Dick short-story *Minority Report*. The story concerns how crime is prevented before it occurs. In the near future, the police rely on the cognitive insights of a group of gifted people with psychic abilities. They can foresee a murder before it happens, who the offender and the victim are. This in turn enables the police to exercise an arrest before the execution of the crime through a ‘pre-crime division’. The fundamental flaw at the heart of the argument is *how do you know that intention would lead to act?* Science fiction enthusiasts are always keen to draw parallels between the fiction they read and the real world; such a parallel may actually be a bleak indicator of the future.

If we determine the potential behaviours of young people as indicators of a dangerous future, we work on intention instead of act. In doing so, we may face real costs both in a philosophical and pragmatic sense. They raise ‘questions about the type of society we want to create and live in’ (Kemshall 2008b: 31)

### Summary

Youth is understood as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. Each of these concepts is subject to much debate since they represent more than mere biological markers. How we understand childhood, adulthood and the period in between are subject to historical, cultural, social and structural constructions tied to subjective and objective experience and interpretation. In this context, defining a normal transition is difficult at best. However, the dominant theme in youth policy over the past decade has been on the focus of equipping young people to take risks in a prudent and rewarding way that will enable them to navigate through a defined period of transition. If the end goal is adulthood, so too is the idea of citizenship: the fulfilment of adult responsibilities aligned to those identified in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Having established a working definition of the youth experience, it is now necessary to examine how the transition to full and active citizenship has been defined as problematic.

### The transition to citizenship

This chapter has so far established that the period in the life course we define as youth is often thought of as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. In a risk society, this process of transition is subject to greater uncertainty, fluidity and complexity (Smith 2007). Youth and social policy is designed not to alter systems or to significantly influence the structure of society, rather it is concerned with preparing young people to participate effectively within the contours of late modern society: literally to build the capacity of young people to be reflexive (Giddens 1991). The difficulty with this process is that young people engage in, and are subject to arguably greater risks than previous generations (Kemshall 2008b) and this warrants unprecedented state interference under the guise of early intervention and informed by a risk factor paradigm.

The academic Michael Ungar once asked his friends if children today are more at risk than when he and his peers were young. Most ‘could tell stories about the risks were routinely exposed to that we would never expose our children to’ (2007a: 101) but:

“everyone ... believed that children today need to be more protected, that children today live in a world *more dangerous* than the one we grew up in.

[...] More than ever before we *perceive the risks* children face. We hear about them more.”

(Ungar 2007: 101)

Ungar raises an important point that identifies risk both in terms of its changes but also its continuity. Perhaps it is true that once ‘it was expected that children had to some extent learn about risk through experience’ (Ball 2007: 58) whereas now we seek to regulate and contain as much risk as possible. This is in part because we know more about the risks that young people face. In a recent review of youth studies research, ‘risk taking behaviour’ was an investigative preoccupation for psychological studies of adolescence (Ayman-Nolley and Taira 2000). Our exposure to media information about risks certainly aids our understanding (Ungar 2007) often in ways that are somewhat disproportionate to reality; the threats posed to children by dangerous sex offenders is a case in point (Kemshall and Wood 2007). This is unsurprising, since ‘patterns of media attention [rarely] parallel the actual trajectory of any particular threat’ (Hughes et al 2006:250).

Our fixation with transitions and with the risks associated with the process have led us to design preferred futures (Kelly 2003), those trajectories that are seen to result in responsible adulthood and contributory, participative citizenship. Thus, citizenship can be seen as a desired end-goal for transitions, a proxy for responsible adulthood. Social, political and moral responsibility are all qualities associated with maturation and are therefore desirable of autonomous citizens who are required to be economically functional. If we accept the thesis that for citizens to be necessarily prepared to undertake this role they need citizenship education, we accept that there is a requirement for government to intervene early in the life course in order to shape this preferred future. This proposition requires further thought though. What is it *precisely*, other than a generalised anxiety about youth transitions and risk, that indicates young people are incapable of performing their duties as active citizens? What is the rationale set out by proponents of citizenship education? The next section of this chapter examines these questions in further detail.

### **Problem one: democracy in crisis**

The Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC) identified political disengagement as a primary driver for recommending citizenship education. The report draws on studies that have indicated low levels of ‘public issue discussion’ in schools (Crewe et al 1996); low and declining levels of voting behaviour amongst the 18-24 age group (see AGC 1998: 15 and Mori 2001) and a lack of ‘support’ for political parties amongst young people (Barnardos 1996). The argument put forward is that ‘schools should have a coherent and sequential programme of citizenship education’ (AGC 1998: 16) suggesting that ‘values can modify behaviour when mediated through a good teaching programme’ (Ibid: 17). The concern about political literacy and the crisis of democracy is not limited to this small number of studies used to influence the report. There are indeed wider concerns about political disengagement about youth, and it is to these that we now turn our attention.

If ‘political participation’ is an established ‘citizenship norm’ (Dalton 2008), then a feature of contemporary democracy is a preoccupation with the disconnection between citizens and the political processes designed to govern them (Giddens 1998; Coleman 2006; Dalton 2008; Edwards 2007). Contemporary democracy is in ‘crisis’ (Coleman 2006) with much academic, policy, media and political attention directed towards addressing a ‘democratic deficit’ (Jeffs 2001). The definition of the problem varies. For some, the current political class is described as representing a new ‘elitism’ that expresses disdain for the public (Cohen 2003; Coleman 2006), resulting in division and lack of engagement. For others, unresponsive institutions and governing processes have failed to adapt to the grand, changing nature of society, making politics seemingly irrelevant (Jeffs 2001). For those inside their respective industries, politicians and the media are both respectively culpable in failing to communicate political issues (cf. Andrew Marr’s comments at BBC 2005 and Alistair Campbell 2007).

Within this broad and rather negative analysis of the state of democracy, the issue of political engagement amongst young people has attracted much political and academic debate (Bynner et al 2003; Phelps 2005; Wallace 2003). Claims are made

that 'young people are estranged from conventional politics and are becoming increasingly politically apathetic' (Wallace 2003: 243).

In the main, it is voting behaviour that most attracts analysis, since it 'is the most obvious example of political participation' (Electoral Commission 2002: 15). The arguments about poor voting levels amongst young people are generally well known but are worth rehearsing here: Young people are amongst those least likely to vote, claiming powerlessness and evident cynicism directed towards party politics (Electoral Commission 2005a). Those aged 55 and above are twice as likely to vote as those aged 18-24 (Electoral Commission and the Hansard Society 2006). In the 2001 general election, just 39% of the 18-24 age group voted, with a drop to 37% in 2005 (Electoral Commission 2005b). Across all demographic groups in the 2005 election, only one other age group (45-54 year olds) showed declining engagement against a general trend of increase in voter participation. The general election of 2001 was notable for representing the lowest turnout since 1918, and the 'lowest ever under the full democratic franchise' (Electoral Commission 2002: 6).

The picture is not unique to the UK. Across Western and Northern Europe, young people aged between 18 and 29 are generally the least likely to vote (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 1999). Wider still, there is evidence of a growing youth disengagement in 'new and old democracies alike' based on global turnout statistics (Ballington 2002).

### **Explaining political disengagement**

The detachment of young people from the formal democratic processes invites competing claims for cause. For many commentators, an entrenched apathy amongst the age group is evident (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995) with some going so far as to label young people as a generation who, by default, care little about anything other than themselves (Pirie and Worcester 2000). This argument is perhaps too simplistic to warrant serious endorsement, especially when countered by the increasing evidence drawn from research that actually takes into account the views of young people. For instance alienation (Roker and Player 1997), a decline in trust (Mulgan and Wilkinson

1997) and cynicism and scepticism (Wring et al 1998) are often cited by young people as causes for disengagement.

The Electoral Commission (2002) summarised the main reasons for disengagement as:

- Personal and convenience issues.
- Legal or non-registration.
- Apathy.
- Alienation.

(Electoral Commission 2002: 18-19).

These four reasons clearly locate the problem of disengagement within the individual. This reflects an individual ‘deficit’ approach to understanding disengagement. Kimberlee (2002) undertook a review of research around political disengagement, and identifies the deficit model under a ‘youth focused’ discourse. This approach tends to prioritise traditional lifecycle explanations – suggesting that young people are politically apathetic as a result of their individual lifestyles and choices. These include increased levels of ‘mobility’, lack of long-term attachments to their local area and consequently low patterns of registration and voting. The lifecycle explanation can also be used to cast young people as apathetic. Pirie and Worcester’s (2000) analysis of MORI data paints a similar picture to others. Citizenship is ‘a big turn-off’ (p22) and:

“Young people are less likely to than their elders to be involved in the political process at any level. They take less part in it, and know less about it. While there has always been a tendency for this to be true, it is more prevalent now, and may not be something this generation will grow out of as they become older.”

(Pirie and Worcester 2000: 28)

Research that supports the youth focused discourse tends to focus on the behavioural or attitudinal qualities (or deficits) in the individuals concerned. For instance, turning their attention to the personality of voters, Denny and Doyle (2008) applied data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) to investigate the determinants of voter turnout in the 1997 general election. When ‘turnout’ and ‘interest in politics’ are

put together, it is those individuals with high comprehension ability and an ‘aggressive personality’ who are more likely to vote.

Edwards (2007) rejects claims to individual deficit. Writing in the Australian context where one fifth of the age group (18-25) does not vote in compulsory elections, Edwards conducted a study of young people’s attitudes towards registration (known as enrolment) and voting in order to understand motivations and barriers to electoral participation. She determines that ‘education alone is not sufficient to produce higher youth electoral turnouts’ (2007: 540) considering the issue to be ‘disenfranchisement rather than of ‘deficit’’ (p540). As a result of interviews with 55 young people, some of whom were drawn from a number of marginalised communities, Edwards determined three key barriers to electoral enfranchisement:

#### *Political barriers*

Political barriers concerned the extent to which participants felt that their votes would actually result in desired social change. Here young people were articulate about concerns and issues that they were interested in, but were sceptical of the political system’s capacity to effect change, captured in this example:

“At ... a government school in close proximity to the nation’s capital, students were particularly politically literate and aware. As a group they were also passionate in their opposition to the [Iraq] war...The general view here was that voting could not do much because ‘they don’t take out a ballot box every time they declare war’.”

(Edwards 2007: 546).

‘Powerlessness’ was also raised by the participants who linked ‘the personal and political’ (2007: 546). Marginalised young people did not participate because they felt that it was an ‘ineffectual’ system: failing to represent the needs of young people in a fundamental ‘aged hierarchy of power’ (p546). Of particular note was the dominant themes of the election, comprised of issues that had seeming irrelevance to younger people. In the UK context, messages of a strong economy and debate about interest

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rates, for example, may have little bearing on an 18 year old when home ownership is occurring increasingly later on in life (Smith 2007). As Edwards notes:

“Young people are being chastised for not participating in a system that constructs barriers to participation in the form of marginalisation of young people’s subjectivity, interests and issues, as well as one that fails to adequately represent them.”

(Edwards 2007: 547)

In a similar review, Kimberlee (2002) identifies a ‘politics focused’ discourse. Here the dominant theme is of a political system failing to stimulate young people. In current politics, the focus on narrow groups to yield maximum electoral results often excludes young people. For instance, in drawing on the declining turnout in Canada, Adsett (2003) has argued that the ‘demographic weight’ of young people is less than other groups, and as a consequence, they are ‘politically marginalized’ and ‘excluded from the political conversation’ (2003: 262). Some proposals have been put forward to extend the franchise to 16 year olds, extending the potential electoral voice of young people<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Structural barriers*

The structural barriers that Edwards identifies are perhaps context-specific, since they concern the classification of electors and the national voter registration laws applicable in Australia. Of particular importance is the necessity for ‘stability of address’ (p548) a factor that particularly impacts upon young people, since they are frequently mobile. This factor is transferable to the UK, where young people are often a more transient population.

#### *Social barriers*

The final classification concerns social barriers to voting. According to Edwards, ‘it is rare to encounter policy frameworks that link social disadvantage with

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the coalition campaign, Votes at 16 - <http://www.votesat16.org.uk/>



disenfranchisement or that discuss disenfranchisement as an aspect of social disadvantage' (2007: 549). Reviewing homelessness as a case of social disadvantage, Edwards identifies a number of consequent social difficulties that establish young people as a 'low priority' as low-income earners who are unable to access the housing market. But 'lack of access to stable housing also raises other social barriers to the franchise' (2007: 551) namely being concerned about other, more imminent and pressing issues such as 'finding employment, dealing with personal issues or simply finding a meal, and that voting was, in relation, 'not important'' (2007: 551). In conclusion,

“When we listen to the voices of young people, we hear both that young people care about political issues and that many are interested in participation through voting. Preventing many are political, structural and social barriers. By considering these barriers, rather than assuming that failure to enrol to vote results simply from a deficit of individuals, related to either personal feelings or 'lack of knowledge'.”

(Edwards 2007: 552)

#### *'Alternative value'*

The discussion thus far has focused on politics as realised through enfranchisement and party political membership. Where these indicators are low, the popular conclusion is that political knowledge and participation must also be in deficit. Kimberlee (2002) identifies a significant counter-argument in the literature that she terms the 'alternative value' discourse. This approach concerns 'the new politics', where young people are less likely to engage in traditional or conventional party politics in favour of issue-led campaigns, such as environmental work. Evidence suggests that young people's participation in these movements has actually increased in recent years (Roker et al 1999). Across Europe for instance, there is very real evidence of young people's involvement in high levels of political activism, especially in resistance movements or challenges to government rule (Machacek 2000; Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998).

Furlong and Cartmel caution against being swept up in the idea that this represents a ‘generational shift’ towards a new politics. They argue that young people have always participated in single-issue campaigns, pointing to involvement in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the opposition to the Vietnam war as examples. These movements, and those that are signed up to presently such as the anti-war movement, environmental action groups, the ‘Make Poverty History’ and Jubilee 2000 campaigns, are all evidence that ‘young people display different forms of civic engagement and often prefer the simplicity of single issue politics where they both know what they are buying into and can judge progress towards specific goals’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 134). Whilst there is certainly evidence of weaker commitments to traditional party politics, there is no definitive claim that young people are more individualised in their politics:

“Young people still express collective concerns, although they frequently seek personal solutions to problems which are largely a consequence of their socio-economic positions and expect politicians to act in accord with their interests and values.”

(Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 137).

This argument leads Wallace to conclude that:

“We may be looking at the wrong things when prematurely announcing the disengagement of young people from politics.”

(2003: 244)

To narrowly conceive of politics as the process of voting behaviour is perhaps to ignore significant strands of other forms of politics. Indeed, other forms of political action are very popular amongst young people such as joining demonstrations, signing petitions and participating in boycotts (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Like other forms of social practice, political engagement is open to judgements about acceptability. Some forms of political engagement (participation in demonstrations) may be deemed less acceptable than others (voting).

This issue of the acceptability of certain alternative value political action is illustrated by Cunningham and Lavalette (2004) who assessed media reactions to school student strikes against the Iraq war in the early part of 2003. On the back of the enormous, global growth of the anti-war movement in early 2003 (see for example [www.stopthewar.org](http://www.stopthewar.org)), a date was set for one day of coordinated European protest against the war: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2003. Across the world, a series of actions took place including local and national demonstrations, with 600 known demonstrations across the globe. These events were the background against which a series of schools strikes took place between the end of February and the beginning of March.

In an unprecedented, ‘new kind of protest’ (Brooks 2003), children and young people participated in ‘what were, for most, their first political demonstrations (Brooks 2003: 41). The scale of the protests had come somewhat as a surprise to many and:

“While some heads and teachers supported children’s right to protest, the dominant view of the educational establishment was that the strikes represented an ‘unruly’ excuse to truant.”

(Cunningham and Lavalette 2004: 259),

Head teachers had written to parents to assure them that schools were not sanctioning protests (BBC 2003a) and in some cases, students were formally disciplined through suspension (BBC 2003b). Martin Henson, a head teacher at Fortismere School where some 60 pupils staged a walk out, reflected a common response to the protests:

“It is irresponsible and dangerous to do this. The organisers are sixth-formers but many of the children who have gone with them are younger. They should be in school... They have whipped up a frenzy over this and will be in a lot of trouble when they get back. Whoever organised this across the schools was fantastically irresponsible.”

(Cited in BBC 2003a)

Claims of unknowing irresponsibility were debunked by several interviews conducted both by Cunningham and Lavalette and by journalists at the time. There was evidence in abundance of coherent arguments put forward by young people to justify their

involvement in the demonstrations that was reflective of goals set out in the Crick report: namely, a concern for international issues, the importance of human rights and a ‘concern for the common good’ (AGC 1998: 44). Thus,

“In a country where children and young people are thought to display high levels of political apathy, the justifications that pupils gave for their actions were remarkably considered, reasoned and articulate; indeed, they almost precisely reflected the key values and dispositions that the [AGC] felt should form the core of citizenship teaching.”

(Cunningham and Lavalette 2004: 260)

### Summary

There is a near consensus in political and public discourse that the cause of the present-day democratic deficit in the UK lies in the apathy of its citizenry, a condition particularly acute in young people. Newer research has challenged this position. At the heart of this emerging literature is a determination to listen to the voices of young people whether in unpacking the ‘new politics’ or assessing the consequence of barriers to franchise. There are difficulties with the new research to be sure: most of it is qualitative and small scale, explaining the circumstances of *those* young people in very different contextual situations. What we can determine though is that the reasons for the supposed ‘crisis of democracy’ are more complex than simplistic analyses of voting behaviour can determine. As with other literature around the dimensions of citizenship, we learn that a whole range of social practices exist.

Young people represent the generation growing up in the face of these dilemmas. Mere attempts to reorganise (or repackage) voting systems such as the moves towards greater convenience voting strategies will not necessarily yield increased turnout, as Mori (2002) data suggests. Nor is citizenship education alone necessarily enough to stimulate formal political action (Edwards 2007). Whilst a deficit model persists, or for as long as we deem the majority of alternative value acts ‘unacceptable’, we are likely to perpetuate thinking that limits or narrows our conception of the political in young people’s lives.

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## Problem two: respect and anti-social behaviour

If political illiteracy is deemed to be a major problem for the demonstration of active citizenship, it is in the social and moral behaviour that a very real crisis is perceived. Whilst political education had long been the key driver for citizenship education in schools, the final version put forward by the Advisory Group on Citizenship in 1998 determined a broader framework that attended to a very different form of youth alienation. Here:

“Truancy, vandalism, random violence, premeditated crime and habitual drug-taking can be other indicators of youth alienation, even if historical comparisons are difficult; and the spurts, fits and fashions of vivid media coverage can make it difficult to judge how much is real increase and how much is justifiable public intolerance of things once taken more or less for granted.”

(AGC 1998: 15)

As the report acknowledges, it is hard to make historical comparisons in relation to youth crime and disaffection. Young people have long been subjects of adult anxiety in relation to their criminal or anti-social activity (Kelly 1999; France 2007), and as a result the objects of ‘moral panic’ (Jeffs and Smith 1999b). As Muncie noted in his 1984 analysis of youth and crime in post-war Britain:

“The young have consistently been identified in the post-war years as a major social problem. Many of these fears have clustered around the image of ‘vicious young criminal’ or ‘hooligan’ intent on ‘meaningless’ violence, who has made the streets unsafe for ‘law abiding citizens’.”

(Muncie 1984: 179)

Over two decades later, public perceptions of dangerous youth are magnified through ‘amplification by the media’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 119), reinforcing a dominant perspective that young people and risk are increasingly intertwined (Kemshall 2008b). The very real consequence is that the fear of crime significantly outweighs the reality

(Armstrong 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2007) and young people become the targets of ever-greater state interventions designed to control their behaviour.

The historical legacy aside, many commentators note that there has been an ‘authoritarian drift’ (Kelly 2003; Stephen 2006) not only in youth justice, but in wider youth and social policy. Youth crime is no longer merely a welfare issue, addressed by social workers and the criminal justice system. The focus is on the ‘pre-criminal’, the aspects of young people’s social and moral behaviour that can be classified as anti-social. New laws have been designed not to *address* criminal activity but to *prevent* it through measures located at the site of the individual and the community. Moreover, this authoritarian drift concerns itself with incivility: behaviours that were once distasteful are reframed as anti-social, and potentially criminal.

A key aim of citizenship education is to address these social and moral deficits seemingly inherent in young people. In order to understand this aspect of the youth problem, it is necessary first to define anti-social behaviour and explore how proposals to tackle it have developed in the past decade.

### **The rise of anti-social behaviour**

In 1993, the murder of two year old James Bulger by two young people marked a key cultural shift in UK political debates about law and order. In particular, this event like similar high profile cases allowed the ‘politics of punishment’ (Wallis 1997) to dominate discourses around crime and disorder. As Cohen notes, ‘at the time of the Bulger murder about 70 children aged under five were being killed each year’ (2003: 5). Children responsible for murder represented a small and static number, with their crimes being ‘random and idiosyncratic’ events from which it was hard to draw inference about the condition of ‘wider society’ (Cohen 2003: 5). The response by media and politicians might have been measured in the sense that they recognised the strangeness of the crime. Rather, the then opposition home affairs spokesperson, Tony Blair, suggested that convicted Thompson and Venables ‘personified the state of a feral nation’ (Cohen 2005: 6). As a result, the Bulger case served both as a ‘point of condensation for wider social anxieties’ (Hay 1995: 199) and as a trigger for the

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‘punitive turn’ in criminal justice policy (Smith 2003; see also Kemshall and Wood 2008). As Smith and Sueda (2008) note:

Politicians and media commentators united in claiming that many children and young people were out of control...explanations included a breakdown of family relationships and a consequent loss of discipline, an ill-defined ‘national malaise’, which had produced a moral vacuum.

(2008: 13)

This key case set in motion a series of political debates about the extent to which law and order needed reform. Indeed, it was in the immediate aftermath of the event that Major promised to ‘condemn a little more and understand a little less’ and Blair committed to be ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’ (Smith and Sueda 2008: 13). The ‘political football’ of punishment (Wallis 1997) was tossed between opposition and the Conservative government, with more and more proposals for punitive responses to crime, ‘usually targeted at undesirable others’ (Cohen 2003: 15). Young people, characterised as ‘corrupted’ and ‘potentially dangerous’ (Davis and Bourhill 1997) became the key targets for criminal justice reform.

There can be no question that the revised emphasis on punishment was intimately linked to the politics of the day. Successive Conservative governments had established their dominance in law and order and challenging this became a key element of the electoral strategy of New Labour in opposition (Pitts 2000; Yates, J. 2009). Seen as its ‘Achilles heal’ (Morgan 2000), Labour had been accused for being ‘soft on crime’ in its arguably virtuous pursuit of redressing the socioeconomic and structural causes of crime. It is perhaps telling that the first significant policy to reform youth justice in England and Wales was entitled *No More Excuses* (Home Office 1997) and that the twin themes of retribution and responsibility became commonplace in subsequent youth justice legislation and policy development (Goldson and Muncie 2006). Amongst these many developments (see Yates, J. 2009 for a recent review), two key legislative measures formalised community-level processes for tackling anti-social behaviour. The first was the Crime and Disorder Act

(1998) which established that anti-social behaviour orders could be ‘made by a relevant authority’ upon the following conditions:

(a) that the person has acted, since the commencement date, in an anti-social manner, that is to say, in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself; and

(b) that such an order is necessary to protect persons in the local government area in which the harassment, alarm or distress was caused or was likely to be caused from further anti-social acts by him;

(Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 1(1))

Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) are civil orders designed to protect the public from behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harm as stipulated in Section 1 of the Act. They carry conditions prohibiting the offender from engaging in specific behaviours or entering defined areas (Home Office 2006). The application of these orders reflects the very problem of ‘defining the anti-social’ (Yates, J. 2009) as the discussion below indicates. They have been used in a wide range of ways targeting a wide range of behaviours. Examples include those behaviours as diverse as spitting, associating with friends and family, travelling on buses in a specific area, going into shops, committing suicide, being sarcastic, being on the street, political protesting, and visiting family members have all been prohibited by anti-social behaviour powers ([www.asboconcern.org.uk](http://www.asboconcern.org.uk)). Home Office guidance stipulates that ASBOs are not criminal sanctions and are ‘not intended to punish the offender’ (Home Office 2006: 8). However, breach of an order invokes Sections 90 and 91 of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act (2000) where applications can be made for: “detention and training order, action plan order, referral order, attendance centre, order, supervision order, reparation order, parenting order, fine, community punishment and rehabilitation order (16–17 year olds), absolute discharge. All sentences to the community are open to the following orders: curfew order, parenting order, drug testing and treatment order.” (Home Office 2006: 12).



The second relevant legislative framework is Section 30 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) which introduced the powers to disperse groups and remove young people under the age of 16 to their place of residence. Dispersal powers apply where an officer has reasonable grounds for believing:

(a) that any members of the public have been intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed as a result of the presence or behaviour of groups of two or more persons in public places in any locality in his police area (the “relevant locality”), and

(b) that anti-social behaviour is a significant and persistent problem in the relevant locality.

(Crime and Disorder Act, s30(1))

The constable is then afforded powers to direct the group to disperse either immediately or at a specified time. As with the ASBO, it is in the ‘breach’ of a dispersal order where the criminal offence is recorded and offenders can be fined or imprisoned, or both. In addition, there are age-specific curfew powers: children under the age of 16 and ‘not under the effective control of a parent or a responsible person aged 18 or over’ (s30(6b)) can be removed to their residence between the hours of 9pm and 6am.

A critique of these legislative developments is withheld for now, since any such discussion needs to take into account the entirety of the problem of youth, crime and anti-social behaviour. For this, we must first explore what is defined as ‘anti-social’ and how it is experienced.

### **Experience and perception**

Precise definitions of ‘anti-social behaviour’ are problematic since what constitutes the key terms ‘harassment, alarm or distress’ are likely to be subject to wide variation (Garside 2005). Guidance from the Home Office suggests that antisocial behaviour includes ‘a variety of behaviour covering a whole complex of selfish and

unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life’ (Home Office undated). Examples cited by the Home Office range from ‘nuisance neighbours’, ‘people dealing and buying drugs on the street’, ‘people dumping rubbish and abandoning cars’ through to ‘yobbish behaviour and intimidating groups taking over public spaces’ (Home Office undated). According to Wood (2004), anti-social behaviour first requires an agreed definition if it is to be measured and tackled. Upson determines that most definitions ‘concentrate on specific types of behaviour that have a ‘day-to-day’ quality and that are widely regarded as ‘unreasonable’ or ‘inappropriate’ (2006: 1). In offering practice guidance to local authorities, the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate produced a ‘typology’ of anti-social behaviour, reproduced here in table 2.

**Table 2 - Home Office typology of anti-social behaviour**

Misuse of public space	Disregard for community/ personal well-being	Acts directed at people	Environmental damage
Drug/substance misuse & dealing	Noise	Intimidation/harassment	Criminal damage/vandalism
Taking drugs	Noisy neighbours	Groups or individuals making threats	Graffiti
Sniffing volatile substances	Noisy cars/motorbikes	Verbal abuse	Damage to bus shelters
Discarding needles/drug paraphernalia	Loud music	Bullying	Damage to phone kiosks
Crack houses	Alarms (persistent ringing/malfunction)	Following people	Damage to street furniture
Presence of dealers or users	Noise from pubs/clubs	Pestering people	Damage to buildings
Street drinking	Noise from business/industry	Voyeurism	Damage to trees/plants/hedges
Begging	Rowdy behaviour	Sending nasty/offensive letters	Litter/rubbish
Prostitution	Shouting & swearing	Obscene/nuisance phone calls	Dropping litter
Soliciting	Fighting	Menacing gestures	Dumping rubbish
Cards in phone boxes	Drunken behaviour	<i>Can be on the grounds of:</i>	Fly-tipping
Discarded condoms	Hooliganism/loutish behaviour	Race	Fly-posting
Kerb crawling	Nuisance behaviour	Sexual orientation	
Loitering	Urinating in public	Gender	
Pestering residents	Setting fires (not directed at specific persons or property)	Religion	
Sexual acts	Inappropriate use of fireworks	Disability	
Inappropriate sexual conduct	Throwing missiles	Age	
Indecent exposure	Climbing on buildings		
Abandoned cars	Impeding access to communal areas		
Vehicle-related nuisance & inappropriate vehicle use	Games in restricted/inappropriate areas		
Inconvenient/illegal parking	Misuse of air guns		
Car repairs on the street/in gardens	Letting down tyres		
Setting vehicles alight	Hoax calls		
Joyriding	False calls to emergency services		
Racing cars	Animal-related problems		
Off-road motorcycling	Uncontrolled animals		
Cycling/skateboarding in pedestrian areas/footpaths			

(Home Office 2004: 4)

A much publicised one day ‘count’ of the incidence of anti-social behaviour was conducted in 2003, with the aim of understanding ‘better how anti-social behaviour impacts on members of the public and on key service providers’ (Home Office 2004: 8). Over a twenty-four hour period on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2003, agencies that received reports of anti-social behaviour were asked to record incidents using the RDS typology.

**Table 3 - Behaviours reported within the one-day count of anti-social behaviour**

Drug/substance misuse and drug dealing	2,920
Street drinking and begging	3,239
Prostitution, kerb crawling and other sexual acts	1,011
Vehicle-related nuisance and inappropriate vehicle use	7,782
Intimidation and harassment	5,415
Noise	5,374
Rowdy behaviour	5,339
Nuisance behaviour	7,660
Hoax calls	1,286
Animal-related problems	2,546
Abandoned vehicles	4,994
Criminal damage/vandalism	7,855
Litter/rubbish	10,686
Total	66,107

(Reproduced from: Home Office 2004: 8)

The findings of the study were useful insofar as they illustrated the incidence of certain classifications of disorder and in doing so sparked a media blitz of comment about the prevalence of bad behaviour in society. However, there are several limitations with such an exercise, only some of which are acknowledged in the Home Office guidance. Not least in how they are ‘counted’:

“Measuring anti-social behaviour ...has its problems. Its subjective and context-specific nature means that counting ‘incidents’ is difficult, unlike for crime where clear legal definitions are available. In addition, particular types of behaviour may have an effect on many people, for example several people may see a single incident of graffiti or vandalism, and an incident may be reported by several individuals, or to several different agencies, causing problems with double counting of incidents.”

(Upson 2006: 1)

A Home Office review of *British Crime Survey* data in 2004/2005 examined the perceptions and experience of anti-social behaviour. The most widely perceived individual problem was ‘young people hanging around’ with 31% of respondents regarding it as a ‘very’ or ‘fairly big’ problem (Upson 2006: 5). Methodologically, the approach to assessing such attitudes may be open to question, since ‘young people hanging around on the streets’ was offered as an option, and attitudinal scales will undoubtedly lay themselves open to criticism for what constitutes a ‘fairly big problem’. Reading on: of those participants who had ‘seen young people hanging around’ in the past twelve months, the top three concerns were ‘swearing/using bad language’, being a ‘general nuisance’ and ‘being loud, rowdy or noisy’ (Table 4, below). These acts are not criminal, nor are they exclusive to young people. In a sense they represent a moral distaste for certain activities (swearing the case in point) which *may indeed* be construed as anti-social. Conversely for young people, might the use of swearing within their own groups be evidence of a very pro-social dialogue?

**Table 4 - Nature of behaviours experienced in incidents of young people hanging around in the local area (BCS 2004/05)**

<i>Percentages</i>	<b>2004/05 BCS</b>
	Percentage who experienced this behaviour
	%
<b>Type of behaviour experienced:</b>	
Swearing/using bad language	70
Just being a general nuisance	66
Being loud, rowdy or noisy	66
Drinking	53
Littering (e.g. spitting gum on the street)	45
Blocking the pavement	42
Being abusive/harassing or insulting people	35
Blocking the entrance to shops	29
Generally intimidating or threatening people	26
Taking drugs	22
Fighting with each other	22
Writing graffiti	22
Damaging property or cars	19
Physically assaulting people	5
Mugging or robbing people	3
Other behaviour	1
Not doing anything in particular	4
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<b>3,398</b>

1. Based on adults who saw young people hanging around in the local area in the past 12 months.

2. Percentages add to more than 100 as more than one option could be selected.

(Reproduced from Upson 2006: 47, table A4.1)

Similarly, the idea of ‘general nuisance’ is particularly problematic and I would like to be unorthodox and draw on two recent anecdotes as examples. The first concerns a walk with my dog in the local area in the early evening. We arrived at the local park and a short time later, a police officer arrived after receiving reports of young people’s loud behaviour and acts of criminal damage. He could clearly see that such reports were either false or exaggerated since if young people *had* been causing damage just ‘fifteen minutes earlier’, there would be evidence of such disorder. What constitutes a reported incident and an actual event is not only beset by *whether it actually happened* but also by the subjectivity we give to it. The second example concerns where I used to live. On my previous street, there was a group of young people who would always hang around. They did not appear to me to be exhibiting ‘nuisance behaviour’ and, in fact, always seemed courteous and respectful. However, the perception of my neighbour was of imminent trouble if the group were left to their own devices. She would consequently call the police to move the group on without having been victim to any specific incident. When I challenged her about this behaviour, she cited noise as the precipitating factor – something that I had been entirely unaware of. My own anecdotes are of course purely without credence for empirical judgement, but they do illustrate a wider problem with ‘defining the anti-social’ (Yates, J. 2009).

The difficulty with such research that concentrates on perception is that it invariably only tells part of the story. It is also devoid of context. The influence of the media in reproducing dominant ideas about certain groups must have a part to play since such a large percentage of coverage concerns ‘yobbish’ behaviour (HM Treasury 2007). The Home Office review itself acknowledges that:

“It is likely that recent government initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour and media coverage of these initiatives have raised public awareness of anti-social behaviour. This may have influenced people’s perceptions of anti-social behaviour in their immediate area by, for example, making people more likely to notice problems near to their home, or more likely to report problems.”  
(Upson 2006: 7)

However, the responsibility does not lie only with the media as to do so is to ‘ignore the role of other factors in the forming of our fears’ (Hughes et al 2006: 262).

According to recent research that has examined risk communication, the importance of the ‘social currency’ built around the circulation of ‘everyday knowledge in routine conversations’ is as important (see Hughes et al 2006: 262). Social currency neatly defined as the interactions that help cement or confirm ideas, rightly or wrongly, about risk. As communicative strategies and interactive media continue to expand through, for example, the internet, yet more information and debates are in the public domain and these in turn help shape our social currency.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the social currency about young people ‘hanging around’ has gained so much support. The dominant media, political and cultural discourse that imagines anti-social behaviour as a ‘catch-all’ phrase ‘goes beyond the particular: it has a deeply symbolic meaning combining a law and order message with the creation of a powerful and disturbing image of the enemy within’ (Burney 2005: 165). Communities have always operated on the basis of an inclusionary/exclusionary basis (Staheli 2008), identifying those who are visibly outside of the ‘norm’. Defining these abnormal elements on account of their age seems little different to attempts to classify and exclude on the basis of other factors of identity, such as ‘race’, gender, sexuality and so on. The difficulty with age-related exclusionary practices, especially targeted at young people, is that they have become so normalised: cultural norms establish themselves to become ‘an assumed *consensus* about what is right and what is normal’ (Thompson 2006: 27) and these are embedded within, and reinforced by the community context. Youth and dangerousness become intertwined (Kemshall 2008b) and it is ‘common sense’ that they should be regulated and targeted in punitive ways. The central problem with this is that it reinforces misinformation. There is no evidence to suggest that criminal activity represents any such ‘breakdown in the social fabric of society’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 119). Ultimately, our fears of young people become further exaggerated by our desire to gain control over the perceived risks they pose.

For young people, the process of ‘hanging around’ is often undoubtedly *pro*-social. What we do know from research is that hanging around in local settings is a critical

part of young people's social identity formation (Holland et al 2007). The process of 'asserting' and 'testing' identities is usually conducted in these groups (Hall et al 1999) where a strong attachment to the local neighbourhood is usually in evidence (Weller 2007). At the heart of this idea is that of 'belonging', an essential, inclusionary component of citizenship (Lister et al 2002) particularly in relation to young people and their local 'community life' (France 1996). Young people *belong* within their friendship and other social networks, and have this belonging endorsed by their peers. Where communities exclude, belonging and integration inevitably weaken.

Weller (2007) examines the linkage between citizenship and hanging around in local communities. In a survey of young people 'hanging out in rural communities' (Weller 2007: 100), the majority of those who responded indicated that they most often hung around in what were defined as public spaces.

**Table 5 - Where do you socialize with your friends?**

Where do you hang out?	Number of times cited by participants	Examples
Private spaces	91	Own home Friend's home
Public spaces	177	Beach Park/Green Woods Recreational ground Skate parks
Commercial spaces	166	Town Cinema Leisure centres Cafes Pubs/clubs
Claimed spaces	92	Streets Benches Other school's grounds Bus shelters Graveyards

(Weller 2007: 101, table 2)

Weller's assessment of public spaces and claimed spaces provide illuminating insights into the uses that young people make of them. They serve as 'meeting points' in 'favourite or regular' spaces (Weller 2007: 104). Most of these are sites of socialising with other friends and there was a general frustration that there were not more

‘affordable and accessible’ activities available for young people – ‘as teenagers, with greater spatial freedoms, many stated the need for more facilities when away from the home’ (Weller 2007: 137). In a context where the majority of young people liked living in their community but only ‘34 per cent felt a sense of belonging’ (Weller 2007: 133), young people hanging around was deemed by others as not ‘a legitimate use of space’ (Ibid: 135). Public space ultimately becomes what Reay and Lucey (2000) termed ‘child-hostile social landscapes’ leading us to return to our discussion about the ‘state response’.

### **Regulating young people**

If it is ‘young people hanging around’ who represent the largest element of perceived anti-social behaviour, it is also true that:

“the seemingly newly ‘discovered’ problem of anti-social behaviour appears to be increasingly recoded as a problem of young people in deprived and marginalised communities and neighbourhoods”

(Hughes and Follett 2006:157).

For Stephen and Squires (2004) this represents an exemplar of Kelly’s (2003) ‘institutionalised mistrust’ of children and young people. As they point out, the condition of late modernity is to dispense with equality before the law in favour of the specific ‘assignment’ of dangerousness to certain social identities. Whilst there are problems that need addressing, the strategies as they stand:

“Serve to reinforce, rather than redress, processes of marginalisation and constructions of Otherness through a blurring of boundaries between moral judgements and legal actualities.”

(Stephen and Squires 2004: 352)

Anti-social Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) were introduced as a pre-ASBO measure. The contracts were established as a ‘useful alternative to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders where the latter are not considered justified’ (Stephen and Squires 2004: 352).



Whereas the ASBO is effectively a civil order with legal force, ABCs represent a more informal process, addressing acts of anti-social behaviour through written agreements between a young person, the police and a partner agency (usually housing). A study by Stephen and Squires focused on ten families subject to such agreements in what they classify as ‘two of the most marginalised housing estates in a city on the south coast of England’ (2004: 355). Responses to the imposition of ABCs were different for the families involved, with by far the most seeing it as further criminalisation of their children already ‘alienated’ without appropriate support. The findings make for depressing reading. For the ‘three young people for whom the ABCs were not working had the most pressing social, emotional and educational needs’ (p355).

The study established that families criticised the ‘heavy-handed’ nature of ABCs, and the basis of ‘evidence’ used against young people often predicated on an existing ‘reputation’ (p357-358). Children themselves exhibited no sense of ‘ownership of the terms of the contract’ (p358) with parents exhibiting a greater awareness. Despite assurances that ABCs would follow explicit warnings, the contracts were often the first illustration of the graveness of behaviour, and were presented as a threat of eviction (p359). Young people could not understand why they had been ‘singled out’ in the context of a culture of similar behaviours, and families reported high degrees of threat and added stress (p359-361).

Stephen and Squires conclude, quite vehemently:

‘Respect and responsibility’ indeed. Our findings show that the contemporary ‘institutionalized mistrust of youth’ (Kelly 2003) in Britain, actualised thorough ‘Community Safety’ policies and hackneyed stereotypes, serves to further marginalised young people, and their families, most in need of inclusion and support’.  
(2004: 366)

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At the heart of the critique is the failure of justice, particularly in the dismissal of key human rights, namely privacy and family life (Article 8), the right to education (Article 2) and:

‘Of greatest concern, however, is that the civilianisation of crime prevention...can absolve authorities from the rights enshrined in Article 6 (‘right to a fair trial’) which, for the young people and their families, was where their greatest concerns lay.’  
(2004: 366).

The prioritisation of anti-social behaviour over the past decade or so has brought with it a new energy in targeting young people on the ‘margins’. It is certainly true that for over 200 years, ‘the scientific and professional discourses about our bodies, our minds and our relationships to each other and society’ have often concerned ‘youth’ (Watts 1993/1994: 120). Similarly, Kelly has identified that certain groups of young people have long been represented as ‘ungovernable’ and lacking in ‘self-regulation’ (Kelly 1999). However:

“A major problem for young people today is that they increasingly cause adults anxiety [that] translates into a raft of responses that have young people as their targets.”  
(Kelly 2003: 166-167)

Consequently, forms of government exist to institute new processes of surveillance that are ‘targeted and focused, in the interests of the economy, at those populations who pose, or face, the *greatest* dangers and risks.’ (Kelly 2003: 167). As we discussed in the opening section of this chapter, such dangers and risks are located within the process we term ‘youth transitions’. If all young people, determined by the bank of knowledge that emphasises ‘deficit’ are effectively deemed to be problematic, then young people become ‘the universal symbol of disorder’ (Burney 2002: 473) which enables policy makers to ‘easily dispense with’ the liberties and rights of young people (Fox 2002:10). Government stands charged of ‘policies...that have demonised its own young people’ (Howson 2007: 15) with a particular exclusionary ruthlessness

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towards those who are further defined as outside or ‘Other’ (Burney 2002; Howson 2007; Stephen 2006).

These ‘powerful narratives of risk’ loom large in attempts to regulate youth identities (Kelly 2000: 303). A combination of lower levels of public tolerance for incivility together with an increase in the fear of young people (Young and Matthews 2003) serve to disguise the reality of a general decline in youth related criminal activity (Armstrong 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Such fear reproduction effectively stigmatises young people further, resulting in yet more surveillance and regulation (Kelly 2003; McKenzie 2005) and a perverse consequence is of a vicious circle:

“Society [...] becomes increasingly fearful, suspicious of youths, which in turn means they are more closely supervised by the police than any other age group.”

(McKenzie 2005: 194)

This indictment does indeed put ‘community on trial’ (Amin 2005). The regulation of behaviour, at the expense of structural change lends itself purely to a ‘moral underclass discourse’ that ignores the wider determinants of structural inequality – whatever proponents of early intervention might say. There is little in Bamfield’s analysis (2007), for instance, that suggests significant reform to economic relations.

In determined attempts to tackle moral and social deficits, at the expense of socio-economic inequalities the targets are the individual young people:

It is, therefore, asserted with gusto that the risk *of* the Other in contemporary [discourses] masks the real risks *to* the Other simply as a result of their Otherness through social, economic and political marginalisation’.

(Stephen and Squires 2004: 367)

**Summary**

Young people have probably always been of concern to adults. In particular, their engagement in risky or criminal activity provokes reflections on the historical relationship between youth and dangerousness. However, the past decade has been witness to an expansion in strategies to regulate the behaviour of young people through a series of measures designed to tackle ‘anti-social behaviour’. The problems are twofold. Firstly, there is the issue of perception – what constitutes a perceived problem may not necessarily indicate its actuality. Young people are excluded from public places on account of a social currency that deems them to be a threat. Secondly, the increase in civil measures is effectively reducing the right of young people to fair justice. This means that greater measures are instituted at a community level, effectively targeting those who are already marginalised. It is argued that such approaches effectively reduce the welfare goals of those who work with young people, and replace these with a strategy of criminalisation.

**The youth problem and responsabilisation**

This generation of young people are the first to grow up in the risk society (Kemshall 2008b). They face challenges based both on the continuity of social identity stratification, and the changes brought about by globalisation and late modernity (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). There is a generalised anxiety and institutional mistrust of young people (Kelly 2003) particularly in their capacity to make prudential decisions in the face of these risks (Dean 1999; Kemshall 2008b). An academic obsession with the ‘dark side’ of adolescence is matched only by unprecedented policy initiatives designed to intervene early and address factors that are likely to become entrenched problems later on in the life course. Moral and economic arguments are used as commonsensical justifications for these interventions, all of which increasingly frame young people as individually responsible for their own navigation through the life course.

Returning to the themes of governmentality and welfare examined in chapter two, the problems identified in this chapter offer illuminating examples of Rose’s (1996) responsabilisation thesis. In particular, the definitions of the problems presented here firmly establish the individual as a culpable subject in need of ‘a whole array of programmes for their ethical reconstruction as active citizens’ (Rose 1996: 60). These

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problems become the justifications for citizenship education, a programme of renormalisation based on the transmission of knowledge and appropriate values. Governmentality perspectives invite us to ask ‘what forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government and what sorts of transformation do these practices seek?’ (Dean 1999: 32). The two justifications for citizenship education frame an individual as *sans* appropriate knowledge, *sans* acceptable values and as a consequence, lacking the necessary qualities of a future citizen. Let us revisit and summarise both problems in the light of this claim.

