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“They don’t know what’s going on”:
Exploring young people’s political subjectivities
during transitions to adulthood in the UK

Benjamin Chance Bowman

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath
Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies

April 2016

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iii. Abstract

The transitions of young people to adulthood in the UK are a political threshold that has received much public attention. The trend for young people to abstain from elections relative to older generations is one example of the many reasons young people's politics have come under the microscope of researchers who claim that the manner of young people's transitions to citizenship represents an incipient crisis for the UK as a democratic system (Farthing, 2010; O'Toole, 2015, p. 175). This thesis responds to calls for more research into young people's lives as sites for political subjectivity as well as, in the UK, for explorations of the main question in the field of young people's politics: the extent and nature of young people's relative disengagement from politics, and their marginalization from institutional politics in general

The theoretical basis for this research project is a constructionist framework based on Bourdieu's methods for uncovering social worlds (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 1) that also attempts to approach young people as equals in a political sense (Rancière, 1991, p. 229). Focus groups with young people at one vocational college, one secondary school and one youth group in the UK, utilizing participant photography as a data generation technique, provide the data for this study in an everyday politics approach. Young people's perceptions of their everyday worlds are developed into broader discussions of political subjectivity, perceptions and actions.

Keywords: young people, politics, UK, citizenship, Bourdieu, Rancière, liminality, visual methods, insecurity, autonomy.

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1. Introduction

Young people’s political practices – or, more often than not, the failure of young people to muster to the political practices expected of them – are most often considered somewhere between an incipient crisis or an immediately pressing one (Farthing, 2010; O’Toole, 2015, p. 175). The empirical understanding of young people in the UK is that they not only continue to withdraw from democratic institutions and traditional, formal political processes, but that the overall withdrawal of young people from formal, institutional politics is accelerating (Norris, 2011; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Henn and Foard, 2012; Garcia Albacete, 2014; Akhtar, 2015).

Thus proposed, the crisis of young disengagement from institutional political practices is the alarm bell sounded to introduce a wide range of policies, from citizenship education (Tonge, Mycock and Jeffery, 2012) to ‘anti-radicalization’ citizenship intervention programmes for young Muslims (Blackwood, Hopkins and Reicher, 2015) to the fast-tracking of armed services personnel into school teaching roles (Tipping, 2013). The urgency of the rhetoric around young people’s politics – as well as the ideological and romantic depiction of young people existing by the nature of their youth at the “cutting edge” of social change (Miles, 2015) – whether depicting the young as the vector of social decline, as the vanguard of vibrant new modes of political agency, or as something in between, will be familiar to any reader who bore witness to the years through which this research project was undertaken, from the protests, occupations and riots of 2010-11 (Bennett, 2013; Bowman, 2014) to the UK’s first votes at 16 in the Referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 (Stewart *et al.*, 2014).

The popularity of the focus on young people’s politics does not entail the necessary popularity of the view that young people themselves are political. This project works a rich vein of theoretical study in the UK based on the perception that young people are subject to more or less depoliticizing normative perceptions of their civic role (Banaji, 2008) as well as long term social and economic factors that marginalize the participation of many young people in traditional political arenas like elections (Sloam, 2014) with their youth intersecting with other inequalities such as race (McDowell, Rootham and Hardgrove, 2014), gender

(Geniets, 2010) and physical dis/ability (Slater, 2012). The question of whether young people are *in* or *out* of that broadly defined democratic arena and institutions for changing the world around one's self and those around us, which we might call politics, coincides with the contemporary question about whether young people are being *left out* of the arenas and institutions of the UK. Indeed, the question of whether young people *do politics* to an acceptable extent and in acceptable manners compared to older generations, goes hand in hand with the (very political) question of to what extent young people's position in the UK as a society, compared to older generations, is acceptable. The economic crash of the last ten years hit the young exceptionally hard (Verick, 2009; Scarpetta, Sonnet and Manfredi, 2010; Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts, 2014) and the hangover of the crash continues to affect young people in the UK on a daily basis. Higher proportions of young unemployment followed the crash as the shifting landscape of labour markets impeded young people from getting, keeping and progressing in employment (Tunstall *et al.*, 2012). Permanent employment with job progression is just one of many pathways in the transition to adulthood that previous generations enjoyed that have become far more difficult to traverse since the crisis: another commonly cited example of transitions that are riskier and costlier to the young following the crisis are the move from a parent or guardian's home into independent housing (as in Clapham *et al.*, 2014; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015).

1.1. Turning out or falling out? Agency and apathy in the approach to young politics

Over the duration of this study, the unorthodox interventions of young people in British politics have raised concerns among political elites who perceive a lamentable willingness among the young to abandon formal political processes (Henn and Foard, 2014). The first fall in electoral turnout, among the generation who grew up in the 1980s, hit in 2001 alongside a turnout of 59% among the overall electorate that was the lowest since 1918, when only 39% of 18-24 year-olds voted (Ipsos-Mori, 2001); turnout fell further to 37% in 2005 (Ipsos-Mori, 2005) before exhibiting a slight rise, albeit to a still relatively low level of 44% in 2010, compared to a national turnout of 65% (Ipsos-Mori, 2010). Post election polls indicate young turnout in 2015 was 43% (Ipsos-Mori, 2015). Young abstention has proved both significant and persistent, and has been taken not just

to indicate the decision not to vote, but disillusionment with politics as a whole: indeed, to be a sign that those who reached adulthood just before the turn of the millennium were the vanguard of an apolitical generation (Pirie and Worcester, 2000). It is, above anything else, electoral abstention that spurred observers of the young to sound the call to arms against “the young of today [who] are jeopardising the future of democracy” (Forbrig, 2005, p. 7).

The image of young people as revolutionary spoilers of democracy is exciting enough as rhetoric, but masks the dominant theme in the analysis of young British citizens at the dawn of the 21st Century, which is that they are not so much swinging an axe at the trunk of democracy, as failing to ripen on its branches. That young people do not gain an interest in politics is one common hypothesis for their disappearance from the ballot box (Park, 2004; Phelps, 2012). Another is the position that alienation and disaffection among young people leads them to avoid institutions for participation (Kimberlee, 2002; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005; Marsh, O’Toole and Jones, 2007; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010). In fact, the contested nature of young people’s politics is taken to reinforce the need for this research project to clearly define its intent to increase the knowledge available to those studying the status of young people in political arenas of the United Kingdom, while developing creative and exploratory methods that can contribute to future data generation in this field. This is a research project that focuses on the young person as a political subject, and on exploring the potential for political agency among young people in the UK.

1.2. Unpacking the concept of “young politics” – defining a political spectrum from apathy to democratic citizenship?

As Shakuntala Banaji wrote in 2008, “the idea that young people are disengaged from politics and civil society, indeed from the entire public sphere – through no fault of their own or systemic constraints, or because of something that typifies that particular age-group – has become something of a mantra now in this field, and it is almost unthinkable not to state it” (2008, p. 543).

This project follows a rich literature of research on young people’s politics and in order to define this key concept, it puts roots into the existing literature as analyzed in chapter 2. First of all, young people’s politics is taken to be the study

of the participation of young people in political institutions through processes like voting, as well as structured political or civic behaviour such as badge-wearing, protesting and volunteering for a cause (Roker, Player and Coleman, 1999; Matthews, 2001). Secondly, it is considered to refer to less structured political activity, including abstention, and political subjectivities that may not be evidenced through traditional, institutional forms of political action (Bennie and Rudig, 1993; Norris, 2003; Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007; O'Toole *et al.*, 2010). Thirdly, young people's politics is considered to be rooted in a context of young marginalization from political institutions in particular, and the public sphere in general, and so must be addressed in a way that includes young people "practicing politics in ways which take advantage of a permeable public/private divide" (Manning, 2012, p. 2), that is, if young people can be considered to be marginalized from UK society, economy, public life and its governance, relative to older generations (e.g. Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Verick, 2009; Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts, 2014; Sloam, 2014), then the study of young people's politics in the UK must include the study of that marginalization from the public sphere and the extent to which it can be questioned, contested, subverted and changed by young people.