Firstly, there is the issue of a democratic deficit. This problem is not seen in terms of a failure in governing systems at a structural or societal level. Rather, the problem is located within the individual’s capacity to participate as an effective citizen. The episteme of government (Dean 1995) is based upon a set of calculable patterns concerning individual voting behaviour and engagement in party political groups. An assessment of this knowledge posits that the reasons for non-engagement are of apathy, unawareness or antipathy. Alternative value positions (such as the range of other political practices that young people engage in) are disregarded since they do not fit within the required measurements of democratic performance. They are epistemologically unacceptable (Bryman 2004). It follows that education is designed to address knowledge and value deficits in the individual. Simply put, if people understand how democracy works and what their role is within it, then people will participate.

Secondly, whereas once crime and anti-social behaviour may have been seen as symptoms or causes of structural disadvantage, they are now rooted in a moral underclass discourse (Levitas 2006) that identifies the individual as culpable for engaging in morally or socially irresponsible acts. They are literally recast as people ‘whose self-responsibility and self-fulfilling aspirations have been deformed by the dependency culture, whose efforts at self-advancement have been frustrated.’ (Rose 1996: 59). Individuals are thus expected to make the correct choices to disentangle disadvantage and crime. Education for citizenship is tasked with remoralising young people towards desired socially responsible behaviour, and communities are charged with regulating this behaviour through the new civil measures discussed in this

chapter. Garland (1996) has famously identified this shift in criminal justice towards a community responsabilisation strategy: ‘central government seeking to act upon crime not in a direct fashion through state agencies...but instead by acting indirectly, seeking to activate action on the part of non-state agencies’ (Garland 1996: 452). Agencies outside of the criminal justice system take on enforcement roles, exemplified by the use of ABC contracts in housing estates (see above). Muncie draws on this work to illustrate how communities, individuals and the family are all now held responsible for managing problems of youth crime and anti-social behaviour with a series of ‘programmes which seek either to remove young people from the street or to provide them and their parents with coercive ‘retraining’’ (Muncie 2004: 139). The consequence is that the criminal net around children widens (James and James 2001) and welfare issues become of criminal justice concern (Stephen and Squires 2004).

In concluding this chapter, there are a number of brief points of summation to note prior to moving into any discussion about the development of citizenship education. Firstly, the problems of citizenship have been identified as those which concern individual deficits. The justifications put forward for citizenship education are therefore based on a process of restructuring individual knowledge, values and behaviours. Secondly, this position assumes that active citizenship is accepted and adequately defined as a ‘normative ideal’ in advanced liberal democracies. Finally, whilst the history of citizenship, particularly as a ‘momentum concept’ discussed in chapter one, could easily lend itself to liberal education or empowerment theory (Young 1999), the model that emerges from this chapter suggests that citizenship education is little more than preparedness to conform to prescribed standards of socially responsible behaviour. Thus, young people are seen as problems to be managed, moulded and reformed rather than as active citizens who can think and make decisions about issues that concern them (Gewirtz 2000). Consequently,

“Citizenship education ... appears to have evolved into a much more apolitical individualistic version of citizenship teaching, focused around imparting information about moral obligations and students’ responsibilities towards society.”

(Cunningham and Lavalette 2004: 258)

In the next chapter, this ‘evolved’ citizenship education will be discussed, exploring its aims, implementation and the research studies that have sought to evaluate its effectiveness.

## 4 Activating youth citizenship

In chapters two and three, the author established the context of citizenship in the UK as it is presently understood. Chapter two examined the contemporary definition of citizenship in relation to its communitarian persuasion. In chapter three, we examined the extent to which young people were felt to be lacking the necessary qualities required for active citizenship. This chapter reviews some of the key policy developments that have been specifically targeted at young people in the past decade, designed as they are to provide a broad based programme of citizenship education.

The premise has been established that citizenship education has been designed to address individual political, social and moral deficits in young people in order to prepare them to perform as active citizens. What form does this education take? How has it been implemented, and what has been the impact to date? What attention has been given to the experiences of young people, from their own perspectives?

This chapter explores each of these questions in order to establish an understanding of contemporary citizenship education.

### **Citizenship education in schools: the Crick Report**

David Blunkett, former secretary of both the Department for Education and Skills and later the Home Office, has long been a strong advocate for citizenship education. He was the principal advocate for citizenship education and later, as Home Secretary, pushed forward calls for strengthening local community involvement through ‘civil renewal’ (Blunkett 2003a; 2003b).

As early as 1990 he had been a member of the Weatherill Commission on Citizenship. This commission had sought to strengthen the case that ‘citizenship ... has to be learned like everything else’ (Murdoch 1991: 439). Upon learning that he would be appointed Secretary of State for Education and Employment prior to Labour’s 1997



election victory, Blunkett had an early conversation with his former teacher and politics mentor Professor Bernard Crick:

“He [Blunkett] said it was one of his major ambitions to get citizenship into the national curriculum. ‘Citizenship education, mark you, Bernard’, he said, ‘not political education’ ...Citizenship did not just mean the politics of parties and pressure groups but also knowledge of and the skills to be effective in all manner of voluntary, community and neighbourhood groups. My mantras soon became ‘good *and* active citizens’ *and* ‘rights and responsibilities’”  
(Crick 2002: 494)

The first education white paper produced by the government shortly after their election entitled *Excellence in Schools* pledged to ‘strengthen education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools’ (AGC 1998: 4). The Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC) was established with the terms of reference:

“To provide advice on effective education for citizenship in schools – to include the nature and practices of participation in democracy; the duties, responsibilities and rights of individuals as citizens; and the value to individuals and society of community activity.”  
(AGC 1998: 4)

The main outcomes of which should be:

“a broad framework for what good citizenship education in schools might look like, and how it can be successfully delivered – covering opportunities for teaching about citizenship within and outside the formal curriculum and the development of personal and social skills through projects linking schools and the community, volunteering and the involvement of pupils in the development of school rules and policies.”  
(AGC 1998: 4)

Despite some unspecified difficulties faced by Crick in chairing the committee (Blunkett 2006) the publication of the final report (known simply as *The Crick Report*) of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC) in 1998 marked a watershed in citizenship education in England. Following the Citizenship Order in 2000, citizenship education was incorporated in English schools for the first time in the school curriculum between ages 5 and 16. It is a statutory foundation subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 (applying to those students aged 11-16) and schools are therefore legally obliged to deliver citizenship education (Ireland et al 2006). The educational aim was indeed bold, illustrated by the quotation on page 1 of this thesis. Students would ‘think of themselves as active citizens’ in a radically changed political culture. They would be able to influence public life, with the critical capacity to weigh evidence before speaking and acting. These qualities would be associated with an extension of the ‘best in existing traditions’ of public involvement and public service (see AGC 1998: 7-8). Enveloping these aims, and within the direction of the proposed curriculum, stood a very clear new definition of the active citizen with three, interlocked learning outcomes:

- **Social and moral responsibility:** Pupils learning from the very beginning, self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other.
- **Community involvement:** Pupils learning about becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhood and communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community.
- **Political literacy:** Pupils learning about the institutions, problems and practices of our democracy and how to make themselves effective in the life of the nation, locally, regionally and nationally through skills and values as well as knowledge - a concept wider than political knowledge alone.

(AGC 1998: 40-41)

The model of citizenship put forward by the AGC identifies strongly with the civic republican tradition with its emphasis on duty and responsibility (Annette 2008) though it goes somewhat beyond political participation. The group stated that community and voluntary involvement would be core to the teaching of citizenship:

“volunteering and community involvement are necessary conditions of civil society and democracy. Preparation for these, at the very least, should be an explicit part of education”

(AGC 1998: 10).

This extends citizenship from a distinctly political or civics study to one of wider social responsibility suggesting attention to, and some conflation with character – or values – education (Frazer 2003; Berkowitz et al 2008). For the advisory group:

“citizenship education in a parliamentary democracy finds three heads on one body: *social and moral responsibility, community involvement* and *political literacy*. ‘Responsibility’ is an essential political as well as moral virtue, for it implies (a) care for others; (b) premeditation and calculation about what effect actions are likely to have on others; and (c) understanding and care for the consequences.”

(AGC 1998: 13)

Blunkett’s view was that political education alone would be too narrow (Pollard 2004) preferring instead to have a broader definition of what it means to be a citizen. For Blunkett, the subject was ‘as much about the broader engagement of an individual as a social being as it was about renewing democracy’ (2001a: 64) because:

“It is about building from the foundations which all of us cherish, understanding that we are so much more when we work together as part of a strong community, supporting and enabling individuals to develop their talents.”

(Blunkett 2001b: 126)

Consequently, the aims of citizenship education lend themselves to a broader focus of building young people’s ‘social capital’ particularly in their capacity to integrate and perform within local communities (Kisby 2006). They address also the question of morals: accepting ‘the individual citizen’s motivation to engage politically... comes often from a moral sensitivity’ (Haste and Hogan 2006: 474). It is a communitarian definition of citizenship *par excellence*, ‘challenging the previous orthodoxies of

individualism and rights' (Alton 2001: 107). Berkowitz et al (2008) argue that this is the pursuit of certain dispositions: 'enduring tendencies to act in certain ways' (2008: 399).

The relationship between character, moral and citizenship education has been taken up by Haydon (2000; 2003; 2006). Of the three strands put forward by the *Crick Report*, the issue of social and moral responsibility may pose particular problems for schools, since 'the idea of *teaching* moral and social responsibility may seem to many teachers to run the risk of indoctrinating students in society's values' and consequently 'teachers will reasonably seek ways of avoiding the undesirable outcomes' (Haydon 2003: 79) perhaps through a narrow teaching of citizenship or through the avoidance of controversial issues (AGC 1998; Crick 2002). These issues are not new ones, and they are not only characteristic of citizenship education. For example, the aims of citizenship education overlap with those found in moral education, though the term has been little used of late (Haydon 2000).

There are two competing understandings of moral education in contemporary philosophy. One uses the 'language of individual autonomy, rational thought and the principled endorsement and following of norms' (Haydon 2003: 83), the other concerns the notion of 'virtues' and in particular the personal qualities, feelings and motivation to follow 'virtue ethics'. The idea that citizenship education should 'be centrally concerned with the development of the right civic virtues' has become a strong strand in recent philosophical writing (Haydon 2003: 83). Haydon argues that the more these virtues are emphasised, the less impact this form of moral education will have on strengthening inclusion and collective identity. The major thrust of this argument is that virtues inherently attach themselves to individual qualities and traits, a 'state of character' that differentiates one person from the next. Commendable traits to be sure, but:

"In a society which is not only liberal but plural in its cultures and traditions, can the promotion of a set of virtues be compatible with inclusion and the proper recognition of diversity?"

(Haydon 2003: 84)

The argument then becomes both about the prioritisation of *certain* virtues, and also about the differences in interpretation (what is good to one may not be necessarily good to another). For Young (1999) this has always been a feature of engaging young people in a process of ‘moral philosophy’ asking questions about what constitutes ‘being good’. Taking a different line to Haydon, Young argues that ‘qualities considered to be [virtuous] tend to widely shared amongst different ethical traditions’ (1999: 49) and therefore ‘virtue requires practical reason’ (Ibid.). Simply put, this means a process of practical deliberation about what constitutes a virtuous life.

The question then becomes ‘which virtues’ should be taught as part of citizenship education? Might the answer lie in Young’s proposed deliberative dialogue? Another approach may be about the transmission of the ‘dominant’ virtues given priority by those who direct education. The danger here is that a project of attempted assimilation and consequent ‘unthinking subordination’ can find ground (Osler 1999; Davies 2001). For all those who cannot subscribe to the dominant virtues put forward, or who do readily see them as ‘natural and unproblematic will not be able to identify fully with the moral citizen constituted by those favoured virtues’ (Haydon 2003: 85). Even commonly agreed virtues, those that underpin the drive towards civic virtues, can come under criticism. Interpretations of ‘justice’ and ‘tolerance’ can open themselves up to the charge of ‘thin interpretation’, i.e. that they are simply ‘good things’ (Haydon 2003: 86).

In rejecting the language of virtues (what sort of person should I be?), Haydon proposes instead a focus on citizenship *norms*. That is:

“Each of us, as a citizen, can reasonably expect, and demand, that our fellow citizens live by certain norms and principles. We cannot demand of each of them that they *be* a certain person.”

(Haydon 2003: 86)

Therefore, citizenship education has a duty to socialise young people into the norms and principles that society will bring to bear upon them:

“We do not punish citizens for failing to be sufficiently generous, courageous or whatever. We punish them for failing to adhere to certain specified norms. And one of the strongest arguments for insisting citizens are educated in moral responsibility is that we cannot...punish people for failing to abide by society’s norms if they have not received an education which fits them to be aware of these norms and understand the reasons for them.”  
(Haydon 2003: 87)

In any project designed to educate young people towards an established set of norms, there is evidence of a tension between social control and social liberation (Payne 2009). Prevalent norms can be very problematic especially in the context of unequal power relationships between different groups. The normative context for Black young people illustrates the point. High numbers of Black young people continue to be subjected to oppression and injustice through education, welfare, criminal justice and health (see Sallah and Howson 2007; Howson 2007; Pandya 2007 and the influential *Parekh Report 2002* for recent analyses). In a review of the AGC recommendations, Osler (1999) questioned whether the ‘new citizenship curriculum...can really support initiatives for racial equality’ (p12). The framework ‘in its representation of minorities, and in its discussion of identity and diversity [is] in many ways, unhelpful’ (p12). Its omission of specific references to racism in the analysis of democratic deficit indicates a failure to realise that:

“Citizenship education is seen across Europe as playing a central role in strengthening democracy and in challenging racism as an anti-democratic force.”  
(Osler 1999: 13)

The implication that minorities ‘must learn and respect the laws, codes and conventions as much as the majority’ (AGC 1998: 17-18) reveals a very negative view of so-called minority groups:

“One explanation is that the cultures and values of minorities are somehow at odds with the laws and conventions; another that minorities have not yet been

socialised into these laws; and a third, that those drafting the report believe that individuals from minority communities are more likely than those from majority communities to break the laws and conventions.”

(Osler 1999: 13)

This concern is reflected in other work around ‘race’, identity and political citizenship. Ashrif (2001) demonstrates that a majority/minority dichotomy has always been founded on the presumption that majorities possess qualities that minorities do not. The job of citizenship education is supposedly designed to instil these qualities, whether universally (to all young people) or in a targeted way (to the ‘minority’ young people).

In the debate about norms and socialisation, Davies (2001) argues that the interlocked aims of citizenship education have the potential for confusion and contradiction.

Citizenship education seeks:

“on the one hand, to foster compliance, obedience, a socialisation into social norms and citizen duties; and on the other, to encourage autonomy, critical thinking and the citizen challenge to social injustice.”

(Davies 2001: 307)

The issue of control versus empowerment runs throughout the debate around citizenship, and has been a theme running throughout this thesis (see especially chapter three). The problem is further compounded by the nature of schooling in this country, a discussion that cannot be done justice to within the confines of this present work. Suffice to say, schools are by tradition ‘anti-democratic’ institutions and pose problems for any attempts to engage in rights-based education (Alderson 1999).

## **Citizenship education beyond the school**

In 2000, Crick was again requested to chair an advisory group with a remit to:

“Advise the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how, and in what form, the principles and aims of the citizenship order for full-time compulsory schooling might be built upon to inform studies by all 16-19 year olds in further education and training.”

(FEFC 2000: 3)

Such a task would surely have presented numerous challenges above those experienced in the original advisory group work, since post-16 education and training is characterised by fragmentation and diversity, ranging as it does from further education colleges to private work-based employment agencies.

The advisory group recommended to the Secretary of State, that:

- Citizenship should be acknowledged as a Key Life Skill and should be given its proper place alongside the six *Key Skills* identified already
- An entitlement to the development of Citizenship – of which, participation should be a significant component – should be established which would apply to all students and trainees in the first phase of post-compulsory education and training, and
- All such young adults should have effective opportunities to participate in activities relevant to the development of their Citizenship skills, and to have their achievements recognised.

(FEFC 2000: 7)

The learning outcomes are described in the initial advisory group report (FEFC 2000: 14-18) covering the already well established themes evident in the earlier work of the AGC (AGC 1998). Principally, any citizenship programmes should have a number of key concepts at the core of attributes they wish to develop in young people, namely: participation, engagement, advocacy, research, evaluation, empathy, conciliation, leadership, representation and responsibility (FEFC 2000: 15). These concepts would



be ideally placed in the context of a number of roles that citizens play, ranging from ‘consumer’ to ‘worker’ (p15).

Youth Work was a provider amongst many involved in the delivery of post-16 education for citizenship (see Ofsted 2005) and is discussed here for reasons of personal and professional interest to the researcher. Defining Youth Work is almost as problematic as defining citizenship. Since the inception of services that work with young people, there has been an emphasis on moulding ‘the sort of people’ desired by the policy and practice context in which it operates (Young 1999). A commonly cited statement of purpose agreed at the second Ministerial Conference for the Youth Service offers some guidance:

“The purpose of youth work is to redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people to fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and members of groups and communities and to support their transition to adulthood.”

(National Youth Bureau 1991: 16)

Though there have been significant changes in the shape of the youth service, and indeed in the statements of purpose and intent since, many practitioners still use this as their guide. Of particular importance to this present study are two of the objectives that are designed to work towards this more ambitious mission statement. The first is a commitment to ‘participative’ work:

“Through a voluntary relationship with young people in which young people are partners in the learning process and decision making structures which affect their own and other young people’s lives and their environment.”

(NYB 1991: 16)

The second acknowledges that participation takes shape in the context of ‘empowerment’ through:

“Supporting young people to understand and act on the personal, social and political issues which affect their lives, the lives of others and the communities of which they are a part.”

(Ibid)

These statements of intent clearly frame youth work as an educative process concerned with facilitating young people’s development as active citizens. In real terms, this has often been interpreted as process models where practitioners work with young people to increase the ‘level’ of involvement they have in, say, the running of a local youth club. Huskins (2003) visualised this as a ‘curriculum development model’ where young people progress through seven stages of empowerment, from the limited end of ‘making contact’ through to ‘leading’. These stages are accredited through the *Youth Achievement Awards* promoted by the charity *UK Youth*. Another common way of illustrating youth work participation is in the form of a ‘ladder’ where participation is progressed through ‘steps’ towards greater autonomy (Simpkin 2004). Such approaches are rightly criticised for their tendency to see participation in simplistic and linear terms, and critically the ‘danger of creating some sense of failure if the high rung on the ladder is not reached’ (Simpkin 2004: 15).

In his review of how Youth Work promotes active citizenship, Rowe (1999) found that ‘citizenship was not a term favoured by the majority of our interviewees’ (1999: 15) since it tended to imply for them ‘passive conformity to the status quo’ (1999: 58). However, many practitioners engaged regularly in forms of rights-based education and were in favour of strategies that sought to emphasise responsibilities to self as others as ‘vital to the achievement of a tolerant and humane society’ (Rowe 1999: 59). More recent, and ongoing research has seen a wholesale commitment to not only developing active citizenship programmes in Youth Work but sharing good practice to promote the work across other local authorities<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The national evaluation of the Beacon councils’ ‘Positive Youth Engagement’ programme is being carried out by a team at De Montfort University (until Summer 2009). The focus of the work is on assessing the extent to which Beacon councils effectively transfer their expertise in active citizenship and participation to other authorities. The word ‘Beacon’ denotes an award given to local authorities for excellence in a particular area of delivery.

In line with a wider ‘turn’ towards citizen engagement in public services (Andrews et al 2008), the first significant reform of youth services in 2002 indicated a commitment to the active involvement of young people. *Transforming Youth Work* stipulated that local authorities should ensure the ‘active participation of young people in the specification, governance, management, delivery and quality assurance of youth services’ (DfES 2002: 9). As a result, local authorities began ‘investing in the active involvement of young people as part of a drive to modernize local government’ (Merton 2002: 19). Later reforms, including *Youth Matters* and the ten year youth strategy initiated by the Treasury (*Aiming High for Young People*) both contained specific proposals for extending the active involvement of young people in youth services.

### Recent developments

Developments in citizenship education and experience continue apace. At the time of finishing this thesis (September 2008), the flurry of rhetoric around citizenship is once again at the fore. A parliamentary inquiry into the effectiveness of citizenship education has taken and reported on its evidence (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2007). A review led by former attorney general Lord Goldsmith is ongoing with significant recommendations for the expansion and development of citizenship education. Key proposals include:

- The use of ‘citizenship ceremonies’ for young people when they leave school, building on their existing use with migrants seeking British citizenship.
- Making citizenship education a compulsory part of primary schools as part of the curriculum.
- Establishing ‘citizenship manifestos’ for schools to evidence their ‘place in the community’.

(see <http://www.justice.gov.uk/reviews/citizenship.htm>)

In February 2008 a new fund of six million pounds was made available by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to stimulate youth leadership in local politics and to ‘advise and challenge Government on involving young people in

decision-making at the highest level' (DCSF 2008b). In a wide ranging review of aspects of UK democracy, the white paper *The Governance of Britain* presented to parliament in July 2007, set out proposals for the establishment of a 'youth citizenship commission':

“The Government will now launch a Youth Citizenship Commission which will examine ways to invigorate young people’s understanding of the historical narrative of our country and of what it means to be a British citizen, and to increase their participation in the political sphere. The Commission will examine what support schools in England need to improve the ways that they prepare young people for their life as an adult citizen. It will look at how citizenship education can be connected to both a possible citizenship ceremony when young people reach adulthood and to the acquisition of voting rights. In that context, the Commission will also examine, including in debate with young people, whether reducing the voting age would increase participation in the political process.”

(Ministry of Justice 2007: 55)

In June 2008, the launch of the commission was formally announced with the appointment of a chair, Professor Jonathan Tonge and the inclusion of three young people as members. The commission has been broadly welcomed by the UK Youth Parliament and the Citizenship Foundation. A summary of findings from this thesis has been submitted to the commission as contributory evidence.

### **Young people’s experiences of citizenship education**

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by the government in 2002 to undertake a longitudinal study into the effectiveness and impact of citizenship education in England. The study has tracked a cohort of young people who entered secondary school in September 2002, and will continue to do so until they are aged 18. Each year, findings from the study are published by the government with emphasis on different aspects of the curriculum, the teaching and learning approaches and the views and experiences of young people. Findings from

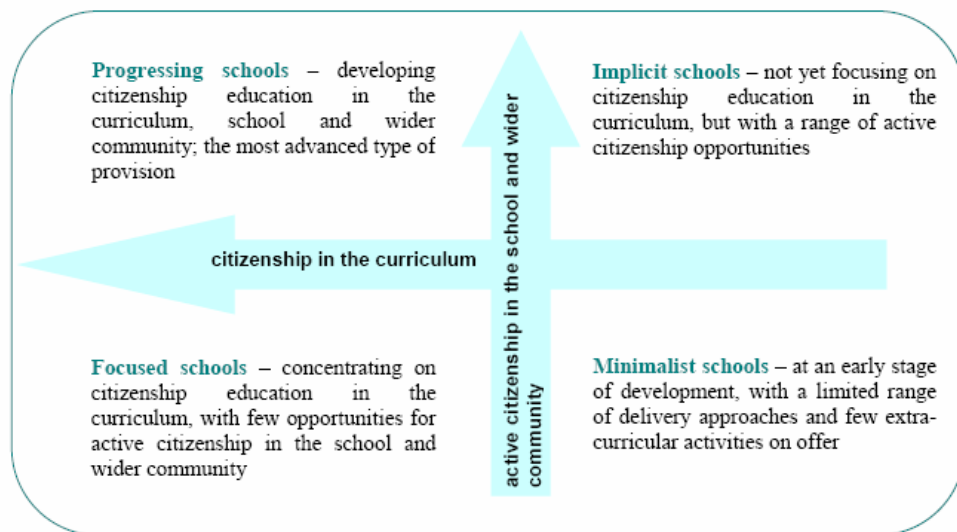
some of the key annual reports are briefly discussed here, as they provide the most comprehensive assessment of the impact and effectiveness of citizenship education.

**Models and methods of delivery**

The delivery of citizenship education in schools has been characterised as ‘uneven, patchy and evolving’ (Kerr et al 2004) and measuring its effectiveness is somewhat challenging given its relatively recent introduction into schools. In giving evidence to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, Professor Sir Bernard Crick suggested it was ‘too early to judge’ the relative success or otherwise of citizenship education against its original aims since ‘no cohort had experienced citizenship education throughout an entire school career – or even through an entire secondary school career’ (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2007: 11).

Therefore, alongside the longitudinal work with young people, NfER research to date has tended to focus on assessing the approaches that schools adopt in delivering citizenship education and highlighting good practice and pitfalls. In the study’s second annual report (Kerr et al 2004), the research team presented a typology of school and college approaches to citizenship education (see fig 5).

**Figure 5 - Four approaches to citizenship education in schools**



(Kerr et al 2004; reproduced in Ireland et al 2006: 5, fig 1.1)

The most advanced approaches were those that adopted a ‘whole-school’ approach to citizenship education, complemented by strong links with the community. Where good practice exists, critical success factors include:

- Clear, coherent and broad understanding of citizenship education;
- Supportive school ethos and values system;
- Senior management support;
- Positive relations between staff and students;
- The employment of a dedicated and enthusiastic citizenship co-ordinator;
- A range of delivery approaches within regular time slots;

(Kerr et al 2004: 2)

The active involvement of young people in schools and the wider community provided an opportunity for learning and *experiencing* active citizenship (Kerr et al 2004: 2-3). Such opportunities depend on student interest, the teaching staff’s involvement in the wider community and the school ethos (Ibid: 5). They also depend on a commitment to experiential learning. The AGC (1998) report emphasised the importance of active learning for active citizenship (see also Arthur and Davison 2002; Packham 2008; Woodward 2004), an approach that requires opportunities for community involvement and learning *through* citizenship (Selwyn 2002).

In the original AGC recommendations, citizenship education was seen as intimately tied to action in the wider community (AGC 1998). Despite this, later research by the NfER found that:

“Young people’s participation opportunities are currently confined largely to the school context, and comprise opportunities to ‘take part’ in clubs and societies, rather than to effect ‘real change’ by engaging with various decision-making processes in and out of school. Additionally, opportunities in the curriculum are often not connected with those in the whole school, or indeed, with wider contexts and communities beyond school.”

(NfER 2006a: 1)

The original typology of schools developed in the 2004 study (see fig 5, above) were revised in the fifth annual report (2007). Given that some time had elapsed since the introduction of the Citizenship Order, many schools were now incorporating citizenship in a more systematic way, but there was still evidence of variation in approaches. Four types emerged:

- **School type 1 – curriculum driven citizenship** – provides a firm grounding of citizenship education in the curriculum but is less strong in the areas of participation and has inconsistent levels of student efficacy.
- **School type 2 – student efficacy driven citizenship** – has a sound or high level of student efficacy in the school, but is weak on student take up in extra-curricular activities and its delivery of citizenship through the curriculum.
- **School type 3 – participation driven citizenship** – has higher than average levels of student participation but its students feel low levels of efficacy and the importance placed on citizenship as a curriculum subject is average.
- **School type 4 – citizenship-rich driven citizenship** – in which students not only express high levels of efficacy and show high levels of participation, but citizenship education is also viewed as a strong and central subject within the curriculum.

(Kerr et al 2007: 2)

Studies have also attempted to provide an evaluative contribution to the emerging initiatives designed to develop a citizenship curriculum for the 16-19 age bracket. Some initial research provides illumination on the developments of citizenship education.

The work of Nelson et al (2004) from the NFER on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) comprised a three year evaluation of the post-16 citizenship development projects established by the government in 2001. The qualitative study attempted to:

- Assess the extent to which the development projects were progressing in line with their action plans, and were working towards their own objectives.

- Identify the conditions necessary for the success of post-16 citizenship.
- Identify the forms of citizenship provision that appear the most effective.
- Examine the apparent impact of involvement in post-16 citizenship on young people's knowledge, understanding and skills.

(Nelson et al 2004: 1)

The findings conclude that the most effective citizenship programmes are those which combine knowledge and understanding with action, what is termed 'political literacy in action' replacing mere political knowledge (Nelson et al 2004: 2). The active involvement of young people in making decisions about their learning (p2) together with evidence of negotiation with young people of the key issues to be explored were cited as critical success factors (p6). Such practice is aided by critically reflective learning environments that depend on a variety of experiential learning experiences, together with the use of relevant current events and useful resources (Ibid). Whilst educational programmes that made links with the wider community either through partnership with national organisations focused on citizenship, or with local charities and community agencies and guest speakers, were cited as best practice models, such integration:

“tended to be underdeveloped, with little interaction ... and some larger organisations reporting that they found it difficult to find suitable opportunities for community linking and activities for all their young people.”

(Ibid: 5)

Here, small youth work projects were advantageous due to their unusually high staff to young person ratio, resulting in greater opportunity for community integration (p5).

Further reflections upon the same study by Craig et al (2004) suggested that the most successful citizenship provision was characterised as having flexible, but rigorous frameworks for delivery with a clear definition of citizenship. This was complemented by an enthusiasm and commitment from senior managers and staff delivering programmes, with the active involvement of young people in decisions about their learning (Craig et al 2004: 1).



The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in partnership with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) evaluated the effectiveness of post-16 citizenship education pilot programmes (Ofsted 2005). Drawing on a sample of 48 school sixth forms, further education colleges, sixth form colleges, youth services and work based learning provides, the study set out to:

“evaluate the achievement of young people in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills in citizenship; and the effectiveness of projects, in a variety of settings and with cohorts of different sizes, in delivering the aims of the post-16 citizenship programme.”

(Ofsted 2005: 1)

With young people overwhelmingly positive about their citizenship projects, the key benefits identified included ‘learning by doing’ and active contribution to local communities, including opportunities to take responsibility for learning (2005: 1). As with the NfER reports, experiential learning was seen as most critical, with ‘weaker teaching [being] overly didactic’ (Ofsted 2005: 31). Of similar note:

“Where the programmes were over-theoretical, with little chance to take forward ideas and apply them in practice, students did not see the relevance of the material.”

(Ofsted 2005: 27).

The unifying message across all of the key evaluative studies is that active participation in and beyond the classroom is an essential requisite of effective citizenship education. As Craig et al (2004) note:

“Active citizenship has been achieved across [a] range of ... organisations, with many young people being given the opportunity to put their citizenship understanding and skills into practice and participate in a community or public context.”

(Craig et al 2004: 3)

## Young people's voices

The NfER study has sought to capture the voices of young people through its work. Since 2002 a cohort of 13,643 young people have taken part in a questionnaire survey. Through site-based fieldwork, this large sample has been complemented by 120 in-depth interviews with students (see NfER 2006b). Focusing on citizenship definitions in their 2006 review, the study found that young people tended to relate citizenship to 'fair treatment for all' (35%), 'being a good citizen' (33%) and 'responsibilities and obeying the law' (27%). Only 15% of young people felt that citizenship meant 'being active in the community' and 10% related the concept to 'voting, politics and the government' (NfER 2006b). The findings thus reveal a tendency towards understanding citizenship less in a political sense and more in terms of expected behaviours (a finding reflected in this thesis; see chapter six).

The sixth annual report provides more in-depth data based on the attitudes and experiences of young people in relation to civic participation. Of note:

- Young people are generally 'law abiding' with a sense of what constitutes socially acceptable behaviour, and have very clear views about unacceptable behaviour.
- They exhibit a 'fairly strong' community attachment with stronger attachments to school than their neighbourhood. They have the strongest attachment to their school, which is their main community, followed by their neighbourhood. They are however more attached to their local neighbourhood and town than to their country (Britain) and Europe.
- They reveal higher levels of trust for those groups and institutions they engage with daily in their near environment than to those further away. They have most trust for their family and peers, followed by the police and their teachers, and least trust for the European Union (EU) and politicians.
- Have moderate levels of relative deprivation and efficacy, the sense, in the former, in which they feel hard done by in their lives and, in the latter, in which they believe their actions can bring change.

- Express higher levels of personal efficacy than student efficacy, revealing that they feel they have more chance to get their voice heard and affect change in their lives in general than in working together with other students in their school.

(see Benton et al 2008: 1-2)

The evaluative contribution of the NFER has been useful in understanding the developing impact of citizenship education, both in terms of how schools have adopted it but also in how young people have experienced it. These studies in turn have illuminated our understanding of the ways in which young people define and experience active citizenship as a result of the education they receive. However, in relying solely on these studies to inform our thinking about young people and active citizenship we render ourselves subject to a certain form of governmental episteme (Dean 1995). Dean reminds us that we should pay attention to ‘knowledge that arise[s] from and inform[s] the activity of governing’ (Dean 1999: 31) Evaluative studies effectively *measure* the contribution of citizenship education: they do not assess the question ‘what does active citizenship mean, when experienced by young people’ in the absence of citizenship education. The studies seek to assess the contribution of government initiatives to addressing government problems. In visualising the field, we are presented with only part of the picture. The purpose of this knowledge can be summarised in a simple sentence: Young people’s citizenship is a problem, and education is the solution: let us now see how it has worked.

Alternative, theory-building research perspectives emerged prior to the introduction of citizenship education, and to some extent since its inception. Three of the most significant studies are presented here, as they establish the context for the present study. Early work by Lister et al (2002) as part of the ESRC funded network ‘Young People, Citizenship and Social Change’ remains one of the most significant studies in helping us to understanding how young people define and experience active citizenship. The study entitled *Negotiating Transitions to Citizenship* was published by the ESRC in 2002, in brief format by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence in the same year and has informed key publications (e.g. Lister 2008; Smith et al 2005). The project employed a longitudinal qualitative design with repeated interviews with

young people over a three year period (64 young people took part in all three waves). Young people were stratified as either ‘insiders’ (those young people achieving at and enjoying school) or ‘outsiders’ (who found school alienating or unsatisfactory). Both groups experienced a different ‘transitions’ path with the insiders progressing in a fairly standardised way from education to employment, whereas the outsiders experienced volatility.

Using the definitions provided by young people, three dominant models of citizenship definition emerged from their study. The **universal status model** was used to mean ‘person’ or in its thicker understanding ‘belonging’. The **respectable economic independence model** was used to explain the person in employment, who paid taxes with a range of features such as home and car ownership and having a family. Finally, the **socially constructive model**:

“which referred to taking a constructive approach towards community, ranging from the more passive ‘abiding by the law’, to the more proactive ‘helping people’ and ‘having a positive impact’. This model underpinned understandings of ‘good’ citizenship. ‘Outsiders’ were a little more likely to subscribe to this model than ‘insiders’; no other distinct differences were apparent in terms of gender or ethnicity.”

(Lister et al 2002: 4)

This final point has most relevance to the present study and in particular the problems outlined in chapter three. Whilst the government has emphasised the importance of voluntary work in demonstrating active citizenship, Lister et al (2002) found that the day-to-day experience of active citizenship revealed a range of socially constructive practices that distinguished between formal voluntary work, ‘neighbourliness, informal political action, and other forms of social participation’ (2002: 10). All young people in the study had engaged in constructive social activities. Citizenship responsibility thus embodies an ‘inclusive and fluid notion’ of social participation that is not necessarily reducible to formal volunteering alone and in fact most participation took place outside of formal organisations.

Work by Roker et al (see Roker et al 1999; Roker and Eden 2002; Roker and Player 1997) also reflects this point. Young people involved in their studies were engaged in a wide range of social participation activities, ranging from informal volunteering through to structured participation. Again, factors such as ethnicity and gender did not have a bearing on the level of participation. Lister et al found that social class (in the form of insider/outsider) did have a bearing on the *types* of activity undertaken whereas for Roker et al this was not a significant factor. Lister's work however does show a more sophisticated attempt to map the different pathways of young people and in utilising a transitional, longitudinal approach is better positioned to argue how attitudes and experiences changed over time.

Osler and Starkey (2003) report on survey research with 600 young people living in multicultural communities in Leicester that explored understandings of community and levels of civic engagement. Two workshops were also held with a smaller number of young people. The paper explores how multiple identities and loyalties impacted upon how young people understood and experienced citizenship. Whilst in the survey, only a small proportion of young people identified a neighbourhood by name, evidence from the workshops suggested that 'the majority of young people ... identified strongly with their city and/or their local neighbourhood' (Osler and Starkey 2003: 252). Of particular note, young people were actively engaged in local campaigns and fundraising for charity and clear 'about how they could improve their city' (Osler and Starkey 2003: 251). In supporting their parents or carers, and in their interaction with public services:

"Individuals were gaining and practising skills for citizenship and these examples, together with others where young people gave informal help to neighbours and family members illustrate sites of learning for citizenship in homes and community."

(Osler and Starkey 2003: 251-252)

### Summary

Citizenship education was introduced into schools following the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (1998). The aims of citizenship education move beyond political education, embracing aspects of moral and character education. This

approach has led some commentators to highlight tensions between attempts to socialise young people into society's norms and the necessity of citizenship education to stimulate critical thinking.

Evaluations of citizenship education have shown it to be somewhat inconsistent, with a diversity of approaches and methods. Progressive schools are usually those where there is strong engagement with the local community. Further, the best in citizenship education is seen to be that which emphasises experiential learning.

Research that has explored how young people define and experience active citizenship has also emerged in the past decade. The messages from this research illustrate that young people engage in a range of social activities that indicate high levels of active participation. This present study builds upon this body of work and in the next chapter; a research design that engages young people in a theory-building investigation is outlined.

## 5 Methodology

This study investigated how young people aged 14-16 define and experience active citizenship. This empirical project employed a staged methodology utilising qualitative methods. In stage one, fieldwork comprised: one initial workshop to involve young people in the design of research information (n=6), four pilot focus groups with young people designed to set the parameters of investigation (n=24) and one workshop designed to refine concepts (n=9).

Following the initial analysis of this data set and the submission of the MPhil/PhD transfer report, the study progressed to the second stage. Here, 9 sets of two focus groups were held with 69 young people using the refined concepts from stage one as the principal discussion tools. Between the first and second focus groups, there was an attrition of 7 participants. Significant data analysis followed this period of data collection using the adaptive theory approach and a range of techniques are outlined here and in the *Findings* chapters (six and seven).

This chapter examines:

- the design of the study
- the ethical issues and considerations
- the staged approach to methodology, discussing and analysing each stage in turn
- the protocols for transcribing and coding data

## The study design

Research methods textbooks have always sought to draw on the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research to highlight differences in methodological approaches. At the heart of such a debate lies a question about the ‘worthiness’ of research and no discussion about methodology should be received without attention to the overriding issue of where the research study is located in terms of a paradigm.

A paradigm can be viewed as:

“A set of *basic beliefs* [or metaphysics] that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts.”

(Guba and Lincoln 2004: 21)

In essence, the question of ‘which paradigm’ is one that extends beyond choice of methods and even beyond the idea of a quantitative or qualitative approach, to larger questions of our conceptions of reality (ontology), the value we place on what constitutes knowledge (epistemology) and the investigative approach we consider to be most suited to adhering to those principles (methodology) (see Guba and Lincoln 2004: 21-22; Bryman 2004 and Denscombe 2002).

## Positivism

The heavy emphasis on quantification in science has led to less quantifiable areas such as the social sciences being labelled as ‘soft’ (Guba and Lincoln 2004). Whilst not always meant in a critical fashion, qualitative research in particular comes under frequent attack for its lack of rigour, focus on individual cases without drawing inference and its subjective nature (Dey 1999; Hesse-Biber and Levey 2004; Guba and Lincoln 2004). Positivist approaches to social research were arguably first professed by John Stuart Mill in his urging of social sciences to adopt the harder approaches in quantification (Bryman 2004). In many ways, quantification came to



symbolise maturation in scientific exploration and this truism is still alive and well in many research contexts. For instance, politicians may find themselves more at ease with statistical patterns about young parenting over the complexities of individual, in depth stories. Or as Maximillian Cohen asserts in the film *Pi*:

“1. Mathematics is the language of nature. 2. Everything around us can be represented and understood through numbers. 3. If you graph these numbers, patterns emerge. Therefore: There are patterns everywhere and they mean everything”

Positivism then is most easily classified as an attempt to *mirror* the natural sciences in both theoretical and methodological conceptions of a research problem. Table 6 summarises the positivist approach applied to the different considerations outlined above.

**Table 6 - Positivist approaches to research investigation**

Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Reality is assumed to 'exist' external to whether it is interpreted or otherwise, reflecting a 'natural order of things'. Such order is undeterred by time and space contextual differences and research is charged with revealing the 'true' state of affairs.	Investigator is independent and is able to study without influencing or being influenced by the object. Reduction of any influence, values and biases is of primary concern. Findings are 'true' and replicable.	Often experimental. Largely concerned with quantification. Emphasis on 'discovery' of social life. Use of triangulation and other multiple methods to falsify hypothesis.

(Denscombe 2002; Guba and Lincoln 2004; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Robson 2002).

The perspective has altered somewhat with a development that Guba and Lincoln term 'postpositivism': an attempt over the past few decades to responds to the most glaring criticisms (see 2004: 23). However, by reviewing the terminology of such modifications one can see that changes are not overly significant. There is, for instance, a move from suggesting that hypotheses can be accepted as facts and laws (positivism) to hypotheses that can be regarded as probable facts and laws (postpositivism), signalling a move towards the use of carefully chosen caveats in the modified perspective.

### *Criticisms*

Criticisms of the positivist approach to research are common in the social science literature. Some of the most compelling are found in the feminist literature which challenged the notions that positivism, and in fact the wider natural sciences, are somehow divorced from a political and social context in which they operate (see Sprague and Zimmerman 2004: 40-44). As such, questions asked during research, the design itself and any conceptualisations produced as a result invariably reflect a specific worldview and an often taken for granted one at that. Such a normalised, ‘received view’ (Guba and Lincoln 2004) needs careful inspection.

Guba and Lincoln (2004) helpfully suggest that the central criticisms of quantification have occurred under two themes – the internal critiques and the external. The internal critiques recognise that:

- Precise approaches in quantitative research are exclusionary insofar as the choice of variables can remove much of the ‘context’ that influences data and provides rich meaning.
- Human behaviour does not mirror that of physical objects. There are questions about the meaning and purposes that lie behind human actions. Criminal research data provides a useful example: one could receive data that provides a statistical incidence on types of crime, whilst not examining the causes and motivation – or indeed the reasons given for participation in such crime.
- There is a disjunction between ‘grand theories’ and local contexts. This dilemma, referred to as Etic (the outsider) versus Emic (the insider), suggests that hypotheses are ‘tested’ upon a population based on the Etic standpoint.
- There is a disjunction or inapplicability of the general to the personal. Knowledge about the percentage number of people involved in criminal activity provides statistical meaningfulness but is inadequate to explain individual circumstances.

(Denscombe 2002; Dey 1999; Guba and Lincoln 2004)

It is proposed that many of the difficulties labelled under the ‘internal’ critiques can be remedied with the integration of qualitative methodologies into the research design (the ‘mixed’ method). This suggests a ‘methods-level accommodation’ (Guba and Lincoln 2004: 20) whilst potentially ignoring more significant paradigmatic questions. As has been already suggested above, paradigms are concerned with more than method choice: they raise important questions about *belief systems*. Thus, such clinical application of natural science to the social science investigation (however much mixed methods are accommodated) has not rested easily with all, resulting in the proposition of alternative paradigms. Justification for these alternative positions arises out of a number of challenges, or external critiques:

- Facts and theories are interdependent. Thus, facts are viewed through a ‘theoretical window’ that challenges the notion of objectivity.
- As such, different theories can be used equally well to examine the same set of ‘facts’. It is never possible to arrive at one single, ineluctable theory.
- Values and facts are not independent of one another, and many theories are indeed underpinned by values. Thus, the notion of a value-free design is compromised.
- The researcher, through interaction with the participant, brings to bear some influence on phenomena. Questions of ‘to what extent has naturalism changed’ replace ‘this is how things are’.

(Fraser and Robinson 2004; Guba and Lincoln 2004; Morgan 1997)

### *Positivism in citizenship research*

The literature review (chapters 2-4) presents a range of studies that have explored dimensions of the citizenship debate, with particular reference to young people. Those studies characterised by being underpinned by a positivist or post-positivist paradigm are quantitative in design and suggest that citizenship behaviours and constituent parts are ‘normative’. Studies have therefore sought to record deficits in meeting citizenship obligations. Table 7 summarises this common position.

**Table 7 - Positivist approaches to citizenship research**

Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Citizenship as a normative position, unchanging and with accepted characteristics.	The behaviour of inactive citizens, their incidence of not voting and being part of community action is seen as the key knowledge acquisition.	Testing 'active citizenship' through quantitative surveys of political and social behavioural patterns; polling data of potential voters.

### Alternatives to positivism

Given such weighty criticism, it is hardly surprising that alternatives have gained ground in the social sciences. Hence the emergence and prominence of another position – *interpretivism*.

Interpretivism contrasts with positivism at its most basic foundations, proposing that:

“The study of the social world [...] requires a different logic of research procedure, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order.”

(Bryman 2004: 13)

In essence, the perspective is predicated on the view that researchers need to grasp the ‘subjective meaning’ of social action. The approach is founded on a mixed intellectual heritage, but essentially from the ideas of Weber. In brief, he argued that sociology should concern itself with an interpretive understanding of social action in order to explain both cause and effects (Weber 1947). The significance here is that ‘causal’ meaning would be generated from the interpretive understanding as opposed to the external measures inherent in positivism.

As Weber suggested:

“We shall speak of ‘action’ insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behaviour - be it overt or covert, omission or

acquiescence. Action is ‘social’ insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course.”  
(1968: 4)

However, Weber’s position is not straightforward and much of the writing suggests confusion in respect of a distinction between values and social facts. It is almost impossible to discern from Weber’s work a precise view on objectivity in research. What is certain is an acknowledgement that value-free investigation is a questionable assertion, at best.

Another tradition that has had immeasurable influence upon an anti-positivist approach is that of *phenomenology*, a perspective first advocated by Schultz (1962). Phenomenology is concerned with:

“The question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world.”  
(Bryman 2004: 13)

Schultz’s assertions are as follows. There is a fundamental difference between the natural sciences and the social sciences insofar as social reality has meaning for human beings, and therefore action is meaningful. The task for an investigator is access these meanings and experiences, interpreting them from the participant’s point of view (see Schultz 1962: 59-60).

Whilst Weber and Schultz are not the only influences upon the development of interpretivism (Bryman 2004) their propositions provide the foundations for a stark contrast between the two dominant paradigms in social research. Table 8 (over) attempts to summarise these.

Table 8 - Two positions in social research

Positivism	Interpretivism
Explanation of human behaviour	Understanding of human behaviour
Forces acting upon human action (cause/effect)	Empathic understanding of human action
Etic-led inquiry (testing and proof of external hypotheses)	Emic-focused inquiry (emphasis on participant meaning and experience)

As with any overriding philosophical position, developments in interpretivism have led to some distinction between further sub-classes of this approach. Principally, the differences between critical theory and constructivism have been highlighted (Robson 2002; Guba and Lincoln 2004; Bryman 2004). Critical theory has been used as a ‘blanket term’ (Guba and Lincoln 2004) to define various paradigms, notably neo-Marxist, feminist, materialist and participatory inquiries.

The constructivist paradigm, often located with ideas around post-structuralism, is characterised by an emphasis upon:

“Meaning and language [...] all knowledge is contingent, that is, located within communication shared by people [...] Hence, what we know is *socially constructed*.”

(Fraser and Robinson 2004: 74)

Fraser and Robinson’s emphasis clearly locates constructivism in a wider post-modern framework. Modernism is characterised by ‘certainty’ in the form of (1) reason over ignorance, (2) order over disorder, (3) science over superstition and it is suggested that such rules had created a ‘powerful illusion’ of truth at the hands of science (Fraser and Robinson 2004: 75). Thus, there is recognition in post-modernism that such certainties are actually more fluid than static, and that they should be considered as discourses subject to interrogation rather than mere acceptance. Indeed, empirical research should concern itself with the collection and analysis of these discourses in terms of their content and authorship.

It is this conceptualisation of reality that underpins the fundamental ontological difference between positivism and the multiple identities that make up the broad term

interpretivism and, in this case, constructivism. In turn such ontological understanding inevitably suggests a shift in epistemological and methodological approaches. These are summarised in table 9.

**Table 9 - Constructivist approaches to research issues**

Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Reality is form of multiple, mental constructs, socially experienced and local in nature (though there are shared elements across cultures).	Findings are 'created' by the interaction between investigator and participant.	Individual constructions are elicited/refined through interaction. Distillation towards a consensus construction that is informed and sophisticated.

(Guba and Lincoln 2004).

*Constructivist approaches to citizenship research*

At the commencement of this study, there was a limited extent to which research engaged with a critical understanding and appreciation of the different definitions and experiences of active citizenship that young people hold. Some notable examples existed where the primary methods were clearly qualitative, fronting the 'voices' of young people in an otherwise normative debate. These studies attempted to understand how and why young people are involved in community life (e.g. Hall et al 1999), their understandings of citizenship (e.g. Lister et al 2002) and how multiple identities shape this understanding (e.g. Osler and Starkey 2003).

**Table 10 - Constructivist approaches to citizenship research**

Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Citizenship has multiple meanings, is experienced in different ways and is not yet fully understood. It is a contested concept.	An understanding of the different interpretations and experiences of active citizenship to broaden our knowledge base.	Primarily qualitative studies with emphasis drawing out the experiences of young people.

A cautionary note is worth opining at this juncture. Whilst oppositional positions of different paradigms make them prone to competition in the theoretical discussion as

far as the practice of empirical research goes such polarisation is not so straightforward (Denscombe 2002). Indeed,

“In practice, social research has moved to a position where, though they might feel more at home and more comfortable with one position rather than the other, researchers will borrow from the other perspective when they feel it is necessary to do so.”

(Denscombe 2002: 23).

Based on this brief introduction and review of common paradigms, it is incumbent on the researcher to identify a position to which this research is aligned. Any investigation that attempts to explore ‘meanings’ (how do young people *define* active citizenship) and the interpretation of ‘experiences’ (how do they *experience* it in their everyday, real world situations) suggests an approach that is qualitative and underpinned by interpretivism and constructivism. How this informs a ‘research design’ is discussed in the next section.

### **Theory and research: the application of (adaptive) grounded theory**

This study has adopted a grounded theory design to data collection and analysis. Such an approach relies on a number of key features, including: (1) data collection based on the idea of ‘theory building’ as opposed to ‘theory testing’ starting out with limited preconception of ideas; (2) the continuous interplay between data collection and analysis; (3) the use of explicit coding procedures to provide rigorous data analysis protocols; (4) continuous memo writing and (5) theoretical sampling.

Grounded theory is an attractive design since it provides a flexible yet systematic approach to data collection. Whilst qualitative methods continue to come under criticism for being open to subjectivity and for reliance on ‘soft’ data (Denscombe 1998; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2004), grounded theory offers the researcher a quality assurance mechanism through the continuous refinement of concepts and eventual saturation of these to form propositions, together with explicit coding procedures (Dey 1993, 1999; Kemshall 1998; Robson 2002).



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There is no one agreed formula for implementing grounded theory. As Ian Dey notes:

“There [are] probably as many versions of grounded theory as there [are] grounded theorists.”

(Dey 1999:2)

In respect of this study, the author has drawn principally from the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998), Layder (1993; 1998), Charmaz (2004) and Dey (1999). Grounded theory principles, first realised in the original work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and taking into account the many rich developments that have occurred since, have been applied to this research project. These are advanced with special incorporation of Layder’s (1998) ‘adaptive theory’.

In the seminal text on grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) highlighted a dissatisfaction with traditional ‘grand theories’ that had little association with the real world and relied too much on the imposition of researcher values and preconceived theories about the topic (Bryman 2001; Dey 1999; Layder 1993; Robson 2002). Glaser and Strauss sought to develop a position that would challenge the division of theory and research; the belief that qualitative methods were unsystematic and could only be used as a precursor to more ‘rigorous’ quantitative research; the separation of data collection and analysis and; that qualitative research could only provide case-studies rather than make a substantial contribution to theory development (Charmaz 2004; Glaser and Strauss 1967). In part, the work could be described as polemical insofar as it was heralded as an alternative to more established sociological methods of inquiry. As Dey (1999) notes:

“The polemic was directed against speculative or deductive forms of theorizing, in which theories were first dreamed up (preferably while resting comfortable in an armchair) and then subsequently “tested” against evidence through research”

(Dey 1999: 12)

Theoretical relationships in research have traditionally been labelled as *theory building* (characteristic of interpretivism) or *theory testing* (often aligned with positivist research). Layder (1998) proposes that such a distinction is unhelpful and calls for a more sensitive and open approach. He suggests that, on the one hand, empiricism has tended to propose an ‘anti-theoretical’ stance which rejects the importance of grand theories (Layder 1998: 34) and on the other, when theoretical frameworks are used (either in the application of grand theories or the testing of concepts), researchers exclude competing paradigms in favour of their own schooling. In rejecting the influence of theory, Layder suggests that grounded theory is flawed and can be seen as a dogmatic, ideological approach to research:

“[...] which precludes other legitimate attempts to grasp the relation between theorizing and research. In this sense grounded theorists simply miss out on some valuable resources which can be drawn into a more comprehensive and far reaching set of strategies for the generation of theory.”

(Layder 1998: 37).

Instead, Layder advocates an ‘adaptive theory’ that embodies a ‘pluralistic, flexible and open’ approach to social research (1998: 37). In essence, this means that the researcher must integrate theory throughout the research process by attending to emerging theory as well as the existing theory. The ‘adaptive’ label suggests that theory adapts to, or is shaped by, incoming evidence. In applying any form of theoretical framework and analytical protocols, the researcher should be ‘epistemologically open’ insofar as they should see different grand theoretical positions as ‘complementary’ rather than necessarily ‘conflicted’ (see Layder 1998: 37-39). Indeed, one of the key problems of interpretivism is its tendency to:

“envison the social world as entirely composed of intersubjective meaning and communication [leaving out many accounts] of social life, such as social structures and systems, forms of domination, cultural symbols, ideology, which cannot be understood solely in this fashion”

(Layder 1998: 139).

Essentially, many of these systems can be explained in more ‘objective’ terms. This is a ‘moderate objectivist’ position that ‘assumes that social reality is composed of both subjective and objective aspects and they condition and influence each other since they are deeply interwoven’ (p141). Thus, social activity is influenced by systemic phenomena and attention must be paid to both in order to form a more complete picture of the data.

The disjuncture between theory building and testing approaches is often best approached by looking at the differences between induction and deduction in knowledge production. Deduction involves ‘using a set of general assumptions in order to formulate empirically testable propositions about a phenomenon’ whereas ‘induction relies more on the initial gathering of empirical data as a means of developing a more general (theoretical) understanding’ (Layder 1998: 134).

All research, it can be argued, combines both to a certain degree. There is however an impression of incompatibility between the two (Layder 1998: 135). Adaptive theory suggests a more open relationship, rejecting the idea that ‘*in the final analysis* theory has *either* to be produced exclusively in a deductive manner *or* solely within an inductive frame of reference’ (p136).

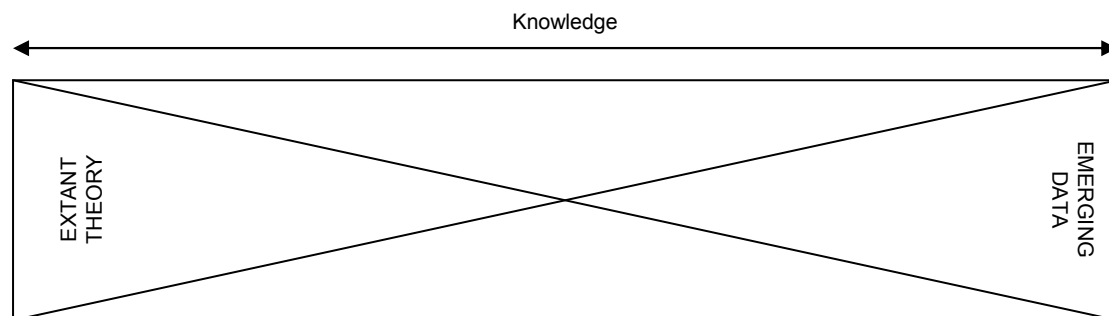
Neither induction nor deduction have ‘fixed starting points’ which are immovable and should be seen as ‘frameworks of ideas’ (p136). In this respect, both extant theory and emerging data influence one another. Whereas dogmatic social research positions may suggest that both induction and deduction are linear pathways towards understanding, it is more helpful in this regard to think of the relationship as a domain where one may locate the influences of each. Figure 6 (over) shows this domain that, at first glance, suggests that both emerging data and extant theory have equal levels of influence in shaping understanding. Rather, such a figure enables fluidity for the researcher to plot how far extant theory or emerging data has helped shape the ‘final analysis’ in the ‘mutual interplay’ between deduction and induction.

As Layder suggests:

“Particular projects will produce a unique set of circumstances in terms of the practical and conceptual problems they pose and the practical and conceptual solutions that they bring forth. The exact roles that inductive and deductive procedures play with respect to each other will be dependent upon the unique and unfolding dynamics of the ongoing research.”

(Layder 1998: 136)

**Figure 6 - The relationship between induction, deduction and knowledge**



### Summary

This study is a small scale qualitative research project that aligns itself with the principles of interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology. The design was influenced by the original research question of understanding how young people define and experience active citizenship, relying principally on their own articulations of ‘social reality’. The grounded theory approach to analysis allows systematic and purposeful data collection, starting with limited presuppositions about the findings of the research. However, as with all studies across social research, a more realistic assessment of the interplay of theory and data has been taken into account. Thus, the principles of Layder’s (1998) ‘adaptive theory’ bear influence on the analysis stages of this study. This relationship is explored further throughout the thesis. For now, we turn our attention to other important facets of the research design, starting with a review of the ethical considerations within which this research is located.

## Ethical issues and considerations

An ethical approach to research is formulated with two considerations. In part, ethical approaches mean attending to processes and systems associated with the research act. The other part is founded on the basis of a set of belief systems about what is deemed to be in the best interests of the participant group. The former position comprises ethical rules of engagement, particularly in how the research is carried out so as to protect the rights of the individuals involved. The latter is concerned more with an analysis of the choice of research question, the motivations for carrying out the research and the value base of the researcher. In what follows, I attend to both of these important ethical dimensions for they interlock and determine the whole approach to the research project.

In presenting the ground rule for ethical research, Denscombe asks a critically important question:

“Have the rights and interests of those affected by the research been taken into consideration?”

(2002:174)

This question is particularly important in a research focus that suggests the voices, experiences and interpretations of young people have been missing from social policy. The ethical issues of involving children and young people in research can be found in key debates ranging from the levels of ownership over research materials and understanding of research topics (West 1999), dealing with sensitive disclosures that arise out of interviews (Michell 1999) and in working within a climate where an increased social policy emphasis surrounds the issue of child protection (Masson 2000; 2004). Ethical issues in research to an extent mirror those experienced by child/youth work practitioners who are frequently challenged by the ethical dilemmas of dealing with confidentiality and its limitations (Tyler 2000) and who face difficult decisions about developing ethically good practice (Banks 1999). It is here where we may find the first principles for developing ethical research. Ethics are also considered intrinsic to the constructivist position in research, especially the inclusion

of participant values in the inquiry (Guba and Lincoln 2004: 33). Given the emphasis on interaction, this accentuates the need for *honesty* in research. Guba and Lincoln argue that there is little to be gained from hiding research intent if one is truly seeking to explore meanings and experiences.

The wider context of children and young people and their ‘status’ in society has implications for research with these social groups. Despite an overwhelming shift in perceptions towards a more ‘rights focused’ understanding of children (Sinclair-Taylor 2000), the issues of competence, precisely what is meant by rights and the notion of ‘having a voice’ are all highly contested terms largely because of how children are understood in society (Fleming and Hudson 2009; James and James 2004; Lindsay 2000; Sinclair Taylor 2000). Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000) helpfully organise the different levels of how we understand ‘children’s rights’ under four sociological constructions of childhood:

- **Children as possessions:** where the view is held that children are the ‘property’ of parents or other adults.
- **Children as subjects:** where the child is viewed as in need of protection by adults, holding rights in terms of access to welfare and protection under the direction of adults.
- **Children as participants:** where children participate in the decision making of adults and holding the right to be consulted about decisions made concerning them. Participation is characterised as involvement in economic, social, political and cultural terms.
- **Children as citizens:** where children are autonomous with rights to choose and act independently of adults.

(Lloyd-Smith and Tarr 2000: 62-69)

Such positions are transferable to our understandings of young people in society. The concept of ‘youth’ is problematic since it by default is a term with often negative connotations (see chapter three). Research with young people reflects such difficulties (France 2004). These constructions of children and ‘youth’ enable us to begin to understand the level at which rights are prioritised (or otherwise) for young people.

Such constructions apply to the methodological approach taken in research and to what degree this enhances or restricts the rights of participants to be actively involved in the research process. Alderson (2004) helpfully summarises the involvement of young people in research as three levels.

1. **Unknowing objects** of research. This view is characterised by the use of *covert* methods, limited explanation about research aims and a reduction in consideration of participant rights.
2. **Aware subjects**. Here, the research aims are known and understood, and participants consent to involvement.
3. **Active participants**. Research participants take an *active role* in the design, delivery and evaluation of research methodologies. Often the focus is on ‘social action’ or didactic research aimed at social change.

Whilst sociological constructions are undoubtedly helpful in framing the ethical approach, and also in serving as a clarification for one’s own values, it is worth reminding oneself that they do not serve well as definitive positions. The same is true with Alderson’s three classifications of involvement. It is perhaps more helpful to think of these as a continuum, with degrees of involvement within each category.

In the case of this study, the views, meanings and experiences of young people have been central to the research question. At this level, young people appear to fit into the categorisation of ‘citizens’ with autonomous rights to participate (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr 2000). Similarly, young people were actively involved at stage one of the research design process in developing the tools and in shaping the main areas of inquiry. Nonetheless, the role and place of participants alters throughout the study. A realistic view of involvement is proposed.

### **Ethical standards**

The ethical approval required to conduct this study was obtained from De Montfort University’s Higher Degrees Committee in 2003. Such approval relied on the setting out of a comprehensive statement of ethical procedures, and this document has guided

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the study. However, whilst the essential principles have remained fairly static, a dynamic ‘ethical reflection and dialogue’ has enabled the researcher to review whether the standards are effective or otherwise (Banks and Nøhr 2003).

This set of ethical standards refers to the key tenets of ethical research (Bryman 2004; Denscombe 2002) and as a member of both the British Sociological Association and the British Society of Criminology, the codes of conduct for both of these bodies have been adhered to throughout the research. They have helped to inform the study protocols and have also been useful as a reflective discussion tool during supervision. Each of the standards used for this study are now discussed in turn.

### *Informed consent*

There is certainly some dispute about the value of informed consent, particularly where researchers feel that anonymity may be compromised (see Thorne 2004). This can be most pressing in research around sensitive areas such as criminal justice (Williams 2006). Add to this that ethically and legally, it is hard to establish a definitive position on children and the ‘age of consent’ (Masson 2000). However, if sought at all, consent must come from young people as they are legally entitled to challenge where others have consented on their behalf (Masson 2000; 2004).

Although referring to consent to medical treatment as in many issues around research ethics, the Gillick case (1985) provides a principle that suggests that a child can provide consent if they achieve sufficient understanding of what is proposed.

In this case, the parent’s right to determine consent ends. This position appears to be applied to social research, as indicated in Masson’s (2000; 2004) reviews of legal issues. For the Gillick principle to be justified, the notion of ‘informed consent’ is particularly important.



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Denscombe proposes that informed consent comprises:

- All pertinent aspects of what is to occur and what might occur are disclosed to the subject;
- The subject should be able to comprehend this information.
- The subject is competent to make a rational and mature judgement.
- The agreement to participate should be voluntary, and free from coercion and undue influence.

(2002: 184)

The Declaration of Helsinki (1964; 1989; 1996) states that for informed consent to be meaningful, written proof of such should be obtained. The duty on researchers is to judge the extent to which people understand the implications of involvement in the research process (Masson 2000: 39) and written evidence provides an accountability mechanism for the researcher.

In pursuit of good practice, this researcher has:

- Involved young people in the production of information materials that clearly stipulate (1) the aims of the study and the scope for further, secondary investigation of the data post-study; (2) the intended use of the research both in terms of the production of a thesis but also the possibility of publication.
- Emphasised, in the information sheet and through the initial pre-fieldwork encounters, the rights of the participants – notably:
  - The commitment to preserve confidentiality except with the option to be named as a participant in the acknowledgements of the thesis and any future publications.
  - The right to consent to be involved and to leave the project at any time during the research process.
  - The right to decline involvement in specific parts of the study (such as declining to answer certain questions).

- Asked for verbal and written confirmation of understanding from all participants.
- Used the end of focus groups to invite participants to ask questions and contact the researcher if necessary.

(Denscombe 2002; Alderson 2004; Masson 2004)

### *Confidentiality*

The right to confidentiality was preserved through the duration and dissemination of the project. All original data, interview material and transcripts, consent forms and other documents that contain references to personal details were stored in secure conditions, accessed only by the researcher. The provisions made in the Data Protection Act 1998 were followed at all times.

In general, there are exemptions to confidentiality. Under the provisions of the Children's Act (1989), those working with children have a duty to be alert to cases of abuse or potential abuse. This duty extends to those working with anyone under 18 years of age.

The following principles were adopted to support this research study:

- During research, it is accepted that information may be disclosed that if kept confidential could result in harm or intent of harm to others. In these cases, the protection of children and others should override a blanket commitment to confidentiality. At the outset of the project, this was communicated clearly to participants.
- In the case of such disclosures, researchers should encourage young people to approach relevant authorities or support services.
- With the provision of clear information about the research and guidance on confidentiality, it is hoped that the potential for disclosure is minimal.

No disclosures of significant concern were highlighted during the study, though a disclosure in one group about the behaviour of a teacher (see page 269) required the researcher to check with the participant about what action they intended to take as a result of the experience. The participant and the researcher decided to discuss the matter with a practitioner who was working in the project where the focus group was held, as a way of ‘handing over’ the issue raised during the focus group.

### *Health, safety and security*

The health, safety and security of participants and of the researcher were considered as a principal concern throughout. This researcher committed himself to undergo all necessary legal checks that are required by government in order to work with children. During this study, it was the process of ‘enhanced disclosure’ as managed by the Criminal Records Bureau.

In order to provide supportive follow up about any of the issues raised during interviews and to reduce harm or damage (for example, stress and duress), the researcher made available contact details for locally based information and advice services.

Further, specific ethical considerations are referred to in the remaining sections of this chapter.

### **Internal validity**

This investigation is dependent on data that reflects the meanings and experiences of participants, retold from their own accounts. This raises questions about internal validity and whether participant contributions can be treated as truthful and authentic representations of their lives. As the discussion above detailed, the researcher has designed a study that emphasises the ‘Emic perspective’: a focus primarily on the lived experiences of young people, according to their own interpretations.

Silverman (2001) considers issues of internal validity and outlines two positions. The first, an ‘externalist’ position suggests that interviews can ‘in principle, be treated as reports on external realities’ whereas the second, an ‘internalist’ position proposes that interviews are reports subject to influence of what ‘both interviewer and interviewee are *doing* through their talk and non-verbal actions’ (Silverman 2001: 111). Here, the interplay of identity may be an important factor (see below). However, constructivist approaches suggest that we:

“Need not hear interview responses as true or false *reports* on reality. Instead, we can treat such responses as *displays* of perspectives and moral forms.”  
(Silverman 2001: 112)

Silverman offers three practical questions for considering internal validity. The first concerns the status attached to data. Here, Silverman asks whether interview responses are to be ‘treated as giving direct access to ‘experience’ or as actively constructed ‘narratives’” (Silverman 2001:113). Actually, there may be multiple explanations or meanings that are offered. This may be particularly important in terms of understanding a social situation where multiple actors may perceive things differently (as in the case of perceptions of anti-social behaviour for instance). In a sense this study sets out to establish young people’s meanings, and is upfront in asking participants to relate to experience in defining concepts. This is the narrative aspect where young people draw on their own interpretation of events, situations, actors and actions in order to justify or defend a definition. Without the resources (time and otherwise) to triangulate narratives of experience, we rely solely on the views of young people to answer the research question.

The second is whether the analytic position adopted is appropriate to the practical concerns and here Silverman notes that some complex designs can in fact ‘cloud’ the issue of what the research aims to do. In essence, this is a call for more realistic research and in the case of this study is reflected in an accessible set of methods that enable young people to describe and explore their social worlds. There are, as Silverman acknowledges, more complex ways of examining the research question but these have not been pursued within the parameters of this investigation.

Finally, Silverman asks whether the chosen method is appropriate for answering the research question. In this case, he focuses on interview data and invites the reader to consider whether other methods may be more appropriate. In the case of presenting accounts of life and deliberating these with others, focus groups and workshops were argued to be the strongest methods for this study as discussed in the coming methodological literature review (see below).

The interpretation of data is also impacted by questions of identity, particularly in an investigation that seeks to explore meaning and experience; aspects that are undoubtedly mediated by differences in identity. The limitations of the study in terms of diversity are acknowledged later in the thesis but factors that influence the interpretation of this data are recorded here in order to assist in determining the transferability of the data. The interplay of identity in this study can be understood in three significant ways.

*(1) The identities of the group participants and the role of gatekeepers*

Young people are too often treated as a homogenous group (France 2007) and to an extent social research reproduces normative assumptions about the lived experience of young people. The groups who have participated in this study can be better understood in relation to their personal and social identity characteristics. Where this study has fallen short is in accurately representing the individual social characteristics of each person, however this is somewhat compensated by a ‘thick description’ (Bryman 2004) of the groups offered at the start of chapters six and seven. This information will enable the reader to assess the transferability of the study to comparable groups and may help to contextualise findings.

Access to young people who participated in this study was sometimes subject to the work of gatekeepers: people who took an active role in identifying and recruiting young people to the study. As has already been discussed, gatekeepers may ‘screen’ participants (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999) leading to a compromise in sample or the further marginalization of certain groups of young people. This was identified as a

concern in the design stage of the study and steps were taken to broaden access to potentially excluded groups of young people through the deliberate selection of pre-exclusion and school exclusion projects as well as through creative sampling strategies engaging young people in naturalistic settings, for example through the detached youth work project and meeting young people on the street.

It is simply not possible to determine the extent to which gatekeeping may have influenced the selection of participants, however for reasons of transparency the contexts where they were used are set out here.

**Table 11 – Use of gatekeepers**

Stage	Group	Gatekeepers
1	City Youth Centre	Youth worker was asked to help recruit young people.
	School pre-exclusion project	School teacher who asked school mentor to nominate.
	Youth forum	Local authority funded participation worker
	Detached youth work group	Detached youth worker (and former student of researcher)
2	Rural youth club committee	Senior youth worker (supervising student of the researcher)
	Intercultural education project	Community worker and personal friend of the researcher
	Music group	Youth Worker and personal friend of the researcher
	Advice and information drop-in centre	Advice worker
	Youth grants panel	Charity worker
	School exclusion group	Exclusion group tutor

In all cases, gatekeepers represented some form of authority role in each of the settings visited. They were contacted in advance of fieldwork visits and were asked to identify and recruit young people. Full information about the aims and objectives of the study were sent out in advance and these were verbally reinforced during initial access negotiations. Despite this, there may have been other factors that influenced the selection including the context of changing service provision and misunderstanding about the study remit.

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### *(2) The personal identity of the researcher*

As the discussion below illustrates, professional values have an influence upon the researcher in terms of how he approached the study from initial design through to interpretation of the data. The extent to which the contributions of young people involved in this study can be accepted as ‘truth’ is also determined by the personal identity of the person in receipt of this information. In a recent chapter on identity and anti-oppressive practice, Chouhan argues that individuals need to ‘understand who they are and the process of how they come to think and feel the way they do about ‘others’’ (Chouhan 2009: 71). ‘Who’ we are invariably calls into questions aspects of identity, the baseline that shapes our view of the world and offers a prism for interpreting other viewpoints. In terms of this researcher, the perspective is one of a white, able-bodied, middle-class and heterosexual male: reflecting a ‘dominant’ perspective of social reality (Chouhan 2009). However, there is something both static and dynamic about these facets of identity. It is unchanging that I am white and male; however through a process of reflective dialogue and continuous interaction with different social groups, my values and perspectives become dynamic. For instance, my personal and youth work educational experience has developed a sensitivity to other worldviews, in particular black perspectives and an acute awareness of the need to challenge oppression across issues related to disability, class, sexuality, age, gender and so on. Static identify factors inevitably mean some difficulties in fully understanding issues that young women or black young people may face. Dynamic factors, on the other hand, offer the means to identify that this difficulty occurs which in turn may stimulate critical reflection about differences in experience.

### *(3) The professional identity of the researcher*

In addition to the personal and social identity of the researcher there is a third important strand – that of the professional identity. Without indulging in too much of a personal biography it is important to set out the professional background of the researcher and to assess to what extent this may have a bearing on the research context.

My own experiences as a young person led me to become a youth worker, in common with other practitioners (Tyler 2009). My early teenage years were marked by disaffection with school evidenced through regular and lengthy periods of truancy and temporary exclusion. Parallel to these periods of disaffection was an increasing interest in social justice campaign work and in particular a desire to affect change for young people in my local area. This ‘activist’ model of community engagement manifested in campaigns for better youth facilities and at the age of sixteen, I started Gloucester’s first youth-led young people’s centre as a volunteer. At eighteen, I was employed as a part time youth worker and two years later became a full time practitioner before leaving the service to undertake my full time professional qualification which I completed in 2002.

Youth work, like other welfare professions is ‘value-based’ (Banks 2009) which suggests that:

“At the heart of the occupation there is a set of ethical beliefs about what is regarded as worthy or valuable.”

(Banks 2009: 49)

The ethical principles that underpin youth work include a requirement to:

- Treat young people with respect, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination.
- Respect and promote young people’s rights to make their own decisions and choices, unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are seriously threatened.
- Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people, while permitting them to learning through undertaking challenging educational activities.
- Contribute towards the promotion of social justice for young people and in society generally, through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination.
- Act with professional integrity.

(National Youth Agency 2004)



These principles are designed to underpin the youth worker's engagement, in whatever context they seek to work with young people. They are commonly supplemented by four 'cornerstone' themes of youth work: a commitment to participation, empowerment, education and equality (National Youth Bureau 1990; 1991).

It was during my studies that these professional values were consolidated and strengthened, and they underpin my commitment to work with young people. My own entry in to youth work suggested an acceptance that young people can and should have opportunities to participate, and that there is a process of empowerment that leads to this engagement (Young 1999). This commitment is dependent on a recognition of the value of young people's contributions (Fleming and Hudson 2009) and that the 'foundations of anti-ageist practice should be a high priority for workers in this field' (Thompson 2001: 89). This sometimes requires 'tipping [the] balances of power in favour of young people' (Davies 2005: 10) but certainly requires that the practitioner:

“Understands their personal, professional, political and organisational *power and influence* and uses it ethically and effectively...good youth work can have a powerful impact on young people.”

(Tyler 2009: 243)

These professional values underpin the education and practice of the researcher and therefore have implications for the topic selection, approach to research and interpretation of the findings that are contained within this thesis. Most obviously, the research question reflects a prioritisation of young people's voices in terms of addressing how we understand active citizenship. This is in response to the claim made in chapters three and four that young people's voices have been 'missing' from the debates in the social policy context. Thus, a generalised ethical principle of respect for young people translates into a research project that seeks to represent their meanings and experiences in order to better understand young people's lives.

Kerry Young writes:

“Youth Work **should** encourage young people to question ideas, attitudes and standards – and not only their own but others’ as well...Such questioning and critical reflection is, in fact, part of the essential purpose of youth work.”

(Young 1999: 6).

## The staged methodology

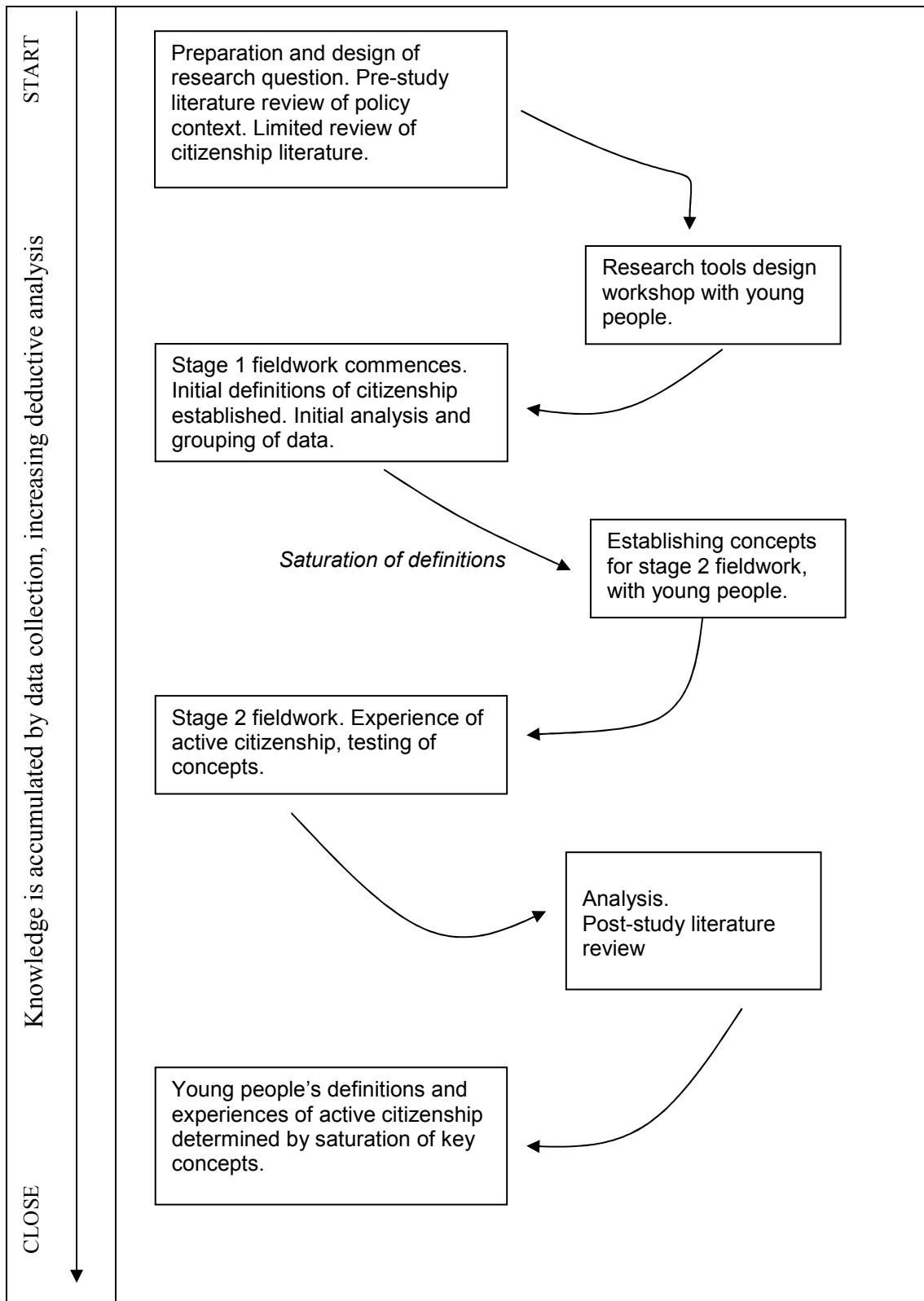
The design of this study comprises a logical and well ordered approach to data collection and analysis. This is realised in the form of a ‘staged methodology’ which compartmentalises each significant phase of the research process and provides in depth explanation for each component. Diagrammatically, this is best represented by the ‘inductive spiral’ used by Kemshall (1998). If one were to conceive of the research process as a journey, then the spiral shows a developmental process leading towards conclusive findings that, in essence, stand up to the test of defensible research. Notwithstanding Layder’s (1998) observation that stages of research can oftentimes blur due to the fluid nature of research investigation, the staged methodology provides a useful project management tool for small scale studies that take place over a period of time.

The version of the inductive spiral used here (see fig 7 on page 162) indicates a research journey where as data collection continues, knowledge of the topic area is built and as a result, doubt about findings becomes minimal. The sense that theory is grounded in and confirmed by data matches the emphasis in this project in relying on the experiences and meanings offered by young people. Thus, though the theory generation process *inductive* thinking becomes *deductive* resulting in a decreased uncertainty and:

“Reasoning moves from inferring general statements from singular ones, to finally deducing singular statements from general ones.”

(Kemshall 1998:22)

Figure 7 - The inductive-deductive spiral



Based on Kemshall (1998: 23, fig 1.1)

## Defining focus groups

The primary method used in this study was focus groups: essentially group discussions that yield research data, based upon a ‘focused’ issue (Morgan 1997; Morgan 1998; Barbour and Kitzinger 1999). Whilst their use is not confined to qualitative research alone, focus groups:

“Rely on the strengths of qualitative methods, including exploration and discovery, understanding things in depth and in context, and interpreting why things are the way they are and how they go that way.”

(Morgan 1998:31)

As such, focus groups in comparison to other research methods depend on flexibility and openness. However, this should not be ground for taking a less than rigorous approach to planning - they are to a great extent contrived. The research data that comes from the group discussions will be reflective of the quality of questions or stimuli materials that the researcher has endeavoured to produce (Morgan 1998; Barbour and Kitzinger 1999).

Focus groups can serve as the only research method, or as is often the case, they are used in conjunction with other methods such as individual interviews (Michell 1999). There are three basic methodological uses for focus groups:

Morgan (1997) suggests that focus groups are a form of ‘group interview’ but that the research relationship is different in that there is limited alternation between the researcher’s questions and participant’s answers:

“The reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of a moderator”

(p2)

The proposition here is that focus groups discuss specific research issues and in doing so are different from other forms of group interview in that attention is given to

analysing ‘group interaction’ (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999). As Bloor et al (2001) highlight, academic researchers carry out focus groups to examine the *processes* that lead to interpretations being made about the research issue. Whilst research encounters with individuals, either by means of interview or observation, can provide in-depth personal histories and experiences (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999), focus groups are important for analysing the *processes* and *considerations* that social groups go through in order to make sense of issues or situations:

“It is the access to [the] group meanings, processes and norms that accounts for much of the interest currently being shown by academic researchers”  
(Bloor et al. 2001:4)

The reliance on interaction in the group to produce data raises both opportunities and limitations for Morgan (1997). The comparisons made about experiences and insights can be valuable in analysing behaviours and motivations, and issues such as conformity and diversity are evident in the group dynamics.

There are limitations where tendencies both towards conformity (see below) or polarisation in that extreme views may be more evident than in private. Certainly, in my experience of holding focus groups with young people, the group ‘joker’ can make comments that are deemed extreme that might be retracted or dismissed in one to one interviews. Bloor et al. (2001) highlight that:

“Such emphatic views on the subject in hand can be potentially damaging or threatening for individual members if the composition of the group is badly thought out.”  
(Ibid: 20)

A suggested strategy given by Bloor et al. is to run groups ‘consisting of individuals from each peer group separately’ (2001:21). For example, one can see a potential disadvantage in bringing offenders and victims together for analysing perspectives on crime.

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If we consider normative behaviour to be prone to a broad range of influences, the use of focus groups enables us to begin to unpick group norms and reason-making processes, in turn allowing us insight into how people form their perceptions about issues (Bloor et al. 2001; Krueger 2000). Rather than simply stating ‘this is’, groups actively unpick why participants believe this to be the case. The steps that the group go through to reach this point inevitably raises conflict, agreement and assimilation of other viewpoints – all potentially data-rich interactions.

### *Sensitive Topics*

In a chapter detailing focus group work around the health needs of gay women, Farquhar (1999) suggests that:

“As focus group methods have grown in popularity, it has become clear that their inappropriateness for research around sensitive topics cannot simply be assumed.”

(Farquhar 1999:47)

Farquhar’s own research experience concludes that focus groups are *more* likely to foster an environment where sensitive topics will be discussed without a great deal of difficulty, and that firstly the researcher should address precisely what is meant by ‘sensitivity’. A topic may be sensitive to the researcher, but a common experience for other groups of people. Might the topic be sensitive because it is at odds with the researcher’s own norms and values? Addressing these questions through self-reflection is a good start prior to researching such *assumed* sensitivities.

However, research undertaken in schools by Michell (1999) shows how focus groups can sometimes fail to yield data about true personal experiences due to existing power relations within groups. Sensitive data about personal and family life, bullying and popularity all neglected to appear in focus group research and thus, children failed to accurately articulate their social worlds. Rather, participants offered ‘public explanations’ which hid more ‘private and painful ones’ (Michell 1999:44). These

responses were particularly evident in cases where children were already marginalized in social groups.

Nonetheless, Kitzinger and Farquhar (1999) present analysis drawn from six focus groups that all involved working with groups who had varying degrees of pre-existing social connection. They identify three levels of sensitivity in groups. Firstly, groups move from recognising the sensitivity of a topic to debating why this is difficult to discuss. Secondly, there may be some discussion as the group tentatively explores ‘breaking taboos’. Thirdly, in depth discussion occurs and the group witnesses ‘shocking revelations’. (Ibid: 157). Crucially, ‘sensitive moments’ can occur when a group feels comfortable with itself and thus, it may well have moved beyond Michell’s example given above. The role of the moderator may be critical in facilitating these disclosures, but equally there is value in analysing how the group handles the moments themselves. Tactics such as ‘reassuring’ and ‘silencing’ reinforce how decisions are made within social groups, thus raising questions about power relations (Kitzinger and Farquhar 1999:162).

If a whole project is deemed to be ‘sensitive’, this can have implications for recruitment (which in turn may impact upon sampling) but may well produce interesting data in itself:

“There may be patterns in who will or will not accept invitations to participate”

(Kitzinger and Farquhar 1999:159)

The authors give an example of a project undertaken to explore young people’s ideas about violence (Burton et al. 1997). The limited number of young men generated group descriptions about those who had chosen to be involved and, importantly, those who had not (‘immature’, ‘old fashioned views’ and so on):

“Such comments [...] begin to locate the status of the research topic within everyday peer discussion.”

(Kitzinger and Farquhar 1999:159-160)

It appears that some attention must be given to the potential for topic sensitivity when undertaking research design. In the case of this study, three particular questions were addressed:

- **What strategies will in place to debrief or take breaks to express concern if things are not well?** Regular breaks were timetabled into the focus groups to allow participants to leave the group and take ‘time out’. In addition, the moderator was ‘attuned’ to the body language of participants to assess whether any uncomfortable, non-verbal signals were becoming apparent. The researcher drew on his experience as a youth worker to support young people but was cautious about being too directive – the role of the researcher and the role of the youth worker are too different things.
- **Will non-participation of certain groups be analysed?** To an extent, this was noted but the limitations of the research are in the failure to analyse differences of topic importance by ‘race’, disability and other facets of social identity. Resource and time implications meant that the ‘access net’ to young people was heavily dependent on gatekeepers (see below) that may have limited the range of young people who could have participated in this study.
- **What support and information will be available to participants?** Support was ensured through carefully introduced aims and groundrules for the group. Follow up support was ensured through the provision of advice and information sheets, and the researcher remained with the participants for a short period after the focus group to offer any conversations that may debrief participants.

### *Conformity*

Morgan (1998) suggests one of the myths associated with focus groups is their tendency to produce conformity. Whilst this is certainly a possibility, Morgan stresses that the skills of the moderator, particularly in the research design phase will affect the level of conformity in the data collection. Much of the concern with conformity



has arisen out of research from decision-making groups that, as Morgan states, seldom use trained moderators or well-developed questioning routes.

It is important to be reminded of Michell's (1999) analysis of using focus groups with children, and the potential for conformity in light of existing power relations. One gets the sense that, as with Farquhar's discussion about 'assumed' sensitivities, Morgan tends to emphasise existing anonymity between group members.

In relation to this study, the researcher developed some consistent working principles to address group dynamics, conformity and power relations. Each principle aims to work towards a balance between ensuring the naturalness of a group and making sure participants are empowered to contribute. These principles were discussed during research supervision and reflected upon in the researcher's personal diary:

- Ensure a balance. Allow the loud member of the group to offer lots of contributions as a commitment to upholding natural group interaction *but* use strategies to involve those who may not have had an opportunity to contribute.
- Try not to silence individuals during their contribution.
- Challenge group conformity through inviting alternative views, and posing probing questions such as 'is this the same for everybody', or 'other people may not even feel this way'.
- Use body language to remind all groups members that you are addressing topics to them all. Try to avoid consistent eye contact with louder members of the group.
- The main role is of *moderator*. Try to avoid the tendency to directly influence the group's discussion patterns, and minimise verbal or non-verbal challenges to contributions.

(Research diary, 13/11/03)

### *Further Ethical Considerations*

In this review, work with 'sensitive' issues and the potential for conformity have been explored as two prospective ethical questions. There are more to be raised.

Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) discuss the dependency on gatekeepers to provide access to participants and as such, there is potential for participants to be ‘screened’ prior to engaging in research. They provide the examples of the schoolteacher who may select pupils from the debating society and the line-manager who ‘selects’ uncritical employees. This has a two-pronged effect. Firstly, sampling may be compromised and secondly, the views of those who may be marginalized from policy in the present context will be further excluded (this could be a feature of the present study). At the other end of the scale, Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) and Farquhar (1999) both identify the over-zealous gatekeepers who in a desperate attempt to recruit will be shy of detailing the actual research proposals. This has immediate implications for the notion of informed consent, and places the researcher in an awkward position. Some of the difficulties in relation to this study are discussed in the final chapter.

The issue of over-disclosure is raised in much of the literature (see, for example, Bloor et al, 2001; Farquhar 1999). Over-disclosure occurs when:

“Respondents impart more information, express views or declare experiences in the group setting that they subsequently may feel uncomfortable about revealing.”

(Bloor et al. 2001:25).

Bloor et al. suggest over-disclosure is more prevalent in pre-existing groups and this may have an impact on lasting social relationships. However, one wonders whether research undertaken by Michell (1999) suggests otherwise where under-disclosure was documented.

Negative impacts aside, there may be incidence of positive outcomes in over-disclosure as suggested by Farquhar (1999) insofar as people may find reassurance that others share the views, feelings or behaviours they may have felt concerned about. Nonetheless, attention to this in the group forming stage was critical to ensuring the research process does not cause undue distress to participants.

### *Further Methodological Considerations*

The importance of research setting is given little prominence by Morgan (1998) but Barbour and Kitziinger (1999) suggest that:

“Researchers should choose a venue easily accessible to the people they wish to include in the research [...] People are more likely to turn up for a group which takes place in a familiar venue.”

(Ibid: 11).

In the case of work with young people, this may be a school or youth club. However, Green and Hart (1999) discuss the importance of considering context and how this impacts upon data. By examining differences in institutional context, the authors were able to identify how the role of the moderator may change, in either supporting the group to vocalise (formal settings) or by adding additional controls (informal settings). Crucially, the lessons from this research suggest that the settings where focus groups are held should not be taken for granted. This is to some extent addressed in interpreting the findings (chapters six and seven), since focus groups were conducted in very diverse settings. Some were carried out in schools, others literally in the middle of a park.

### **Application of methods**

As indicated at the stage this chapter, the present study utilised two stages of data collection. Stage one concerned exploratory work with a focus on defining active citizenship and setting the parameters for further investigation. Stage two built upon this by encouraging depth and breadth of interpretation of key active citizenship concepts. During stage two, groups provided further definitions and related these concepts to their own experiences. The application of focus groups in each stage is now discussed in summary form. Further discussion of the process occurs at the beginning of both *Findings* chapters, six (stage one) and seven (stage two).

### Stage one: the exploratory stage

In the stage one, the advice offered by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Dey (1999) was adhered to, with minimal structure enabling participants to shape the emerging data. This model respects a guiding principle in grounded theory that ‘the researcher actively constructs the data in concert with his or her participants’ (Charmaz 2004: 501). What then is the place of the researcher’s prior understanding of the topic at hand? How does this influence the initial stages of data collection? As Heath and Cowley (2004) rightly note, nobody enters the field entirely without ideas and these epistemological considerations were examined above. Charmaz (2004) calls for a somewhat realistic expectation of the place of values and knowledge in research, proposing that researchers:

“follow the leads that they define in the data, or design another way of collecting data to try and follow their initial interests.”

(Charmaz 2004: 501)

The principal line of investigation at this stage of the research is ‘how do young people define active citizenship?’ In response to the commands of the research question and the paradigm outlined above, I entered the field here with limited pre-conception to elicit ‘real world’ meanings as defined by the participants themselves (Charmaz 2004). The design of the investigation and the approaches used were developed with young people during a set workshop (see chapter six) and the author did not use literature or policy definitions to construct the questions.

A non-probability, purposive sampling technique (Blaxter et al 2001) was used to recruit young people to participate in stage one of the study. The approach was extended somewhat by the use of quota and snowball strategies. Quota samples are those that occur by the nature of availability, in this case – access to youth clubs and centres automatically opens opportunity to meet young people. Snowball strategies were used to encourage participants to invite peers and widen the sample net further (Bryman 2001; Blaxter et al 2001).

A total of four ‘pilot’ focus groups were held with young people living in the East Midlands region, aged 14-16 (n=24). As indicated before, the pilot stage relied on a greater degree on unstructured interviewing techniques, designed to stimulate an open dialogue between researcher and participants.

Focus groups were split into two parts. The first part was an open discussion guided by three key questions:

- What do you think ‘active citizenship’ means?
- Where have you heard the term?
- Do you consider yourself to be an ‘active citizen’?

Probing was a key element and there are several incidences where the researcher intervened into a conversation in order to expand specific points made by participants. This may have altered the course of the ‘natural’ conversation but at all times, interruptions were based on drawing out the ideas that emerged as components of active citizenship.

The second part of the focus group was designed for participants to reflect on what they had said so far and to generate a list of key components of *being* an active citizen. This included the things they need (knowledge and skills) and the qualities they should possess (attitudes and behaviours). These lists were retained for use by the coding group.

This was followed up by a further two ‘coding’ workshops designed to assist the researcher in refining concepts. Nine young people participated from two of the focus groups and from the original research tools design group. The process is described in detail in chapter six but in summary, young people first grouped the listed concepts under headings (categories) and then, using a diamond ranking template, determined the relative importance of concepts. These were ultimately used for the second stage of the study, and became known as ‘level one concepts’:

- (1) Rights**
- (2) Responsibilities**
- (3) Care for others**
- (4) Making decisions**
- (5) Respect**
- (6) Control**

### **Stage two: the experience of 'level one concepts'**

Following the initial analysis of the pilot data set, the deliberation workshops with young people and the submission of the MPhil/PhD transfer report, the study progressed to the second stage. Here focus groups were again applied with a sample of 69 young people drawn from a range of new settings across the East Midlands region, in order to widen the number of participants involved in the study. The purpose of stage two was to use the level one concepts generated in the pilot study to invite further definitions and investigate the experiences of young people.

Each concept was reproduced as a flash card and these were used to stimulate discussion. At this stage of the research, the directional role of the moderator increased somewhat, with greater guidance offered to participants. The semi-structured prompts were designed with a sense of what the researcher was ultimately looking for in line with the developing focus of the research. Essentially, for each of the concepts, the researcher sought:

**(1) definitions with examples of 'real world' relevance**

*Examples of prompts: What does [the concept] mean to you? Can you give me an example of when you have used/experienced [the concept]? How important is [the concept] to you? Is [the concept] particularly different for young people?*

**(2) the conditions under which the concept is evidenced**

*Examples of prompts: When can you best experience [the concept]? Who else is involved?*

**(3) the constraints that limit or negate the concept**

*Examples of prompts: What or who stops you [experiencing the concept]?*

There was, of course, some variance in the prompts largely because the concepts are asymmetrical when compared by themselves. Questions concerning ‘respect’ differ from those of ‘care for others’. Similarly, the level of intervention by the researcher varied across concepts, across groups. As an example, one group very much struggled to relate to the ‘control’ flashcard whereas this same group needed virtually no prompting to work through the concept of ‘rights’.

In order to cover the adequate time for discussion of each of the concepts, focus groups were split into two sessions with each participant group. In beneficial terms, this allowed participants to focus for a shorter amount of time (45 minutes to 1 hour) but unfortunately led to some attrition, albeit a small number: Across all groups, seven young people who took part in the first session were absent from the second. Full details about the sample, and the context from which they were drawn are discussed in their respective *Findings* chapters.

#### *General observations about the choice of method*

There are some general observations that I wish to introduce here about the quality of the methods chosen when applied to research with young people.

1. Motivation: Some discussion groups, and especially those that took place in schools, appeared to be received as an extension of lessons or curriculum based activities. This had been cited by young people as a reason for diminished motivation to participate. Similarly, a 45 minute group requires a degree of concentration and participation that we may take for granted. One group that was carried out, despite being quite active and relying on ‘young people friendly’ methods, lasted just 25-30 minutes. This has consequence for the amount of data that can be derived.
2. Literacy: Young people who have difficulties with literacy may find focus groups to be discriminatory since they often rely on writing down feelings, opinions and experiences. The Save the Children guide – *Participation: Spice it Up!* which has been used in the majority of these initial groups as a tool for

making focus groups more engaging relies heavily on the use of pens, paper and so on. On a number of occasions, the researcher needed to assess whether everyone could participate fully in the research process and not be barred on grounds of literacy. As a consequence of this observation, the emphasis on writing down in stage one was not replicated in stage two. Similarly, the issue of literacy impacts upon the capacity to understand informed consent – and this placed a greater emphasis on clarifying the research purpose and outcomes.

3. **Power and Confidence:** As discussed in the literature review of focus groups (above), there can be a lack of awareness of existing power relationships when undertaking research. Suggesting that participant silence reveals these power relations is not sufficient, as research can simply go on to exclude those whose voices are missing. Throughout the study, ‘silent members’ were evident in all focus groups. Where possible, strategies of moderation increased levels of inclusion but there are examples where participants have shut down the contributions of others (illustrated in some transcript extracts offered in the Findings chapters).

Of additional note: the local authority, responsible for managing many of the projects at which access was secured, had undergone at least two comprehensive structural reviews and changes during the study timeline. The resulting impact was that some professionals experienced heightened frustrations which may explain why, on two separate occasions, the researcher arrived to find that organised focus groups could not take place because the provision was in fact not open on the date agreed. Similarly, there was some suspicion about the motives of the researcher and on many occasions, I was subjected to presentations about the effectiveness of citizenship programmes despite my assurances that the study was not concerned with evaluating such dimensions. What all of this means for the selection of participants, and the context in which focus groups took place is cause for some critical reflection.



**Summary**

This study has utilised a staged methodology in its approach to data collection. The principal data collection method was focus groups and was applied to the study with extensive review of ‘best practice’ literature. Ethical and methodological issues were reviewed and in their application to the study, both good practice and potential problems were highlighted. In the next section of this chapter, the procedures for data management and coding are reviewed. This includes a review of the transcription and data recording methods used, the approach to coding and the analytical tools used to assist in developing the data.

**Data management and procedures for analysis****Transcription and fieldnotes**

Transcription involves the ‘complicated process of translating from oral discourse to written language’ (Miller and Crabtree 2004: 200). Inevitably if one recognises that a focus group or interview contains multiple communications, both verbal and non-verbal, then transferring such data to paper can never truly reflect reality: they serve as ‘frozen interpretative constructs’ (Miller and Crabtree 2004: 200). If one were to take audio tapes as the only evidence of a research encounter, it is possible to miss nuances of the interaction. Therefore, at the outset, data collection tools were combined to ensure a multi-layered approach to analysis of focus groups.

Alongside audio tapes, a ‘focus group mapping’ fieldnote was completed (see appendix 1 for the template used). Fieldnotes contain contextual information and in this study, included:

- The reflections of the researcher (a personal activity that aided memo writing and theoretical development). In line with the principle of ‘reflecting *on* action’ (Schon 1991), the researcher undertook this task after the event.
- Any observations about interaction particularly in thinking about the impact of power on a group dynamic. These were of two sorts. Instant notes were made during the focus group (including a positioning map of where people sat, gender breakdown, etc) and signals were used to indicate (1) volume of the

contributor's voice, (2) length of contributions, (3) level of contributions – including silence.

- Any observations about respondents (including evidence of nerves or evasiveness).
- Observations about the environment (including interruptions, and quality of meeting place).

(Adapted from Miller and Crabtree 2004)

Fieldnotes therefore aided the contextualisation of responses. For instance, a fieldnote about the interruptions of a youth worker during one of the early pilot focus groups as part of this study, enabled a reflection on the number of contributions made by the participants. There was a correlation between the number of interruptions and of group 'awkward silences'. Fieldnotes provided a quick reference to ensure a higher ethical standard of excluding youth workers from entering the research area on account of privacy.

At the end of a focus group both audio tape and fieldnote were given a unique identification that correlated the pair prior to secure storage and (early) transcription. The actual process of transcribing data was excessively time consuming, with a ratio that greatly exceeded the length of interviews (Miller and Crabtree 2004).

### **Coding and categorising data**

Miles and Huberman (1994) reflect upon two common and interrelated problems for a researcher when first collecting data – those of data overload and data retrieval. A chronic problem of qualitative research is that it deals with words, and these are complex, 'fatter than numbers', and usually have 'multiple meanings'. (Miles and Huberman 1994: 56). When faced with such an 'alpine collection of information', the process of deciding what is important to retrieve from the data is a difficult one since:

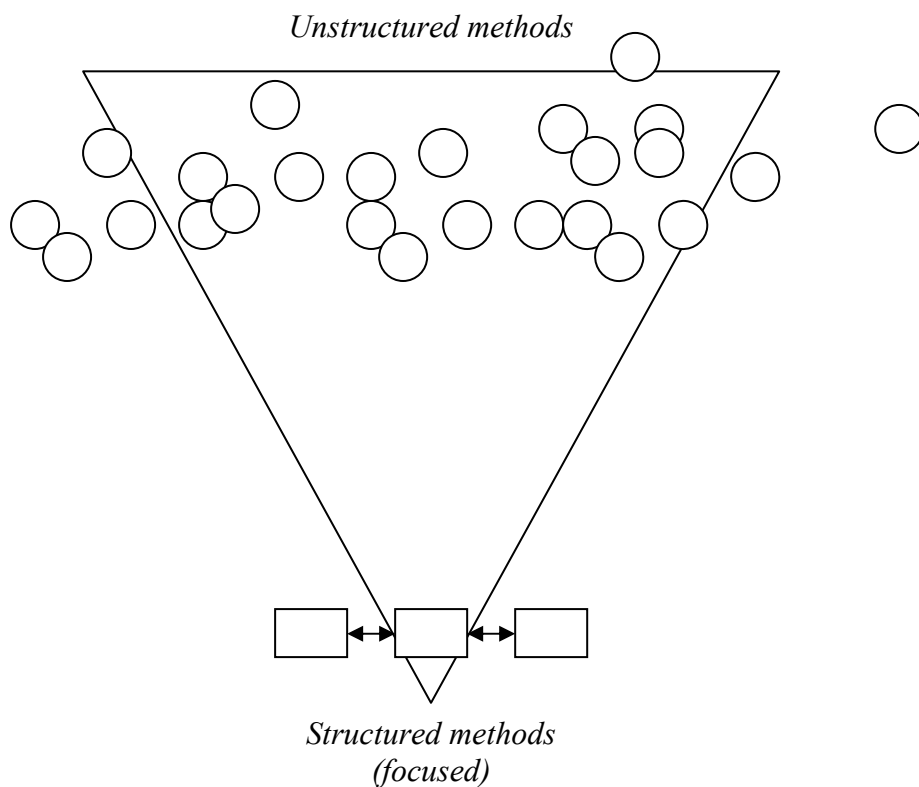
"In the early stages of a study, most of it looks promising. If you don't know what matters more, everything matters"

(Miles and Huberman 1994: 55)

A central tenet of grounded theory is the engagement of the researcher in simultaneous data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Dey 1999; Charmaz 2004; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This dual process focuses the study insofar as it avoids the unnecessary and quite daunting task of collecting seemingly unlimited, unfocused data and also leads the researcher to collect further data according to emerging themes. This approach is reflected in the staged methodology employed in this research study, designed as it is to build upon, extend and clarify the data collected at the stage before. This has been interpreted as a process of ‘data transformation’ (Fig 8).

**Figure 8 - Data transformation process**

**Start**



**End**

Here the seemingly random circles (some interconnected, some independent of one another) represent early data collection. Such confused and voluminous data is collected by relatively unstructured data collection techniques that produce a wealth of information. The task of the grounded theorist is to develop techniques that will shape this data into a more focused way, represented in the diagram as reasonably static rectangles (ordered and symmetrical). Note also that there are considerably less of these rectangles than circles, demonstrating that data that is often in considerable multiples can be refined into smaller groupings as theory generation takes shape. Note however the presence of the arrows to signify the *relational* nature of the categories. Too often, coding can be seen as a data simplification process. As argued later, the coding and categorising of data entails a process of *complication*. Thus, whilst the number of data bits are significantly less, their level of complexity increases.

Charmaz (2004) suggests that a ‘hallmark’ of grounded theory studies consists of:

“The researcher deriving his or her analytic categories from the data, not from preconceived concepts of hypothesis”  
(p501)

And that in following this protocol, the researcher ‘[is forced] to attend closely to what happens in the empirical world he or she studies’ (Charmaz 2004: 501). Adherence to such protocols requires substantial ‘work in progress’ in establishing explicit coding procedures to categorising data. Coding is the ‘pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emerging theory to explain the data’ (Charmaz 2004: 506). Though not grounded theorists, the definition of codes offered by Miles and Huberman (1994) is most useful:

“tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to “chunks” of varying size – words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting.”  
(p56)

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Coding takes different forms but there are three principal models set out by Miles and Huberman:

- Descriptive codes: designed to apply labels that require little interpretation, serving to apply a class of phenomena to a segment of text. In the case of this study, this may involve the provision of the short hand label *family* to chunks of text that identify siblings, parents and grandparents.
- Interpretative codes: These codes occur as ‘hidden’ data begins to reveal itself, showing that within descriptive codes there may be distinctions. One’s feelings about *family* may thus hold different meanings when discussing them from the perspective of the participant or when he/she is discussing the views of their family from outside.
- Pattern codes: These are invariably more inferential and explanatory and occur towards the end stages of data analysis. Here, ‘emergent patterns’ occur in segments of text and can be explained with an overall familiarity with the data set.

(Miles and Huberman 1994: 57)

Miles and Huberman’s preference is in entering the field with some pre-established codes designed with reference to the research question and the conceptual framework (1994: 58). Rather, grounded theorists seek to collect data and allow codes to adopt the language of the participants. In the case of this research, there was some pre-emption with the introduction of guiding questions but the concepts generated were words familiar to and chosen by the participants to best express their answers to the questions. Similarly, later grouping and final prioritisation of the concepts in stage one was a process undertaken by young people.

Coding can be seen as both a process of simplifying data through the application of indexing techniques where data is reduced to ‘equivalence classes and categories’ (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 28). The process is also seen as data complication, where codes are ‘used to expand, transform, and reconceptualize data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities’ (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 29).

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In practice, however, the process of coding is a mixture of both approaches:

‘Coding generally is used to break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories *and* is used to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation.’

(Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 30).

Strauss (1987) is cautious to advise that coding should not be seen as a merely a mechanistic procedure for organising data sets that researchers need to learn to do easily. It is far from the easy and unproblematic procedure that many take for granted. As with others (e.g. Strauss and Corbin 1998; Miles and Huberman 1994; Dey 1999), Strauss (1987) sees coding as a process of conceptualising data, raising questions, providing provisional answers about the relationships among and within data, and discovering the data.

This study adopts the grounded theory approach to coding and categorising data, leading to analysis. It is here that the investigator relies on the definitions set out by Charmaz (2004: 506-516) in that a process that entails four stages has been adopted, each of which are discussed below: (1) line by line coding, (2) focused coding, (3) memo writing and (4) theoretical sampling. The entire process is summarised in diagrammatical form on page 176.

#### *Line by line coding*

Rather self explanatory, line by line coding relies on the examination of each line of data to assess and define actions or events within it. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define this process of questioning as ‘sensitizing’ oneself with the data. In asking questions about ‘what is going on?’ and ‘who are the actors involved?’ at this early stage, one begins to see what the data might be indicating by a process of familiarisation (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 77).

The preparation of transcripts thus followed a format akin to the extract set out on page 171. Data was transcribed in the first column and key terms are highlighted. Terms are identified according to actors, processes, meanings and experiences

identified by the participants. At this stage, codes offered do little more than provide an illustrative function, describing what is within the data rather than offering analysis of meaning (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 119-120; Miles and Huberman 1994: 57). Importantly, one should look to make the codes as precise and well defined as possible (the use of definitions in memos was particular helpful here). Categories should be exhaustive, comprehensive and refined (Dey 1993: 105).

Data or ‘data bits’ as they become (Dey 1993) and their assigned codes were then recorded and stored in an Access database devised for this study. The data entries take different forms, in most cases they are either single words (such as ‘friends’) or sentences (‘I hate my friends’). The database form comprises the following fields:

- Focus group transcript reference
- Code location ref (where the data is located on the original transcript)
- Level one category (which broad concept is being discussed)
- Data (the original data that has been coded)
- Sub category 1 (any sub-category label that has been applied)
- Property (any significant properties relating to the category)
- Dimension (any specifications about the category ‘level’)
- Memo (for discussion about the category)

The final three fields in this list are discussed in further detail below.

#### *Focused coding and comparative questioning*

At completion of line by line coding, the data should present interesting observations whilst also guiding further data collection. Successful line by line procedures will reveal a series of *categories* which enable the researcher to begin to see data in a more critical and analytical way. At this stage, it is important that such categories become more focused. This introduces a second layer of questioning, of a more *theoretical* nature (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 77). Here, the researcher examined ‘connections among concepts’ by looking at relationships. Relationships took form in terms of the *incident to incident* comparisons. A more substantial analysis of relationships also began to occur here, with the researcher becoming attuned to more *theoretical*

comparisons (see Strauss and Corbin 1998: 79 – 85). Here, the researcher engaged with questions about the factors that may well impact upon the relationships between categories.

Some key relationships that become apparent include:

- Casual relationships (where X causes Y)
- Rationalization
- Supporting links
- Oppositional links

(Dey 1993; Dey 1999; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

As part of the data familiarisation process in stage one and initial data interrogation at stage two, the researcher compiled his own list of possible enquiries known as the ‘four C’s’:

- Evidence of data **consistencies** or the search for patterns
- Evidence of data **contradictions** – the search for negative cases or exceptions
- Evidence of data **conditions** – the factors influencing the proposition
- Evidence of data **constraints** – the factors negating or limiting proposition

Thus, focused coding in this study provided a framework for comparison. The researcher was concerned with the relationships present between different concepts. Such relationships, as has been noted, can take different forms.

### *Memo writing*

As the intermediate process between coding and analysis, memo writing provided a mechanism by which to ‘elaborate processes, assumptions, and actions that are subsumed under [the] code’ (Charmaz 2004: 511). In this sense, the grounded theorist is attempting to examine and define processes since this is largely what the researcher is concerned with. In defining categories as precisely as possible, one can then examine properties, characteristics and underlying assumptions. Here both *theoretical*



and *structural* questions are important. In the latter respect, questions about which concepts are well developed or not can guide future data collection (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 77) and almost certainly contribute to theoretical sampling (see below). Broad terms such as the ‘conditional caring’ can ultimately condense a wide range of codes that would otherwise remain quite scattered – but this depended entirely on succinct and carefully considered definitions.

Memos in this case began as soon as codes appeared to repeat themselves in the line by line process. The access database had a field created to record memos as and when the data is being entered to enable the researcher to make instant commentary about emerging categories.

### *Theoretical sampling*

Theoretical sampling provided the researcher with a rigorous tool for further clarification of data by looking for ‘variation within them’ and the ‘gaps between categories’ (Charmaz 2004: 514). Here, the researcher was able to apply the label *concepts* to those *categories* that best explained the data at hand. Theoretical sampling was a more selective process, focusing on certain experiences and meanings to enhance the process of explaining the emerging theory. Here theoretical sampling formed the basis of clarification and verification. In this study, the final three focus groups were more directive in that they were used to explore concepts in greater depth, taking into account the individual accounts of participants to add weight to the data obtained in the focus groups. The search for negative cases also advanced theory generation since participants may confirm or deny the relevance and appropriateness of the data analysed (Kemshall 1998; Padgett 1998). At this stage of the study, memo-writing (and subsequent commentary about theory) was more ‘precise, analytic and incisive’ (Charmaz 2004: 515).

### The application of this approach: an illustration

The analytical process used to inform the findings presented in this study depended on a consistent approach to classifying data and determining relationships between concepts. In the section above, the researcher has set out the procedures used, with reference to the literature. To demonstrate how this process was applied and adhered to in this study, an example of a focus group is used here to illustrate.

One of the flashcards used in stage two of the study contained the concept ‘Care for Others’. As with other flashcards, the group were invited to discuss how they defined and experienced the concept, drawing on their own interpretations. At the line by line stage of coding, the researcher analysed the transcript to identify actions and actors, through a process of labelling. As stated above, the concern here was with data familiarisation. Table 12 (below) shows an example of line by line coding to determine ‘who is cared for’.

**Table 12 – Example of line by line coding: who is cared for?**

Extract 1 from the ‘Youth Grants Panel’ focus group

F1	my <b>[mum]</b> ... that’s the first thing I thought of when I saw it on the table. I care for my mum.
F2	Me too., my <b>[mum]</b> , my <b>[dad]</b> as well. I care for <b>[some people]</b> ...depends on who they are really..
M4	Its <b>[mates]</b> that you care for, and your <b>[family]</b> and <b>[people who are close to you]</b> . Care’s a pretty strong word, it means that you love people, right?
F1	I think its about helping.... <b>[some people]</b> . Try to help some people.
F3	Yeah depends on if they care for you or not as well. You can spend a lot of time caring about <b>[people]</b> and giving them time and stuff but they don’t always return the feelings or respect you enough. Some people take the piss...
M1	I think if more people cared then there would be less piss taking.
F1	I’m not saying I don’t care, I’m just saying that it depends on who it is an why you care for them.
F2	<b>[she’s]</b> right... like I spend a lot of time looking after my <b>[best friend’s little brother]</b> ...her mum’s always asking us to help out and stuff but when it comes back to caring for us, she’s not always around. I find that annoying and it makes me think why do I care about her? It works both ways doesn’t it.

As the table demonstrates, there is relative simplicity in the classification at this stage as the investigator is highlighting the key actors who are cared for. These literally serve as a list (mum, dad, mates, etc). These are coded and stored in the database under the heading of ‘care for others: who’ and subcategorised by group (e.g. immediate family). Together with other transcripts, this forms the first section of a

typology of care for others by defining who the ‘others’ are. In a diagrammatical form, the relationship is thus:

**Figure 9 – Who is cared for?**



Analysis of the database at this stage could determine who young people care for, and this would be presented in terms of a range. The first relational aspect of ‘care for others’ came when the researcher asked the question ‘why do young people care for others’? Again, a counting exercise would enable us to determine how many different reasons there are for caring (another range) as illustrated in the table below (illustrated in black highlighter):

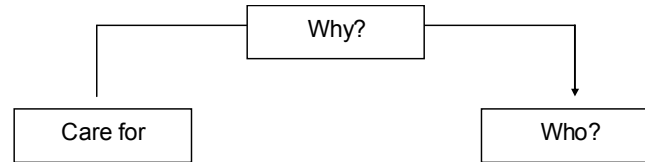
**Table 13 - Why should care be given?**

Extract 2 from focus group with ‘Youth Grants Panel’ group

M1	Depends on <b>what you think you’re getting out of it</b> . I care for people because it <b>makes me feel good</b> .
M3	Like I said earlier, its about who <b>respects you</b> when you do your responsibilities for them...it’s the same with caring en it? <b>You care for people because they care for you</b> . It’s as simple as that.
F1	I disagree...
M1	I think... I think that if we cared <b>a lot more things would be better</b> . You know, we should even care for people we don’t know...
M3	People we don’t know?
M1	Yeah, we should care for strangers, people we don’t know, care for everyone really. I don’t think there’s enough of that. There isn’t enough caring for other people and that’s why <b>we have all the shit going on between people</b> .
JW	What do you mean by strangers?
M1	Anybody really. It’s important to care for everybody and to ...
F3	Whoever. Doesn’t matter.
F1	I might look after someone in the street, you know a homeless man a tramp.
F3	I wouldn’t.
M1	No I wouldn’t.
F1	Depends who its for. If its for someone really important then I’d [inaudible] but if its some tramp sitting on the floor who <b>just wants money to stitch up another hit of crack then no</b> . Yeah only some tramps, not all of them, some of them its not their fault
F3	yeah if <b>they drink and do drugs</b> , that’s <b>different but if they can’t help it</b> .

This more interesting analysis, determined by focused coding of ‘reasons or motivations for care’ linked to ‘those we do or do not care for’ offered a new relationship. This relationship is illustrated in figure 10:

**Figure 10 – Why do you care for certain people?**



Here the analysis was concerned with the reasons *why* young people care for *certain* ‘others’ and also enabled the researcher to determine why care was not offered. This was one conditional element that allowed the researcher to understand not just the range of people cared for, but what the conditions were that made care a feature of active citizenship. These procedures were also followed by asking similar questions about the ‘type’ of care offered (i.e. what does ‘care’ entail), what ‘level’ of care is offered to whom, and why. The approach effectively complicates care for others by illustrating that:

- Care differs – there are different **types** and **levels**.
- People care for different reasons.
- People care for certain types of people.
- There are things that stop people caring.
- Thus, care depends on certain conditions.

Further data complication arose in the relationships between different level one concepts. It was therefore important to note that a further level of focused coding took place in ascertaining whether there was a relationship between, for example, ‘responsibilities’ and ‘care for others’. This determination was made often through reflection and writing in the memos. The following extract is an example of when the researcher considered the relationship between concepts and wider theoretical models in order to focus further analysis. This also serves as an example of existing theory influencing emerging data analysis as per the ‘adaptive theory’ approach (Layder 1998).

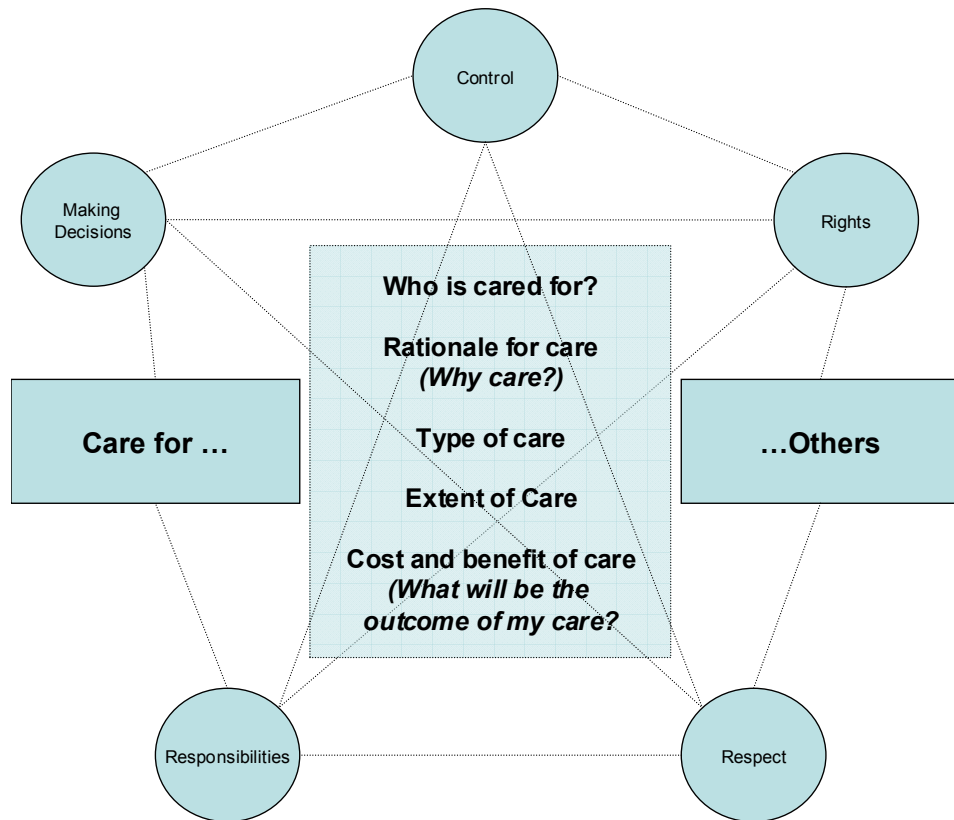
**Memo: the relationship between generalised reciprocity and care for others****[Extract]**

...Participants in the YGP focus group made reference to caring for others in relation to reciprocity. [A colleague] had previously talked to me about 'instrumental' and 'generalised' reciprocity – I think this may apply here. In the first case, care was conditional on whether it would be returned (they'll do something for me in return, or I only care about those who care for me). In the other examples, the care was in the pursuit of something more general (it's the right thing to do for society). Interestingly, even in the case of generalised principles, these seemed to be subject to conditions. As one participant seemed to say, 'strangers' doesn't include everyone. This needs testing across the other concepts... Particular questions I should seek to address include:

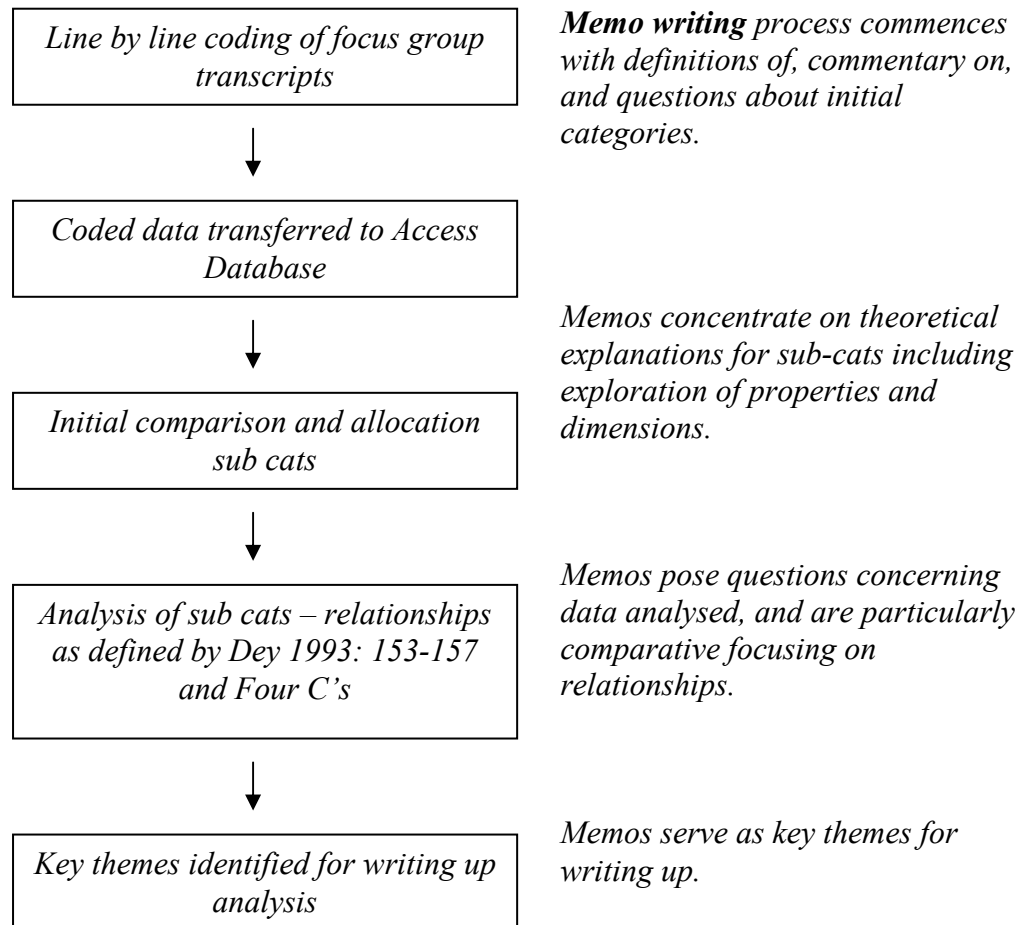
- Is there a generalised/instrumental sense of 'responsibility'?
- Is there a relationship between 'who is cared for' and how those people recognise or support the rights of the participants?
- Do these differences apply to being in *receipt* of one of the concepts (e.g. do young people feel that care for them is dependent on the same principles?)...

In summary, figure 11 shows how complicated the process of data analysis became during this study. Moving from line by line coding, through to focused coding and finally, theoretical sampling was aided throughout by the continuous use of memos and critical analytical questions. It became increasingly important to see each independent concept of active citizenship in relation to the *conditions specific to that concept* and the *meanings and experiences of the other concepts*. Both emerging and existing theory aided in the process of analysis (Layder 1998).

Figure 11 - Conditional elements of care for others



## Summary: Analytical process - from categories to proposals



## 6 Findings: Establishing the investigation

As indicated in the previous chapter, this study has utilised a staged approach to fieldwork. Stage one, which this chapter explores, was concerned with undertaking an initial exploration of how young people *define* active citizenship. Constructed as a pilot study, stage one contributed to the university's MPhil/PhD transfer requirements but it also served a process of greater significance: the young people involved in this element of the fieldwork established the parameters of investigation for stage two.

There were three elements to the first stage.

The **first element** involved the design of the research tools, the information sheet (appendix 2) and the consent form (appendix 3) and this process involved six young people aged 14-16 who attended a local youth centre where the researcher was working as a practitioner at the time of the pilot study. The group were members of a youth club but had also begun to meet separately in preparation for being a 'youth committee' involved in the running of the club. Members of the 'research tools group' would later take part in the third element.

The **second element** was a series of four focus groups run with young people aged 14-16 and living in the East Midlands region. Three key areas were explored with the group, using a series of interactive focus group exercises designed with young people in the first element. The three overarching aims/questions were:

- What they understood by the idea 'active citizenship'.
- Where they had learnt about, come across or simply heard of the idea.
- What they felt were the key attributes of being an 'active citizen'.

These discussions were deliberately open in line with the study design. A total of 24 young people participated in the focus groups in stage one of the research, eleven of



which were young women and thirteen were young men. Four different projects were approached for access, and a pen picture for each focus group appears below.

The **third element** of fieldwork was designed to establish the key words that would be used in stage two of the study. Here, nine young people were involved in two workshop sessions designed to:

- (1) Group the different terms that had been generated from the lists in stage one and attempt to apply a category for these ‘groupings’.
- (2) Prioritise which of the categories were felt to be most important to young people in defining active citizenship.

Those that were felt to be of most significance would be used as ‘level one concepts’ that would guide discussion in the subsequent focus groups in stage two.

The participants in this third element comprised members of the original research tools design group (n=4) together with two participants from the youth forum and three from the detached youth work project. The session was held at a local youth club within the vicinity of both the detached youth work group and the youth forum. Practitioners accompanied the young people from the detached youth work group but did not take part in the workshops.

### Pen picture of participant groups

City Youth Centre	
Female 3	Male 2

The city youth centre was an open-access youth club that was one of the services offered by a dedicated youth and community centre. It was based in an area just outside of the city centre. Whilst Upmystreet.com indicates that areas such as these are usually populated by older people, ONS data confirmed that the largest population was between 16-29 years old (at around 45%). This may have reflected the comparatively high level of student housing in the area with a high proportion of rented terrace housing. 12% of people living in the area were claiming a working age

benefit at the time of the study, and the indices of deprivation suggest comparatively high scores in crime and the living environment. There are a number of local secondary schools close to the area, with the three main community colleges showing 5 A-C GCSE passes in the range of 22%-35% (against a national average of 48%).

The youth centre aimed to provide educational and social activities for young people. The club offered sports, arts and music related activities together with a space for young people to meet with their friends. The service was available to young people three nights a week, for two hours per session. Young people attending the centre were of mixed cultural and ethnic backgrounds and the majority of attendees were male. The project was mainly funded by the Local Education Authority. Five young people were recruited by the researcher through the assistance of a local authority employed youth worker.

School pre-exclusion project	
Female 2	Male 3

The school pre-exclusion project was an educational mentoring project set up for young people who were at 'risk of permanent exclusion from school' and was based in a secondary school for 11-16 year olds in an area approximately three miles from the city centre. ONS data suggests that the area ranks in the middle on most aspects of deprivation, with an equal spread across the different age groups. The Ofsted report however indicates that most pupils had 'significant educational and social disadvantage' with the number of pupils entitled to free school meals 'well above average'. The school had previously been in special measures and standards of student attainment were low. The majority of young people attending the school were white though almost 1 in 5 attendees spoke English as a second language.

The school exclusion group was set up to mentor and provide alternative activities for young people who had previously faced two or more temporary exclusions and were exhibiting problematic behaviour in the classroom. The aim of the project was to reintegrate young people back into the formal school system by addressing issues relating to their learning progress and classroom behaviour. Through a series of

workshops and activities, and an individual mentoring scheme, the workers would reward good behaviour and challenge inappropriate behaviour. Many young people would then rejoin mainstream school upon completion of the programme.

<b>Youth Forum</b>	
Female 4	Male 3

The youth forum had recently been established at the time of meeting the group. They were members of the local school and local youth club who had met together with the goal of ‘influencing local decisions’. The forum regularly met at the local secondary school which according to the relevant Ofsted report was bigger than most secondary schools with over 1000 students. The school was rated as ‘good’ and the report commended student achievement and school leadership and management. The performance in GCSEs was average when compared similar schools and fluctuated between below and above average year by year. The majority of students were of Indian origin, with the largest minority group being white, and the forum comprised young people who classed themselves as ‘White’ and ‘British Asian’.

The forum was facilitated by a local authority funded participation worker, and to date the group had been involved in a series of ‘team-building’ workshops, subsidised leisure activities and had one meeting to discuss what key issues were facing the local area.

<b>Detached Youth Work Group</b>	
Female 2	Male 5

Detached Youth Workers were approached to engage young people who accessed youth work outside of centre-based settings. Detached Youth Work is a method of street-based work designed to engage with young people outside of buildings (see <http://www.infed.org/youthwork/b-detyw.htm>). As a result, this method of access enabled the researcher to meet with established groups of young people, but outside of the context of an institution or agency. The group met outside a row of shops near to a local housing estate, approximately three miles outside of the centre. The total group size was between 10 and 15 young people, and seven of these participated in the

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research. They all knew the practitioner and had engaged with him over a period of six months.

The area in fact borders two council housing estates, with one tenant's association reporting high levels of criminal and anti-social behaviour to the researcher at the time of his visit (though crime appears to be in the mid-range on the indices of deprivation for the neighbourhood). The local secondary school was high performing but the lead Detached Youth Worker post was charged with addressing issues of school exclusion as part of his remit. Part of the funding for his post came through a national initiative designed to target young people at risk of social exclusion. The area was also subject to a number of other regeneration initiatives, and there was a visible police presence through a partnership with the tenant's association.

## The focus groups

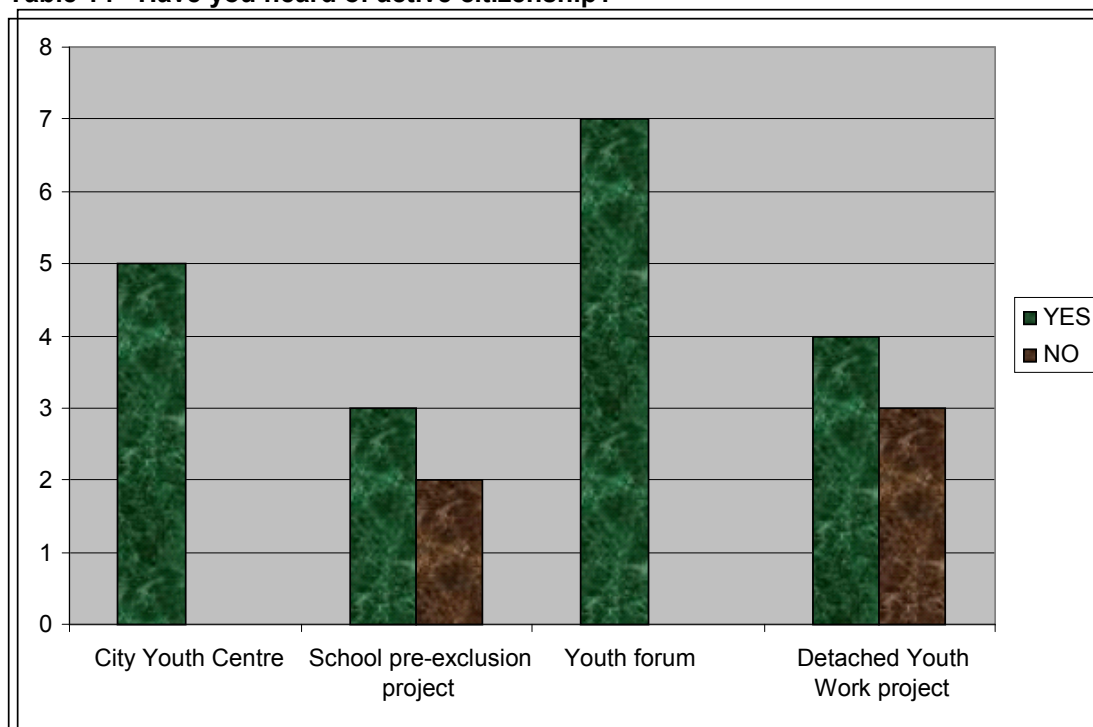
As indicated above, the focus groups were designed to be open discussions that enabled the researcher to ascertain how young people defined ‘active citizenship’ when asked to consider its meaning. This was an essential first step to exploring ‘meanings’ and ‘experience’ in line with the study aims. There was only a basic structure to this focus group session, with three key questions used to guide the respondents:

- What do you think ‘active citizenship’ means?
- Where have you heard the term?
- Do you consider yourself to be an ‘active citizen’?