In other words, a study that merely concerns those political arenas "led and defined explicitly by adults" fails to approach young people's politics as the "complex and multivalent struggle" (Staehele and Kofman, 2004, p. 3) that young people undertake as apprentice members to those public arenas, "where common issues are deliberated by [adult] representatives and politicians" (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 4) and where elite adults engage in what Rancière calls "the activities which create order by distributing places, names, functions" (1996, p. 173). In Rancièrian terms, this study includes young people's politics in terms of their participation within the arena of the distribution of places, names and functions by adult representatives and elites – it includes the division of young people at the age of 18 between voters and non-voters, it considers political subjectivities with respect to institutions such as local councils to be *political* for the reason that this function has been distributed to the council by adult representatives and elites – but it also includes their lives outside these arenas, by exploring how the complex and multivalent struggle of young people can be illustrated by their testimonies of life at the divide between the public and the private.

1.3. Guiding research aims

This thesis begins by stating the main aims, which are as follows:

1. To explore the main question in the field of young people's politics, which is the extent and nature of young people's relative disengagement from the public sphere in the UK (Banaji, 2008, p. 543). Since this question is central to the thesis and to the academic literature in general, and since there are numerous possible research positions on the subject that include, for example, the discussion of young people's disengagement as a question of their political apathy rather than their marginalization (Phelps, 2012), therefore to this question are attached the following research positions:
 - a. In an exploration of the extent and nature of young people's marginalization from the public sphere, it is appropriate to extend the definition of politics from what is traditionally and institutionally understood to be political activity, and especially to include young people's subjectivities at the threshold between the public and private spheres (Manning, 2012, p. 2).
 - b. That in such a study the perspective that young people experience 'disengagement' is in itself a political position, since it presupposes young people to be actors who must engage with certain pro-social civic pathways of activity and institutions (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010). In other words, defining *disengagement* is a political process because it engages in the external and interpretative distribution of functions between what is acceptable, engaged and 'political' and what is not (Rancière, 1996, p. 173).
 - c. That in the contemporary context the narrative that young people are disengaged is also a mantra of crisis or, at least, of incipient crisis (Farthing, 2010), and that it is important not to let the narrative of crisis obscure the potential exploration of new grammars of political action (O'Toole, 2016).

- d. hat perspectives on young people's marginalization and social disadvantage in the contemporary context can fall into the trap of assuming young people's identities are to be conflated with work, that only certain types of employment can create meaning in their lives (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009), and that marginalization can be resolved through individual character building and personal resilience (Wörsching, 2012, p. 125).
2. The exploration of young people's politics can include the exploration of young people's subjectivities in "everyday politics" (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010; Street and Inthorn, 2010; Wood, 2012), since the division between public politics and private politics is a conceptual division that allow the exploration of the exclusionary nature of young people's citizenship and participation (Lister, 2008; Skelton, 2010). In this case, research can explore young people's liminal positions between macro politics and micro politics, in both and in between the public and private spheres (Wood, 2011), and their subjectivities constructed in the in-between space of transitions to adulthood, insofar as youth is understood to be a "complex transition between childhood dependence and adult independence" (Pachi and Barrett, 2012, p. 344).
3. This thesis aims to explore young people's politics thus constructed, by young people in transitional and everyday conceptual political spaces at transitions to adulthood, for the additional reason that it identifies a gap in the literature for the research of young people's lived worlds as political arenas, and not just as social and cultural environments (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 2) young people's lived worlds are typically researched "as social and cultural environments, but not as political arenas".

The research aims synopsized above are developed and explained through the course of the literature review in chapter 2, and provide the foundations of the aims and structure of the research methodology and method design constructed in chapter 3, below.

1.4. Research questions

Based on the research aims in section 1.3, the research questions are as follows:

1. In the complex transition from childhood to adulthood in the UK, what tools for political agency are available to young people, from traditional modes of institutional participation to new grammars of action and everyday politics?
2. In what ways do transitions to adulthood in the UK provide the opportunity for young people to craft political subjectivities, in the liminal spaces between childhood and adulthood, dependence and independence, and the private and the public arenas?
3. In methodological terms, in what ways can research that is applied to young people's lived worlds as political arenas contribute to an identified need for new methods and new explorations of those arenas

1.5. Structure of this thesis

Following the introductory chapter 1, this thesis provides a thematic review of relevant academic literature in chapter 2, including a discussion of the findings of that review in section 2.6. The background theory, approach and design of the method for data generation and analysis are in chapter 3. There were three sites for data generation, and each site is provided a separate chapter in which the data is discussed, in chapters 4 through 6. Chapter 7 draws themes together that arose in the corpus of generated data and presents the researcher's interpretations of those data. Given the aim of this thesis to explore not only the data, but also to reflect on the method, chapter 8 is a systematic review of the method itself. Chapter 9 draws this thesis to a conclusion.

2. Literature Review

This review of the literature concerns young people's civic and political engagements during transitions to adulthood, with its focus on the UK. It begins with a chronological review and develops into a discussion of conceptual frameworks for interrogating young people's politics. In doing so it considers the ways young people navigate transitions to adulthood in the risky contemporary world, their negotiation of imposed neo-liberal narratives and their own reflexive self-narratives concerning the transition to adulthood, and the permeable division between public and private spheres that allows young people to develop as citizens somewhere between and in both. This paper concludes by suggesting that the trajectory among scholarly literature towards conceiving of young people's politics in this way has promise as a basis for future research. In the context of this thesis, this chapter provides an assessment of the landscape of the study of young people's politics, as well as a starting point from which the subsequent methodology for research is constructed.

2.1. Introduction

This literature review, utilizing a critical approach, investigates how previous research has considered young people to engage and disengage with politics, focusing on the UK. It builds towards a discussion of recent theories expanding in the direction of conceptual perspectives on young political subjectivities. The trajectory of this critical literature review points towards everyday politics as a perspective available while building on existing research, as well as a way to conceptualize young people's political behaviour, especially in the contemporary UK, neither as engagement nor disengagement, but as a mixture of the two, reflecting young people's liminal status as they craft political subjectivities during transitions to adulthood.

2.2. Research questions & method for thematic literature review

As a literature review this paper reflects on how previous research has considered young people. At the outset it maintains broad research questions in order to develop a theoretical framework (Coughlan, Cronin and Ryan, 2007) before refining and focusing the research questions to produce what is, in total, a meta-

synthesis approach used to “integrate, evaluate and interpret the findings of multiple qualitative research studies” (Cronin, Ryan and Coughlan, 2008, p. 39). These studies are found using targeted keyword searches comprising as primary terms “young people”, “politics” and “engagement” with synonyms (Timmins and McCabe, 2005); by critical readings of secondary sources with a rough maximum time frame of 5-10 years imposed on results (Paniagua, 2002); and later secondary searches based on emerging themes. Though the focus of the paper is on young people in the UK, sources based on research outside the UK were included when their findings and theoretical discussions were not specific to these different sites. There was a wealth of literature on the subject of young people’s politics generally.

2.3. Presentation of findings

2.3.1. Young politics in the literature

In this section of the literature review, two initial findings are presented. First, that there exists a prolific body of academic work concerning young people’s politics to investigate the relatively low and declining turnout of young people to elections in Britain from roughly 1992 onwards, and that through the 2000s these studies took an increasingly youth-specific approach to research in an attempt to isolate young people as an electoral segment and to prove or disprove the hypothesis Bennett refers to as the schism within the field, between conceptualizing engagement and disengagement, or in Phelps’ terminology, the “apathy” and “anti-apathy” schools (Bennett, 2008; Phelps, 2012). Secondly, this literature review uncovers a recent trend in research towards investigating what is sometimes considered a paradoxical engagement/disengagement and apathy/anti-apathy dichotomy among young people in terms of a redefinition of what counts as politics and what does not, communicating their discoveries concerning young people’s behaviour while grappling, increasingly, with the challenge to redefine politics itself.