## The meaning of active citizenship

The focus groups were opened with a vote that asked young people if they were familiar with the term ‘active citizenship’. Participants were invited to raise their hands and the results of this vote are presented in table 14:

**Table 14 - Have you heard of active citizenship?**



The table above indicates that most young people (n=19) were familiar with the term, especially in the youth forum where all seven participants were familiar with it, and the youth centre where all five were. Of those who had heard of active citizenship, many young people had heard it or learnt about it through one or more identifiable places. Most had come across the term at school (n=14) which given the timing of the study was unsurprising – citizenship had become part of the national curriculum in September 2002 and was beginning to filter through into school teaching. Other sources of citizenship knowledge were a youth worker (3) and a participation worker (4). Six young people could not recall or did not know where they had come across the idea, two had heard parents talk about it, and three had come across the term in the news.

Participants were initially asked to write down a key phrase or word that they associated with active citizenship. They were then asked to share with the group what they had written down. Despite some young people not being familiar with the term (n=5), all participants in the study offered contributions to the key question - how do participants define active citizenship?. This was largely because as soon as ideas were raised by participants in the group, others would add their own definitions or illustrate with their own examples. Even those who had indicated not hearing about the term still wrote something down. This process of deliberation and discussion was key to deciding to use focus groups (see *Methodology*). In this case, the concept or idea is not always understood but characteristics of it are.

Young people understood active citizenship in a number of different ways. For some it was related to some form of membership or status, for others it was a term used to describe various social responsibilities or behaviours. A small number related it directly to politics. These three broad categories were defined by reviewing the focus group transcripts for the ‘first definitions’ offered by participants and grouping these accordingly to similar themes. Table 15 presents the findings from this exercise where column one indicates the chosen classification for a range of examples (column 2) cited by young people in response to the question.

Table 15 - Primary definitions of active citizenship

Classification	Examples	Number of young people who defined it this way
Membership and Status	Being 'English' or 'British' Being part of society Belonging	6
Political	Rights Voting and elections Free speech	3
Social Responsibility and Behaviour	Being good Volunteering Charity work Being involved in the local area	15

This counting exercise provides an overview and each category will now be discussed in turn.

### Membership and status

Those young people who identified citizenship as being concerned with some form of membership did so in two ways. The first concerned national identity (being part of the country) and the second concerned a more general sense about being members of society or their local community. In the Detached Youth Work group, participants developed a discussion around citizenship and having a 'national identity'.

*Graham:* "Citizenship is about being part of a country. For me its being English because I'm English. You're a citizen if you're born here."

*Jason:* "Only if you're born here?...Do you think that people who aren't born here can also be citizens?"

*Sarah:* "They should have to pass tests like in America. You get a green card I think and then you can be part of America. I think the same should be here."

*Graham:* "I think anyone can live in our country.... but to be a citizen you do have to be born in the country. Its about who are you, you're English and being a citizen proves that."

Graham associated the idea of citizenship with a 'born into' national identity, whereas Sarah compared the membership model to 'joining' a national identity:

*Jason:* “Sarah, you mentioned tests before – what kind of tests do you mean?”

*Sarah:* “I don’t know... its something that was on the news and sounds like a good idea. You can test people to see if they really belong in this country and see if they are citizens or not.”

*Chris:* “Yeah but what do you test for?”

*Sarah:* “I said I don’t know but it would probably be about what you think of the royals or your prime minister or something like that. In America, they have to pray to their flag [laughter]. Seriously, they do.”

*Chris:* “I reckon people should do time in the army as a test of whether they would like to be a citizen or not.”

*Graham:* “I still say there’s a difference between being born here and moving here.”

In this thread, the idea of citizenship as an identity was seen as either something you are born into or something you had to prove. For Graham, it appeared to be very clear cut, citizenship was a ‘birth rite’ whereas Sarah and Chris suggested there were ways in which to induct migrants as citizens through various forms of testing. Young people were drawing on their own views but no reference was made to the formal status of British Citizenship.

Was there something distinct about being an ‘active’ citizen?

*Jason:* “The term on the flipchart is ‘active citizenship’. Do you think there is a difference between being a citizen, and being an active citizen?”

*Graham:* “Yeah of course. Active citizens are people who celebrate their country. Its about being proud of being English...”

*Ed:* “I disagree. I think that being active means being helpful or something like that. Being a member of society. You know society needs everyone to get involved to do work and not claim the dole and I think that’s what being active is about.”

Ed’s point about a more general membership of society was commonly defined in other groups who saw active citizenship in terms of ‘being part of society’, a feeling of ‘belonging’ or ‘being part of something’. Some of these definitions comprised specific activities (e.g. working) others did not.



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Examples of generalised belonging tended to indicate the person as ‘included’ within something:

“[Active citizenship] is being part of society, being a member of the society instead of being on your own. Part of a group.”

*(Michael, Pre-exclusion group)*

“Its about feeling like you’re part of something.”

*(Annika, Youth Forum)*

To what extent did Ed, Annika and Michael feel that they were members of society? They revealed interesting observations when asked if they felt they were ‘active citizens’. For Ed, it was clear that working was a significant feature of the active citizenship identity, and he was employed at the time of the study:

*Ed:* “Yeah I guess because I work and do my bit I’m active and involved in society. Its not like I’m unemployed or anything like that...”

Annika and Michael saw things differently. Both responded to the question with the view that they did not think of themselves as active citizens. Annika did not ‘feel part’ of her local area, and ultimately for her this was ‘society’:

*Annika:* “The society doesn’t want me to be part of it...people in my local area are always going on about how much trouble we cause and that’s why I don’t feel like I’m an active citizen...Young people can’t be active citizens if nobody thinks they fit in.”

Michael however did feel he ‘fitted in’ with a group – his friends. This view of belonging as part of a group of friends was evidenced in other contributions throughout the study. Young people identified themselves in relation to the groups of friends that they socialised with. Members of the youth forum illustrated this point:

*Megan:* “Being a social person is being active ... I’m always social with my friends so I suppose I’m part of society....”

*Tasha:* “Me too...people who aren’t active citizens are people who spend their time being inside, playing games on their own [laughter]...”

*Kevin:* “Loners.”

Membership, status and belonging definitions were therefore seen as:

- Holding a national identity.
- Doing certain acts that were seen as contributory to society.
- Being part of a community or society, in a generalised sense.
- Being social and part of a friendship group.

### **Social responsibility and behaviour**

The second set of examples was grouped under the broad heading of ‘social responsibility and behaviour’. It was by far the largest proportion of young people who felt that active citizenship had something to do with specific ‘pro-social’ behaviours and attitudes (‘being good’) and specific forms of volunteering or helping out. When broken down, they were of three sorts.

#### *Charity and formal voluntary work*

Acts of formal voluntary and charity work were seen as part of the same thing for young people. They defined these acts as work done in pursuit of a good cause and without financial reward. Generalised statements were offered, such as:

“Citizens are people who do good work for other people...they work for charities and do stuff for free.”

*(Karen, pre-exclusion project)*

Young people also identified specific experiences of undertaking voluntary and charity work, and associated this with evidence of ‘being’ an active citizen:

“[The school group] had to go on a trip to [residential home for older people] to do some painting and gardening. We didn’t get paid for it, it was just volunteering to help them out and to try and change the image because most old people hate [us]”

*(Megan, Youth Forum)*

“When I think of active citizen I think of my teacher’s project ...we had to go out to the park and clean up the rubbish all day...The paper came along and took photos and did a story on us and I was in the paper with my class. The teacher told us it was about being good citizens.”

*(Julie, pre-exclusion project)*

Other specific examples of volunteering included doing work for named charities. One young person was also involved in a church volunteering scheme, again helping older people who needed additional care. What the study did not fully ascertain was the reasons that young people felt that voluntary or charity work was important: whether they had carried it out or not. However, analysis of the transcripts often reveals some motivational aspects or other drivers. For example:

“It’s a **good thing** to help out...it proves to old people that we can be helpful and it helps them to **think about us differently**. It’s also just a **nice thing** to do.”

*(Megan, Youth Forum)*

The first element of why voluntary work was important (challenging views of young people) was reflected in other contributions by participants but the ‘nice thing to do’ that Megan suggested was more common. When talking either about their own experiences or the general notion of volunteering and being involved with charity work, young people generally saw these acts as virtuous. This rationale was also linked to ‘being helpful’ in a more local and informal way.

*Being helpful in the local area*

Young people across the four different groups felt that membership of their local area or community meant being helpful in some way or another. The examples here differed from the formal voluntary or charity work that they had highlighted since they tended to be more associated with everyday helping, keeping an eye out for neighbours and looking after friends or other members of the community. The overall theme of these contributions was one of ‘care’:

“Its about caring for people, looking after people and making sure they’re alright. It’s a bit like being part of charity or something but we’re all expected to do it by ourselves...it’s the right thing to do.”

*(Cassie, Youth Centre)*

But being helpful was not always felt to be possible or desirable. Young people felt that they could not always care for people in the community because of how they themselves were treated. Again, there was evidence of a belief that young people were excluded from their communities and this meant that they could not exercise the same duties as other people. This, from the youth forum:

*Kevin:* “We get told off all the time for stuff because we’re young and because people are prejudiced to us... The people who own the [local shop] are always complaining to the police about us and we get told to move on and go home....”

*Dave:* “Yeah...I feel why should we care for people and help them if we’re always told to piss off?”

Again, the motivations for helping out were hard to determine, and certainly there was not enough offered to draw clearly the reasons for engagement in helping others. Examples were offered of ‘generalised’ help, i.e. doing it because it’s the right thing to do. Other cases were offered where young people expected to get something in

return, though this was not always of monetary value. This exchange from the youth centre group:

*Ben:* “You look after your neighbours because **they do things for you...**”

*Jason:* “Can you give us an example?”

*Ben:* “There’s loads of stuff. Like I help do bits of shopping because [next door neighbour] lends us the lawnmower...**we do stuff, they do stuff...**”

*Simon:* “It’s the same in my street...my sister does babysitting for the kid next door and she gets paid for it and everything but they also look after our house when we’re away and stuff. I think **if we didn’t do those things they probably wouldn’t help us.**”

*Rita:* “It’s called scratching my back or something like that.”

### *‘Being good’*

For many young people, being an active citizen was synonymous with ‘being good’. They spoke about normative behaviours that were expected of active citizens, particularly in relation to specific behaviours and more general attitudes. Specific behaviours included not doing things that would cause problems for other people, such as not: ‘leaving a mess around the street’ (Michael, pre-exclusion project), ‘making noise’ (Dave, youth forum) and ‘not hanging around where people get disturbed’ (Ben, youth centre). More generalised attitudes included ‘being respectful’ and ‘being kind’ to people in their local community. These were not pinned to specific behaviours but were considered to be important qualities in an active citizen.

Young people related active citizenship to crime and anti-social behaviour, often because they were being exposed to the link through their learning:

“We’ve started doing citizenship at school and so far we look at things like crime and why it happens and what young people should do to stop it... and we have a local [police officer] come to the school to talk to us in our citizenship class and... he was telling us how we all had to avoid crime.”

*(Megan, Youth Forum)*

The issue of crime and drugs was highlighted by the Youth Centre group where one member in particular seemed to accept the assumption that young people were, by and large, involved in criminal activity:

*Cassie:* “The reasons we’re learning about citizenship at school is because most children are idiots or they just mess around and ... get into crime and drugs... They don’t have any self control or their parents don’t give a shit about them so they get into trouble all the time.”

*Becky:* “Not all kids are like that though...”

*Cassie:* “I didn’t say all did I? I said that most are in trouble...”

*Becky:* “Not most. I think that most people are alright actually, think about us and all your friends. They don’t do anything wrong.”

*Cassie:* “Yes they do, they get into shit all the time.”

*Becky:* “But not serious stuff, sometimes little things but nothing major. Its just part of being [interrupted]...its part of growing up...its normal to be a bit bad.”

*Ben:* “It depends what you think is bad. Some of my mates just [*knock on doors and run away*] but I know one guy broke into someone’s house.”

*Jason:* “So does that mean that you can only be an active citizen if you don’t get involved in crime?”

*Ben:* “Yeah that’s right. There are things you can do, silly stuff like what I said about knocking up ... anything more serious, proper crime and you’re not an active [citizen].”

In this dialogue, Ben provided a distinction that underpinned what sort of behaviours were likely to exclude you from being an active citizen. Certain aspects of what might be deemed ‘anti-social behaviour’ (‘knocking up’ in this case) were dismissed as part of being young, and growing up. Other, more serious crimes were seen as particularly problematic, and not indicative of active citizenship. This ‘continuum’ of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour was reflected in other discussions around citizenship.

### Political interpretations

Just three young people immediately associated active citizenship with politics, one of whom was in the city youth centre and the other two were in the youth forum. When entered into the group, these did spark off further discussion however. This exchange comes from the Youth Forum:

*Dave:* “It’s about having rights... Voting is one of them ... you get to choose who runs the country and the government.”

*Tasha:* “...right to speak and stuff like that.”

*Kelly:* “Free speech that’s called.. You can say what you want to people. Is that right? ... I can say if I don’t like someone or I can disagree if they say something I don’t like.”

*Tasha:* “but you can’t be racist and stuff like that. You’re not allowed to call certain people things that they might not like because its stereotyping people...”

Dave’s definition clearly locates ‘voting’ as a ‘right’ and a ‘choice’ as opposed to a duty or responsibility. Fixing it within this definition enabled other rights to be discussed (free speech). Rights in this case linked to the notion of ‘respect’ (not being racist).

The youth centre group participant who immediately identified active citizenship with ‘politics’ referred to knowledge required for understanding how laws are made.

*Rita:* “[an active citizen] is about knowing how politics works... like how the government makes laws and what the laws mean for teenagers. How we know

its not legal to buy fags, and who decides ... If we want to change it we've got to know who makes laws."

Rita not only suggested that we needed to know who made laws, she implied that young people could challenge them through her proposition that she could 'change laws'. I drew out the discussion a bit further on into the group.

*Jason:* "Rita, earlier you said it was important to ... understand the law and how it is made. Does that mean you can challenge laws that you don't agree with? I mean can you change them?"

*Rita:* "I don't think we can... I think mostly we have to obey laws. That's also part of being an active citizen as well."

*Cassie:* "Rita's right. You've got to obey laws but you do also need to know how they are made. We should be taught about that in school."

*Jason:* "I'm sorry to keep on this point but is there any influence you can have over the laws?"

*Ben:* "Sure... you can choose not to obey them if you don't agree with them I guess."

*Rita:* "And you get to choose the government who make the laws so I guess that's one way of getting the laws you want."

[Pause]

*Jason:* "By voting?"

*Cassie:* "Yes..."

*Rita:* "Yup. But voting is only for adults over... I think its over 18... so you don't really have power to change laws if you are younger..."

Politically active citizenship in this case was associated with understanding, obeying and challenging laws. Rita was clear that in order to understand laws, you needed to have a sense of understanding about government. She also saw a role in deciding how laws are formed through government, and how government can be elected. However, the recognition that young people couldn't vote implied a powerlessness in respect of challenging laws. Ben's suggested of disobedience was an alternative to obedience.



In the youth forum group, the idea of participation was highlighted by a member of the group:

*Dave:* “I think the most important thing is having a say...like it says on our forum badges...having a voice so that you can vote and decide who runs the country but also having a say on things that you have opinions on...”

*Jason:* “Can I ask you if you get a chance to influence things?”

*Dave:* “Well we will do with this forum...we’ve got a council meeting coming up and we want to try and get a skate park for the local area and I think that’s where we can make sure young people’s opinions are heard...”

*Kevin:* “I don’t think we’ll get it...”

*Megan:* “Nor do I actually. I think it’s a waste of time. Nobody ever listens to us.”

Dave responded with optimism stating that there had ‘never been the forum before’ and that this was a chance to give young people ‘a voice’. However, young people generally recognised that their ability or opportunity to ‘have a say’ was constrained by their age. We return to the youth centre group:

*Ben:* “The reason that voting is for adults only is that the youth aren’t trusted to vote. They think we irresponsible and that we’re immature. That means that we don’t have the power that adults have to change things.”

*Cassie:* “Ben’s right...”

*Rita:* “I think that’s why young people don’t have enough ... don’t know enough about politics because we’re not mature enough. Because we’re too young, we don’t get to make decisions about politics.”

The relationship between politics and active citizenship was relatively thin on the ground in this small study. It was understood in terms of the processes of laws and elections, but was not significantly developed as a main theme for young people. More generalised notions of ‘having a say’ were put forward, but examples of how

this might be enacted were disputed by members of the youth forum. Age was seen as the primary barrier.

### **The attributes of an active citizen**

In the second part of the focus group, young people were asked to split into pairs or threes and work up a list of some key attributes of an active citizen. The following guidance was given to each group:

If you can have a think about the discussion you were having before break. I would like you now to make a list of the different things you think are important for an active citizen. I would like you to list these as three different things if you can.

**KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:** These are the things that you need to learn in order to be an active citizen. What things do you think you have to learn at school for instance, and what skills do you need to practice?

**PERSONAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS:** These are the things that I think of as personal qualities. You may have certain beliefs about how society should be, for example you may believe in world peace, or have a religious belief. What sort of attitudes or beliefs do you think an active citizen should have?

Don't worry if you can't think which box to put your ideas into, we can sort those out later. I'll come around to each pair and see how you are getting on and if you get stuck, just ask and I'll try to help.

The different flipchart lists have been compiled into table 16. The only terms that were rejected from this list were those considered repetitive. Note: this may in fact alter the findings, since repetition of concepts may imply a greater importance than others.

Table 16 - The attributes of active citizenship

Knowledge and skills	Attitudes and behaviours
Communication Knowing about the law Knowing human rights How to vote Problem solving Knowing about the council Knowing about the government Thinking skills	Being able to hang around with mates Looking after/caring for family Looking after/caring for mates Being kind Working for a charity Volunteering Looking after old people Not leaving litter Being generally respectful Giving to charity Having a say Helping neighbours Helping people in need Being a leader Deciding on things that affect you in your local area Being involved Standing up for young people Equality Being good Working Independence Self-control Respecting adults/elders Being polite Having power Helping friends with problems Staying out of trouble Obeying the law Looking up to teachers Earning money Being listened to

The most immediate observation from the compiled list was that young people more easily identified attitudes, behaviours and experiences than they did the knowledge and skills required for active citizenship. These lists are further explored in the second part of this chapter, where the coding group ultimately developed ‘level one concept’ headings that combined many of the attributes identified above.

### **Brief commentary on overarching themes and questions**

The differences in how young people interpret the term ‘active citizenship’ do indeed reflect its contradictions and complexities. Despite my own previous assumptions prior to commencing the PhD, most young people did not define citizenship in

relation to membership or national identity<sup>4</sup>. These young people defined active citizenship as ‘good will’ activities and behaviour. These were, more often than not, located in the community context.

There is an overarching theme of inclusion and exclusion apparent in the definitions (Lister 2003). The extent to which young people felt able or willing to contribute to their local communities or to be involved in charity/voluntary work was dependent on how others treated them. Note the comments particularly about being helpful but not having this recognised by adults in the community. Inclusion and exclusion were also apparent in discussions about membership and national identity, particularly in the qualifications of who is entitled to be called a citizen and whether young people even consider themselves to be citizens.

What is also clear from these initial findings is that young people do engage in a variety of what might be termed ‘socially responsible’ behaviours and activities. These encompass a range of activities from formal volunteering through to helping out in the local neighbourhood. This certainly reflects the work of previous studies around social participation, in particular how the young people in Lister et al’s (2002) study engaged in a wide range of ‘social participation practices’. A priority for investigation in stage two will be to assess the extent and range of activities that young people determine to be ‘active citizenship’. A further issue will be to try and assess for ‘motivation’ and ‘outcomes’: literally why do young people do their activities and what do they expect to get out of them?

What is perhaps not surprising is the extent to which active citizenship is not immediately associated with political literacy and behaviour (see, for example Lister et al 2002; NfER 2006a). This is all the more interesting given that most young people had started to engage in at least some form of discussion about citizenship at school. Given that a key aim of *The Crick Report* is to address the supposed political deficits in young people, this raises questions about the extent to which the political literacy component is being adequately addressed. Granted, this is a small proportion of young

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<sup>4</sup> Captured in an essay written for my undergraduate degree where I all but defined citizenship as associated with ‘status’ and ‘belonging’, rather than seeing it as a series of active behaviours or attitudes (Wood 2002).

people and we would be foolish to make generalisations. However, early research into the effectiveness of citizenship education has found political literacy to be less of a priority in favour of teaching young people about personal and social issues and behaviour (e.g. Henn et al 2005).

The distinction between what is ‘political’ and what is ‘being involved in your local community’ is certainly worthy of some debate, since it concerns what we mean by politics. Many commentators are beginning to challenge the notion that politics should only be measured in terms of its traditional components (such as voting, being a member of a political party) favouring instead a more inclusive definition that recognises the involvement of young people in a range of political practices (see chapter three for a fuller discussion). However, the question remains – do young people define *these* different models of political activity *as* politics? Or put another way, to what extent do young people feel that their involvement is an act of politics?

### **Developing concepts for stage two**

The final component of stage one was designed to establish the concepts that would be used to guide focus groups in stage two. A total of nine young people drawn from two focus groups and the research tools group were involved in two workshops.

The purpose of these groups was to firstly group the series of attributes, components and skills that had been identified in the first round of focus groups together. Upon finding a ‘group’ for each of the set of terms, the young people were then asked to give a heading for each one. This heading would form the ‘level one concepts’ that would be used in stage two on a series of flash cards. This grouping exercise was relatively straight forward, with only some level of debate about the appropriateness of the level one concepts chosen. Key to the success of stage two was the appropriateness of the language used to describe each level one concept. In this respect, the young people involved in the workshop chose the terminology and the researcher did not suggest any alterations. The grouping and the chosen concept names are indicated in table 17:

Table 17 - Final concepts by group

1. Knowing Your Rights
<b>Standing up for young people</b> <b>Equality</b> <b>Knowing about the law</b> <b>Knowing human rights</b> <b>How to vote</b>
2. Responsibilities
<b>Not leaving litter</b> <b>Being involved</b> <b>Knowing about the council</b> <b>Knowing about the government</b>
3. Control
<b>Independence</b> <b>Self-control</b> <b>Having power</b> <b>Being able to influence other people</b>
4. Decision Making
<b>Being a leader</b> <b>Deciding on things that affect you in your local area</b>
5. Having a Say
<b>Having a say</b> <b>Being listened to</b>
6. Problem Solving
<b>Problem solving</b> <b>Communication</b> <b>Thinking skills</b>
7. Working
<b>Working</b> <b>Earning money</b>
8. Volunteering and Charity Work
<b>Working for a charity</b> <b>Volunteering</b>
9. Respect
<b>Being generally respectful</b> <b>Being good</b> <b>Respecting adults/elders</b> <b>Being polite</b> <b>Looking up to teachers</b>
10. Socialising
<b>Being able to hang around with mates</b>
11. Caring for family
<b>Looking after/caring for family</b>
12. Caring for friends
<b>Looking after/caring for mates</b> <b>Helping friends with problems</b>
13. Caring for others
<b>Looking after old people</b> <b>Being kind</b> <b>Giving to charity</b> <b>Helping neighbours</b> <b>Helping people in need</b>
14. Obeying the Law
<b>Staying out of trouble</b> <b>Obeying the law</b>

It was in the second of the workshop sessions that young people decided which of the key terms were to be used in stage two of the study. Here they were asked to review the ‘level one concepts’ they had formed and using a process of diamond ranking, were asked to prioritise what they felt were the most important qualities associated with being an active citizen. It is to this second workshop that we now turn our attention.

### **Ranking the level one concepts**

Prioritising the concepts proved to be a stimulating and engaging exercise: the process of deliberation as to what stayed in and what was rejected from the further stages of the study invited a lot of further discussion concerning different perspectives of what constitutes active citizenship.

The second workshop was based around the concept of ‘diamond ranking’: an exercise used in consultative work to ascertain the relative importance of different issues. The researcher had used diamond ranking in work with young people before, but had not applied it as a research tool. Diamond ranking is so named because the ranking template is literally based on the shape of a diamond. The diamond developed for this study presented young people with nine boxes (and in effect, nine options) for them to place one of the categories in. Categories were listed on individual post-it notes. The top of the diamond signified ‘most important’ and the bottom end ‘least important’.

Participants and the researcher agreed that:

- Just six (i.e. those concepts in the top section of the diamond) would be used in the second stage of the study.
- If the categories they had chosen could be changed to accommodate other categories, then they could make alterations to their original choices. To

illustrate ‘green’ and ‘red’ may fit into a broader category of ‘colours’, changing two into one.

- They had as much time as they needed in order to do the exercise, and they should deliberate and debate if they did not agree with the emerging diamond.
- The role of the researcher was to answer questions wherever possible about what young people had been saying that led to the initial list of concepts.

The young people involved in the group completed a diamond after just over one hour of working together. They had produced several ‘attempts’ before arriving at a consensus. The following findings illustrate some of these changes in thinking that led to the final concepts for use in stage two. Data during these sessions was captured in two ways:

- The deliberations were audio-taped.
- Flipchart notes and diamond ranking attempts were photographed by the researcher and numbered on a field note.

## Findings

The key concepts being debated were devised by the same group in workshop one:

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Knowing Your Rights | 8. Volunteering and Charity Work |
| 2. Responsibilities    | 9. Respect                       |
| 3. Control             | 10. Socialising                  |
| 4. Decision Making     | 11. Caring for family            |
| 5. Having a Say        | 12. Caring for friends           |
| 6. Problem Solving     | 13. Caring for others            |
| 7. Working             | 14. Obeying the Law              |

The first attempt at ranking the concepts happened with some speed and with one young person (*Graham*) tending to take a lead. Graham literally took the post-it notes



and said where he thought they should go, placing the first five on before someone interrupted him. His initial presentation was to put ‘Obeying the Law’ at the top with ‘Caring for family’ and ‘Caring for friends’ as joint second.

*Ed:* “I think you’re going too fast for me to take it in... I don’t think that caring for friends is more important than other things like working [group laughter] ....no I’m serious – you need to work or you can’t care for your friends. You need money to care for people.”

*Tasha:* “You always go on about money [group laughter] I don’t think that’s what we mean by care for friends, remember? It was about looking out for each other and taking care of mates when they’re having a rough time... You don’t always need money for that sort of stuff.”

As the debate continued, Graham and Shelley started to take responsibility for applying the post-it notes to the flipchart. After ten minutes, the group had arrived at a ‘first attempt’ (figure 12, over).

The group initially decided that ‘obeying the law’ was at the top of list because they could be penalised for not doing so. Some of the proponents for this decision offered convincing cases:

*Graham:* “If you don’t obey the law how can you work? You’ll be in prison. You can’t care for your family and friends and you lose your rights if you’re in prison so obeying the law is the first one.”

And:

*Shelley:* “The law is the most important thing because everything else is only possible because of the law.”

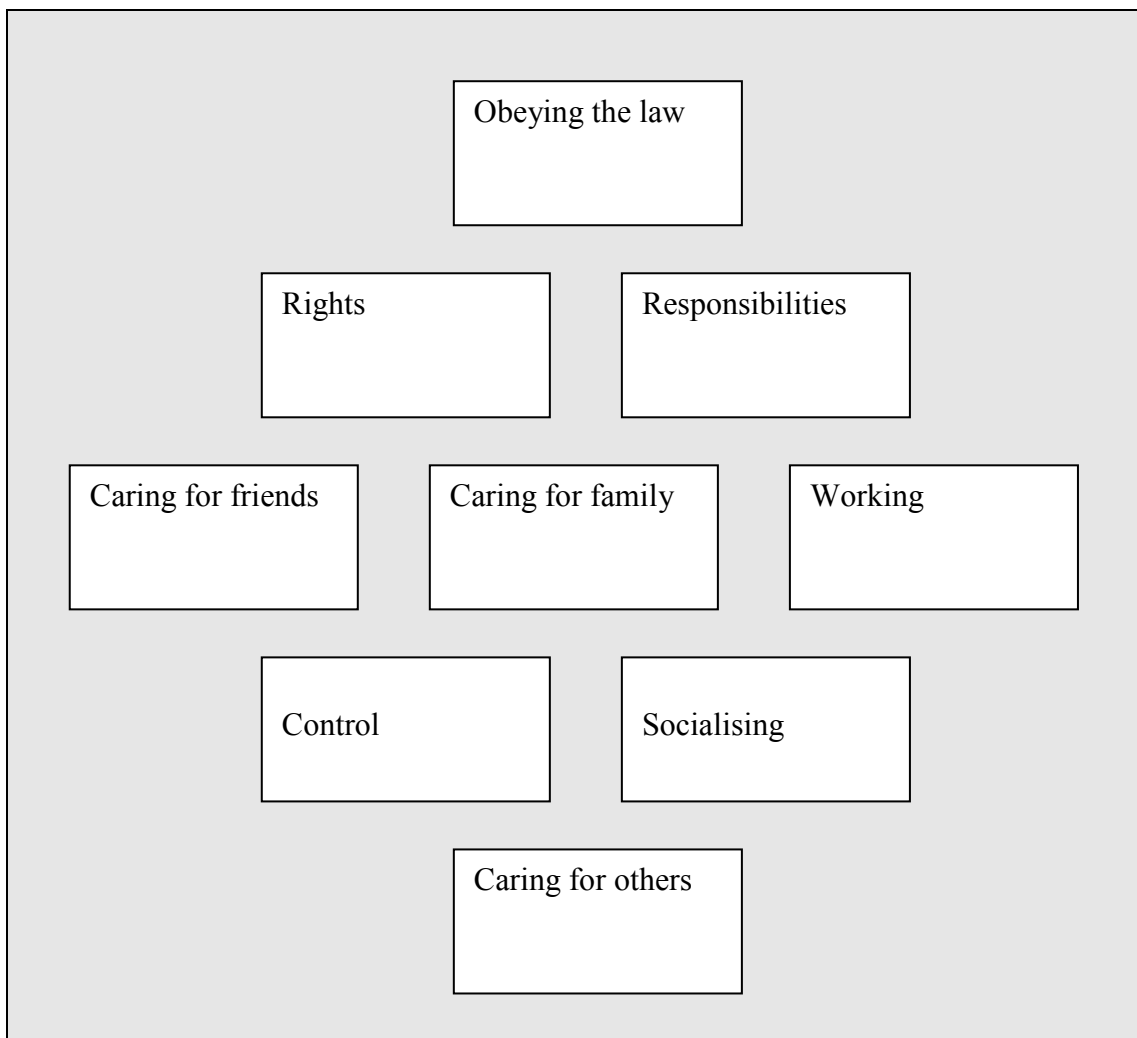
However, one participant suggested that this might actually constitute a ‘responsibility’:

*Aaron:* “That’s what the word means, being responsible it’s a duty to obey the law something that is expected of you.”

*Lucy:* “And rights are as well. You get rights when the police stop you and prisoners get human rights. You also get rights if you obey the law. So rights is about the law.”

*Aaron:* “Sure but its more about responsibilities isn’t it. We’re always told at school that you’re supposed to follow laws. If you don’t then yeah your rights get taken away you get banged up.”

**Figure 12- First complete diamond**



Aaron proposed swapping ‘obeying the law’ with ‘responsibility’ and the group agreed.

*Raj:* “Responsibility can mean anything really it could be all of these things. If we are talking about citizenship then being responsible is probably at the top.”

A similar debate began to spring up about ‘working’:

*Aaron:* “Think about this... If you got to work you are less likely to do crime aren’t you? Because why does [Steve] do crime? [laughter] Because he can’t afford to buy things he wears trampy clothes [laughter]... I think working is more important than obeying the law.”

*Ed:* “I think [work is] a responsibility as well. Working is really important to me, its really important to have money in the house and my own money so I think its responsible to be working... don’t want to live on hand-outs. Why can’t we put it as part of that?”

*Jason:* “Is there anything to stop you putting ‘work’ inside ‘responsibility’?”

*Steve:* “Dunno, work can be a right as well can’t it?”

*Shelley:* “I don’t agree. I think work is mainly a responsibility and the more I think about it, the more I think work is just about being responsible. Think about what your Mum and Dad always say about getting a job so you can be responsible.”

*Jason:* “Remember that you can change the categories whenever you like if you want to make less of them. There are five left off the diamond.”

The intervention by the researcher clearly changed the focus of the discussion and soon the group were examining ways in which concepts could be better formed. The first target was ‘care for others’. The group were uncertain as the origins of this third

type of care, so went back to the original flipcharts used in session one. ‘Care for others’ had comprised lists of looking after old people, being kind, helping neighbours and other such examples. It was different from family and friendship groups, but the notion of ‘care’ was what bound them together. The group decided to re-categorise ‘care for family’ and ‘care for friends’ under this other heading of ‘care for others’. A convincing point was put forward by Megan:

*Megan:* “Others can mean anyone can’t it. It can mean your friends, family or strangers or neighbours or whoever. Its up to people to decide who they care for and ‘others’ means anyone but yourself. If you only care for yourself, then you’re selfish and not part of citizenship.”

The group also incorporated ‘obeying the law’ into the heading ‘responsibilities’.

The categories were now listed as:

1. Knowing Your Rights
2. Responsibilities
3. Control
4. Decision Making
5. Having a Say
6. Problem Solving
7. Working
8. Volunteering and Charity Work
9. Respect
10. Socialising
11. Caring for others

The group continued to discuss the diamond as it stood. There were now two gaps created by the amalgamation of ‘care for others’. There was a question raised about retaining ‘socialising’ as an important feature of active citizenship. Lucy could not understand why it was on there, but Kelly reminded her that it had been part of being in the community, ‘hanging around with your mates’.

*Lucy:* “I know its important but it isn’t something we’re taught when we are taught citizenship...hanging out with our mates is something we do for ourselves.”

After some discussion, the group decided to take socialising off the diamond. The idea of ‘control’ was proposed to be moved up into one of the vacant spaces created by the change to care. Aaron reminded the group that ‘control’ had been really important when they were grouping the lists, it concerned ‘being in control’ and ‘having power’ to ‘influence others’ so that you could make a contribution to your local area. The group accepted the change. Aaron also felt that ‘decision making’ should not have been left out:

*Aaron:* “Decision making is really important especially in our youth forum...if you are going to be an active citizen, you need to be able to make decisions about things otherwise you are not a leader.”

*Lucy:* “So is charity work ... that’s a really important part of being active citizens. Can we take them all off and try again please? But leave the socialising off?”

The group took all of the concepts off the diamond and Lucy was responsible for putting them back on as the group discussed what should be included. I took the opportunity to remind the group that they were trying to define what they felt were the most important aspects of ‘active citizenship’ and to try and frame the diamond in that way.

The most interesting category to be included in the second attempt at the diamond (fig 13, over) was ‘respect’ which had been ignored the first time around.

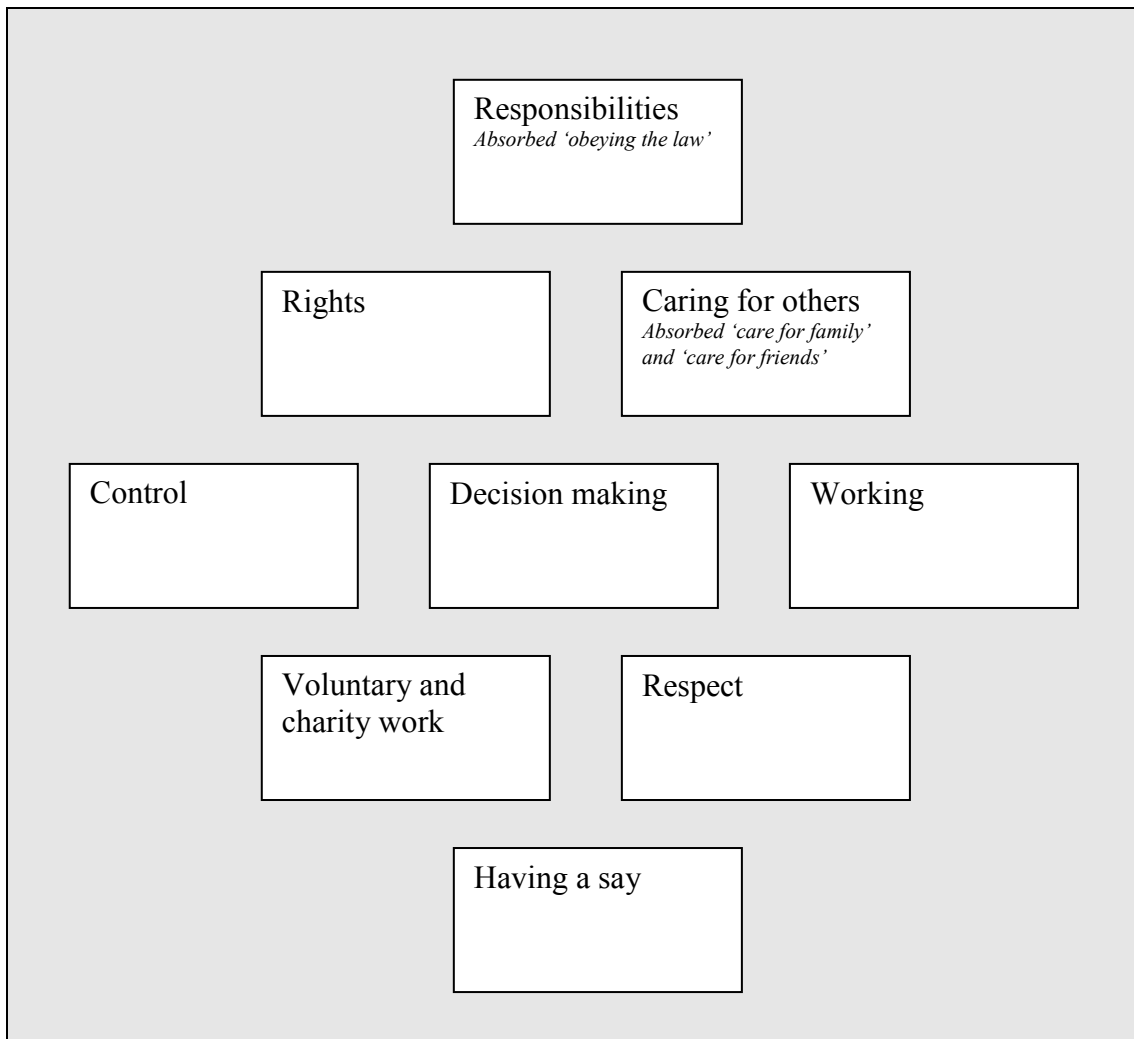
*Jason:* “Respect wasn’t there before...”

*Steve:* “I can’t believe it was missed off...its so important for people to respect us or else nobody can take you seriously...”

*Aaron:* “Respect is everything really. You need to be respected by your family, by friends but also in work and other things. It should stay on the list.”

Respect was discussed in terms of ‘being respected’ but Kelly also reminded the group that they had indicated respect was *‘both ways... we’ve got to be respectful to our parents and to look up to police and people like that if we’re active citizens’*. Ed agreed: *‘When we decided on that word it was because people had talked about looking up to teachers and adults in charge. That’s about showing respect.’*

**Figure 13 - Second complete diamond**



There was a relationship drawn between respect and rights, with Shelley suggesting that rights are rewarded to those who are respected. Shelley asked whether respect should actually be moved up the diamond, and swapped with ‘decision making’. But after some discussion the group determined that you often needed to make decisions in order to be respected:

*Tasha:* “Its like Steve said about being taken seriously. Being taken seriously is about how well you can make decisions for yourself. I’m choosing my [A-level options] at the moment because I want to stay on at school and I want to do it by myself and my Mum is well proud of me for being mature about it. That’s respect isn’t it.”

Or respectful:

*Steve:* “... You decide who you look up to, you make decisions about choosing to respect someone or not.”

Still the group felt respect was too far down the diamond. They had all agreed that it should move up but were unsure as to what should be relegated in its place. Earlier in the workshop the group had declared that work was an essential characteristic of active citizenship: they were almost unanimous in upholding ‘working’ as virtuous. It was Tasha who made the link between the group and the notion of working as a component of their *current* active citizenship:

*Tasha:* “Working was important yeah... For earning money like Ed [laughter] and someone even said buying a house. But how old are we? How many people actually work at the moment...”

*Kelly:* “Are you saying its ok not to work?”

*Tasha:* “No I’m saying that we’re too young to do proper work... Jason was asking about us and active citizenship. Asking about youths and active citizenship not adults...we’ll all have to work when we’re adult citizens.”

I asked the group how many of them were involved in some form of paid work at the moment and of the nine, three currently were in regular employment of some form or another.

*Ed:* “I know most of you don’t work but I still feel like its really important. I said earlier that it’s a responsibility to work and think that we should keep work but put it inside responsibility. Shelley?”

Ed had motioned to Shelley as she had agreed with him earlier that work was a key ‘responsibility’. The group agreed to incorporate ‘working’ as part of ‘responsibility’ rather than dismiss it entirely. The same process of elimination was applied to voluntary and charity work which the group felt was important, but not significant enough to be outside of responsibilities, despite some reservations:

*Lucy:* “I disagree...charity work is really important for citizenship. Being a volunteer shows you do things for other people without thinking about yourself.”

*Aaron:* “So how is that not a responsibility?”

*Lucy:* “It is a responsibility...but it’s a different kind of thing from working and obeying the law. Working earns you money and obeying the law keeps you out of trouble... You...”

*Aaron:* “I still don’t see the difference...”

*Lucy:* “Well don’t interrupt me then! [laughter].”

*Jason:* “Carry on Lucy...with your point I mean.”

*Lucy:* “I can’t remember my stupid point because of being interrupted by him.”

*Kelly:* “I think Lucy’s a bit right – she probably meant that you have to work and you have to obey laws but you don’t have to do charity work.”



*Aaron:* “Yeah but responsibilities don’t...I mean they’re not always things you are forced to do are they? Otherwise, stuff that’s written on that list like being involved shouldn’t have been put on that list in the first place. I think we should just include voluntary work in responsibilities...”

*Jason:* “Does everyone feel comfortable with that...Aaron suggests moving charity and voluntary work into responsibilities.”

Lucy was somewhat ambushed by Aaron which may have disguised an important objection. The group however opted to follow Aaron’s lead and incorporate ‘voluntary and charity work’ into ‘responsibilities’.

The unique categories were now listed as:

1. Knowing Your Rights
2. Responsibilities
3. Control
4. Decision Making
5. Having a Say
6. Problem Solving
7. Respect
8. Caring for others

At this point, the group were relatively comfortable with the diamond (see fig 14, over). The concepts were now listed with only two in the lower area (‘problem solving’ and ‘having a say’):

*Jason:* “Those two at the bottom...are you all comfortable with those being left out of the next stage of the study? It’s only the top six that can go on. That means no more of having a say or problem solving.”

The group debated for a while. Problem solving was considered to be considerably less important for the group. Raj suggested that the skills listed under problem solving could be used anywhere:

*Raj*: “Communication is part of decision making, its part of rights and all of the other things. I don’t see why it has to have its own bit really. That’s the same as having a say anyway.”

*Ed*: “Feels like a waste of time having it there...you need to be able to solve problems to get respect and to care for your mates.”