2.3.2. Investigating low electoral turnout

W. Lance Bennett divided research contending with young people’s politics between two dominant “paradigms”. Either young people are “reasonably active and engaged” relative to older age groups, or relatively “passive and disengaged”

(2008). This cleavage was formed around the field’s initial query, *“why don’t young people vote?”* From the 1990s onwards, the mainstream, conventional (O’Toole et al., 2010, p. 46) political science research on young people’s engagement can be characterized with a contention that:

“Today’s young people say they are not interested in politics and do not regard political activity as worthwhile. They know little about the institutions of government at various levels, and feel little loyalty to the communities of which they are a part. They reject community activism and do not participate. They regard citizenship only as a way of behaving, and of having regard for others”

(Pirie and Worcester, 2000, p. 35)

In research methodological terms the mainstream in young people’s politics literature uses a traditional conceptualization of engagement and citizenship based around “a set of rights and duties that involve formally organized civic and political activities... e.g. voting or joining a political party” (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010, p. 347). Historically, research was at first dominated by positivistic quantitative studies which seek to capture reality, rather than to condense and represent it (Smart, 2010; Holloway and Biley, 2011), vis-à-vis policymaking by performing statistical analyses on bulk surveys and vast data sets on voting activity (Denver, 2010). From this conceptualization such research grew in part to meet formal democratic institutions’ needs by problematizing a young, non-voting generation as an incipient crisis for democracy (Farthing, 2010). Generalised crisis narratives converged on concerns about young societal integration and ‘failed integration’, political disaffection, and lack of social capital; in the period of study specific narratives of young crisis were especially fervent regarding young people identifying within ethnic minorities and, notably, young Muslims (O’Toole, 2015, p. 175). A second wave of research began around the contention that studies focusing too much on traditional forms of political engagement could never succeed until a youth-specific approach was taken with its founding data collection principles shifted away from merely proving that young people don’t vote (Bhavnani, 1994). The typical method for the second wave of research is the youth-specific survey moving towards mixed methods and a survey plus focus group approach, forerunners of which were Wring, Henn, Weinstein and other colleagues (Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999; Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002;

Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005). These youth-specific approaches grew from attempts in the 1990s-2000s to broaden the definition of political engagement to include forms of participation in politics through traditional means other than voting, such as participation in formal political organizations and doing volunteer work (Roker, Player and Coleman, 1999; Matthews, 2001). Youth-specific surveys were able to identify trends that mass voting data could not, such as simultaneous interest in traditional political topics like health and education and what could be called postmaterialist ones like the global environment and animal rights (Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005).

More precisely, this second wave interrogated a shift not from young people's participation to non-participation in politics, but rather from their participation in traditional formal politics towards informal, less traditional politics (Bennie and Rudig, 1993; Norris, 2003; Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007; O'Toole *et al.*, 2010), a phenomenon that voting statistics could hint at but not capture. In the same way that, in our historical moment, young people have been unshackled from long established pathways for the transition to adulthood, so too have they been released from the connections to political socialization that in the past have been theorized to have great effect on political behaviour, party support bases, and so on, with consequent changes in young people's engagement via traditional pathways like voting (Phelps, 2012, p. 282). It was suggested by many scholars (for example, Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999; Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002; Dalton, 2008) that young people were shifting in their politics towards something more like that which Inglehart (1977, 1997) called post-materialist, although using youth specific surveys and focus groups, research like that by Henn *et al.* (2005) showed young people in the UK were aware of and understood events, affairs and political systems at levels from their local communities through to the national and international, and strongly supported electoral democracy as a principle for government, while being disengaged from formal politics. They found "young people's apparent disengagement from formal politics and the established parties... [does not indicate] a uniform shift towards 'new politics', value systems and orientation" (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005, p. 573).

2.3.3. Further theoretical development

Despite suchlike speculative efforts towards explaining *why* young people neither engage with formal politics nor entirely disengage from it, the crux of the academy’s research remained more or less the same as it was throughout the late 1990s and mid-2000s, based on the longstanding trajectory of work that found young people’s knowledge of and interest and participation in politics lacking (for example, Torney-Purta, 2002; Park, Phillips and Johnson, 2004; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005; Phelps, 2012). As Kathy Edwards encapsulated it in 2007, “the literature assumes from the outset that most young people are apathetic, civically unaware, disassociated and excluded” (2007, p. 543); Shakuntala Banaji wrote the following year that “the idea that young people are disengaged from politics and civil society, indeed from the entire public sphere – through no fault of their own or systemic constraints, or because of something that typifies that particular age-group – has become something of a mantra now in this field, and it is almost unthinkable not to state it...” (2008, p. 543).

Though it is conceptually useful to depict the literature along divisions between the “apathy” and the “anti-apathy” schools, retrospective reading of Edwards and Banaji hints that these schools do not have entirely distinctive theories about young people’s political engagement, despite the rhetorical polarization evident among scholars in the academy. This is not to criticize the academics in question: after all, it has long been the case in politics that the bloodiest rhetorical battles are fought with the young somewhere at their heart (Jenkins, 1998; Selwyn, 2003). Rather, this paper contends that at a fundamental level the split between scholars is a polarization along theoretical lines disagreeing on what is politics and what is not. The differentiation between young people and other age groups, it was suggested, could be due to a “period effect” – the time they live in and the nature of its politics imbue young people’s political engagement with a characteristic style – or a “cohort effect” with particular emphasis on how they conceive of politics and their relationship with politicians, differently to the ways that older age groups do (Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002; Furlong and Cartmel, 2011; Henn and Foard, 2014).

This literature review considers that it encountered a discursive framework of theoretical transition among scholars. While the above literature can be summed up in static structures between opposing apathy/anti-apathy and engagement/disengagement schools, increasingly academics interpret their findings to show young people “practicing politics in ways which take advantage of a permeable public/private divide” (Manning, 2012, p. 2). Put differently, the current phase of research follows a clear trend from the first youth-specific survey approaches and especially the oft-cited work by Henn, Weinstein, Wring, Forrest and colleagues (Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999; Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005; Henn and Foard, 2012) which suggested something more complicated than mere electoral apathy was going on, and that young people were not just too ill-versed, ill-engaged or idle to vote, but that their political engagement was taking different forms from traditional ones, with concurrent research suggesting young people’s political behaviour does not point to a cohort effect – young people are not inherently different or interested in clearly different things to other age groups – but a period effect arising from the risky transitions they must make to adulthood – the struggle to “get by” – alongside “the ways in which young people are denied an effective voice in the political process and are short-changed in the policy process” (Furlong and Cartmel, 2011, p. 26).

To some extent this can be considered a gradual process of unpacking the terms involved. At first “save for a few honourable exceptions... notions of politics are seldom examined in themselves” (Manning, 2012, p. 3); nor was, it is this project’s contention, the notion of *youth* examined in the early literature. The focus on young people’s non-participation in electoral politics in the 1990s to early 2000s presupposes a separation between the personal and the political, considering ‘politics’ to be a public matter concerning administrating and regulating public life. Recalling Pirie and Worcester’s statement that “today’s young people say they are not interested in politics and do not regard political activity as worthwhile” (2000, p. 35), the young’s apparent resignation from politics was at first considered problematic based on strictly defining politics as the legal, juristic and institutional interaction in the public sphere by individuals who require political institutions to regulate social life (Benhabib, 1987; Habermas, 1992). According to this review’s findings, the next step in the literature was to move away from problematizing

"young people's apparent disengagement from formal politics and the established parties..." as not indicating "... a uniform shift towards 'new politics', value systems and orientation" (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005, p. 573).

2.4. Crash, crisis and consolidation: youth and politics in transition

The debate over young people and politics was rotated in 2010 by a maelstrom of conflicting opinions, spectacular statements, superlatives, and photographs of burning boroughs and political slogans in European cities, whether ballot papers in Paris, placards in Madrid, or looting in London. After the flames of opposition to austerity in 2010-2011 came new perspectives on youth in the austerity period, especially from the perspective of asking whether the current generation of young people, making transitions to adulthood during economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures, faced economic and social changes in the world around them that subjected them to a generational change affecting their political activity (Power, 2012; Slater, 2012; Threadgold, 2012; Wörsching, 2012; Farrugia, 2013; Heyes, 2013; Huq, 2013; King and Waddington, 2013; Rheingans and Hollands, 2013; Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts, 2014; Clapham *et al.*, 2014; Garcia Albacete, 2014; Henn and Foard, 2014; Sloam, 2014; Wolfe, 2014a).

Academic debate shares both the urgency of its public counterpart and its manifold redoubts, for many agree that a battle needs to be fought to resolve young people's problematic engagement or disengagement with politics without finding common theoretical ground. It is around *engagement* that schisms historically formed in academic circles, as we recall W. Lance Bennett's synopsis (2008) of mainstream literature condensed around two dominant frameworks, one that young people are "reasonably active and engaged" and another that they are not, relative to older age groups. The old cliché, that in order to make rabbit soup we must first catch our rabbit, holds true. For example, in order to address what comprises reasonable political activity and engagement among young people, we must first identify the boundaries we set around youth: if we consider democratic citizenship based around electoral participation our primary concern (as in the case of Phelps, 2012) our definition of youth must take into account the "at best, apprentice" citizenship (Henn and Foard, 2012) conferred on young people,

especially before they reach voting age. In this section the literature review presents a theoretical framework based on its findings from the corpus studied.

2.4.1. Youth as a risky transition

The lowest common denominator between most definitions of youth is that it is an “unstable period of life between childhood and adulthood” (Spence, 2005, p. 47) affected by many physiological and psychological, social, cultural, structural and political elements. The primary indicator of youth has long been held to be physical and behavioural changes (Hine, 2009) though youth is considered a “socially determined category” (Henderson *et al.*, 2007, p. 5) requiring more than individual biological markers to distinguish it from childhood on the one hand and adulthood on the other. The school teacher’s adage that some people grow up quicker than others is a truism: our social, cultural and political context shapes how we (and others) define our transitions between childhood and adulthood. It is important to mention, though this paper’s focus is on youth and the transition to adulthood, that childhood (nor, indeed, adulthood) cannot be regarded as an unproblematic conceptualization of a natural biological phase (Lister, 1998; Edwards, 2007, p. 553). Youth, as a period of life between childhood and adulthood, is to a great extent to be conceptualized with reference to adulthood, though the socially constructed and historically and culturally defined nature of all three states makes their mutual distinction problematic; it is more useful to conceive of youth as a “complex transition between childhood dependence and adult independence” (Pachi and Barrett, 2012, p. 344) and a journey rather than a distinct category (Spence, 2005, p. 48).

The journey’s destination – adulthood – is accurately to be conceptualized as a struggle with ever changing pathways and even end points as today’s young people navigate risks and fears, hopes and opportunities that are characteristic to our time (Lummis, 1996; Brooks, 2003; Clark, 2007; Flanagan, 2008; Duckworth and Schoon, 2012; Sloam, 2013; Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts, 2014; Rheingans and Hollands, 2013; McDowell, Rootham and Hardgrove, 2014; Mendick, Allen and Harvey, 2015). It is in this concept of navigation that this paper finds its conceptualization of youth. Young people are not simply those to be governed by their elders, in the Aristotelian sense (J. J. Wood, 2009, p. 67), until

they reach adulthood along a linear pathway of any form. There is no clear pathway or clear finishing line. The normative patterns and traditional sequences from school up the career ladder to a pension via marriage and a family that gave clarity to young people's choices about their futures until the late 20th century, in public life and stable employment for men (Flanagan, 2008, p. 197) and domestic labour and childcare for women (Nayak and Kehily, 2008), have been replaced by risks, diversions and deferrals of adulthood (as they are phrased in Foucault, 2002) as "traditional securities are superseded by risk choices" (Cronin, Ryan and Coughlan, 2008, p. 6) and young people try to maximize their opportunities for stability; it is perhaps most characteristic of today's youth that they navigate the transition to adulthood by balancing their education and 'qualifications stockpiling' against consequent debt, the unpredictability of finding a job, the decreasing number of young people who are able to buy their first home, etc. (Simpson, 2005; Brooks, 2007; Flanagan, 2008; Duckworth and Schoon, 2012; Sloam, 2013; Gregg, Macmillan and Vittori, 2014; Wolfe, 2014b; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015). This is especially true for young people of more challenging economic backgrounds, for the wealthy through power, money, family support and/or education can acquire safety from risk that the poor cannot (Lemke, 2002, p. 35).

In navigating this transition the young person as an individual, perhaps especially the less privileged young person with respect to the unequal distribution of risk (Clark, 2007), takes control of his or her future "organized reflexively in the present" (Giddens, 1991, p. 29). The young person is, expanding on Giddens' concept of the reflexive self, engaged in the constant reflexive construction of their future biographies. The young person is not just running in the race for a successful transition to adulthood, but also tasked with inventing themselves as adults in advance of this transition, deciding "who we are and what we want to be" (Henderson *et al.*, 2007, p. 19). Transitions to adulthood are further complicated by the various normative and cultural pressures on individuals with respect to intersecting factors of gender (Harris, 2004; Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005; Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Verick, 2009; Geniets, 2010), national/ethnic/cultural identities (Hebdige, 2006; Ahmed, 2009; Gale and O'Toole, 2009; Ratna, 2010; Pachi and Barrett, 2012; Palmer, 2012), and sexualities (Downes, 2010; Holland and Thomson, 2010; Monro and Richardson, 2010; Moore and Prescott, 2013) to name just a few factors considered in great detail by the literature.

2.4.2. Neoliberal transitions and their transgression

Youth has already been introduced as a transition state between childhood and adulthood, for which stability, independence and survival are primary coordinates and the reflexive construction of the future self is the intended destination: our youth is something for our CV (Brooks, 2007; Flanagan, 2008; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009; Manning, 2012). As recently as the 1980s young people in Britain – particularly for those in the working class – grew up within a “strict sexual division of labour” (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 40) between young men who could expect regular pay, stability and security in the public ‘masculine’ working world and young women whose future lay in unpaid, private, domestic labour. Deindustrialization since the 1980s has opened up less restricted opportunities for both young men and young women of all backgrounds. These opportunities remain inequitably divided – for example, richer families are able to provide their children with a safety net against unemployment, homelessness, the trials of further education, failed working experiments, and so on – with more opportunities available to the more privileged (Lemke, 2002; Clark, 2007; Leyshon and Bull, 2011). What Coffield identified in 1986 as “shit jobs and govvy¹ schemes” (1986, p. 86) are still – at least to some extent – the fate for working class young people who are viewed, and problematized, as “unskilled, unemployable, redundant youth” (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 40).

The modern social contract as it appears to young people carries both the opportunity and threat of Thatcher’s famous claim that there is “no such thing” as society; that there are individual men and women and there are families, and no government can do anything except through people, and people look to themselves first. Deindustrialization, as has been mentioned already, implies losing the collective ties that were so critical to earlier generations, their transitions to adulthood, and their political behaviour. As many scholars point out, the contemporary disappearance of collective coordinates from young people’s lives is a period effect associated with various political phenomena, the most common

¹ Government schemes.

example being detachment from party political and ideological commitments (Wheaton, 2007; Manning, 2012; Phelps, 2012) replaced by a reflexive politics of the self; in more day to day terms, "flexibility and reinventing oneself have replaced loyalty and authenticity as virtues to cultivate and networking has replaced.. anchoring [one's self] in stable long-term relationships with co-workers" (Flanagan, 2008). Rather than climbing the ladder through years in stable employment, in an economic world characterized for the young by job instability and structural unemployment (Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Verick, 2009; Heyes, 2013; Wolfe, 2014b; McDowell, Rootham and Hardgrove, 2014; Gregg, Macmillan and Vittori, 2014; Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts, 2014), young people negotiate volatile employment tracks through demotion, promotion, unemployment, and shifting between different careers, while continually accumulating qualifications and credentials to ensure their own marketability in future employment negotiations (Evans, Schoon and Weale, 2012).