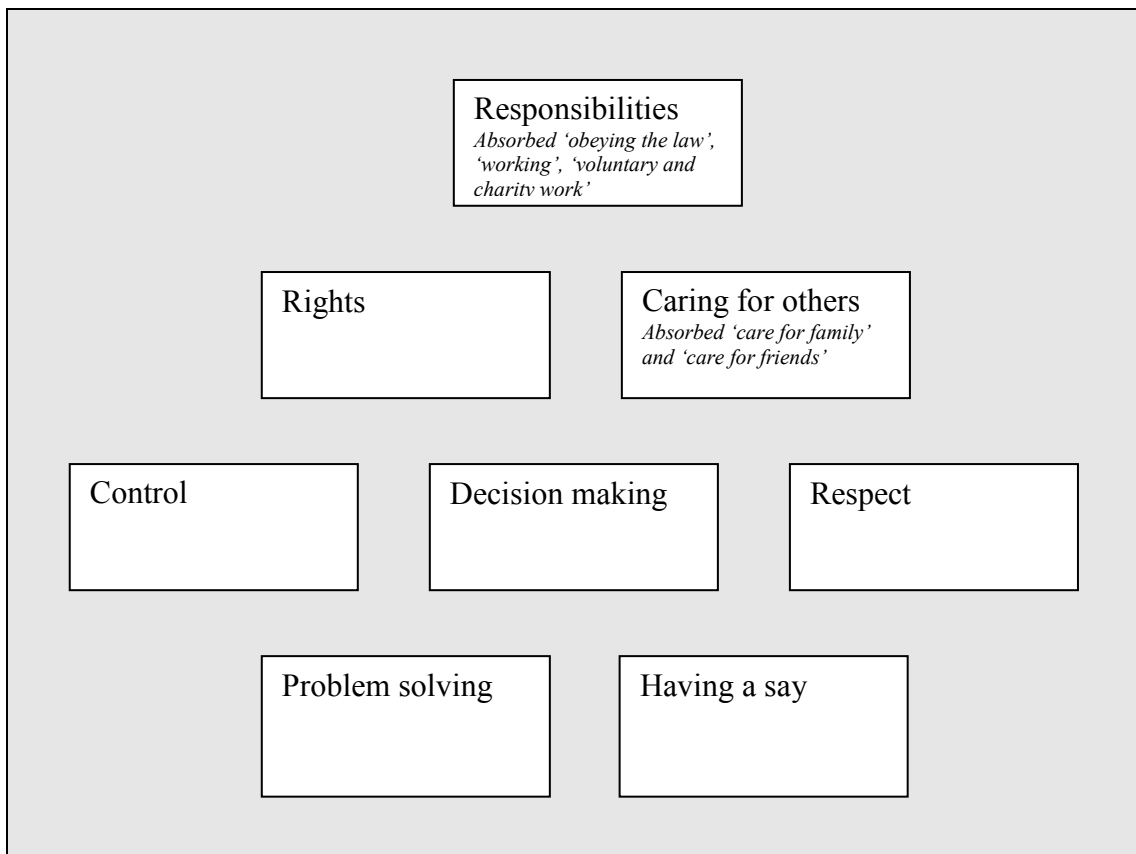
*Jason*: “Does that not mean it’s a more important category than the others?”

*Ed*: “It’s not though...its...”

*Raj*: “What I meant is its just part of all of them really. Like having a say.”

‘Having a say’ was, in this case, felt to be too much like ‘respect’ and ‘decision making’ to have its own place. Aaron suggested it should come off the diamond altogether, but Tasha said that it should stay on as one of the less important categories.

**Figure 14 - Final complete diamond**



The final complete diamond was the one decided and agreed by the group. As a last reassurance, the researcher asked for a vote by way of approving it. If anyone in the group did not agree with the prioritisation, we could revisit the concepts. All of the group voted that they were happy for it to be the tool for stage two of the study.

Therefore, six categories were felt to be most important to this group of young people as components ‘active citizenship’. The categories had been drawn from focus group discussions about how active citizenship is defined. These six ‘level one concepts’ would be put forward to be tested for how young people in different contexts understand and experience them. In chapter seven, the second stage of the fieldwork is presented and analysed.

## 7 Findings: The Experience of Active Citizenship

This chapter discusses and analyses key findings from the second stage of data collection. As set out in the previous chapter, stage one of the study was concerned with establishing definitions of active citizenship. Young people employed grouping and diamond ranking exercises to define and order key concepts that they associated with what it means to be an active citizen. Through a process of deliberation, the six ‘level one concepts’ for further study were identified as:

- Rights
- Responsibilities
- Care for Others
- Decision Making
- Respect
- Control

Chapter six details the process that led to the development and saturation of the six level one concepts. The concepts were devised by young people and based on their groupings of stage one data.

The purpose of stage two was to use the level one concepts to initiate a series of discussions around further definitions and to investigate further the experiences of young people. Each concept was reproduced as a flashcard and semi-structured prompts were designed to support young people in engaging in the discussions. As outlined in chapter five, the researcher explored:

1. Definitions of the concepts with real world experiences and examples.
2. The conditions under which the concept was experienced.
3. The constraints that limited or negated the concept.

The six level one concepts were discussed over two focus group sessions with each of the groups who joined the study in stage two. A total of 69 young people took part in

at least the first of two focus groups for stage two of the study, with seven dropping out before the second group. This represents a small attrition rate. There were 31 young women and 38 young men involved in this stage of the study. Two young women and five young men did not return for the second group. For reasons of continuity, potential participants who expressed an interest to be involved at the second group meeting were declined. The groups represented a range of settings and contexts which are detailed in this chapter (see page 231 onwards). It is also important to note that in this second stage, participants inherited the concepts generated in stage one and this may have limited the possibility for the second group to offer their own primary definitions. Further, the primacy of social responsibilities may reflect dominant definitions of active citizenship (further explored below and in chapter eight).

### **Themes and structure of the chapter**

The dataset from stage two of the study is voluminous. There was a total of 18 focus groups (based on nine separate groups meeting twice) with a large participant group. In each focus group, six concepts were discussed. Presenting each concept in depth and detail would require more space than is allowed within the confines of a thesis so there is some degree of selection about the representation of findings in this study. The advice of Strauss and Corbin has been followed, in that ‘not every event or incident in the data must be traced out extensively. To do so would be exhaustive and would complicate the analytic explanation with unnecessary detail’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 189). To set the parameters, the researcher remained within the frame of the original research question: to investigate how young people define and experience active citizenship. In the literature review, several important themes emerged and these have been developed further in the analysis of data explored in this chapter.

#### *Young people’s understanding, awareness and experience of the level one concepts*

Using the approach to analysis set out in chapter five, transcripts were coded for detail about types and properties and these provide illuminating insights into how young people understand and experience the concepts. This chapter therefore places

emphasis on definitions and experiences in order to build an overall understanding of range and difference in relation to the level one concepts.

*What conditions and constraints influence the awareness and experience of a concept?*

The study also set out to investigate the conditions under which a concept occurs and the constraints that may limit or negate it. In order to do this, the data has been investigated in relation to several contextual influences and mediating factors. Each discussion engages with analysis of these factors.

The following themes are therefore explored within this chapter:

1. How young people define and experience responsibility, the most common types of responsibility and how responsibility differs according to the context in which it is experienced.
2. The relationship between general social participation as a form of responsibility and another level one concept, care for others.
3. Types of decision making, the experience of decision making in different contexts and its relationship to the concept of control.

In addition, a number of young people were involved in institutional programmes that promoted aspects of active citizenship (see participant groups, page 231). These groups were selected as sites of specific interest for comparative discussion in the forth theme – an analysis of the experience of young people engaged in institutions.

*Alternative themes*

The degree of selection means that other lines of enquiry have not been pursued. This is largely on account of the limitations of space, time and resource – factors inherent in a PhD small-scale qualitative study. The researcher intends to address some of these through re-analysis of the existing data (see concluding chapter) but acknowledges that other themes could have been pursued. These include:

- A more detailed exploration of the types, conditions and constraints of the other level one concepts, and in particular the question of rights. Young people's definition and experience of rights was limited during the focus group explorations and this may be reflective of how the context constructs or narrows the possibility of expressing strong ideas associated with rights. This issue is addressed through further analysis in chapter eight.
- The differences in gender which may have provided alternative perspectives on some of the key findings of this thesis. Gender was recorded systematically throughout the study and yet there is no consistent approach to comparing findings along gender lines.

Other lines of enquiry have not been pursued on account of the limitations in sample or data collection. Some of these will be subsequently addressed in the author's future research plans (see concluding chapter).

### *Presentation of the findings*

This chapter presents an overview of the key findings in the order set out above, and organised in three sections. Each section contains detail of the approach taken to analysis and is closed with a summary of the key findings. Tables and figures have been used to show the results from database queries, and quotations from participants have been used throughout. All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

In chapter eight, two overarching themes that enable us to better understand young people's active citizenship are explored in detail with reference to the findings. These emerge from the data and concern the importance of context and the interplay between awareness and activity. Chapter nine concludes the thesis by drawing the relationship between this study and the previous literature, setting out the contribution to the discipline of social policy and highlighting further areas for research investigation.

## Pen picture of participant groups

Inner City Youth Project			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
4	3	4	3
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>7</b>
Attrition			0

The Inner City Youth Project provided a range of services for young people aged 5 to 19 and was housed in a local community centre, managed by (but with services independent from) a church. Children would attend a subsidised childcare scheme during the day and from 5pm onwards a series of youth activities targeted at the older age group would take place. Young people were recruited from the general youth club which took place two nights a week for around three hours each session.

The project was funded by the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) designed to target the most 'at risk' young people usually based on the criteria of employability. The majority of young people attending the project were from a social housing estate just across the road from the community centre. ONS data based on the Indices of Deprivation 2007 indicates that the area is in the higher band of deprivation, with education and living environment scoring most high. Data from a neighbourhood profile obtained through Upmystreet.com also indicates family income and degree level education to be comparatively low. The NSF was instituted to support 'disaffected and disengaged young people in areas of high deprivation back into education, training or employment'<sup>5</sup>. As a result, the project was responsible for collecting data on young people who attended, tracking their progress through accredited leisure and training opportunities and recording outcomes.

Of interest, young people who attended the ICYP were predominately white in their ethnic origin. This was particularly interesting given that the centre is less than one mile from the city's most concentrated South Asian population. ONS data at neighbourhood level only records differences in religion, with Hindus representing the

<sup>5</sup> see <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/youngpeople/NSF.html>



largest group (at three times the level for the entire city and forty times the level for England). Most young people at the centre attended a local secondary school (less than 1 mile from the project). In 2001, the school was attended by 1211 pupils of mixed gender, with four fifths of students identified as Indian origin (many of whom were forth generation British Asians). Of all the programmes run by the centre, the only one that was notably absent of Asian participants was the youth programme.

The immediate area also included a range of local shops including a supermarket where young people would frequently congregate when the club was closed. The local recreational park was used by the project during summer evenings for sports-based activities but was otherwise not generally used by the young people.

<b>Rural Youth Club Youth Committee</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
6	3	5	3
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>9</b>
Attrition			1

The Rural Youth Club was based in a rural town with a population of about 1500. The town's main economic drivers were tourism and farming. According to the neighbourhood profile obtained from Upmystreet.com, the area comprises family incomes rated as high with high levels of home ownership, representative of 2.99% of the population described as 'comfortably off, middle-aged people living outside of major towns'. As a result, the town appears to be low in all indicators of deprivation except access to housing and services. In terms of ethnicity (recorded at ward level), ONS data indicates that 88.4% of people were classified as white, in line with the national average estimates for mid-2006. Children aged 0-15 comprises 18.4% of the total population, with the highest age group aged 45-69.

The community college is based in the town centre and approximately 1000 young people aged between 14 and 19 attended during the period that the researcher visited. The school reports higher than national average results in GCSE (at just fewer than 60% attainment) but a persistent absence score above the national average. Some young people who attended the college came from the town itself, but most were from outlying rural areas and some from outlying urban areas. According to the Ofsted

report conducted during the period of the research, most students come from white backgrounds with less than one fifth from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Just over 20% of students have special educational needs.

The youth centre was based within the school. As part of the programme of participative activities, the ‘Youth Committee’ comprised members of the youth club who had a specific interest in helping to run the activities on offer for other young people. They were all attendees at the youth club and had since been recruited by the youth worker to be involved in various aspects of the club management. At the time of interviewing the young people, they had been involved in organising trips, helped to establish ground rules for the club and had set up the committee with a constitution.

<b>Street group</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
2	5	2	4
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>7</b>
Attrition			1

The label ‘Street’ was chosen by this particular group of young people who were met by the researcher near to his place of work. They frequently congregated near the local park and shops, approximately five minutes walk from the main city centre. The group of young people tended to live in the immediate vicinity, though some would walk up to three miles to meet with their friends who they knew through school. In the indices of deprivation, the area ranked highly in all categories: income, employment, education, barriers to housing and services, crime and living environment deprivation. In terms of health, the local area was within the top percentile of deprived areas. Despite the indicators of deprivation, 28% of the working age population are classed as ‘managers and senior officials’ or holding ‘professional occupations’. Young adults aged 16-29 make up the largest proportion of the population, with ONS registering 52.4% of the population as Christian and 21.2% indicating no religion.

The area in which they congregated was usually around a park. The park was overlooked on one side by houses, and on the other side was adjacent to the main road leading into the city centre. Because of its location, the park and area was frequented

by lots of groups of varying age ranges. Later, this park (as with other areas in the city centre) would become subject to dispersal zone status<sup>6</sup>.

This was an opportunistic sample insofar as the researcher approached them to be involved in the research when walking home one day. All young people indicated that they attended some of the local schools.

<b>Intercultural Education Project</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
4	4	4	4
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>8</b>
Attrition			0

The intercultural education project was a short term initiative funded by central government in 2005-2006. The group was comprised of young people from different schools across the city with the goal of fostering intercultural education and understanding through creative activities. Key to the project's aims was establishing 'cross-cultural dialogue' by drawing together young people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The eight young people self-selected from a larger group of 45 project participants when the researcher met the entire group. Of this larger number, there was representation from white, mixed, Asian and Black British communities.

The group focused on personal and social issues that were important to young people including substance misuse, rights and responsibilities, identity and discrimination. The group met at a local school community wing on a weekly basis and the researcher organised two focus groups with some of the young people involved.

<sup>6</sup> Dispersal zones were established by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) and are discussed in chapter three.

<b>Music Group</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
5	4	5	3
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>9</b>
Attrition			1

The music group project was based in a youth and community centre dedicated to working primarily with Black young people living in an area approximately three miles from the city centre. The term Black was used by the centre to describe young people of African, Caribbean and Asian heritage and at the time of visiting the project, much work was beginning to be targeted towards the area's high concentration of asylum seekers. The centre was local authority funded for its main services, but additional money from national lottery heritage funding supported the group. The area is notable for 'transition populations' alongside more established community groups, with rich cultural diversity as a result. Upmystreet.com suggests that similar neighbourhoods can be found in inner London and outer metropolitan areas such as Croydon, Harrow and Ilford.

ONS data indicated that the area had high deprivation scores. In terms of income deprivation, it was ranked in the mid-200s out of 32,482. Nearly one quarter of the working age population was claiming a key working age benefit. The area also scored highly on other indices of deprivation. There were no neighbourhood specific figures available for crime or housing.

The music project was facilitated by a youth worker but the programme and activities were largely devised by the young people. Alongside the youth worker, music tutors were employed to deliver sessions around skills, knowledge and understanding in music production. Some of the group were learning new instruments, but most were involved in dance, singing or learning to be DJs.

School Council			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
3	5	2	4
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>8</b>
Attrition			2

The school council was based in a mixed community college for 11-16 year olds with approximately 950 students. At the time of visiting the college, just over 30% of students obtained 5 A-Cs (lower than the national average). According to the Ofsted report, most students attending the college were drawn from areas that have high levels of social and economic disadvantage. It described the college as ‘rapidly improving’ in the face of ‘challenging circumstances’. Key to its developments was the improvement of relationships between staff and students, and the teacher with responsibility for the school council highlighted that this forum was instrumental in securing greater levels of student involvement.

The school council was a formal body of ten elected students who represented school students in making decisions about the school. They had formal meetings once a month, during lunch breaks, and met occasionally at other times. They were usually responsible for helping run school-based activities, contributing to fundraising events and being available to promote the school’s work. However, they also provided evidence of campaigning for student rights, with some examples of success in obtaining better facilities for students.

School councils have become commonplace and now have their own association, which defines them as:

“democratically elected groups of students who represent their peers and enable pupils to become partners in their own education, making a positive contribution to the school environment and ethos.”

(School Councils UK: <http://www.schoolcouncils.org/>)

At the time of meeting the group, the council had been established for two years, though not all members had been involved for that length of time.

<b>Advice and Information Drop in Centre</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
1	3	1	2
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>4</b>
Attrition			1

The Advice and Information Drop in Centre was a general advice service for young people aged 14-19, based in a community centre approximately four miles outside of the city centre. This project was ‘open-access’ in that it was open to all young people who needed advice or information on any aspect of their personal and social development. It also developed ‘targeted’ approaches to advice and information, particularly young people who were considered ‘NEET’ (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Although seven young people were signed up to participate from this group, just four attended the first session and three the second. Whereas other focus groups tended to be run with established groups, this depended more on individuals being approached to be involved. On reflection, different approaches to securing access may have been more helpful in this case.

<b>Youth Grants Panel</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
5	5	5	5
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>10</b>
Attrition			0

The youth grants panel were appointed by a local charity funding body to help them make decisions about which youth projects should be funded. Ten young people served on the panel, and all participated in the study. Young people from across the city were recruited to be involved in the Youth Grants Panel and they were usually drawn from projects that had already received funding via the body. Young people who attended the project were aged between 14 and 16, and travelled independently to the project’s meeting facilities.

The panel met once a month for funding decision meetings and group building work. They also participated in a range of leisure activities together. At the time of meeting the group, a key aim of the project workers was to extend the opportunities for ‘ethnic

minority groups to obtain funding' (Business Plan, 2005) and the charity's first Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) worker had been appointed. There was also a worker employed to increase funding for outlying rural areas since the majority of funding had been awarded to city-based projects.

The charity indicated that young people had main authority to make funding decisions of up to £7,000 but two indicators highlighted this may not have been entirely accurate: applications for funding were 'short listed' by the full time (adult) staff team and panel meetings were chaired by the (adult) charity worker.

<b>School Exclusion Group</b>			
Group One		Group Two	
Female	Male	Female	Male
1	6	1	5
<b>Total (unique) participants</b>			<b>7</b>
Attrition			1

The school exclusion group comprised young people attending an alternative education programme having been referred to the scheme by a multi-agency reference group designed to find the best options for young people facing educational, behavioural or personal difficulties that may have underpinned their exclusion from school. Around thirty young people were engaged in programmes at the time of the research, and the centre is classed as a pupil referral unit. The majority of young people attending the project were male, with a small proportion of young women.

School exclusion is defined here as 'the expulsion or suspension of a student from school... a disciplinary sanction that can only be exercised by a headteacher' (Gordon 2001: 70). Upon confirmation of the decision to permanently exclude, the Local Education Authority (LEA) has a legal duty to secure alternative education necessary for children (Wood et al 2005). This project was designed to fulfil such a statutory obligation, providing alternative qualifications to those excluded from their studies at GCSE level. Participants were involved in 'key skills' qualifications and some were working towards the ASDAN award. The project staff engaged in providing mentoring support to supplement the teaching provision. Of note, none of the staff (bar the Headteacher) were qualified teachers.

## Responsibilities and care for others

In this thesis, the issue of responsibility has been explored in the context of a wider understanding of citizenship and the need for citizenship education. The introductory chapter established that the relationship between the citizen and the state, and in particular their political duties was the hallmark of the civic republican tradition of citizenship. In chapter two, the changes in late modern society and the consequent shift in how the New Right and New Labour redefined politics led to a prioritisation of ‘responsibilities’ over rights. This was especially evident in the changes to distribution and uptake of welfare and in the use of community as a site of governance. The developments recast young people as lacking responsibility, both in terms of their political aptitude but also in terms of their social and moral contributions at community and societal levels (chapter three). As chapter four explored, it follows that citizenship education emphasises social and moral responsibility as one of its key learning outcomes.

In the first stage of the study, young people determined that responsibility was an encompassing level one concept that could potentially ‘mean anything’ (*Raj*, page 218). It came to absorb aspects of being helpful, obeying the law, working and doing voluntary or charity work (see final complete diamond, page 224). Of particular note, there was a distinction made between ‘responsibilities’ and ‘care for others’. However, in the second stage of the study, similar activities and definitions were shared between these two level one concepts.

The range of things that might constitute ‘being responsible’ was again a feature of the findings in stage two of the study. This section of the chapter provides an overview of how young people defined responsibility and then examines in detail the three most common forms of responsibility.

The approach taken to analyse how young people defined and experienced responsibility followed the procedures for analysis set out in chapter five. Transcripts from all focus groups were coded using the line-by-line approach and then categories were deployed for the purposes of data simplification and reduction (Miles and



Huberman 1994). The different categories were then analysed in terms of their properties and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Specifically:

1. Types of responsibility (definitions and examples) were determined by coding actors, actions and locations.
2. A typology was established by clustering the raw data terms into researcher-generated categories and external categories from similar research.
3. The properties examined in relation to each type were: (a) the direction of responsibility; (b) whether the type was a specific experience that the young person had undergone or whether they were offering a more generalised definition; (c) where possible, the context of the responsibility in terms of where the responsibility took place.
4. Any conditions that impacted upon the types.
5. Where types share a relationship with other level one concepts, these relationships have been examined (illustrated by the discussion around ‘care for others’ starting on page 250).

### **Defining responsibility**

Analysis of the database reveals that there were 143 definitions or examples of responsibility put forward by individual young people in the focus groups. This contrasts significantly with other concepts and perhaps serves to confirm the ease with which young people can readily identify their responsibilities (Lister et al 2002). In all but three of 102 valid cases, young people cited examples of being responsible for or to others rather than identifying other people as being responsible for or to young people.

This finding may reflect the fact that young people were asked to explore their own experiences and therefore may have taken this to mean being responsible to others rather than the responsibilities that they can expect from others. This emphasis is also challenged by other findings in relation to control and decision making (discussed later in this chapter) where young people were able to identify their own key expectations of responsible behaviour in other people. However, it may also suggest

an acceptance that responsibility means *being responsible*: a reflection of the dominant themes in citizenship education (chapter four).

The range of types of responsibility are set out below in table 18. A total of ten categories were used to classify the different types. Categories 1-9 were defined by the researcher with category 10 including the different range of social participation practices found in previous research by Lister et al 2002 (see Smith et al 2005).

**Table 18 - Frequency of types of responsibility**

	Classification	Definition	Total
1	Membership	Generalised statements about 'fitting in' with the community.	2
2	Personal safety/health	Examples of taking steps to secure personal safety or making good health decisions.	3
3	Education	Citing going to school or college as a responsibility.	3
4	Household	Examples of responsibilities specifically related to the household.	4
5	Horizon	Examples of future responsibilities, e.g. what adult responsibilities might include.	6
6	General acts	Generalised ideas about what constitutes a responsible act.	11
7	Attribute of responsibility	Examples of attributes or other aspects of 'being responsible'.	13
8	Paid work or responsibility	Examples of work or responsibilities that are linked to financial benefit.	15
9	Avoiding ASB	Examples of criminal or anti-social activities to be avoided.	23
10	Social participation practices **	Contains five categories of voluntary and social practice based on the work of Lister et al 2002. The framework aims to capture the wide range of social participation practices that young people are involved in (discussed below).	63
	<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>143</b>

\*\* Category 10 adapted from Smith et al 2005: 173-174

The table indicates a small number of examples in relation to membership, personal safety, going to school and helping out in the household. Of note, six examples related to future (adult) responsibilities such as having a family or getting married. These were not imminent responsibilities but showed that some young people had considered their broader horizons in terms of responsibility. The identification of

general acts and attributes concerned different definitions of ‘being responsible’ and taken together, show a good range of generalised examples. The three most common forms of responsibility were avoiding anti-social behaviour, engaging in a range of social participation practices and paid work. Each of these is now discussed in turn.

#### *Avoiding anti-social behaviour*

Young people across all groups described socially responsible behaviour often in terms of not engaging in certain behaviours that have been classified elsewhere as ‘anti-social behaviour’ (see chapter three). This category has been used by the researcher to include aspects of individual and collective behaviour that were defined in opposition to anti-social behaviours rather than being seen as ‘pro-social’. Table 19 illustrates the frequency of key aspects of behaviour *to be avoided* that were evidenced in the transcripts.

**Table 19 - Anti-social behaviour to be avoided**

<b>Term</b>	<b>f =</b>
Hanging around	8
Making noise/being too noisy	4
Causing trouble/being a nuisance	4
Vandalising property	2
Drinking	1
Shoplifting	1
Fighting	1
Swearing	1
Intimidating	1
Grand total	23

Note: Frequency (f) refers to the number of individual examples in the database

As the table signifies, young people provided evidence of avoiding certain behaviours as evidence of responsibility: things that they either do not do or should not do as opposed to positive indicators of pro-social behaviour. It suggests a predominately negative view about socially responsible behaviour. It is often common to describe things by what they are not: general behaviours that might be classed as socially responsible were determined by their absence of problems, rather than with a positive definition. Of interest, twenty examples were defined as responsibilities towards the

community or located within the community context. Community was a category applied by the researcher to include all references made to ‘community’, ‘neighbourhood’, ‘the estate’, ‘the village’ and other local places. Two young people gave this as avoiding anti-social behaviour in the community as their primary definition of responsibility:

“It’s about being **responsible** to others who live near you and around you...not making noise, respecting your elders...being good.”

*(Louise, Advice and Information Group)*

“Young people are thought of jobs...they need to be more **responsible**...that’s how I think of responsibility. It’s about fitting in with the community and showing respect to them.”

*(Darren, Intercultural Education Group)*

The table indicates that ‘hanging around’ was the key anti-social behaviour to be avoided. For young people, hanging out was a persistent feature of their social situations. It reoccurred throughout this study as an important element of being with friends, or being in local places. In stage one, ‘socialising’ was felt to be important enough to be considered for further analysis. For young people it is continuously referred to as a positive aspect of their lives, meeting with their peers in social places that provide them the freedom to congregate (reflected also in other work, e.g. Hall et al 1999; Weller 2007). However, when asked what one of the key responsibilities they had were, *not* hanging around was perceived to an important feature:

“I think [being responsible] is making sure that **we don’t hang about**...they don’t like us to meet around here and ... its probably not responsible...being responsible probably means being at home.”

*(Matt, Street Group)*

“I think we get a bad name because we spend so much time in a **group**...people can be scared of us because we’re a group.”

*(Andrea, Inner City Youth Project)*

In one case where responsibility was identified as belonging to someone else, the police were seen by other adults to be ‘acting responsibly’ for moving young people on (*Male, Inner City Youth Project*).

Given that ‘hanging around’ is cited as a key concern for adults in their experiences and perceptions of anti-social behaviour (Upson 2006; see chapter 3 for a fuller discussion), this finding suggests that young people recognised the fears and concerns of adults, and what they needed to do in order to be accepted. It could be that to an extent young people are involved in the ‘social currency’ and media influences that reinforce our understanding of the ‘problematic’ and heighten our sense of fear, particularly around the congregation of groups (Hughes et al 2006). However, this somewhat contradicts with the positive benefits that young people associated with ‘hanging around’:

“I love being with my mates... we can meet up after school cause we all go to different places in the day. I’m not really mates with people at school... We **hang around** the bus shelter...”

*(Paula, Music Group)*

“There’s not really anywhere to go to be with your friends [in the town] but we like to **hang out** together wherever really. I don’t want to be a loner.”

*(Becky, Rural Youth Club)*

Being with friends is unsurprisingly the key benefit and there was some recognition that hanging around in public areas is the only realistic way to do this. Prohibitive factors may indeed include a lack of affordable places to go, but equally some young people saw the benefit of having their own public spaces:

“I like it down my estate...it’s near my yard and my friends so it’s easy. In the summer it’s the best ... you can play footie down at the grass, its like our own patch that people know is ours.”

*(Will, School Exclusion Project)*

And yet, young people cite hanging around as the number one behaviour that they should desist from in order to be seen as responsible. Of those transcripts where ‘hanging around’ was seen as socially responsible, there were no specific incidences of activities or behaviours were part of the activity that might be considered problematic.

The disconnection between anxieties and positive feelings of hanging around cited by young people reveal competing narratives about the use of public space in a community context. The desire of one group (in this case, young people) to engage in certain pro-social practices is probably outweighed by a more dominant perception of irresponsible behaviour: an example of Staeheli’s ‘contests’ (2008). Staeheli argues that communities are places where several competing interests are played out, and ultimately the most dominant discourse is the one that prevails. The consequences though are not simply limited to an academic dissection of the differences in age or context related perceptions: they have profound implications for the inclusion and exclusion of groups as the following case example demonstrates.

During their focus group session, members of the Inner City Project reflected negatively on a recent experience about the perceived irresponsibility of their local community and the police for ignoring their concerns about meeting in public places of safety. The case study they discussed is worth presenting in its entirety to illustrate:

**A group of young people (three of which are members of the Inner City Youth Project) spend lots of their evening time with each other, ‘hanging around’ local shops and communal areas. They used to hang around the front of the local supermarket. Following complaints by residents (but not by the supermarket), they were continuously moved on by the police. Eventually, they began to hang around a local communal garden before again, being moved on by the police. When asked by the researcher why they chose these two areas, they said they were very near to their homes, and friends, and they were safe and well lit. There was a local playing field but they were scared to go there due to adult strangers hanging around at night. Eventually, after being continuously moved on from the two ‘safe’ places, they went further away from the estate and ended up by a railway track. One of their friends was messing around on the line when he was fatally hit by an oncoming train.**

Whilst this case study is inarguably quite dramatic, it illustrates a number of important points reflective of other situations that young people described throughout the study. There was the perceived rationality of their own decision making and responsible action (seeking a safe, local place to hang out). This was in turn described by others as irresponsible and was consequently penalised (the perceived threat of groups of young people on local residents). Young people moved into more irresponsible and risky situations as a result (the train track).

Responsibility, like other elements of active citizenship, is intimately tied to the *meaning* we give it. Behaviours and decisions made by the young people above were at odds with how adults perceived these decisions resulting in what can be seen as a difference between ‘objective irrationality’ and ‘subjective rationality’ (Evans 2002; Ungar 2004; 2007). The objective outsider may view the behaviour of young people as irrational and therefore failing to warrant endorsement as ‘responsible responsibility’. However, as we quickly learn those who justify their behaviour or decisions do so with rationality that is bound to their interpretations of the circumstances (subjective rationality).

Taking risk taking behaviour as an example, we have learnt in recent times to study the worlds of young people from their own perspective precisely because we cannot fully claim to understand the motivations and reasons for their behaviour (Hine 2009; Ungar 2004). Young people’s behaviour that may be seen by outsiders as ‘deviant’ may in fact be navigation strategies that young people employ in order to ward off greater risks (Ungar 2007).

Citizenship formulation is in part the result of how young people define and experience their discharge of social responsibility. However, what is externally defined as responsible behaviour is often at odds with how young people themselves define it. The definitions and experiences are not on a ‘level playing field’ and are contextualised by existing power structures within communities and institutions (Staeheli 2008). This invariably leads to greater contradictions in the process of citizenship formation.

The example illustrates the wider implications of a gulf between different perceptions of risk and responsibility, by adults and young people. Whilst in this study, we rely only on the views of young people to review the situation they describe, we can draw inferences about the adult motivations for ‘moving’ young people on. As chapter three demonstrated, groups of young people ‘hanging around’ are synonymous with a perceived danger and whilst this behaviour has always been of concern (see France 2007), policy makers have increasingly sought to contain and manage the risks posed by groups of young people (Kemshall 2008b; 2009; Stephen 2006; Stephen and Squires 2004; Yates, J. 2009) often in response to high levels of perception about young people ‘hanging around’ (Upson 2006). This has led to an increasing emphasis on the regulation of public places, the use of dispersal measures and strategies to literally ‘break up groups’ (Yates, J. 2009) and arguably keep young people ‘off the streets’. Local media climates assist in the process of portraying young people as a dangerous threat, with some 71 per cent of media stories involving young people are negative; with a third of articles focusing on anti-social behaviour and crime (HM Treasury 2007: 4) and incidences of anti-social behaviour by young people were reported in 577 local news articles within one week (Wood 2005<sup>7</sup>).

It was not possible to determine from this study the impact on the public of the media and political priorities about managing groups of young people. What we can determine is that young people often feel penalised by local communities already riddled with a fear of risk of harm by the groups. As a result, young people ended up being *more at risk* and taking *less responsible* action. This ‘social currency’ (Hughes et al 2006) continued to perpetuate the climate where it was easier to exclude young people from local areas in some pursuit of ‘shared values’ (Tam 1998). A further consequence of this case was that the group felt high levels of resentment towards their local community, a point illustrated by other groups who felt they were not treated with respect:

*Adrian:* I hate them for [friend] dying. It’s their fault. The police and the others. I’d like to show them what they did, see how they’d like their best friend dying in front of them.

<sup>7</sup> Speech given at the RSA Coffeehouse Challenge on Anti-Social Behaviour and Young People. The figure was obtained from a Nexis Lexis search of local newspaper ‘headlines’ and ‘first paragraphs’.



### *General social participation*

Previous work around young people and voluntary action has demonstrated that young people engage in a range of social activities that constitute helping others. These can be determined as ‘informal’ and ‘everyday’ activities that include looking out for other people, building social capital and engaging in altruistic acts through to more formal volunteering opportunities through initiatives and institution based programmes (see chapter four for a fuller discussion). The findings from this study support the claim that young people can identify a range of things that they do that might constitute ‘voluntary action’. Using a ‘sensitive framework for describing young people’s activities’ (Smith et al 2005: 172), Ruth Lister and her team analysed the range of ‘social participation practices’ that map young people’s active involvement in their communities. This framework was applied to the present study to classify examples of voluntary engagement. There have been two modifications to the original framework. The first category is entitled ‘voluntary and charity work’ and includes all forms of volunteering that were cited by young people including what Smith et al term ‘informal voluntary work’. The final category includes the two distinct original categories of ‘general social participation’ and ‘altruistic acts’ as the duration of young people’s activities was not measured consistently enough to distinguish between the two.

As table 18 above indicated, there were 63 entries recorded in the database. Table 20, below, identifies the range of sub-categories that form ‘general social participation’ and their frequency across the groups.

**Table 20 - Frequency of social participation practices by group**

	Category	Definition	f =
1	Voluntary and charity work	Voluntary or charity work classified as informal (i.e. outside of institutions) or formal (through or within institutions)	9
2	Informal political action	Focused on bring about or preventing change, e.g. demonstrations, or campaigning for local facilities.	4
3	Activities with political implications	Participation in cultural events or events designed around human rights	2
4	Awareness-raising	Deliberate, conscious effort to inform or challenge another person's social or political consciousness	3
5	General social participation	One off or random acts of good will and everyday building of 'social capital': 'looking out for' or helping neighbours on at least a potentially <i>reciprocal</i> basis.'	9

Frequency (f) refers to the number of groups where this category was discussed.

(Adapted from Smith et al 2005: 173-174)

The table above indicates that 'voluntary and charity work' and 'general social participation' were the two most common entries, with examples discussed in each of the focus groups. During focused coding of the data, a distinction was drawn between specific *experiences* of level one concepts and more general or specific *definitions* or *examples*. Where possible, entries were sub-categorised according to the following framework (table 21):

**Table 21 - Sub-classification system for distinguishing between experiences and definitions or examples**

Classification		Criteria for categorisation
General	Definition/ Example	A general definition or principle associated with the concept. Sometimes aspirations ( <i>what 'ought to' or 'should' be</i> ), sometimes judgements about qualities ( <i>'being good', 'doing good things'</i> ).
Specific	Definition/ Example	Named people or situations where the level one concept is experienced.
	Experience	An example where the concept has been experienced by the young person. This may include evidence of the concept, named actors, situations or contexts that support the evidence.

(Research diary: 01/02/06)

Using this framework, the examples discussed by young people were classified. Of 24 cases where young people indicated that ‘voluntary and charity work’ was a responsibility, 17 cited specific experiences. This suggests that the majority of examples were based upon real world situations or experiences that the young people had engaged in. However, of 27 entries classified as ‘social participation practices’, just eight referred to an actual specific experience. Table 22 shows examples of specific voluntary work and social participation practices that young people were involved in.

**Table 22 – Specific experiences of general social participation and voluntary work**

General social participation	Voluntary and charity work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping a lady who couldn't speak English when visiting the housing office.</li> <li>• Babysitting for, or helping neighbours.</li> <li>• Using the police to help with tackling a particular problem in the community.</li> <li>• Taking part in activities through the local youth club.</li> <li>• Reporting someone who had stolen money from the youth club.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helped clean up the local park or helped with a litter collection.</li> <li>• Volunteered at local projects such as the local playscheme or the day centre for older people.</li> <li>• Undertook responsibilities at the local youth club, including planning activities, managing the tuckshop and being on the committee.</li> <li>• Raising funds for charity, helping out with fundraising events.</li> </ul>

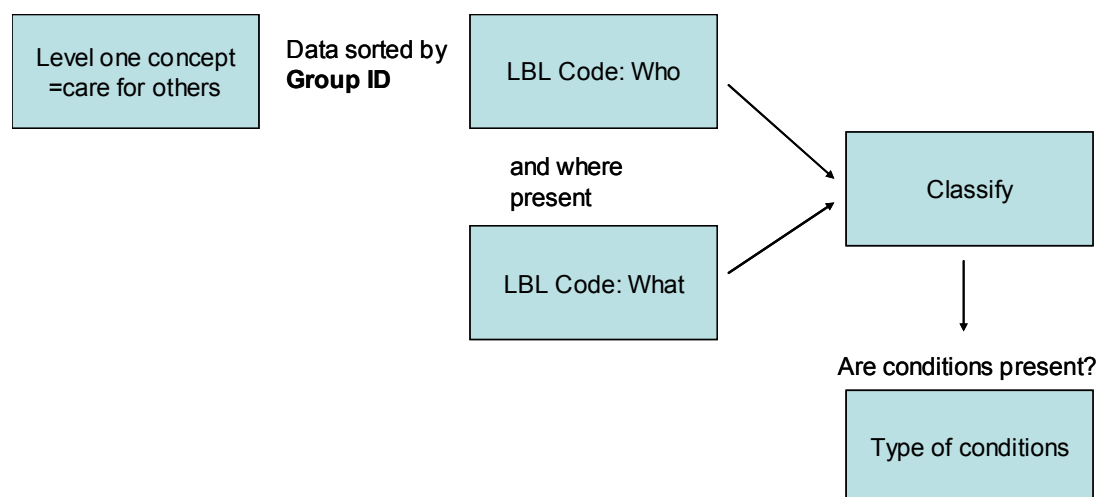
Specific experiences of voluntary and charity work took place mostly in institutions (n=11) such as through the school, the rural youth club or the youth grants panel and general social participation was more commonly found in relation to the community (n=5). Interestingly, all specific experiences that the school council highlighted as responsibilities were located within the institutional context and there was no evidence that they considered issues of general social participation outside of being involved in the school council. In a similar finding, all specific experiences of voluntary and charity work that the rural youth committee cited were bound to the project that they worked with.

Forms of general participation and engagement in altruistic acts were also commonly described in relation to the concept ‘care for others’. Indeed, in eleven cases recorded under the level one concept of ‘responsibilities’, the examples were similar or the

same as those offered as types of ‘care for others’ and were tagged with a ‘cross reference’ code. We now turn to this second concept as the focus of the discussion.

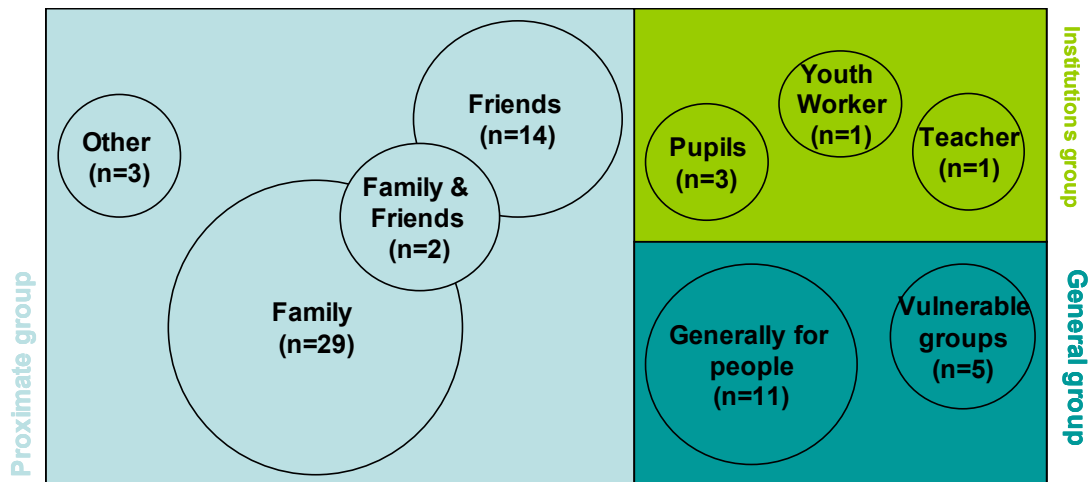
During focus groups, young people discussed ‘care for others’ in relation to *who* they care for and *what* acts of care they perform or provide. As chapter five indicated, line-by-line coding of transcripts included recording actors (*who*) and actions (*what*). The results of this coding exercise were entered into the database and where young people identified any conditions, these were also recorded. In order to examine who is cared for, and under what conditions, the data was ordered according to figure 15. A query was run where the level one concept was identified as ‘care for others’ and where there was an entry in the ‘who is cared for’ coding column.

**Figure 15: Investigating who is cared for and whether conditions apply**



A total of 71 entries refer to ‘care for others’ when the data is sorted by ‘who is cared for’. The different entries were grouped by their similarities (e.g. family encompasses parents, siblings and other family members) and then further grouped under the broader headings of proximate, institutional and general groups. Figure 16 shows the distribution of who is cared for by these groups and sub-groups.

Figure 16: Who do you care for?



Note: these figures exclude two entries. One refers to 'pets' and the other cannot be determined from the transcript.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of entries concern care for people within the proximate group with the highest number of cases relating to caring for family. Outside of the proximate groups, there was some evidence of generalised care with young people describing care for 'anybody', 'strangers', 'whoever' etc (n=11) and for groups that they perceived as vulnerable such as 'old people', 'kids' or 'homeless people' (n=5). Those grouped in the institutional box were identified by young people who were involved in or working with the institutions. The school council referred to pupils in three cases which seems to align with their role as advocates for pupils whilst the 'youth worker' was mentioned by the rural youth committee group. As indicated in chapter five, this may be an example of 'context' impacting upon data with young people identifying concepts in relation to where the focus groups took place (Green and Hart 1999).

Young people engaged in 'care for others' for a variety of reasons. There were expressions of the 'feel good factor' (*Holly, Street Group*) of caring for others. This form of care appeared to be absent of specific rewards or returns. Young people gained a sense of goodwill, and 'reciprocity' was thought of in very general terms:

"Its just about knowing you've helped someone, doing good for them, the feel good factor. I love helping people, it makes me feel really great and satisfied... I think that caring for people, looking after them is one of the most

important things you can do. But that's about who you are as a person... I like to give presents at Christmas and enjoy that more than when I receive them."

*(Holly, Street Group )*

"I'd want someone to care for me if I couldn't do something, its called karma."

*(Simon, Advice and Information Group)*

"We should care for strangers, care for everyone. There isn't enough caring for other people."

*(Robert, Youth Grants Panel)*

These three examples reflect what may be called generalised reciprocity: those examples of helping others for no specific reward (Putnam 2000). In addition, whilst located in the context of a discussion about active citizenship, young people tended not to refer to the principles of citizenship as the reason for engaging in such activities:

"Its just part of looking after people...I help out because that's what you're supposed to do"

*(Kevin, Advice and Information group)*

"I'm not sure why I do it...its just the right thing to do..."

*(Matt, Street group)*

"Everyday stuff, its just good stuff right? Its what my Mum taught me and you should just do these things."

*(Jessica, Intercultural group)*

To be sure, Kevin, Matt and Jessica all locate their reasons for engaging in helpful activities within the context of a broader understanding. Kevin's comment (*'that's what you're supposed to do'*) implies an attitude of generalised obligation, a similar idea to Matt (*'the right thing to do'*). For Jessica it is the passing down of ideas from

her Mum. These attitudes represent generalised moral claims and underpin a ‘sense of responsibility’ which young people can readily explain (Lister et al 2002; Lister 2008). However, in these cases they were not located in the context of a broader ‘citizenship’ identity, a consistent finding from other research. Lister, for instance notes that citizenship is not thought of ‘in terms of formal rights and responsibilities’ (2008: 12) but rather a range of social practices and contributions to society. For this reason, young people did not readily identify themselves as active citizens when they performed these activities.

Despite the evidence of generalised reciprocity, there were also degrees of conditionality applied to notions of care, and interestingly the levels and types of conditionality varied according to who young people cared for. For example, at the proximate level there were only nine cases of conditionality attached to who young people care for against 40 cases without. At the more general level, young people attributed conditions to ten generalised groups (against 5 without any conditions). Table 23 shows the different types of conditions and their incidence in each grouping.

**Table 23 – Incidence and types of conditionality attached to caring for others**

Care is offered...	Proximate	Institutional	General
If reciprocated	3	1	2
If there is time to care	3		
If it is deserved - <i>genuinely need it</i> - <i>will act upon it in an approved way</i> - <i>appreciate it</i>	3		6
If respect is shown			2
If it does not cause harm			1
Other		2	1

Note: based upon entries recorded for types of ‘conditions’ attached to ‘who’ or ‘what’ codes in the database (see diagrammatic representation, figure 15 on page 251).