While socio-economic differences contribute strongly to the divergent paths among young people with wealth accumulating at the top and risks among the poor, it is an accurate encapsulation of the literature to depict young people negotiating this transition as a generation of CV builders and reflexive risk assessors. The ever-present and looming risk of poverty coupled with the realities of post-industrial employment – constant instability, reliance on informal ties, the lack of the safety nets provided to previous generations by steady long-term jobs – not to mention the problematic relationship young people have had in recent years with the government, are among factors young people face in a reality that has been compared to life in a developing economy: at the beginning of the decade, before the economic crisis, Andy Furlong and Peter Kelly had already identified what they called the "Brazilianisation of youth transitions" in the UK (2005).

Certainly, as previously stated, young people can be described as reflexive CV-constructors and risk assessors. There is, on the other hand, some nuance that recent research attempts to tackle. This paper has been building towards combining the fearful economic risk society here depicted, with the permeable division between the personal and political shown in the previous section, a dichotomy between young people's hopes and fears, their opportunities for autonomy and the binding nature of risks. In the literature this reality is captured by

many scholars who consider youth more than a transition towards promised futures, though it does require navigation through numerous and variegated perils that are both economic *and* political. This literature review found young people, as depicted by the researchers who met them, testifying to feelings that they are privately in “full control of their own destinies” (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009, p. 750) and had a far broader field of view than just their economic worth, employability and social inclusion/exclusion – the “transition” for young people is not a linear teleological development with waged labour as its ultimate goal (Cohen and Ainley, 2000, p. 80) – nor in political terms is the youth-adulthood transition a normative pathway, like the flight path provided to an aeroplane onto an airfield: stay in school, work hard, be engaged, do volunteer work in your community, get temporary jobs – typically in the service industry (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 62) – turn out and vote for a politician when you’re old enough and on completion of this “pro-social and conformist” (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010) apprentice adulthood, be granted power as an adult.

The corpus studied does not uncover young people forming such linear coherent self-narratives as are proscribed for them by the mass media, politicians and others (Anderson *et al.*, 2006), nor does it find them perceiving the world through the neoliberal framework such a narrative arguably enshrines (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009). The neoliberal framework provides for a conceptual tension between the individual’s private hope (Lummis, 1996) that if they work hard, go to school, etc., they can succeed and the possibility that if they fall off the path to success they will fail; young people who have fallen are problematized (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 40); young people’s political engagement is considered in this light to be a question of public anxieties – will politics hinder my personal development as a productive worker? – so from the neoliberal perspective on youth, young people are arguably clients of a legalistic public system that defends their private interests (Manning, 2012). The neoliberal commonsense of contemporary Britain is a familiar division between the “striver” and the “skiver”, the latter being “a figure of social disgust” and a vector for political arguments against social welfare (Jensen, 2014, p. 2). The dominant discourse is not just a pathway of rewards for hard work, but also the demonization of those who do not achieve success as not having worked hard enough (Mendick, Allen and Harvey, 2015).

In reality, young people transgress this pathway. What young people report to researchers are better described as private anxieties than private hopes (Flanagan, 2008); though occupational status and work play a role in their narrative biographies they no longer have coherent linear transitions but mixed patterns of individual choices, deriving the creation of their own selves from other sources like music, fashion and leisure (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000; Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010; Downes, 2012; Murray, 2015); and the economic transition to adulthood is not a hopeful journey but a construction of the self on unstable footing. One might say there is something nonlinear about the transition to adulthood. Without assuming all young people speak with one voice (Anderson *et al.*, 2006), it might be most accurate to interpret the literature discovering young people *aware* of the neoliberal pathway to adulthood, but *externalizing* it. The CV of the reflexive self that young people construct in their transitions to adulthood is not really, or at least not entirely, intended for future employers – as one young (identified as working class) interviewee put it to Lawy et al. “they work to live, not live to work” (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009, p. 747). It is fine to conceptualize the transitions to adulthood in terms of ‘deciding what we want to be’, provided that it comes with the proviso that it would not do to limit this to a linear transition to employment.

2.4.3. The trials of young civic and political engagements

During this transition and the ‘deciding what we want to be’, the idea that young people are apathetic about being active democratic citizens is often encountered in Western democracies. More precisely, young people in the West including the UK continue to be “castigated for not turning out in huge numbers to vote” (Banaji, 2008, p. 545) and though a smaller proportion of 18-24 year olds in the UK turn out to vote than any other age group (Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010; Ipsos-Mori, 2010) Kathy Edwards (2007) points out that low electoral turnout is a phenomenon common in older age groups too and that age cannot be the only explanation for young people’s sparse showings at the ballot box. Yet young people, especially in terms of social policy, are the “most targeted” (J. J. Wood, 2009, p. 65) by measures sponsoring political and civic engagement, the notion of which is currently a pro-social conformist (Banaji, 2008) packaging of ‘civic’ engagement with ‘political’ engagement along the lines of conferring an apprentice

or incomplete citizenship on young individuals (Matthews, 2001, p. 299) especially those below the voting age of 18. Young people are expected to follow a normative pathway of "personally responsible citizenship" (Lister, 1998; Banaji, 2008, p. 553) the obedience and pro-social behaviour contained in which could be summed up under the term "good neighbourliness" (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, p. 7), a pathway they follow in their transitions to adulthood with the understanding that by behaving like good citizens today they will earn a passport to full democratic citizenship from 18 years old and onwards.

Young people navigate this transition within the social order largely as subjects to various measures to solve the "problem" that young people pose to communitarian citizenship, in arenas such as formal education, welfare and the criminal justice system. In other words, the "public/government discourses on citizenship" are currently oriented – for it tends to change in waves over time (Lister, 1998, p. 310) – "towards a notion of morally conscious citizens, aware of their rights and shouldering the duties that supposedly bind them together into communities" (Banaji, 2008, p. 545) and the transition of young people from children into morally conscious citizens is the focus of what we could call "young people's politics". From a top-down perspective young people's politics consists of two problems: first, concern about young people's political literacy, comprising declining political affiliation and electoral turnout, perceived general lack of political interest, and so on; and second, a "generalized anxiety" (J. J. Wood, 2009, p. 66) about social decline vis-à-vis the breakdown of community ties to which bringing up a generation of young people who engage as morally and socially responsible citizens is of maximum concern.

From a bottom-up perspective young people's politics must also be considered a game of risk and pay-offs. This paper has already introduced the theoretical perspective of youth as a transition in the risk society (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 2001; Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Furlong and Cartmel, 2011). Constance Flanagan, who wrote with focus on the United States, introduced the notion that young people – particularly individuals without the safety nets provided by wealth, family, etc. – interpret the social contract in light of the risk society as one in which individual hard work and self-reliance is required, and through collecting educational qualifications and work experience, typically in insecure temporary employment,

one can prosper (2008, pp. 200–202). This applies to British young people too, living in a similarly deindustrialized society the historical period of which can be considered to begin with those who were born and grew up during the Thatcher government onwards (Phelps, 2012).

In the British context young politics, from the perspective of young people, is a question of value. For example, given that the young individual is working so hard now balancing education, work, and the ongoing construction of their futures with safety nets like established pathways to long-term employment so scarce; and given the general feeling (characteristic, though not unique, to the youth) that politics is a network of corrupt, hypocritical, rich politicians and elections are a meaningless exercise that merely reproduce unequal power structures (Pachi and Barrett, 2012, p. 346) there is simply too much work and studying to be done and the stakes too high to bother engaging with traditional, perceived inefficacious, forms of politics. The best example, almost ubiquitous in studies speaking to young people, is that among young people the Iraq war epitomizes the gap between what politicians claim is the social contract with respect to young people's political engagement and what really happens (for example, in Pachi and Barrett, 2012), a gap that, to be fair to our 'disengaged youth', was evident in government, public, and policy discourse which called at first for young people to get out and get involved in politics, before chastising and even levying punishments against them as truants and ne'er-do-wells when they organized political action and school strikes against the Iraq invasion (Cushion, 2007; Banaji, 2008).

Similarly, in terms of civic engagements there are nuances to the communitarian citizenship concept that is central to top-down perceptions of young people's civic engagement from the perspective of young people themselves, who perceive the trials of engagement during the risky transition to adulthood as only worthwhile if 'everyone' gets on board in vast social movements to counterbalance the entrenched positions held by a powerful political elite (Flanagan, 2008; Pachi and Barrett, 2012).

Young politics can be conceptualized, then, as a hybrid transition from childhood to political as well as civic engagement; that is, engagement with politics is parcelled up with communitarian citizenship. Again, the Iraq invasion is a bold

example: young people's political engagement – from the organization of protests and strikes at the time of the invasion, to long term politicization among young people who consider the lesson of the Iraq war to be that elections are ineffective (Cushion, 2007; Pachi and Barrett, 2012)– is inseparable from young people's transitions to citizenship, in the same way that young protesters were punished for transgressing diligent well-behaved citizenship pathways (Banaji, 2008, p. 557).

Furthermore, regarding this a hybrid transition to civic and political engagement, young people's political and civic activity orbits a notion of community imposed (at least to some extent) by politicians and other adult elites with its focus on inclusion, stability and security (Delanty, 2003; Clark, 2007) with the result that the value to democracy of young people's political engagement is diluted, it may be argued, by the perceived need to get young people connected by social ties to into community networks. Traditional forms of political engagement, like voting, are not just exercises in democratic representation, criticism of politicians and so forth (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). They mould children into citizens with good civic conduct, perhaps even ritualizing "governmentality" after Foucault (2002) by which young people are apprentice democratic citizens but also apprentices to the "continuum... which extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation" (Lemke, 2002, p. 59).

From the perspective of this apprentice citizenship it might be problematic that young people have been shown to lean in preference towards non-traditional political and civic engagements variously described and exemplified with "everyday politics" (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010; Street and Inthorn, 2010; Wood, 2012), online civic and political engagement (Kreiss, 2009; Banaji and Buckingham, 2010), and ethical consumerism (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005; Micheletti, Stolle and Berlin, 2012). The "incipient crisis" for British democracy that young people and their abandoning traditional forms of politics (Farthing, 2010, p. 182) as well as the moral label of "good citizen" and civic and political engagement pathways and "etiquette" demanded of respectful young people towards officials and institutions (Banaji, 2008, p. 543) may be understood in theory as transgression from formal, organized pathways to good civic and political conduct (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010, p. 346) in a kind of engaged cynicism.

Indeed, it is accurate to say that, based on more than a decade's work suggesting young people don't vote and don't intend to vote, it has come as a surprise to scholars in the last few years that even bulk surveys like the British Election Survey have showed a "high level of agreement between generations on the duty to vote, the intention to vote and in overall interest in the election... [plus] shared views on the key political issues" and even general consensus across generations that politics and its institutions are to be distrusted (Furlong and Cartmel, 2011, p. 25), the main difference among young people being that they feel poorly represented by political processes and translate, by most accounts, cynicism into political action in different ways instead of voting.

2.5. Bridging the personal and political

So far this review has presented its own conceptual progress alongside the progress it discovered in the academic corpus. Early research uncovered young non-voting and hypothesized their apathy and disengagement. Subsequent work indicated, on the contrary, that young people were interested in and engaged with the world around them, and not necessarily in so-called 'new' or post-materialist politics, but were more accurately to be interpreted as engaging in "everyday" and non-traditional forms of politics. In this section of the presentation of findings, "engaged cynicism" (Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999) is developed as a theme within which firstly, young people are witnessed by researchers to experience a world in which the public/private divide is deteriorating and politics leaches into daily life, and secondly, that young people are most accurately to be understood as engaged cynics relating to the risky outside world through their own hopes, values and fears rather than external ideologies and political structures, and cynical both about traditional 'politics' and about the efficacy of traditional political activities.

For example, researchers have looked at how political engagement and social participation through less traditional pathways at the individual or informal group level are an alternative to the "formally organized civic and political activities" considered to be both a right and duty young people hold (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010, p. 346). A large body of this kind of research was encountered by this literature review within a minority, "subculture" and feminist frameworks (Harris,

2004; Wheaton, 2007; Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010; Anitha, Pearson and McDowell, 2012) which provides an interesting parallel in itself with the development of theory in the field of young people's politics, since the British young "party and protest" movements (McKay, 1998) first identified in the 1990s were at first characterized, in a familiar way, as evidence for political apathy and dispossession, and hedonistic and narcissistic consumerism (John, 2003) yielding only trivialized or a lack of critical engagement (Chaney, 2002, p. 125) before being gradually reclaimed by scholars as evidence for such engagement (Wheaton, 2007). Wheaton's work, for example was with young members of the Surfers Against Sewage, an environmental action group formed of surfers and windsurfers and emergent placing pressure on beach pollution in the 1990s, in Cornwall and identified a "politicized trans-local collectivity" (Wheaton, 2007, p. 279) based around surfing as a lifestyle subculture.

On the one hand, the group exemplifies various scholars' predictions that people's interconnectedness is utilized by social movements in late modernity to challenge the public/private divide (Young, 2003; Brown, 2011; Manning, 2012). Young people's lives appear to researchers to match Giddens' concept of "life politics" (1991, 1994) in creating a reflexive project of the self, formulated around lifestyle and choice, which in the case of Surfers Against Sewage is done by weaving political practice into the fabric of one's private life, and vice versa, so that from personal practices like sports participation the individual forms a "pastiche of political practices, beliefs and commitments" (Manning, 2012, p. 12): one simple illustration of the way the contemporary world allows— in this case, for young activists – encroachment across the private and public divide. The insight gained by the literature from such research is that early theories locating young people dealing in *apolitics* or *new politics* were inaccurate. They appeared to be neither airheads, nor postmaterialists, and though long-awaited new politics (Jordan and Lent, 1999) surface, it rather appears that these are period effects linked to increased reflexivity in a risk society as evidenced in the above example with environmental issues rather than cohort effects among young people alone. In other words, the keen awareness among young people of – to use two concepts that are admittedly broad though widely prevalent in the corpus – globalization and new organizational forms such as ready access to instant worldwide

communication (Coleman, 2008) is not due to some trait particular to the young, but to the particularities of their period and position within society.

Flanagan interprets the relationship of young people with politics as renewing and regenerating the social contract, a useful way to encapsulate the relationship political institutions build with young people who hold at best apprentice citizenship (Matthews, 2001; Banaji, 2008), and tend not to be regarded as political agents (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007, p. 214). Young people lack an "effective voice" in the policy process: for example, in the UK it is widely accepted that the legislative and executive branches of government are obliged to represent society's major groups but while vocal campaigns support the fair representation of women and ethnic minorities there are "virtually no serious calls for the representation of young people" (Furlong and Cartmel, 2011, p. 26).

Much research in the literature has interrogated young people's disaffection towards a political system that implores them (often using worthy – and cringe-worthy – pseudo-MTV slogans) that voting is cool (Huq, 2009) and that they should get involved with their plans for "Politics Unplugged" and getting "down with the kids" (Pickard, 2007) on the one hand; while on the other hand politics and public discourse frequently and lazily characterize young people's behaviour as problematic disengagement, ignoring often multifaceted civic activities (Huq, 2009; Street and Inthorn, 2010).