The table indicates a higher ratio of conditions to care in the general group with six entries concerning the extent to which care is deserved. The only factor that conditioned care in relation to family was the ‘time’ available to care. Reciprocity was in evidence in all three groupings. In the proximate group, reciprocity referred to care for friends with an expectation of similar care in return. Also of relevance to

friends was the condition of whether care was deserved. For one young man this concerned caring for his partner and this was dependent on whether she was faithful to him or not. At the institutional level, the one case of reciprocity referred to the teacher where care was given if the teacher would give care in return and also if the teacher was known (classified in the table under ‘other’).

One case in particular highlights how different conditions can be applied to a generalised statement about helping or caring for others. In this case, young people discussed caring for strangers and in particular, what care should be given to a homeless man. An extract, from the Youth Grants Panel, is presented below:

*Jason:* What do you mean by strangers?

*Robert:* Anybody really. It’s important to care for everybody and to ...

*Rachel:* Whoever. Doesn’t matter.

*Jason:* Can you give me some examples?

*Kelly:* I might look after someone in the street, you know a homeless man a tramp.

*Rachel:* I wouldn’t

*Robert:* No I wouldn’t.

[Pause]

*Rachel:* Depends who its for. If its for someone really important then I’d [inaudible] but if its some tramp sitting on the floor who just wants money to stitch up another hit of crack then no. Yeah only some tramps, not all of them, some of them its not their fault

*Helen:* yeah if they drink and do drugs, that’s different but if they can’t help it.

*Jason:* How would you care for a homeless person?

*Kelly:* Well you give them money don’t you. Or you buy them a sandwich.

*Robert:* You don’t know where the money goes to.

The discussion continues in the same threads. Whilst the (1) generalised principle is that we should care for all strangers, this is (2) conditional on what we *mean* by ‘strangers’ and what we mean by ‘care’, whether they (3) deserve our care, and (4) whether our care may actually harm them further.



Taking care for others and responsibilities together, the most common individual conditions that influenced whether young people could engage in helpful activities included:

- Lack of time: time was a considerable feature for young people particularly those in their exam cycle. All young people interviewed in the study were 14-16 years old with by far the biggest majority involved in formal education. Young people were attempting to negotiate time with family, friends and in other leisure contexts whilst also doing their school work.
- Lack of material resources: group members would frequently discuss the cost implications of engaging in voluntary and community work. For many young people, cost was a prohibitive factor not merely in the absence of financial incentives for volunteering but also in terms of either 'lost income' associated with not being able to work as much, or in the costs involved in attending voluntary work.
- Levels of motivation: there were a limited number of examples where motivation to do activity did not correspond with the considerably high levels of awareness.

To classify these as purely 'individual' constraints would of course fail to take account of their relationship to external circumstances. For instance, material resources and their availability vary significantly across groups based on socioeconomic differences and this variance impacts upon the uptake of volunteering (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995). Similarly although a element of choice is evident in respect of how time is used, for example, the pressures that seemingly constrain this are linked to the education cycle: a very real structural influence in many of the young people's lives.

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*Paid local work*

Doing paid work locally was seen as an important aspect of responsibilities both in stage one and stage two of the study. This association between employment and citizenship reflects previous work around the extent to which young people feel they are truly ‘insiders’ (Lister et al 2002). In stage two, young people undertook paid work in local shops, with examples including ‘the bakery’ and the ‘chippy’. Another form of paid work often cited by young people was of ‘working for neighbours’. These paid roles included babysitting, gardening, helping with household jobs and going shopping for older people. All of these jobs had some form of a financial incentive attached to them, or a regular pay system. In analysing the data, this was what distinguished the category of ‘paid work’ from the range of social participation practices discussed above.

Two contrasting quotations from participants in two different groups identify the linkage between ‘being local’, being responsible and working.

“Working at the chippy is important because you know everyone and you get really friendly customers...they see you and get to know you and you get on with people then, they don’t hassle me as much when I’m out with my mates.”

*(Martin, Youth Grants Panel)*

“... I don’t like it sometimes because you don’t get your privacy. [My friends] get away with loads of shit but I’m on show at [the bakery] and they can tell my Mum ... but she thinks it’s good to have a job.”

*(Ellie, Intercultural Group)*

In this case it is the idea of ‘being known’. For Martin, this was seen as a positive aspect of the job where he could be identified and further respected as a result. Ellie saw the reverse to be true – the more she was known, the less likely she could have her own privacy. Martin and Ellie both felt significantly different about their local communities, as illustrated in their contributions to the discussion around decision making:

“...I think you can get the chance to say a lot about where you live but its just that [young people] don’t get involved more. We’re on the panel and we get to make decisions about where local money goes sometimes and that means we influence things.”

*(Martin, Youth Grants Panel)*

“We’re just hated in our local area...nobody listens to us, nobody cares really about us unless we’re causing trouble...so no we can’t make decisions because there’s no point if nobody listens.”

*(Ellie, Intercultural Group)*

Data analysis revealed the linkage between doing locally paid work, having positive or negative feelings about this and the linkage with perceptions of the local community. Martin’s relationship is positive, Ellie’s shows a fracture. There are probably several ways to read this data but one interpretation may suggest that Ellie’s perception of work and the community are reinforced by a negative community context. Since the Intercultural Group was drawn from different communities, it was impossible to assess during this study whether other young people shared Ellie’s views.

### Summary

Young people identify a range of different examples and definitions of responsibility, with the majority of these identified as their responsibilities to other people. The three most common responsibilities were classified as avoiding anti-social behaviour, engaging in a range of social participation practices and doing paid work. Participants were thus engaged in a wide range of activities that reflected everyday examples of informal voluntary and community service and expressed high levels of care for people in their proximate context. Engaging in social participation and care for others was conditional upon a number of factors including individual and external conditions or constraints. This finding confirmed previous work in that these activities are not readily identified in the same way that formal, structured programmes are.

Participants were also conscious that in order to be seen as responsible, one of their biggest duties was to desist from anti-social behaviour, even when this conflicted with their own social practices: hanging around was seen as problematic by adults but important for young people’s own social development. This resulted in a tension between the risk perceptions held by young people and adults and led to further difficulties in community relationships.

## Decision making and control

Two level one concepts that provided interesting interconnected relationships were ‘decision making’ and ‘control’. As the discussion in chapter six illustrated, decision making was felt to be an important component of being an active citizen and control was seen as necessary for exacting decisions. This section of the chapter explores aspects of decision making and control drawing on analysis of the data.

The approach taken to analyse how young people defined and experienced decision making and control was in line with the procedures set out in chapter five.

Specifically:

1. Types of decision making (definitions and examples) were determined by coding actions.
2. The context of decision making was established by coding sub-categories of ‘where’ decisions occur and ‘who’ is involved to compare and contrast where possible.
3. Any conditions that impacted upon the types of decisions were also recorded.

The emphasis in this section is on exploring how decision making and control were experienced by young people in the different contexts of their lives. For this reason, an extensive discussion of types is withheld in favour of exploring the different contexts of decision making. These refer to the personal and proximate, community, institutional and general contexts in which young people refer to the level one concepts.

This approach reveals that each concept is experienced differently according to the context, and there is variation in the types of decision making and control that young people experience.

### Personal and proximate decision making

Young people provided a range of different examples of types of decisions that they made in the context of their own personal lives. These were classified as both relating to their own personal identity and experience and as decisions that involved or affected either their family or friendship groups. A total of 145 examples were offered and these were classified as indicated in table 24.

**Table 24 – Frequency of types of decisions made (personal and proximate)**

Classification			Decisions related to...	Total
Personal	1	Personal appearance	The individual's appearance such as choice of clothes, hair, make-up etc	24
	2	Personal finance	What to spend money on	6
	3	Personal leisure time	How to spend leisure time	7
	4	Personal development	Education, employment and training	22
Proximate (Family)	5	Living environment	All aspects of the living environment including the design of living space and the use of it	11
	6	Use of time	How the individual's time should be spent	5
	7	Household duties	Involvement in household tasks and duties	19
Proximate (Peers)	8	Shared spaces	Places to meet or places to hang around with peers	21
	9	Shared leisure time activities	What to do when with peers	18
	10	Risky activity	Whether to be involved in certain risky activities or behaviours	9
	11	Engagement with new peers	Whether to meet new people and the assessment of new relationships	3
		Grand total		145

The table shows a high incidence of examples related to personal identity and personal development. Decisions about personal identity included choice of clothes and make-up, hair styles, as well as choice in music, how to spend leisure time and which groups of friends to identify with. These decisions were either exercised solely by young people but reference would also be made to whether peers or family members helped make the decision, and supported or opposed the decision. One young woman gave examples of personal identity decisions that she took by herself and as a result of the views of other people (in this case, her ex-partner):

“I get to decide the way I behave. I decide by **myself** whether I’m going to be in a good mood or treat people good. You can decide if you are going to be pissed off or happy. If I’m happy, it makes other people smile. If I’m in a bad mood, I piss everyone else off.”

“...He tried to make decisions about what I could wear, and I guess I let him... my **ex boyfriend** is jealous. I wasn’t allowed to wear short skirts, my hair the way I wanted it, long earrings, **he had the control and I’d decide whatever he said**”

*(Leanne, Inner City Youth Project)*

As the table above indicates, personal development decisions concerned education, training and employment and this is unsurprising given the age band of the participant groups. There was some variation since the age band of 14-16 has several key educational milestones within it. Someone who had just turned 14 was making different educational decisions than someone approaching the end of their schooling. These included decisions about what GCSE subjects to choose, whether to go to sixth form, to college or to leave further education altogether. Interconnected factors affecting personal development decisions from this small sample seemed to include some degree of weighing their own aspirations and the cost/benefit of the decision they intended to make. The quotations below illustrate processes of reasoning in terms of exploring how decisions are made.

“I know I need to go to college [**decision**] to do what I want to do which is hairdressing [**aspiration**]...it means I can’t get a proper job for a while [**cost**] and I’ll probably be skint [**cost**] but I can earn loads more when I’ve got my qualifications [**benefit**].”

*(Louise, Advice and Information Group)*

“The biggest decision I [had to make] means leaving my friends behind which makes me a bit sad [**cost**]. Some of them are doing a-levels and I want to go straight into work [**decision/aspiration**] because I hate studying [**benefit**] and I don’t need a-levels to do the work I want to do.”

*(Becky, Rural Youth Club)*

In some cases, additional qualifying factors were taken into account when making personal development decisions. These included the types of support available for the decision making process, and ultimately the decision made.

“I’m going to do computers at the Uni. The only thing that worries me about doing computers is maths [*cost*] as I’m shit at maths ... but my dad says he can help me [*support for decision*] as he works as an accountant.”

*(Robert, Youth Grants Panel)*

It was in the School Exclusion Project that all young people were in a different form of education to that offered in schools and were making decisions of a different kind. As a contrast to the dominant personal development decisions, this group is worth exploring in isolation. For instance, there was no mention of GCSEs or further education pathways as decisions that young people had to take. Young people here tended to talk about decision making as a choice between being involved with the exclusion project or not. This appeared to be less about ‘aspiration’ and more about the consequences of not engaging:

“I’ve been caught about three times by the [police] and I keep getting warnings but I’m told I’ve got to get my act together... This group is one thing I can do to show that I’m behaving.”

*(Will, school exclusion project)*

“...Need to get money [*benefit*] so this is why I’ve got to do it.”

*(Carl, school exclusion project)*

“Its not really my decision to come here...I wouldn’t go to school at all, I hate lessons and teachers and this ain’t much better but [my mum] keeps telling me that I’ve got to go otherwise I’m kicked out.”

*(Monica, school exclusion project)*

There was a similarity with those young people who discuss their school related decisions insofar as both employ a different cost/benefit analysis. However, the distinction between a largely positive (bar some obvious, general negative comments about schooling) aspiration framework and the more negative ‘consequentiality’ framework suggested different attitudes towards the education that young people are involved in. Benefits were harder to identify in this group as were the levels of autonomous decision making. Monica even refers to it as not a decision she made, and Carl sees it is something he’s got to do.

During conversations with young people in the school exclusion project, this negative framework tended to lead their interpretations of other concepts and situations. ‘Rights’ for instance was seen largely in respect of criminal justice rights (those that should be aware of if you are stopped by the police). ‘Respect’ was identified as ‘looking up to your mum’ (*Monica*), and ‘your mates’ (*Will*) with lower levels of more generalised respect at community or societal levels. Young people in this group had been characterised as ‘marginalised’ insofar as they were formally excluded from school and were meeting in an alternative educational environment – termed ‘outsiders’ in similar work (Lister et al 2002). Exclusion from such situations inevitably alter young people’s conceptions of citizenship (Weller 2007) and unless wider issues of exclusion are addressed, education for citizenship is likely to have little benefit (Edwards 2007).

As table 23 indicates above, decision making was in high evidence at the proximate level with frequently relayed examples of decision processes and types within families and peer groups. These decisions often concerned the use of space, time and the negotiation of duties and other activities.

Decisions taken within the family context tended to concern the use of private space or having private time with or away from the family. Common types also concerned the distribution and uptake of household jobs (such as what day a young person would be responsible for cleaning) and having a say in the layout of the household environment. Examples of these decisions were in evidence across all focus groups, as were discussions of the *process* of decision making. Of note, there were several incidences where the process of ‘negotiation’ was discussed:



“For me it means being part of what’s decided about how our home looks...we redecorated recently and I got to choose what my room looked like, and Mum and Dad got me involved in designing the front room as well...”

“...I decided that this wouldn’t go right so we sat down and talked about it and I got to make decisions...you listen to Mum but you also have your own views...”

*(Sandra, Inner City Youth Project)*

This ‘negotiation’ process was evident in examples of decision making in peer groups. The most common examples cited at this level concerned ‘where to meet’, ‘who to hang out with’ and ‘what to do’. In the case of the ‘what to do’ decision making examples, there was some limited evidence of how young people negotiate risky situations and make decisions. Two groups offered specific examples where decision making was linked to whether or not participating in a criminal act was a good idea. Again, the process of negotiation was cited as a way in which this situation was resolved.

*Adrian:* “We had said we’d go up town and it was all good but one or two mates wanted to booze up and get into a fight...its not that they fight because they got drunk they drink because they want to fight, you get me? Anyway we’re heading up town and me and [friend] decided that we didn’t want to do that with them and had to make decisions about it... Well you talk it through with each other and then you’ve just got to make a choice because you look like pussies and have to go against them...but you make the choice together and make the right decision.”

In summary, at both a personal and proximate level, there is a wide range of types of decision making that young people engage in. Some of these are made in isolation from others (such as those relating to personal identity) but others are linked with the decision making of peers or the family. In the ways that young people describe

decision making, it is a commonplace factor in their lives that suggests an active component.

In view of the wider discussion, the decisions made at a proximate and personal level suggests some narrowness of influence. The decisions are largely individualised, focused on aspects of personal identity and the use of space. There is evidence that young people engage in what they deem to be important decision making about educational or employment routes, however the data indicates that these are further impacted upon by the circumstances or contexts that young people find themselves in. For example, the comparison between young people attending school and those attending the exclusion project reveal the presence of different factors in the decision making process. Interestingly, at the proximate level there is limited evidence of control over other people and a limited range of controls.

### **Decision making and control in the community**

In contrast to the discussions around making decisions in personal, family and peer contexts, young people were less able to articulate evidence of making decisions in a community context. Table 23 showed that young people appeared to show a range of decisions made and some confidence in making the decisions. In relation to the community context, the overwhelming impression was of limited decision making. Decision making was thus perceived to be higher in proximate contexts. The findings become more interesting when compared to how young people understood and experienced the concept of ‘control’.

‘Control’ was interpreted in two ways. The first was having control over themselves and their situations. The second concerned ‘being controlled’ by others. In the family domain, despite evidence of high levels of decision making there, young people perceived low levels of control over situations and themselves. In peer groups, there were greater levels but in the wider community, there was control in its strongest sense. Compare and contrast these three quotations from Paula (Music Group):

**In the family:** “No control whatsoever...I’ve got to be in at certain times, I can’t have my friends round...I ain’t allowed this or that...”

**In peer groups:** “There’s always a leader but yeah, if I want us to go up town, I can make us do that...they listen to me...we like the same things so its easy.”

**In the wider community:** “No-one who can tell me how to dress or what to be like, I can go where I want, be where I want...”

The levels of self-control within the community context are perceived to be higher in this case, and at face value this quote represents a common contextual assessment of young people’s lives and the extent to which they feel they can have control over situations (Evans 2002). What is interesting is its contradiction with the extent to which young people feel that they can ‘make decisions’. Surely, if ‘I can go where I want’ is true, then the degree of making a decision making should be high but, Paula again:

“We can’t **make decisions**...who listens to us? We’re not allowed to go to the [park] we can’t be with our friends...the adults in [the estate] hate us and they don’t even know us. The police don’t listen...so no we don’t make decisions...”

The curious distinction and comparison between control and decision making showed that young people evidenced higher levels of decision making in their proximate contexts, with family and peer groups. These decisions were usually underpinned by a process of negotiation and concerned everyday issues about their personal, family and social lives. Control on the other hand showed the reverse. Young people determined that they had higher levels of control in the community context, and in family situations a lesser degree of control is expressed.

It appears from the study data that high levels of control were largely associated with self-identity and behaviours, suggesting limited barriers to performing acts of control. When contextualised in relation to the community or the school situations, control was almost a symbolic term used to define how one behaves in relation to their situations. Where parental authority or other forms of control exist, young people felt

‘less in control’ yet paradoxically able to make more decisions. Decision making in the wider contexts of young people’s lives (i.e. the community or institutions) takes on a different meaning: it is by and large felt to be the capacity to influence and change circumstances. Bruno (Inner City Youth Project) made an observation that was reflected in other focus groups:

“To make decisions you need power. Young people haven’t got any power. That’s right isn’t it?...Think about all the people who make decisions for us, they’ve all got power.”

The discussion about control and decision making, and the complexities between the two are related to the extent to which young people feel controlled by others. Two underpinning explanations for control were found to be the most common in young people’s reasoning. These are classified here as ‘punitive control’ and ‘paternalistic control’.

*Punitive control*: these were elements of control used to exclude young people on account of their behaviours that were seen as problematic to the wider community. Frequently this was associated with being ‘moved on’ or ‘being banned’. The most common forms are presented in table 25. Where they were experienced and discussed in the focus group, a symbol is used to indicate this (✓). Punitive control was usually exercised by adults outside of the young people’s proximate networks, and often by adults who represented some form of institution.

Table 25 - Common forms of control

	Forms of control exercised					
	Being moved on from communal space	Banned from local shop(s) for non criminal activity	Banned from local community centre or similar	Being told off by community members	Exclusion from resident or public meeting	Other generalised feelings of exclusion
Inner City Project	✓			✓		✓
Rural Youth Club	✓	✓				
Street Group	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Inter cultural education group				✓		
Music group	✓					
School council	✓					✓
Advice and guidance drop in				✓		
Youth grants panel	✓		✓		✓	✓
School exclusion project	✓	✓		✓		✓

These forms of control represent exclusion from public or shared spaces and can be understood in relation to wider issues of the relationship between young people and their local communities as discussed in chapter three. The most common form of punitive control was realised in young people being moved on from communal space.

*Paternalistic control:* these were forms of control specifically determined as underpinned by care. Young people usually determined that this form of control was often about being kept safe from harm, usually in terms of the very things that were linked to decision making, i.e. the use of leisure time or public space.

Punitive and paternalistic control practices were not mutually exclusive processes. Often young people would interchangeably describe being penalised and being cared for at the same time, as illustrated here:

“My Mum tells me that I shouldn’t hang around the park because all sorts of bad shit goes on there. There’s a pervert who hangs around at night and all the crackheads go down there as well. She thinks I’ll cause trouble ... get

involved with them and do that shit [*punitive*] or I'll get hurt or something [*paternalistic*].”

*(Andrea, Inner City Project )*

There was also no suggestion from the data that young people were more likely to rebel against punitive controls whilst automatically accepting paternalistic controls. The key factor in each case was the extent to which controls were felt to be reasonable, and well argued.

“Parents put controls on us and try to control us but we undermine them and go against them because we've got our own controls. We try and do what we want to do.”

*(Alice, Rural Youth Club)*

Whether young people thought that the controls set in place were reasonable or not depended on a common set of conditions described in different examples across the groups. These conditions were linked to the quality of relationship between the person exercising the controls and the young person. This in turn was dependent on whether they actually had degrees of respect (in both directions). Take for example these two quotes:

“There's quite a lot of variety in the level of **control** and how different schools and whatever use that authority. Depends how much **respect** you have with the person who is trying to control you.”

*(Susie, Music Group)*

“I think its about who you trust and respect like we said earlier...if you **respect** someone you listen to them when they're **telling you do this or that**. If you don't, you don't accept what they say.”

*(Fran, Street Group)*

And:

“I need to be **respected** if I’m going to be told what to do...people have got to understand that I’ve got views and opinions and feelings and if I’m not listened to then I’m going to kick off against what they say.”

*(Helen, School Exclusion Project)*

“The reason most young people rebel against adults is because they aren’t **respected** by adults. Look at this area, you can’t hang around where you want, you’re **banned** from the shops because they think you’re going to steal stuff. There’s no point trying to behave if people already think you’re up to no good.”

*(Bradley, Youth Grants Panel)*

Respect was thus an important feature in the relationship between those who control and those who are controlled and the process appears to be as much about *respect for* the person in control, as it is *being respected*. The quality of a trusting relationship has been established as a key factor in supporting young people in recent work around effective information, advice and guidance work (Yates, S 2009). The study examined the extent to which adult advisers (who often have to enforce controls as well as tell ‘uncomfortable truths’ about education and employment decisions) were effective in their work. The qualifying factor seemed to be the quality of the relationship (Yates, S 2009). To take another example, our own work around offender risk management has also seen evidence of this: where offenders are treated fairly and reasonably through a ‘pro-social modelling’ framework then there tended to be greater degrees of compliance with controls despite the apparent punitive nature of them (Wood and Kemshall 2007).

Another important consideration was in the **validity** of the control claims made. This was where controls are enforced that did not seem reasonable or proportionate. In either punitive or paternalistic controls, young people were:

“wise to the lies [laughter]...its like saying that we’ll all die if we just have a drink now and then, or get pissed at the weekend with our mates, it doesn’t make sense so we don’t listen.”

*(Patrick, Music Group)*

What members of the Music Group were discussing was the importance of the validity of a message. Control practices had to be reasonably justified and rational for young people to accept. As Patrick’s quote illustrates, there needs to be an understandable relationship between the controls and the eventual outcomes if controls are ignored. Another example:

“My Dad tries to scare me all the time with little stories about his friends in prison and why I should not get involved with [this group of friends] because I’ll get into trouble and end up in prison myself...he doesn’t know what we do or get up to, he just thinks we’re always in trouble but we ain’t...When he tries to control me I ignore him then because he’s wrong.”

*(Junior, Street Group)*

How young people receive, decode and act upon risk messages are important factors in understanding their responses here. Studies on risk taking behaviour have largely rejected a ‘hypodermic’ model of passive, audience reception in favour of more ‘interpretative models’ (Giddens 2006: 610). As Rodgers notes:

“If evaluation of factual information, by itself, informed the debate each of us has with ourselves about risky behaviors, this would have long ago been a nation full of nonsmoking, seat belt-wearing, lean, exercising, chemopreventing, sun-avoiding, health care-seeking men and women.”

*(Rodgers 1999: 21)*

Examples abound where warning messages have no impact upon risky behaviour (in the case of young people and gambling, Steenbergh et al 2004); are mediated by personality ‘types’ (alcohol misuse, Weaver et al 2007) and the sense of time horizons that young people experience (Boeck et al 2006; Kemshall et al 2006). Essentially,



‘individual perception and assessment of risk is fundamentally a subjective enterprise’ (Rodgers 1999: 21). To some extent, these issues fall outside of the scope of the present study but they illustrate that risk message communication is already a complex set of processes, with variable degrees of success. In terms of this study, validity was a strong component – essentially is the message proportionate to the danger and its consequences?

The third component in evidence was the extent to which young people felt as though those who controlled them lived up to their own standards: the idea of **integrity**. The police were commonly cited as people who exercised control over young people and in the timeless tradition, young people felt generalised low levels of respect for the police. Actual incidences of problematic engagements with the police were usually related to attempts to move them along either through the formal use of dispersal powers or in more informal ways. However, two other examples arose during the study which raised questions for young people about police integrity. This exchange from the Street Group:

*Ryan:* “I never listen to them...they can fuck off as far as I’m concerned. They keep telling us to respect the people who live around the park and to stop hanging out in this group but then I see them all the time being disrespectful to people so it’s a different rule for them.”

*Jason:* Can you give me an example?

*Ryan:* “Plenty...I saw them proper harass this guy outside [shop name], they were horrible to him, calling him names and shit like that. That’s not respect is it? Then they’re always kicking off at us but they way they speak to us is the opposite of what they want. They want us to shut up and behave but they can act how they want. My brother was pulled over in his car about six times last year for no reason. [My brother] works, is a dad and they just pull him over because they think he’s bad.”

*Jason:* What does this mean then? For you and the police I mean?

*Ryan:* “I don’t listen to them... they try to control us but the things they tell us not to do are things they do all the time, even drinking down town and shit so like I said they don’t have any control over me and what I do.”

And in the inner city youth project:

*Andrea:* “[on responsibilities] yeah you can use the police, you’re told you’re supposed to use the police. My mum had a racial officer come out [*because of racist verbal abuse from a neighbour*] but because they know what its about they stop coming out. They’ve even been in our house before, sitting there saying, and oh every time we get a call from your house, we all argue and flip a coin about who’s gonna come down because we always know what its about. So we just deal with it ourselves.”

*Jason:* Did your Mum complain?

*Andrea:* “you cant really file a complaint because as I see it, police people stick together.”

In the same group, the response to this claim was mixed and debate ensued. Actually, said one ‘that’s not true’ and another agreed. When asked what the difference was, it was claimed that there were:

*Emma:* “good police... people who care about us and try to help. There’s a guy who walks around all the time and tells us to hang around near lights and stuff so that we can be seen if it’s quite late at night. He’s always sound because he doesn’t hate us and he actually takes us seriously.”

*Andrea:* “ok but all I’m saying is that if you’re supposed to use the police for your rights and they don’t stick up for you and they stick together what’s the point?”

Similar situations occurred within schools. This example from a participant in the School Exclusion Project:

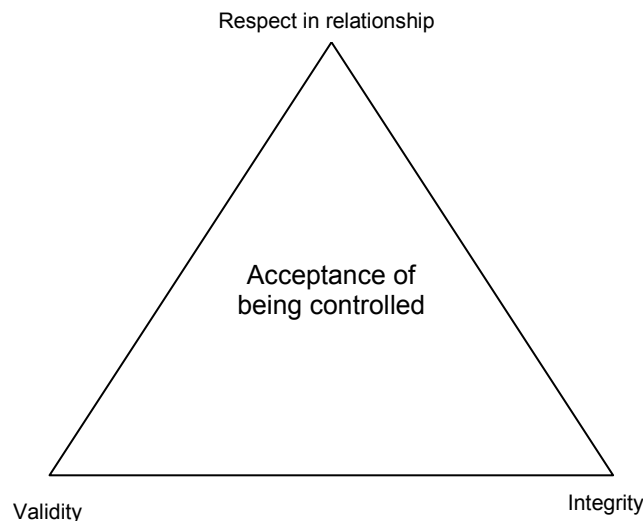
“in year 9 my form tutor his name is [teacher name] he was a pervert, and I’m not being funny. Anytime girls would go up, he’ll make you pick up a pen and look up your legs. I made a complaint about it and no-one ever got back to me.

His name is [teacher name]. I'll spell it out. It's like they expect me to behave in school but don't do anything about the teachers who are acting wrong."

*(Helen, School Exclusion Project)*

There is obviously an interconnection between the integrity of the message giver and the respect that young people feel for them as a result. Similarly, both components affect the extent to which a message can be considered 'valid'. For this reason, the three components form together to illustrate a broader concept: 'authenticity'. For young people in this study, authenticity and acceptance of controls was thus determined by the triangulation of the three elements described above (see figure 17).

**Figure 17 - Triangulating authentic control**



If we analyse this dilemma in relation to debates about personal agency, we see high levels of primary agency in relation to relatively individual aspects of control (at the 'identity' and 'behaviour' levels), with higher deference to structures and other decision makers when decisions require external circumstances to change (see Evans 2002). When using this analysis it is possible to see control as actually a weaker concept than decision making in terms of assessing the extent to which young people can shape and influence their surroundings. Control is a narrow definition that, when examined at face value, suggests high levels of influence in certain contexts.

However, when mapped against 'decision making', we see that young people do not in fact have significant influence beyond their proximate interactions. Control is more illustrative when expressed as 'being controlled' showing that young people identify a

range of structures and agents who for various reasons attempt to restrict their behaviours. Young people do not automatically rebel against such controls; rather they make judgements based upon the conditions described above. This has important implications particularly for the teaching of citizenship: the question of authenticity is linked to the problems outlined in the discussion around institutional contexts, particularly in relation to what is considered ‘acceptable’ participation by adults and how this is communicated or not to young people. Moreover, if energy is disproportionately targeted at increasing the agency of young people to make decisions without attention to the potential structural circumstances that limit or mitigate against their ability to exercise control, we are likely to see further rejection of claims by young people.

### Summary

Young people identified examples of personal decision making and decision making within their proximate contexts. These decisions were often individualised and limited in their capacity to influence circumstances, focused as they were on aspects of personal identity, personal development, the household and decisions made with their family and friends. There is evidence to suggest that young people employ important reasoning and negotiation skills in making decisions, and that decisions (especially in relation to personal development and aspirations) may be limited by existing marginalisation. There is limited evidence that young people make decisions within the community context, though they do express seemingly high levels of control. This control is actual very individual and did little to influence the barriers or circumstances that impacted upon the lives of young people. Young people in the study also frequently associated control with *being controlled* particularly in paternalistic or punitive ways. There is evidence to suggest that young people employ a set of criteria when determining whether to accept or rebel against the controls impinged upon them. These were: the relationship with the person, the validity of the control instructions and the integrity of the person giving the message.

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## Engagement with institutions

All young people involved in this study had contact with various institutions that impacted upon their lives. Some of these institutions were arguably more critical to the process of citizenship formation than others. These were identified in the study as those which:

- *Offered programmes that were explicitly seeking to promote active citizenship* such as: the school council, the rural youth club management committee and the youth grants panel. Characteristic of these organisations was a commitment to youth participation, an emphasis on developing young people to ‘have a say’ in the running of institutions or to effectively campaign for their rights.
- *Offered programmes that certainly lent themselves to an ‘active citizenship’ agenda but this was not cited as a key goal.* The inner city youth project, the intercultural education group and the music group were all examples of this model. These were part of organisations that sought to develop young people’s awareness of social issues or of responsibilities and rights but did not necessarily frame their work in an agenda of developing active citizenship.

The purpose of this study was not to undertake a comparison of how different institutions actively engage young people. Nor did it intend to explore how young people experience and define their citizenship dependent on what institution they were engaged with. However, during focus groups with the *School Council* and the *Rural Youth Committee* there were obviously key differences in how certain level one concepts were defined. Throughout the focus groups, young people involved in each project related the concepts to activities that they were involved in through the institution. In this respect, the citizenship concepts took a different route to other projects insofar as the participants tended primarily to relate them to their institutional environment. Part of this may of course be associated with holding a focus group within the school or youth council setting, where accreditation may also have been a prominent feature.

Since both initiatives are committed to building the skills and qualities of active citizenship through the development of systems that can enable young people to have an influence, they provide interesting case studies for further investigation. This final section of the findings chapter reviews aspects of the level one concepts in relation to young people's engagement with the institutions. It draws on detail from the transcripts and provides some comparison between the two sites of specific interest. In particular, this section explores:

- Aspects of their engagement in the institutions, the extent to which they have been able to affect change.
- Young people's motivation for being involved and the rewards that come from their involvement.

The School Council group was able to present much evidence to suggest that they were actively involved in the running of the school. Analysis of the transcripts from their focus group showed a weighting of definitions and experiences associated with the school as illustrated in the previous section on responsibilities.

The concept that was entirely unrelated to the school context was 'care for others'. This was described in relation to proximate levels – the school council members describing examples of caring for their family or their friends, though it was notable that they also referred to pupils and a teacher.

The school council's relatively close exposure to democratic structures and processes suggests an explanation for the readiness to apply concepts to these situations. Whilst the researcher did not engage groups outside of the council but within the school, one might speculate as to what differences may be found in comparing such groups. Indeed, if you examine the data of the school council against, for example, the Street Group you see very different propositions of what is meant by 'rights' illustrating both points made about the importance of keeping in mind 'context'.

However, when pressed for evidence of enacting the different principles outlined above, there were mixed responses. In some cases, participants offered corresponding evidence that suggested the principle was acted upon. Eleanor:

“We were pissed off about the canteen stopping its breakfast service...some pupils only get their breakfast at school...[so we] set up a campaign with some others, got a petition to [the headteacher] and we managed to get our breakfast club back. That’s about standing up for the **rights** of students, isn’t it?”

And further,

“I gave you an example of where we **make decisions**. Some of us don’t care about the breakfast club thing but others really do care. We had to argue about it and make a decision to campaign for it.”

The ‘breakfast club’ example offers an experience that tests the principles of student rights and making decisions. Were there cases when the students could not enact their citizenship beliefs?

*Kenny:* “Sure there are times when you can’t get things done...”

*Jason:* “Can you give an example?”

*Kenny:* “Don’t really have one, its just general things that we think are important and can’t get done because they [the school] don’t agree with it. The breakfast club she was talking about was easy because they agreed with it and our parents got involved as well so that gave us backup.”

*Anna:* “Its about what they think is important and what will help the school in their view. An example I can give is when all the boys wanted to make a basketball area on the playground and we had a meeting about it with [a teacher] but they said that we couldn’t do it, so it was kind of left really.”

*Eleanor:* “Yeah there wasn’t the same kind of support for it from people. It was a group of boys and us and nobody else really cared about it.”

*Jason:* “Do you mean other students?”

*Eleanor:* “No I mean the school, the teachers.”

*Jason:* “Do you know why?”

*Eleanor:* “No not really....”

*Anna:* “I think it was because they were worried it would be used by kids from around the area who don’t come to the school but I don’t know for sure.”

The discussion between Kenny, Anna and Eleanor revealed something about the extent to which the school council had the power necessary to influence the school system. There was certainly a positive outcome in terms of the ‘breakfast club’: many young people felt it was important as Eleanor suggested. What was also in evidence was that there was a general (adult) support for the breakfast club campaign. On other matters that young people felt strongly about, for example the basketball facilities, there was no reference made to any support. There was recognition that “you can’t always get what you want” (*Peter*) and that the school council would not be able to always have the impact it wanted to. This reveals a problematic issue in relation to active citizenship and youth participation that reflects a long-standing concern about whether young people can act on issues independent of adult approval. There is a degree of ‘acceptability’ present: in the case of the school council, adults ultimately defined what was considered an acceptable act of participation. The extent to which young people meaningfully participate has always been contingent on how the idea is defined, supported and encouraged (Invernizzi and Williams 2008a). This is often a problem in school-based contexts, since they can fail to provide spaces for the empowerment of children (Morrow 2008): schools remain adult-managed, hierarchical, anti-democratic institutions and often rely on citizenship education that is ‘transmission’ orientated (Alderson 1999; Evans 2008). Here, the purpose of educational programmes (with school councils as an example) is to reproduce a ‘reflection of existing societal patterns’ (Evans 2008: 523) through established teaching and learning methods. For example, Evans cites the use of classroom space centred around a teacher and pre-selected teaching materials as evidence of strategy to ‘transmit information or basic skills’ (Evans 2008: 523). Within the context of this study, participation and its outcomes have been defined in acceptable and unacceptable ways, and the purpose of education is to transmit what is deemed acceptable. This is achieved through the validation of children’s concerns by adults, a



process that effectively reinforces the dependency of children on adults (James and James 2004).

A further issue arises in the communication by teachers in relation to why the basketball idea could not be pursued. Anna does indeed speculate on some of the reasons but in her words, she is 'not sure'. As a lesson in the processes of democratic decision making, adults have failed to effectively communicate with young people about why certain things can be pursued and others cannot. This leaves young people confused and uncertain. For Boyden and Ennew (1997), this represents the difference between 'taking part' and 'knowing that one's actions are taken note of and may be acted upon' (p33).

These two issues are interrelated. They demonstrate that, on the face of it, the school can hold up examples of actively involving young people (through the breakfast club) but when further investigation is undertaken, these can be defined as quite limited and not within a wider ethos of supporting young people to understand both the processes and problems of active participation.

For young people involved in the Rural Youth Club, there were different experiences of active involvement. The concepts were again, by and large, applied to their institutional context. Here young people in the project were very familiar with aspects of the language of active citizenship but had not really experienced opportunities to effectively engage in activities that would 'test' their experiences.

It was common throughout the focus group for young people to describe youth workers as helping them to 'make decisions' but without corresponding evidence. The group spoke at length about the need for young people to 'be involved in their local communities' (Harry) and to 'make sure they have their voices heard, else nothing will change' (Louise). The interviewer asked them for examples where they had successfully engaged with institutions or people who affect their lives which they could not easily do. Harry stated:

"Its talk most of the time...we talk about it but nothing gets done."

The Rural Youth Club pointed to their experience with a Connexions shadow board as evidence for this empty engagement. Connexions, the information and guidance service targeted towards supporting all 11-19 year olds set up shadow boards as part of a commitment to actively involve young people in the management of services<sup>8</sup>. Three of the young people involved in the focus group had been members of the shadow board in their local area, but as Harry explained:

“We were invited to this big day out where we were told about why it was important to be part of the shadow board...they must have spent loads of money on it and we did training and stuff [but after the first day] we never heard from them again...any of us.”

Similarly, two of the members had been involved in a local ‘youth forum’ set up to hear the concerns of young people and to resolve community tensions. Becky:

“The police were there, the council, [the youth workers], and us...we were told about loads of plans they had after talking to us, and that they wanted us to help them but like the Connexions we never heard of them again.”

The experiences of the Rural Youth Club demonstrate what commonly happens in the disjuncture between a policy emphasis on ‘consultation’ and the actual practice of active involvement. Fleming and Hudson (2009) distinguish between consultation and active participation (user-led is their term), with the former occurring in a fixed timeframe (i.e. at the beginning of research, in this case) and the latter concerning an ongoing partnership. The difficulty of consultation is that it can be limited in the extent to which it is truly ‘participative’ with externally set and developed agendas (Fleming and Hudson 2009). In the experience of young people in this study, consultation was framed as active participation, but with no meaningful follow up.

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<sup>8</sup> Although ostentatiously sold as an attempt to involve young people, boards also comprised partner agency representatives including senior professionals from the LEA, the Youth Offending Team, the Police, Employers and other key agencies. The literature review explores the implications of similar arrangements where young people are involved in committees dominated by senior level professionals.

One problem that the young people identified in both the Rural Youth Club and the Music Group was the overstatement of possible outcomes of active involvement. According to members of the Rural Youth Club, because nothing was being delivered on their supposed consultation:

*Harry:* “Hardly anyone gets involved now. They see that it’s a waste of time, they can come here and play football or watch the TV, have fun with their friends. Its what we want to do when we come here. The only reason we got involved with the [youth committee] is because we wanted more activities at the club, but we were soon getting involved in all sorts of things. Nothing really changes though, and people know that sooner or later.”

*Becky:* “Yeah, like Connexions they keep saying we can get money for this and more trips and things for our club to do but we don’t see anything come of it.”

What we can determine from the examples above is that young people in the School Council can and do demonstrate awareness and activity in close relationship to their institutional context. Their responses to the flashcards however were limited to this context and drawing out examples of how each concept may apply to other situations was not in evidence. They were clear that participation did not automatically mean getting whatever the students wanted, but were unsure of what constituted a reasonable campaign. By this, certain things seemed to be supported and others not – with very limited explanation as to why either course was chosen. Participation in this case was neatly refined in accordance with what was deemed to be also acceptable to parents and teachers. When things did change, this was dependent on adult support. The Rural Youth Club on the other hand were able to illustrate high degree of awareness and what might be termed the ‘jargon of active citizenship’. There was a limited demonstration of corresponding action and skills, though it was clear this was not a deficit in participants: rather the institutional contexts mediated this action in a negative way.

## Motivation and outcomes

When offering examples of active involvement, the researcher used open probes to explore issues further. Of particular interest was the question ‘why get involved’ particularly in response to examples of making decisions or having control in an institutional context. The reasons for engaging in structured activities and the outcomes were linked to two key strands: the potential for ‘accreditation’ and the potential for ‘other personal development’ outcomes.

### *Accreditation*

Participants involved in the Rural Youth Club, the Music Group and the School Council were able to have their structured activities ‘accredited’. This usually meant that their efforts were formally recognised by some form of qualification. The specific qualifications were not collected as part of the data nor was a leading question asked in order to ascertain specifically the prevalence of accreditation. However, references were made by young people in both the School Council and the Music Group to Millennium Volunteers and the GCSE in Citizenship Studies. In the Rural Youth Club setting, young people highlighted the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, the Youth Achievement Award, various ‘in-house’ awards and several other external, unnamed qualifications. Accreditation was commonly awarded upon production of various forms of evidence, usually drawn from experiences within the institutional contexts:

“I was involved in helping to plan a session around sex education for kids in the youth club [...] they gave me a certificate for doing it. We’re told we need to keep the certificates to show how we get involved.”

*(Jenny, Rural Youth Club)*

“All of us in [the group] are also registered for the YAA [youth achievement award] and we have to keep a portfolio so that we can get the award...we lead the group, and take part in activities so that means we can get the highest award.”

*(Tony, Rural Youth Club)*

Accreditation was important to young people in the music group because they linked certificates to their future employment and education opportunities, though this was not always the primary reason that they involved themselves in the group:

*Emily:* “The certificates help me get on with looking at university... we were told by the connexions person that we should do as much as possible to show that we ..”

*Roger:* “yeah, it’s the main reason I got involved in the group...they said its good for job interviews and stuff like that.”

*Susie:* “that’s not true for me... I mean certificates are important but I like being involved in the group [...] I love music ... and am interested in that.”

*Emily:* “yeah, but you’ve got to get something out of it or it’s a waste of time.”

Accreditation aside, the actual experience of being involved in the projects was important in itself as Susie indicated. There was recognition amongst this group that in order to progress in their own career development, evidence of voluntary or community work was a desirable component for some young people. Young people therefore framed the voluntary experiences as building blocks towards participation in the employment market, not necessarily linked to a desire to do future ‘care’ related work. This exchange from the Rural Youth Club:

*Jason:* “Does this mean that you will go into some form of community work, or care work, or social work in the future?”

*Eleanor:* “No way [laughter] I want to work in TV or as a journalist but I know that you need different experiences from just what you get at school... its...

*Brian:* “its about being competitive... you’ve got to be better than the next man going for the same job.”

And in the Music Group:

*Jason:* You said its important for work and stuff, for your CV. What kind of work do you think it helps you prepare for?

*Emily:* “It doesn’t matter what kind of work. You can go for anything, its just important to show how much you’ve done whilst you’re at school... I’m not a boy so I can’t play sport or compete that way but with voluntary work I can show that I can do more than just study.”

### *Other aspects of personal development*

The second set of motivational aspects or potential benefits of being involved were highlighted as important across more groups than those who cited accreditation. The higher incidence is in part explained by the lack of explicit questioning with respect to accreditation. In that I mean that young people were more readily able to identify other aspects of personal development as key outcomes for being involved in structured activity.

Some of these benefits concerned the development of ‘soft skills’ such as increased confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, leadership and knowing more about the world they live in. Another significant set of benefits were related to external connections, often about building and increasing relationships and networks. Some altruistic expressions were in evidence as well – as earlier quotes within this chapter demonstrate.

Accreditation and other award systems appeared to be primarily linked to advancement in education, training and employment. The extent to which these instrumental acts of citizenship lead to longer term engagement in similar behaviour is disputed by the literature. For instance, recent studies have found that adults engaged in citizenship behaviour through their workplace commonly do so in order to obtain promotion, perceiving such behaviour as instrumental to success. Those who were subsequently promoted were less likely to continue with such behaviour (Hui et al 2000). This in part reflects a concern that volunteering increasingly represents a ‘what’s in it for me’ attitude (Davy 2007) where civic and volunteering activity is offered only in terms of the potential financial, academic and employment benefits.

Other research around incentives has found that young people do not arrive at consensus on what might be a worthy incentive. Most agree that getting certificates and working with their friends are key incentives, but some are concerned that such approaches may in fact devalue the activities that lead to greater sense of self-purpose (Ellis 2004). Brooks (2007) identified similar motivations in her work around young people's extra-curricular activities. Interviews conducted with young people involved in forms of participatory practice through their schools and colleagues revealed that:

“Some young people were motivated to take part in such activities – partially at least – by a desire to ‘play the game’ and provide evidence of a ‘rounded self’ when applying for university.”