This literature review found focus group research with young people typically found young people expressing their distrust of political elites, while perceiving political elites as cynical and patronising of young people's political agency, as if it was truancy: the typical example over the past five to ten years has been the Iraq war under Tony Blair's New Labour, protests against which included organized strikes at universities and schools that were at first lauded as democratic engagement, before the party line changed and young people, who had been begged for years to get out and get heard, were punished as opportunistic troublemakers (Banaji, 2008; Pachi and Barrett, 2012). Policymakers' responses to 2010-2011 as a period of dramatic social action continued to depoliticize youth, as they continued to impose what Banaji and Buckingham (2010) called pro-social and conformist models for the transition to adulthood. For example, numerous

qualitative and quantitative studies following the English riots, of which one visible example was the Reading the Riots collaboration between a research team led by the London School of Economics and *The Guardian* (Lewis *et al.*, 2011), identified underlying factors including long-term anger at the police and police stop-and-search policy, criticism following the shooting of Mark Duggan by the Metropolitan Police, the increase in university tuition fees and the scrapping of the educational maintenance allowance (EMA), and endemic youth unemployment. The response, however, began with denunciations, following that by the Prime Minister, of young people who rioted exhibiting "criminality, pure and simple" (Cameron, 2011); and continued in the manner of the Deputy Prime Minister-led Riots Communities and Victims Panel which concluded that young people needed improved individual "character building [and] personal resilience" (Wörsching, 2012, p. 125). Although some policymakers have called for reform to austerity policies and an increased stake in society for young people –David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, one of the London constituencies worst hit by rioting, is prominent among them – the response to unrest, disengagement and their underlying causes represented initial denunciation of apathetic, truant youngsters followed by renewed commitment to keeping them obedient, well-behaved and on course to develop as apprentices who can have meaningful political action later.

Returning to the theme of young politics as a "pastiche of political practices, beliefs and commitments" (Manning, 2012, p. 12) it is salient, and an accurate way to depict investigations encountered in the literature, to point out that young people tend to retreat from formal institutional forms of political activity towards the sort of public/private divide-breaching activities Wheaton described regarding Surfers Against Sewage, that could be called "life politics" (Giddens, 1994) both, as earlier pointed out, because such politics arguably befits our post-industrial time, and also because institutional politics is perceived by young people themselves to be inefficacious. A young people's politics of the everyday (Wood, 2012) encapsulates various testimonies to ways they might seek to "reinterpret the social contract" (Flanagan, 2008, p. 202) inherited from earlier generations towards their own concepts of citizenship and civic and political engagement based on everyday ethical-political practice, a politics of the particular, and not the commitment to external ideologies, world views, political parties, classes and so on that so informed politics for previous generations.

Manning and Llewellyn and Westheimer, to provide two examples, in interviews with young people uncover various powerful political sentiments in support of worker's unions, Christian ethics in politics, internationalism, feminisms, and so on, yet scarce interpretation of these by young people as political issues or any devotion to political parties or ideologies: one interviewee in Manning's study when asked if she is 'left-wing' says she supposes she might be called that by someone else, but that she deals with things "on an issue by issue basis" (Manning, 2012, p. 11); Llewellyn and Westheimer (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009, p. 59) call this holding "significant civic assets", or "ways of experiencing a greater sense of connection, interrelatedness, and commitment towards the greater community". This literature review therefore considers the theme it discovered, and here introduces, to be formulated around everyday politics motivated on the one hand by contemporary period effects – generally agreed to be a "post-industrialization" period rather than a postmodern one, since young people do not as a group identify with a set of new postmodern politics – and cynicism on the other hand, a cynicism that in the literature appears well founded, and reflects young people's collective experience with political institutions.

2.5.1. Fear, hope and youthful antipolitics

Thematically, there are two ways scholars tend to understand young people's political and civic engagements. On the one hand, many consider period factors relating to a change in the nature of politics towards something more like Beck's post-industrial world in which individuals are "doomed" to "produce, arrange and stage, not just their own biographies, but also their moral, social and political commitments" (Beck, 1998), yielding a permeable membrane between what were in the past separate private and public domains. On the other, many scholars point to a mutual disconnection between young people and political institutions and actors, especially by claiming politics poorly serves young people (Banaji, 2008; Furlong and Cartmel, 2011; Sloam, 2013, 2014).

Whether theory can be taken to extremes is up for debate, not least since political and civic engagements following theories like Beck's can become diaphanous and vague and there are, for example, legitimate questions about the *substance* to reflexive modernity (Smith *et al.*, 1999): yet, this sort of thinking commands a

strong thematic trend in the corpus. Bringing the two stands – a reflexive post-industrial politics of youth and a problematic “us and them” relationship between young people and politicians/institutions – together it is salient to speak of public and private hopes and anxieties. Whether one follows Beck into theoretical reflexive politics or not, young people do turn up bridging the personal and political divides in ways that fit. The ‘CV of the self’ during transitions to education and employment has been mentioned already, and the same concept appears to capture the way young people develop political and civic engagements too (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009; Manning, 2012).

Returning to public and private hopes and anxieties, young people seem to interpret their private transitions to adulthood in terms of anxiety rather than hope. Though they sometimes narrate neoliberal transitions to researchers (If I work hard, I will get a job and then I will be successful) these narrations are commonly recorded as distinct from young people’s perceptions of their actual transitions (Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Flanagan, 2008; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Manning, 2012; Pachi and Barrett, 2012). They accept that, for example, studying hard at college and securing a well-paid job is the narrative an adult will expect, and will typically contend that this kind of neoliberal self-sufficiency is the best way to succeed, but they rarely perceive their own reflexive narrative in these terms. Where politics is concerned, scholars developing themes concerning the risky nature of transitions to adulthood perceive a youthful antipolitics where previous research hypothesized apolitics or apathy (Farthing, 2010).

Youthful antipolitics could be considered a return of hope and anxieties to conceptualizing young people’s civic and political engagements, after the ‘90s and early 2000s when academic discourse coalesced around the hypothesis that young people don’t vote and don’t care, at its fundament considering young people’s retreat from traditional politics as an engaged cynicism. That young people don’t vote doesn’t reflect their not caring enough to bother with it, in other words, but instead constitutes a political act, an engaged decision to disengage. More accurately, “young antipolitics” provides academics a way to move beyond a dualistic framework of engagement *or* disengagement as well as from problematizing young people’s civic and political engagements. Scholars promoting antipolitics as a concept are considered by this literature review to be a

synthetic one, connecting the previous strands of thought concerning hopes and anxieties during risky transitions and the deteriorating boundary between public and private, as well as the discoveries that young people are cynical towards politics but still do politics *including* interest in "traditional" political topics (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005) and strong support in principle for institutional democratic politics and voting (Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010).

The first fundamental reason young people believe in voting but don't vote is their cynicism towards politicians, an anxiety largely based on perceptions and experience of politicians not listening and not keeping promises (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005; Banaji, 2008; Magill and Hamber, 2010; Pachi and Barrett, 2012) and connected to the responsibilities and looming risks associated with self-driven transition to adulthood; why spend valuable time and effort voting for an old-fashioned political party when it won't change anything anyway, and when so many young people have made the commitments and sacrifices demanded by traditional citizenship pathways but still been criticized and punished by powerful adults (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Cooper, 2012). That is, the traditional expressions of political engagement from political party membership to voting have become wrapped up in a grand risk assessment exercise based on private anxieties around the transition to adulthood.

Hope, which according to the apathy framework had dissolved or migrated into a realm of disassociated consumerist and "slacker" pleasures (John, 2003; Purcell, 2003; Bulbeck and Harris, 2007), is decoupled from external ideologies and powerful actors in the public domain and is now to be expressed with a foot in both the private and the public: it is accurate to consider the individual young person, scholars following this theme contend, building civic and political engagements around the principle that "if we all pull together a better world is possible" (Flanagan, 2008). Put differently, the obituaries for young people's political engagement were premature as young people both perceive the world around them and care for it (Street and Inthorn, 2010), though their strategies for engagement do not distinguish between the public and private sphere as previous generations' political engagement did, making issue and lifestyle based politics increasingly relevant (Ward, 2008; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011; Hedegaard, 2014; Mendick, Allen and Harvey, 2015).