(Brooks 2007: 426)

The problem for Brooks was not with individual motivation, but rather the wider emphasis on volunteering for active citizenship and its potential for entering the ‘competitive’ education market. Too often, this promoted a form of ‘conservatism’ as opposed to critical social action where ‘individual, instrumental causes’ (2007: 432) often trumped a wider citizenship identity. This view was reflected in a recent conversation with Tony Breslin, the Director of the Citizenship Foundation<sup>9</sup> who stated that volunteering can sometimes replace a more critical approach to engaging with social issues, and that organisations can compound this problem through offering narrow educational experiences and programmes.

This present study can only present the views of those young people who discussed motivation and outcomes: the findings do however support the claim that there may indeed be greater emphasis on the instrumental gains of social participation practices.

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<sup>9</sup> Personal conversation with the researcher, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

### Summary

A proportion of young people involved in this study were involved in institutions that either offered programmes directly targeted towards increasing active citizenship, or demonstrated high levels of fostering active citizenship related opportunities. Examples of institutional active involvement were offered by young people, and they tended to relate the citizenship concepts to their institutional contexts. Young people involved in the study were motivated by accredited outcomes and also by more generalised rewards of self-development. Key issues were apparent though. Firstly, there is a problem in respect of the extent to which activities or issues are endorsed as acceptable by adults and where active involvement is not endorsed, what reasons are given to young people in order for them to understand the barriers preventing their active citizenship. Secondly, there were instances where young people were consulted or engaged with no meaningful follow-up. This led to disenchantment amongst young people evidenced through diminished interest in their projects and, to some degree, a reluctance to engage in future youth participation initiatives. Finally, a connected issue is the extent to which the realities of participation are effectively communicated including the very real possibility that nothing may indeed come of their involvement. This was not always sufficiently communicated by adults to young people involved in the study.

### Conclusion

In stage two of this study, 69 young people were involved in exploring the level one concepts generated by the previous groups of young people in stage one. Through focus groups, they examined in concept and provided definitions and examples together with evidence of experience. This chapter has reviewed some of the key findings from this process with analysis of how young people define and experience the different concepts.

Responsibility emerges as a strong concept with a range of different forms of responsibility that young people engage in. This was analysed alongside care for others, where young people expressed strong care for family and friendship groups with conditional care applied in generalised examples. The study confirms previous work in that it has identified a wide range of social participation practices that young people are involved in. There is evidence to suggest that young people and adults may define responsibility differently in certain contexts and this may lead to misunderstanding and potential problems in managing young people's perceived risks.



There was also evidence of decision making offered during the study that revealed some confidence in making personal decisions and decision making with family and friends. However, there was less evidence of decision making in the community context. Control was interpreted as ‘being controlled’ or ‘controlling situations’. In the former, young people evidenced a range of controls that they were subjected to. In the latter, they highlighted quite a narrow set of controls: a limited capacity to alter situations and circumstances beyond their own personal identity or personal development decisions.

For young people engaged in institutional contexts where active citizenship was promoted, there was some evidence that young people had been able to exercise influence and to take an active part in the programmes offered. However, there were also numerous constraints to the realisation of active citizenship.

These findings enable us to consider some important broader themes in relation to how we understand young people’s active citizenship. These are: the importance of context in shaping understanding and experience, and the interplay between awareness and activity. Chapter eight explores these broader themes. Chapter nine summarises the key findings and relates them back to the literature explored within this thesis. It also argues the contribution that this thesis makes to the discipline of social policy, and sets out some considerations for further research.

## 8 Findings: Understanding young people's active citizenship

An active citizen is someone who not only acquires and develops knowledge and skills in their social and political worlds, but also possesses certain dispositions, values and moral positions associated with *being* an active citizen (see chapter four). The aims of citizenship education in schools are quite clear about this: 'we want young people to *think* of themselves as active citizens...' (AGC 1998: 7; my emphasis). Here young people are either expected to possess certain 'virtues' (those dispositions of character that indicate aspects of the 'being good') or to adapt to established 'rules' or codes of society – the norms (Haydon 2003; see chapter four of this thesis). At a basic level, the pedagogical assumption made in the AGC report and in similar guidance is that if young people are at least encouraged to think about these moral dimensions, then action will follow as a result. The converse proposition is also implied: through experiencing active citizenship, whether in terms of 'doing' voluntary work or engaging in school democratic systems, young people will, through a process of experiential learning, build the necessary intellectual capacity to 'live' citizenship. Here, it is argued that actions will lead to the development of values.

This relationship between values and attitudes on the one hand, and knowledge and skills on the other is deeply complex and problematic. In our current education system, we can test easily for the acquisition of knowledge about democratic systems and processes. Take for instance the Home Office citizenship test imposed on new migrants seeking British citizenship. These questions are factually based and test the applicant's knowledge of key institutional aspects of democracy and British life (see <http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk/>).

Skills, also, are subject to relative ease in demonstration and assessment particularly in how volunteering and community activity are quantified. Conceptually, young people are able to evidence 'time spent', 'doing an activity', for the purposes of 'stated outcome'. The activity undertaken is dependent on skills deployed – 'being helpful' may encompass a number of key skills around communication for instance.

Matters of a moral nature are more difficult to understand and assess, particularly when we enter into the debate ‘which virtues’ we deem to be satisfactory indicators of an active citizen. How does one test for these? And even if we could test for them, what evidence would we bring to bear in explaining that the virtues ultimately lead to evidence in the wider world that young people are performing as we would expect?

This problematic relationship was evident in this study: there is not necessarily a relationship between expressed moral positions or virtues and the desired resulting action. The general issue appears to be one of ‘conditionality’: a persistent feature throughout this study and used in this thesis as a short-hand expression to discuss the application of values to active experiences. It marked the difference between a ‘generalised statement’ (a value position or ethical belief) and the ‘active behaviours’ (acting on the basis of values or ethical beliefs). Conditionality itself is drawn from the ‘negative cases’ work of grounded theorists who examined ways in which concepts are either upheld or ‘disproved’ through the process of ‘saturation’ (see, Glaser and Strauss 1967 for the theoretical discussion). This idea is expanded upon in the case of this study to explicitly seek out two aspects of understanding citizenship: the ‘conditions’ under which the citizenship concept can be evidenced and the ‘constraints’ that limit or negate the concept (see chapter five). By far the most important set of conditions and constraints are determined by the various contexts in which young people learn and perform as active citizens.

Two broad themes emerge from analysis of the findings and are addressed in this penultimate chapter. The first is that **the active citizenship experience of young people is mediated by context** and in particular, within the private and public spaces that they engage in being responsible, caring for others, exercising rights, showing and receiving respect, making decisions and exercising control. The second is that **the relationship between awareness and activity of the level one concepts** requires consideration of what factors support or constrain the experience of active citizenship. This chapter concludes the findings sections with an analysis of each theme.

## The importance of context

Throughout the presentation and analysis of findings, public and private spaces and the other people who occupied them have influenced how young people defined and experienced active citizenship. Taken together, these mediating factors act as the context of active citizenship and young people experienced the level one concepts differently according to the context within which they operated.

Prior to setting out a review of these contexts, it is important to establish two key methodological caveats that may also influence the reading of the data in this way. The first is that the dataset invariably reflects the sample groups, their identities and the interactions they have with their existing personal and social contexts (as discussed in chapter five). For example, the school council participants held largely positive views about their role in shaping and supporting the development of school provision and this may reflect the positive positions they occupy within the school context. If one were to interview students in the school but outside of the council, the experience of the level one concepts especially in relation to the institution may vary somewhat. The relative status of being on a school council, not to mention the individual identity characteristics of the participants, shapes the ways in which an assessment of the school may be expressed by young people.

This relates to a linked point: the importance of context on the *shaping of data*. As chapter five highlighted, the ways in which participants describe experiences and the ways in which the moderator works can depend on where focus groups are held (Green and Hart 1999). The impact of the school context, or for that matter any of the situations where the researcher encountered young people, could have altered how young people defined the concepts. In terms of transferability, future research project designs need to take both factors into account.

Methodological considerations notwithstanding, there are some important differences in the findings when discussed in relation to context. Each of the four contexts where this was most apparent are now discussed in turn, and represented visually in figure 18 on page 295. The labels used (proximate, community, institutional and

generalised) are those that were applied to the dataset as focused codes to identify differences in the people and places that applied to level one concepts (see chapter 7).

### *Proximate*

The proximate context was used to identify the most immediate networks in young people's lives including household family members, the extended family and close peer groups. Whilst there were some differences in how they related the concepts to different individuals, they were often similar insofar as there was evidence of similar definition and examples and of a limited range of conditions attached to the different concepts. For instance, in the discussion around care for others, the types of care that young people gave to their family and friends shared similar characteristics with low levels of conditionality when compared to wider networks (page 254). Proximate contexts also provided a high frequency of decision making (page 260) though evidence suggests that these decisions tended to be individualised and narrow in their influence. Young people were also subject to a range of controls in the proximate context, and implied limited control over their own lives (page 265).

### *Community*

This context referred to groups that young people identified as neighbours, extended peer networks, associates and other local people outside of their immediate family and peer networks. These groups were sometimes named and known, but oftentimes unnamed (e.g. 'the man at the shop' or 'Ellie's friend'). The label community was also applied to references to the neighbourhood, the estate and other synonyms for local area.

The relationship between community and young people's definitions of responsibility was very strong. Of the three most common types of responsibility, two concerned experiences that were located almost solely within the community context (see page 242) and responsibilities were more often than not framed in terms of responsibilities *to* the community as opposed to things that young people could expect *from* others (see page 240). In one of the most interesting examples from the study, young people

cited socialising and hanging around as important in being active and unsurprising as something that they really value. And yet, there is also strong evidence that young people identify hanging around as something that the wider community view as irresponsible (page 242), and consequently in order to be seen as responsible would desist from this activity. In this respect, young people are engaged in the reproduction of social currency at the community level, and this inevitably mediates how they identify responsible and irresponsible behaviour. There may also be evidence to suggest that how young people feel about their community may influence how they feel about working within it as per the example of Martin and Ellie on pages 257-258. It is interesting that given the strong influence of the community, young people perceived higher levels of control compared to other contexts (page 266) with corresponding evidence of experience of being controlled (pages 268-269). When analysed though, the idea of young people exercising control appeared to be limited in its scope, very much related to personal identity and behaviour rather than the ability to influence or shape external circumstances (page 266). Where external controls were applied by others, young people were able to establish the criteria by which these controls would be acceptable (see fig 17 on page 274).

### *Institutional*

Despite the relative proximity of schools and other institutions to young people's lives, these do form a context of their own that is separate from the proximate and community layers. It was within institutions that many groups highlighted specific experiences of active citizenship, particularly in terms of structured voluntary and charity work often with a corresponding lack of examples drawn from other contexts. Despite the tight relationship between community and responsibility described above, the exception to this was in the case of the school council where all specific examples of responsibility were located within the school (page 250).

In the section that explored engagement with institutions, there was a particular focus on how young people experienced the level one concepts within settings that promoted the principles of active citizenship. Here, there was evidence that young people understood the principles of decision making, supporting student rights and

affecting change, but this was accompanied by evidence of institutional failures to support young people's influence. In particular, the institutional context can impose barriers through the extent to which active citizenship is endorsed as acceptable by adults (pages 279-280), whether institutions take consultation seriously (pages 281-282) and whether adults effectively communicate the reasons why efforts by young people cannot translate into desired outcomes (page 280).

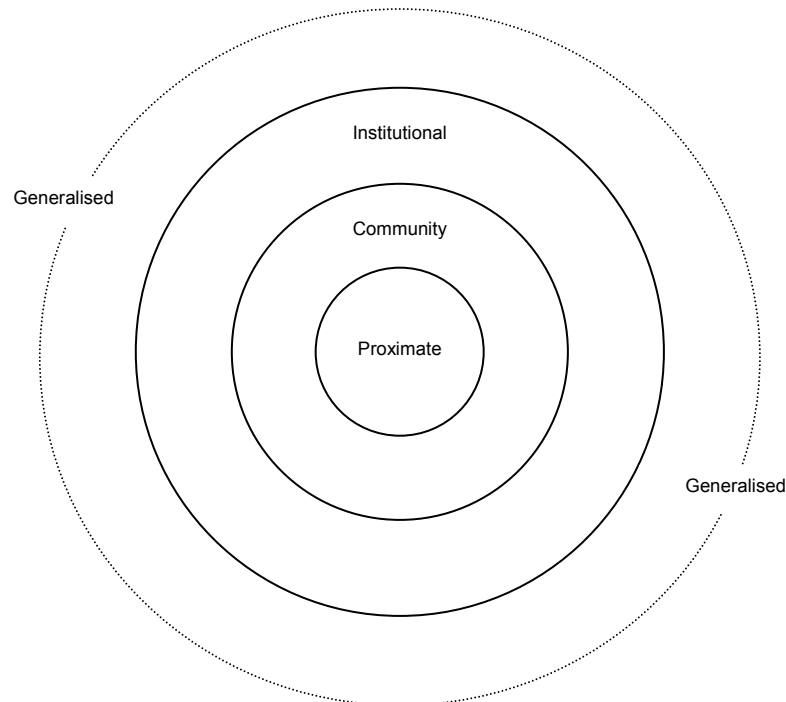
Interestingly, Benton et al (2008) found that young people strongly identified their schools as their community. In this present study, only those young people actively involved in institutions came close to relating the level one concepts to an institutional context. Given that Benton et al's sample was restricted to school students engaged in citizenship education, this may further support the claim that context shapes the understanding and experience of active citizenship and that to draw a more rounded picture of the impact of citizenship education, research needs to consider the other contexts in young people's lives.

### *Generalised*

The forth and final context that shaped citizenship understanding penetrates the three other contexts and falls outside of them. This was the 'generalised' reference point for young people, a set of aspirations, beliefs and judgements about active citizenship that they determined were important in terms of the qualities that could be expected of an active citizen. These were generalised insofar as they did not always apply to specific experiences or definitions and examples, located in discussions around 'society', 'in life' and about unnamed actors ('strangers', etc). Invariably, they became conditional when attached to the three contexts reviewed above. The discussion around 'care for others' illustrates how seemingly generalised principles can be subjected to a range of conditions when context is taken into account (page 255). The process of translation from a generalised principle or belief to a specific experience or activity is complex, rich with conditions and subject to the influence of internal and external factors explored throughout chapters six and seven. The next section of the chapter explores this further.

The four contexts of active citizenship can be visually represented along the lines of similar models developed to explore the interaction of different spheres<sup>10</sup>. Thus contexts are illustrated as layers in figure 18:

**Figure 18 – Active citizenship across contexts**



This device can be used to understand young people's active citizenship in different ways. Firstly, there is recognition that in many cases understanding and experience is different within, and specific to each context. Secondly, that further research is needed to determine how understanding and experience in one context can influence or shape an experience in another. Finally, the relationship between the generalised layer and that of the specific is worthy of further investigation and is further attended to in the next section.

## **The relationship between awareness and activity**

Chapter four of this thesis offered a cursory overview of the development of citizenship education in response to the perceived problems presented in chapters two

<sup>10</sup> See for example Thompson's well known PCS analysis of oppression as operating at three layers, the personal (P), cultural (C) and structural (S).



and three. By far a dominant theme of the policy literature is the idea that young people are passive and the purpose of citizenship education is to address the deficit qualities or dysfunctions in individual young people, seen as the cause of wide ranging social problems. Young people are routinely characterised as ‘apathetic’, a ‘gimme generation’ (Pirie and Worcester 2000) who are somehow ‘feral’ and ‘out of control’ (Jeffs and Smith 1999a) and lacking ‘respect’ (Office of the Prime Minister 2005). The idea of a wholesale disengagement of young people from social and moral practices has undoubtedly shaped the ‘catch all’ citizenship and community agendas, confirming a message that *all* young people are potentially problematic (Stephen 2006) with *certain* young people warranting particular concern on account of their ‘race’ or other identity factors (Howson 2007; Osler 2008). Such a characterisation of young people was not in evidence in this study. This study confirms previous findings in other research: principally that a passive/active dichotomy fails to explain the wide variation of ‘social participation practices’ (Smith et al 2005) that are not necessarily reducible to a tight definition of citizenship.

Young people identified a range of different types of responsibility that were accompanied either by generalised principles (awareness) or by specific examples or experiences (activity). Responsibilities identified in this study, like in Lister et al’s (2002) work, ranged from personal and social issues, aspects of looking after relatives in the proximate context right through to formalised structured volunteering in institutions (page 241).

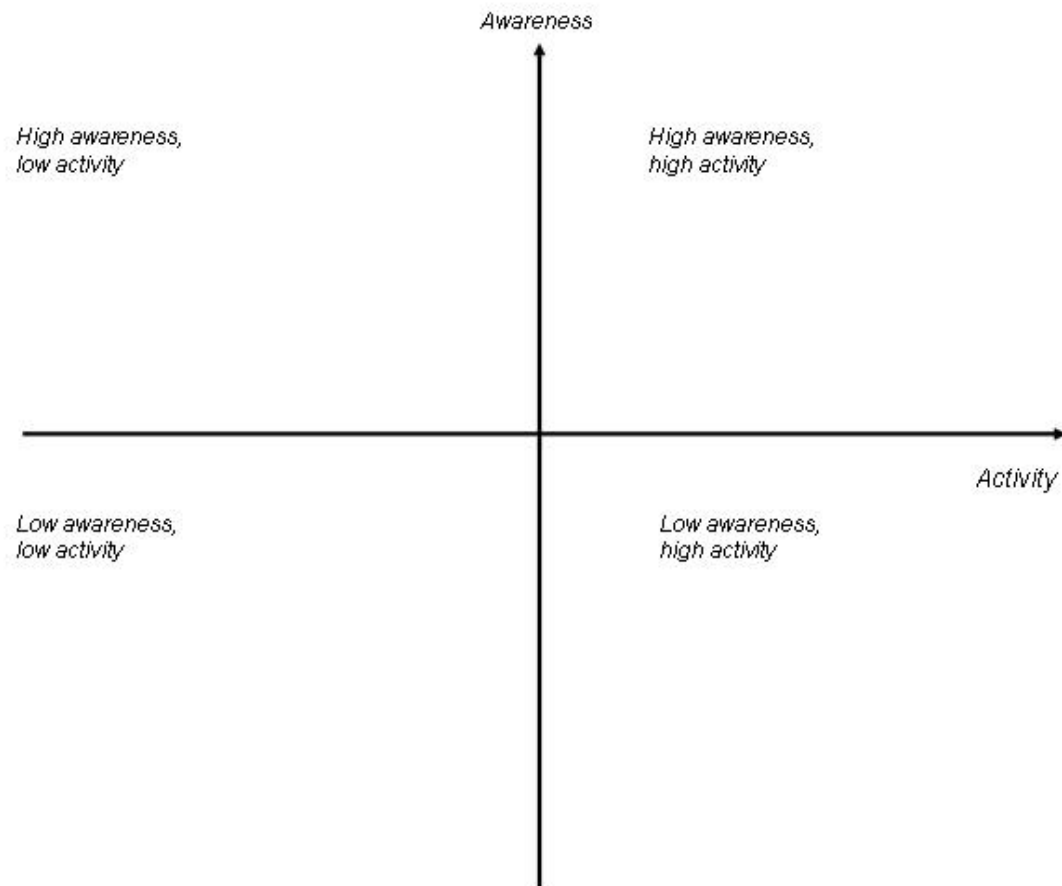
Sometimes awareness and activity appeared closely tied. For example, young people in the youth grants panel held principled views about the need to promote children and young people’s rights and were in positions of comparative power to be able to distribute funds to support the implementation of these principles. A similar example can be found in the school council’s success in securing the provision of a breakfast club for young people. Indicators such as these suggest high degrees of active citizenship in young people, but with important elements of externally imposed conditionality. As already reviewed in this chapter, the young people engaged in schools and other institutions were subject to a number of conditions that may in fact have hindered their capacity to act as active citizens (see above). Conditions were also

strongly apparent in terms of young people's decision making and the findings of this study confirm the distinctions made in Lister et al's (2002) work – particularly around insiders and outsiders (see chapter four). Where experiences of marginalisation were strongly indicative, decision making tended to be within a negative consequentiality framework as evidenced by the young people in the school exclusion project (pages 262-263).

There was also evidence of 'internal' conditions that mitigated against the application of generalised principles into behaviours or actions. Here young people applied a range of conditions in respect of caring for others based on thinking through the consequences of care (page 255). Other individual factors included lack of time, material resources and motivation though as chapter seven illustrated, these are impacted upon by external conditions (page 256). Taken together, internal and external conditions suggest that awareness may be strong or high but activity may be weak or low.

Conversely, some of the data indicated that young people were involved in a range of social participation practices but did not necessarily identify these within a broader framework of active citizenship. In the discussion around generalised care for others on pages 253-254, Kevin, Matt and Jessica could not easily identify the underpinning principles that guided their reasons for engaging in responsible behaviour. Actually, general social participation tended to take place as altruistic 'one off' acts or in the everyday roles that young people played within their communities. This suggests high levels of activity but with lower levels of awareness.

If we consider the relationship between activity and awareness as further evidence that active citizenship is 'inclusive and fluid' (Lister et al 2002: 10), then this lays a clear challenge to policy interpretations of citizenship as a structured and fixed dichotomy of 'active and passive. Rather, we can begin to conceptualise young citizens as operating at different points on an axis of awareness and activity, illustrated in figure 19:

**Figure 19 - Levels of active citizenship (axis)**

An axis model enables us to plot young people's active citizenship at different points in the relationship between understanding and experience, or awareness and activity. Examining the axis clockwise, we can identify examples that apply in each of the four categories. In the high awareness/low activity section, we might include the rural youth club committee, who were able to demonstrate understanding of the reasons why young people needed to be actively involved in shaping services and yet were subject to a range of institutional barriers to ensuring this involvement was actualised. In the high awareness/high activity quadrant, we might locate the youth grants panel notwithstanding the obvious interplay of adult decision making and influence. In the low awareness/high activity section, we consider the wide range of general social participation practices that the majority of young people engaged in. These were mainly located in the proximate and community contexts of young people's everyday experience and were not always framed as consequences of active citizenship understanding (as discussed in the previous section). For the majority of young people in this study, it was this quadrant that most applied. Finally, we have the forth

quadrant which by definition of ‘low awareness/low activity’ implies a passive engagement by young people: this study offers no evidence that young people fit within this category which adds further challenge to the validity of the concept of passivity in the debate about citizenship.

Young people’s active citizenship is therefore best understood as:

- A range of different types of definitions and experiences of the level one concepts that they identified as most pertinent to active citizenship.
- The relationship between this understanding and experience within and across the different contexts of their lives.
- Different relationships between and within awareness of concepts and the activity or experiences associated with them.

The final concluding chapter reviews the main contributions of this thesis and outlines areas for further research.

## 9 Conclusions

The aims of this study were to explore how young people define and experience active citizenship and whether concepts of active citizenship have any bearing on the social and local political decisions and actions that young people take within the communities. In doing so, the research aimed to contribute to our understanding of active citizenship by drawing on the perspectives and everyday, real world experiences of young people.

As a contribution to the interrogation of social policy, this study has attempted to offer an alternative perspective on some ‘systems of thought’ (Kelly 2003) that have established themselves as the knowledge and policy of youth reviewed in the first few chapters of this thesis. Namely that:

1. An ‘individual deficit model’ has been employed to explain the disengagement of youth from political participation.
2. Such political disengagement is tied to a wider disenfranchisement defined loosely as ‘social and moral responsibility’.
3. Indicators of anti-social behaviour, crime, poor community relations, and low levels of volunteering are all consequent symptoms.
4. In order for young people to ‘self-regulate’ against such difficulties, citizenship education is *de facto* a ‘good’ governmental strategy.

Through focus groups and workshops with young people, the attributes, knowledge and skills required for active citizenship were examined, and these in turn were investigated in relation to how young people understood and experienced them in their everyday contexts. In this concluding chapter, the key contributions of this thesis are set out with reference to two strands: (1) how the findings extend our knowledge about young people and active citizenship and (2) how the methodological approach taken in this research study can be further applied to questions of youth and social policy. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research investigation.

## The significance of young people's voices

All governmental strategies depend upon examination of the fields of visibility and the acceptance of forms of rational thought that first identify a problem and then support a rationale for fixing it (Dean 1999). In chapter one, it was argued that most policy understandings of the lives of young people are based upon adult perceptions and interpretations that have little cognisance with the lived experience of young people (Hine 2009). As a result, the complexity of young people's lives is disguised and often misrepresented (France 2008; Hine 2009). This in turn can fuel the potential misdiagnosis of a social policy problem. In respect of active citizenship, the problem is identified through two challenges in late modern society: the distribution and uptake of welfare, and the composition and function of communities in regulating themselves and others (chapter two). Together with more specific problems around the perceived deficits of young people (chapters three and four), these lead to a particular reading of young people's lives: seemingly 'ungovernable' (Kelly 2003) and in need of new expert representations. Young people lack moral and social responsibility, as evidenced through the identification of, and responses to anti-social behaviour. They also lack political literacy on account of the identification and response to falling party membership and voter disengagement. The call for a tightening net of programmes of welfare and education designed to mould the active citizen is justified on account of this reading (chapters three and four).

If Dean (1999: 30) argues that in order to understand the nature of government, we must examine the 'fields of visibility of government', then sometimes our gaze must be adjusted to take account of alternative perspectives. This study has aimed to do just that: in reviewing the problem of citizenship as an aspect of social policy that warrants critical investigation, the voices of young people have been central to the study design and the subsequent findings.

The design of the study was dependent on a staged methodology where young people effectively set the parameters for investigation. They identified the initial areas of investigation through assistance in research tool design; they assessed the evidence gained from their peers in stage one of the study and focused the concepts required for

further investigation at stage two. In using this approach, the researcher withheld policy and academic definitions of citizenship in favour of establishing how young people themselves *defined* the concept. As a result, active citizenship according to the lives of young people involved in this study was defined with their own experiences as reference points.

The former chapters of the thesis argued that ‘theory testing’ approaches can simply reproduce our current understanding of active citizenship and assess to what extent young people match the requirements of it (see in particular chapters three, four and five). The extent to which young people really offer contributions that deviate from dominant conceptions of citizenship is critically examined below. Nonetheless, the methodological approach used in this study may have benefit to other aspects of social policy research. In a more general way, the research employed a systematic approach to investigating ‘real world’ definitions of policy concepts. In utilising the adaptive theory design, young people formulated the concepts that would be explored in the study. Each stage represented a ‘building block’ in terms of knowledge production and all building blocks were put in place by the participants themselves. Such an approach may be applicable to other investigations of concepts that are used frequently in social policy (for example: social exclusion or anti-social behaviour). The starting question was not ‘how do young people evidence active citizenship?’ against pre-set definitions, it was ‘how do young people *define* and *experience* active citizenship?’.

### **Acceptance and rejection of policy definitions**

The study findings indicate that young people both accepted and challenged policy conceptions of active citizenship. On the one hand their own definitions, examples and experiences reflected dominant ideas about what constitutes an active citizen, as evidenced through the attributes, knowledge and skills they identified in chapter six, and the primacy of responsibility as a concept in chapter seven. When read against the discussion in chapters two and three in particular, there is evidence not only that young people consider and actively engage in responsibilities, but that these responsibilities are often adult-defined. In the discussion that explored ‘hanging

around' we saw young people rejecting their own preferred definitions of social behaviour in favour of adhering to community level norms around what constitutes being an active citizen. Young people have defined citizenship less in political terms (chapter six) and more in terms of the expectations adults have of them in relation to their local communities (chapter seven). Examples of decision making and the exercise of power and control appeared limited in both their range and their potential influence. Taking aside the wide range of social participation practices that young people engage in, 'paid work' and 'avoiding anti-social behaviour' emerged as the two strongest responsibilities young people identified with. In terms of paid work, the idea of economic competence and contribution matches that of Lister et al's (2002) 'respectable economic independence model' of citizenship. Through their analysis of current work and their identification of 'horizon' responsibilities, some young people in this study subscribed to this relationship between economics and citizenship. This relationship is cemented in New Labour constructions of the active citizen (chapter two).

And yet, there is evidence that young people offer challenge to the dominant policy conceptions of citizenship. Whereas policy makers may favour structured, accredited activity as preferred indicators of social engagement (chapter four), there is evidence from this study that young people engage in a wide range of social participation practices not easily reducible to tight definitions of voluntary work. This reflects Lister et al's (2002) 'socially constructive model' of citizenship insofar as young people evidence a range of different contributions that they identify as social participation (chapter six and seven). This 'heavy engagement' was also identified in the research by Osler and Starkey (2003) explored in chapter four.

The challenge is also evident in the recognition that there is a disjuncture in how different groups define different aspects of active citizenship. This was particularly evident in the discussion around 'responsibility', 'decision making' and 'control'. Whilst such fissures in understanding exist, young people are likely to perceive themselves as undertaking high levels of social responsibility in the face of alternative views that they are in fact 'irresponsible', most striking in the example around the inner city youth project's experience of being moved on (pages 245-247). This offers



an important perspective that builds on the work of Ungar (2004; 2007) around resilience and Evans (2002) around the interplay between structure and agency reviewed throughout the thesis. It also reinforces the call of youth studies academics that in order to better understand young people's real lives, we need to investigate their own interpretations and experiences (France 2007; Hine 2009) to better understand the nature of local 'contests' in the formation of citizenship (Staeheli 2008).

What also clearly emerges from the study is that young people are not mere dupes, subject to the representations of their lives and accepting of whatever controls are imposed. Nor do they simply reject controls as unfair or out of kilter with what is imposed on other age groups. Rather, they employ criteria for determining the reasonableness of controls, and the thesis offers a triangulated model of how this might be understood.

### **Rights or responsabilisation?**

It is therefore evident that there is both an acceptance and rejection of the dominant model of citizenship within this study. To what extent do the contributions of young people reflect the ideas put forward in chapters two and three that citizenship education could be interpreted as a form of Rose's responsabilisation thesis? At the other end of the spectrum, to what extent do they reflect the ambitions set out in the growing cosmopolitan definitions of citizenship?

Rose's (1996) contention that the individual citizen is charged with making regulated choices in the context of their own freedom is underpinned by the idea that [young] people 'do not need to be governed by others, but will govern themselves' (1996: 45). The other contention is that communities are new sites of governance where regulation can occur at the micro level, as opposed to intrusive government programmes (Amin 2005; Marinetto 2004; Rose 1999b). To some extent, both of these aspects of responsabilisation are evident in the study. Young people appear to have accepted the need to adopt certain conditions of social responsibility, externally defined and regulated by the community. Community emerges as a site of regulation

to be sure, but analysis shows that institutions and central government programmes of active citizenship education are as powerful. There is strong evidence of prescriptive structured activities within the school and youth work contexts (chapters seven and eight) and the acceptance of dominant definitions of citizenship *must* be reflective of the fact that all young people in the study were of school age and could have experienced forms of citizenship education. Indeed, as chapter six illustrated, most young people had heard about citizenship through their schools. Given that schools deliver a curriculum of teaching and learning based on the national ambitions set out in the Crick report, it is perhaps little surprise that dominant ideas are reproduced. What emerges is a mixture between responsabilisation and state instruction, a hybrid that is neither independent of the state nor truly directed by it (Marinetto 2004).

To the question of cosmopolitanism then: are young people's definitions and experience of active citizenship indicative of the powerful human rights framework set out in chapter one? Is there evidence from this study to suggest that young people's involvement is a 'non-negotiable human right' (Lundy 2007)? There is certainly strong evidence to support young people's engagement in the community context. There is also evidence of decision making skills and negotiation processes. The intercultural group talked not only of learning about difference across cultures, but also of their duty to teach about it to better affect community relationships. The young people involved in institutional contexts were able to point to significant impacts as a result of their influence.

If the author is permitted to reflect on the start of his career as a youth worker some twelve years ago, young people's involvement in budget allocations amounted to little more than negotiating the contents of the tuck shop or what trips to provide within a year long programme: examples that are far away from the resources that the youth grants panel can distribute to youth projects across the city. These examples reflect the sweeping changes in children and young people's participation over the past ten years (chapters one and four). And yet, mediating factors persist: of course 'you can't always get what you want' (*Peter, School Council*), but the realities of participation and empowerment show that some of the barriers that young people experienced suggest limited faith in the capacity of young people to exercise responsible influence.

Even where evidence of the *possibility* of influence and change exists, these experiences are defined in the context of what is deemed acceptable by adults. The examples of the school council and the rural youth committee show how participation is still structured around adult definitions of what is worthy, a finding that reflects Cunningham and Lavelette's (2004) work around the endorsement of young people's political activity discussed in chapters three and four.

It seems that citizenship is imbued with contradiction. In chapter four, Davies' (2001) argument that there is a tension between fostering compliance and challenging citizens to think about social justice concluded a discussion about the purpose of citizenship education. There is certainly plenty of evidence from this study to confirm that young people are being trained and supported in compliance, but limited evidence to suggest a strong sense of rights amongst young people, especially so in the case of marginalised groups. Again, these issues may be reflective of the dominant ideals of citizenship education and since human rights did not underpin the development of citizenship education in the UK context (Osler 2008), attempts to develop cosmopolitan citizenship are unlikely to have kept pace.

### **The need for a sensitive framework**

The study has confirmed much of what is known about citizenship when the experiences of young people are taken into account. This thesis supports, and builds upon the work explored in chapters three and four, insofar as the findings challenge the simplistic passive/active dichotomies inherent in policy representations of citizenship. The findings also suggest that there are key differences within and between different contexts of active citizenship. Studies that simply evaluate institutional effectiveness of citizenship teaching (such as the work of the NfER reviewed in chapter four) may in fact miss other key contexts that mediate citizenship awareness and activity. These may include those skills enacted within the proximate contexts (evidence of negotiated decision making, for instance), or those problems experienced within the community. For a more sophisticated and holistic understanding of active citizenship, consideration needs to be given to both the

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understanding and experience of active citizenship within and between different contexts.

This is related to the second key contribution: that of the difference between understanding (awareness) and experience (activity) and the translation from one to the other. In chapter three, the fallacy of the risk factor paradigm was illustrated by utilising the work of France (2008) and in particular, the challenge to causality as a useful basis on which to build social policy. In the case of education and youth policy, the causal assumption is that if young people are taught how to believe, behave and what values to accept, then evidence of activity will follow: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* (after it, therefore because of it). Actually, because of the fluidity and variance in both the understanding and experience of active citizenship, these claims are seriously flawed. Active citizenship is described in contextually specific ways, and there is no evidence to suggest that young people can learn and act upon principles in one context and translate these to others. The findings suggest that the interplay between awareness and activity is mediated by institutional barriers, by adult acceptance and validation and by a whole range of other internal and external factors. Young people are not simply passive or active: rather an axis of the relationship between understanding and experience emerges that helps us begin to understand how better to explore the factors that may support or hinder active citizenship.

The axis itself, if developed further, may provide a useful tool for further research in terms of ‘plotting’ and ‘assessing’ the extent to which young people feel and behave as active citizens. It may also be useful for educational practices in determining what approaches may be most beneficial in supporting citizenship formulation (Staheli 2008).

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## Taking forward citizenship research

The contemporary aspect of active citizenship makes this research timely, and:

“More worthwhile to the extent that [the research] relates to matters that are high on the agenda of current concerns”

(Denscombe 2002: 47)

Research that focuses on the subjective experiences of young people is growing apace (Hine 2009). The complex influences upon a young person’s interaction with social policy can only truly be understood through localised investigation that takes into account the everyday ‘lived’ experience (France 2007). Young people are not passively submissive to policy and social changes (Kemshall 2009): they actively engage with their social worlds, and construct meaning through this interaction as this thesis demonstrates. We learn more about the individual and social pathways of young people by inviting them to share experience and interpretations. If we are to further develop our understanding of the complex and diverse worlds of young people, research needs to focus further on qualitative exploration and discovery. Questions of further study have been highlighted throughout this thesis, and further such questions are discussed in this chapter in the form of highlighting the main limitations of the study and setting out prospective areas for further investigation.

### Limitations

- The study by its nature is small scale and limited to a single location for the reasons outlined above. An interesting further study would attempt to sample wider, drawing from across the United Kingdom to build a comparative perspective of active citizenship as experienced by a more diverse range of young people, in more diverse contexts.
- The interplay between ‘race’ and active citizenship has been under-explored in this study. A better resourced study would have time to examine, in depth, the complications of citizenship across ethnically defined groups, and in particular

what challenges present members of the Black community in times of increasing insecurity. There is little ground to dispute that Black and other minority communities are subject to greater questions of allegiance in relation to citizenship (Sallah and Howson 2007), especially in light of current debates around violent extremism and multiculturalism (see chapter one).

- The same limitations apply to other social identity factors. For example, how a disabled young person is ‘activated’ warrants further analysis. Much attention was given to ‘hanging around’ in chapters three and seven, since it was a central theme in young people’s interpretations of active citizenship. This concept may come under a different form of challenge when understood in relation to disability.
- The researcher was reliant on gatekeepers to secure access throughout the study. The extent to which this led to inclusion and exclusion of certain groups of young people cannot fully be measured but has been explored in the thesis (in chapter five). The impact of gatekeepers on selection is well documented as a concern for social researchers and some strategies were used to decrease coercion and to reduce the ‘halo’ effect. Independence was asserted throughout, and professional workers were asked to refrain from participating in, or observing the research interviews.

### **Learning more from this data**

There are restrictions imposed when presenting a doctoral thesis. The most obvious of these concern time, space and meeting the external requirements for examination. Inevitably, findings and the analytical discussion have to be necessarily truncated. There is, however, a very large qualitative dataset featuring nearly 100 young people. Post-doctoral analysis of the data could explore a number of alternative themes as set out in the introduction to chapter seven. Of most importance, the interplay between gender and the understanding and experience of active citizenship will be explored. The gender of participants was systematically recorded during this study. Re-analysis of the data when explored by gender differences may reveal considerable differences

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and commonalities in how young women and young men define and experience active citizenship. This may also emerge as a further important mediating factor to add to the overarching themes presented in chapter eight. Certainly, Lister's (2003) analysis of feminist perspectives further complicates any simplistic definitions of citizenship.

The findings also offer the potential for further comparison with other research around the lived experience of active citizenship. In particular, the researcher is interested in investigating the transferability of certain explanatory models that have been generated as a result of the data.

### **Developing further research**

Very specific points arise from the limitations of this study and these will be addressed by the researcher in future investigations. Critically, the issue of how *different* young people experience active citizenship will be of concern for this researcher. The limitations of analysis in terms of how, for instance, a Black young person experiences 'rights' in the context of the community warrants further specific investigation. Similarly, the unintended exclusion of disabled young people does little to further our understanding of how citizenship activity may be mediated by disabling systems and structures. Unfortunately, the present dataset does not allow for meaningful re-interpretation but future research will seek to address these and other aspects of the lived experience of young people.

The broader theoretical theme of this thesis concerns how young people are governed in late modern society. Citizenship education is one component of several interconnected initiatives designed to institute preferred moral and social attributes within this generation of young people. In the opening paragraphs of this thesis, the policy ambivalence inherent in these approaches was introduced. For this researcher, one of the biggest learning points in the process of this investigation was a sensitization to the governmentality literature as a rewarding explanatory framework. As a more general research interest, the researcher intends to further develop the use of governmentality in investigating questions of 'youth' in the context of social policy, responsibility and active citizenship.

## Concluding comment

Growing up in the risk society presents challenges of uncertainty for young people. Government concerns itself with the ways in which to risk manage the complex process of transition, in the face of both change and continuity in the fabric of young people's experience. Evidence suggests that the emphasis over the past ten years has been on the effective management of the individual's social and moral behaviour, perhaps at the expense of engaging in a critical analysis of social and structural contexts (Levitas 2006). Initiatives such as citizenship education offer the promise of reigning in happenstance: they mould preferred pathways towards desired adult futures (Kelly 2003). Through a formalised curriculum, underpinned by a transmission model of learning, young people can be equipped to *know* and *act upon* the deficits they seemingly possess. And yet, such an approach should make us uncomfortable. Citizenship education does indeed have a long history, but it is not a history aligned with unthinking subordination. Rather it is bound in a recognition of the value of universal rights and participation for the greater good. It can be a momentum concept, where the very boundaries and structures of our everyday experience are put under intense scrutiny by the generation that follows us.

The paradox is that if we attempt too far to manage the acquisition of these qualities in young people through instructive citizenship education, we may in fact diminish their curiosity and capacity to negotiate their own social identities. The consequences of such over-management may be that young people, in all their diversity and complexity, become further reducible to simplistic labels and categories. Similarly, if we target our efforts only at one group (on account of their age) at the expense of challenging existing power relations, we may in fact reproduce the contextual barriers that are effective in hindering active citizenship.

The promise of meaningful education for citizenship is one that reclaims the social, and enables both young and older to engage in a meaningful process of deliberative dialogue. It should not be the preserve only of the professional educator. The very



best models of community integration arise out of meaningful interchange between adults and young people.

As Tony Jeffs recently said, facilitating that process is ‘the duty of us all’ (2008).

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Fieldnote template

PhD Focus Groups (Stage Two) Fieldnote											
Group name		Date of session		Time (start)		Time (end)					
<b>Participants</b>											
1		2		3		4		5		6	
M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age
7		8		9		10		11		12	
M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age	M/F	Age
<b>Group formation diagram</b>											
<b>Notes about the context of the focus group (including the layout of the room)</b>											
<b>Post-group reflective notes</b>											
<b>Notes about the group</b>											
<b>Issues to explore in memo writing</b>											





## Young People and Active Citizenship Information Sheet

Thank you for thinking about being involved with this project. This information sheet tells you a bit about the aims of the project, and also about your rights as a participant. I will read out this sheet and explain what I mean, but please do ask any questions if you need me to be clearer. At the end I am going to ask everybody if they understand what I've said about the project.

### ***What is this research about?***

This research aims to look at what young people think about 'citizenship'. Often, we hear that the government, or teachers, or other people say that they want young people to be good citizens. It is considered so important, that citizenship is now taught as a school subject.

We want to find out what young people think of citizenship by asking them questions about the subject. By taking part in this study, your views and experiences will help us to consider why citizenship may or may not be important to young people. We will ask questions mostly about your life as a young person, finding out how you solve difficulties and what you enjoy about life.

### ***Why is it being done?***

I am doing this research to work towards a PhD qualification at De Montfort University in Leicester.

### ***What will happen to the research?***

In order to gain the PhD qualification, I must submit a thesis at the end of the project. This is a large report which details the research and will be assessed by the University. There is also the possibility that some of the project will be used for publications or other reports. In all cases, the privacy of participants will be respected and I'll never reproduce your name or any other details about you.

### ***What about my rights as a participant?***

This research is committed to respecting the rights of participants and we have developed an ethical code of conduct to follow. It is important that you understand:

- I will keep your personal details private and will not mention you in any reports. Any interview details we take down will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by Jason. This is the same for any audio recordings I make.
- The only time I can't guarantee keeping things private is when I think I've heard something that may relate to protecting you or others. If I think this has happened, **I'll always talk about it with you before telling anyone else.**
- You can decide to leave the research project – you don't even have to give me a reason.
- At some points, you may not want to answer certain questions or take part in certain aspects of the research. **This is OK** – just let me know if you feel this way about anything I ask you.
- As I am independent to your school/college/youth club I will not pass on any information you give us during the research process. Also, if you decide not to take part anymore – this will not affect your attendance at the project/school (etc). You are fine to ask for members of staff to not be around when you take part in the research.

### ***Why do you need me to sign a consent form?***

We ask everyone who gets involved to sign a form to say that they understand the research project. We will talk everyone through the project and provide this information sheet for you to read before you sign the form. We would expect people to sign this form as a signal that they understand what their involvement in the research project means.

### ***Who do I contact with questions?***

These are my contact details. Feel free to get in touch if you want to chat about any aspect of the research:

**Jason Wood**  
**Young People and Citizenship Research Project**  
**Faculty of Health and Life Sciences**  
**De Montfort University, Hawthorn Building, Leicester LE1 9BH**

**Tel: (0116) 207 8740**

**Email: [jjwood01@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:jjwood01@dmu.ac.uk)**

If there is any aspect of the research that you would like to make a complaint about, please do get in touch with me (details above) or my PhD supervisor:

**Professor Hazel Kemshall (same address as above)**  
**Tel: (0116) 255 1551**                      **Email: [kemshall@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:kemshall@dmu.ac.uk)**

**Thanks again for taking part 😊**

**Appendix 3 – Consent form**

**Jason Wood  
De Montfort University  
Young People and Citizenship Research Project**

**CONSENT FORM**

	Please tick
I confirm Jason has explained the aims of the above study and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop at any time, without giving any reason.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the above study	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the audio-taping of the focus group and I understand that Jason is the only one who will listen to the tape.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Please print your name here:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

*(Optional) If you are under 18, we advise you to ask a parent/guardian to sign this form as well just so they know about your involvement.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Please print your name here:** \_\_\_\_\_