To provide a brief example, vegetarianism turns up frequently in studies with young people (Eyerman, 2002; Beardsworth and Bryman, 2004; Manning, 2010; Piotrowski, 2010; Micheletti, Stolle and Berlin, 2012) as a phenomenon of diet and commensality with a long history, that has increasingly become a way to find something “radical to eat” (Engler, 2012), to turn the intuitively private realm of self-care into political resistance against “power and political stasis” (Tanke, 2007, p. 79) reflecting contemporary tendencies among young people to moralize and personalize the political, and politicize the personal and the everyday.

2.6. Discussion of findings

The spotlight is on young people. The empirical understanding of young people in the UK is that they not only continue to withdraw from democratic institutions and traditional, formal political processes, but that the overall withdrawal of young people from formal, institutional politics is accelerating (Norris, 2011; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Henn and Foard, 2012; Garcia Albacete, 2014; Akhtar, 2015). Young people’s political practices – or, more often than not, the failure of young people to muster to the political practices expected of them – are most often considered somewhere between an incipient crisis or an immediately pressing one (Farthing, 2010; O’Toole, 2015, p. 175).

Thus proposed, the crisis of young disengagement from institutional political practices is the alarm bell sounded to introduce a wide range of policies, from citizenship education (Tonge, Mycock and Jeffery, 2012) to ‘anti-radicalization’ citizenship intervention programmes for young Muslims (Blackwood, Hopkins and Reicher, 2015) to the fast-tracking of armed services personnel into school teaching roles (Tipping, 2013). The usual urgency of the rhetoric around young people’s politics – as well as the ideological and romantic depiction of young people existing by the nature of their youth at the “cutting edge” of social change (Miles, 2015) – whether depicting the young as the vector of social decline, as the vanguard of vibrant new modes of political agency, or as something in between, will be familiar to any reader who bore witness to the years through which this research project was undertaken, from the protests, occupations and riots of 2010-11 (Bennett, 2013) to the UK’s first votes at 16 in the Referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 (Stewart *et al.*, 2014).

The popularity of the focus on young people's politics does not entail the necessary popularity of the view that young people themselves are political. This project works a rich vein of theoretical study in the UK based on the perception that young people are subject to more or less depoliticizing normative perceptions of their civic role (Banaji, 2008) as well as long term social and economic factors that marginalize the participation of many young people in traditional political arenas like elections (Sloam, 2014) with their youth intersecting with other inequalities such as race (e.g. McDowell et al., 2014), gender (e.g. Geniets, 2010) and physical dis/ability (Slater, 2012).

The question of whether young people are *in* or *out* of that broadly defined democratic arena and institutions for changing the world around one's self and those around us, which we might call politics, coincides with the contemporary question about whether young people are being *left out* of the arenas and institutions of the UK. Indeed, the question of whether young people *do politics* to an acceptable extent and in acceptable manners compared to older generations, goes hand in hand with the (very political) question of to what extent young people's position in the UK as a society, compared to older generations, is acceptable.

The economic crash of the last ten years hit the young exceptionally hard (Verick, 2009; Scarpetta, Sonnet and Manfredi, 2010; Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts, 2014) and the hangover of the crash continues to affect young people in the UK on a daily basis. Higher proportions of young unemployment followed the crash as the shifting landscape of labour markets impeded young people from getting, keeping and progressing in employment (Tunstall *et al.*, 2012). Permanent employment with job progression is just one of many pathways in the transition to adulthood that previous generations enjoyed that have become far more difficult to traverse since the crisis: another commonly cited example of transitions that are riskier and costlier to the young following the crisis are the move from a parent or guardian's home into independent housing (as in Clapham *et al.*, 2014; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015).

2.6.1. Turning out or falling out? Agency and apathy in the approach to young politics

Over the duration of this study the unorthodox “interventions” of young people in British politics have raised concerns among political elites who perceive a lamentable willingness among the young to abandon formal political processes (Henn and Foard, 2014). The first fall in electoral turnout, among the generation who grew up in the 1980s, hit in 2001 alongside a turnout of 59% among the overall electorate that was the lowest since 1918, when only 39% of 18-24-year-olds voted (Ipsos-Mori, 2001); turnout fell further to 37% in 2005 (Ipsos-Mori, 2005) before exhibiting a slight rise, albeit to a still relatively low level of 44% in 2010, compared to a national turnout of 65% (Ipsos-Mori, 2010). Post election polls indicate young turnout in 2015 was 43% (Ipsos-Mori, 2015). Young abstention has proved both significant and persistent, and has been taken not just to indicate the decision not to vote, but disillusionment with politics as a whole: indeed, to be a sign that those who reached adulthood just before the turn of the millennium were the vanguard of an apolitical generation (Pirie and Worcester, 2000). It is, above anything else, electoral abstention that spurred observers of the young to sound the call to arms against “the young of today [who] are jeopardising the future of democracy” (Forbrig, 2005, p. 7).

The image of young people as revolutionary spoilers of democracy is exciting enough as rhetoric, but masks the dominant theme in the analysis of young British citizens at the dawn of the 21st Century, which is that they are not so much swinging an axe at the trunk of democracy, as failing to ripen on its branches. That young people do not gain an interest in politics is one common hypothesis for their disappearance from the ballot box (Park, 2004; Phelps, 2012), as is the position that alienation and disaffection among young people leads them to avoid institutions for participation (Kimberlee, 2002; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005; Marsh, O’Toole and Jones, 2007; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010).

Having found the above literature pointing to alienation and disaffection, rather than apathy, at the heart of young people’s civic and political engagements, what’s the bottom line? This question was explicit in Edward Phelps’s literature review (2012), in which he challenges scholars from what he dubs the “anti-apathy”

school to come up with the political goods. To find young people saying they’re interested in politics, elections, ethical consumption, and such things is all well and good, but “fails to situate young people’s political activity within the context of the political life cycle”. His contention is that young people are fundamentally apathetic towards “conventional politics” due to the “Thatcher generation” having received a “unique political socialisation” (Phelps, 2012, p. 295), and that the themes discussed in this literature review are intriguing principles but don’t tackle the “incipient crisis of democracy” that young people and their problematic disengagement represent (Farthing, 2010).

In this case the bottom line for scholars perceiving young people’s engagement through the lens of antipolitics may be to connect, in a more meaningful way, with what exactly counts as politics during the transition to adulthood, and more specifically, what pathways for young people (if any) should be considered acceptable or not and why. A good starting point could be found in Rys Farthing (2010), whose “politics of youthful antipolitics” calls for researchers to reframe the “typical” approach to youth participation – being a disempowering process of enticing and assimilating young people “into stale political processes and/or translating these stale processes into interactive websites” – as a question of the changing substance of the political agenda, and its spheres and forms, itself. At the same time there is value to investigate political engagement as “a set of rights and duties that involve formally organized civic and political activities... e.g. voting or joining a political party” (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010) and the contribution by democratic citizens to the UK whether from the perspective that young people’s critical engagement, as citizens, is vital to democratic function (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004) or that young people need increased functionality from representative politics (Furlong and Cartmel, 2012). We cannot escape politics as a question of democratic citizenship, particularly as so many young people themselves construct fundamentally pro-democratic notions of politics (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010, Furlong and Cartmel, 2012, Pachi and Barrett, 2012). Yet, what Phelps and others may be missing is that more diaphanous definitions of political engagement that encompass acting effectively in the world, by implication a triple definition requiring a concept of that ‘world’, a sense of shared community with others in it, and an emotional concern for it (Street and Inthorn, 2010, p. 472), and young people’s apparent preference for what in previous sections were

referred to as everyday politics, are linked to "traditional" politics. On the one hand, young people have been abstracted from previous generations' pathways to political socialization like membership in trade unions; on the other hand the British political system is a problematic other for young people both in terms of the poor level of participation allowed to them in it and their somewhat oppositional treatment by it (Cushion, 2007; Banaji, 2008; Furlong and Cartmel, 2011; Sloam, 2013). Rejecting a problematic politics is in itself, perhaps, a political act, and it is surely part of the researcher's task to seek the reason why young people act thus.

From a research methodological perspective this renders talking politics very difficult. The very word "politics" falls like a sledgehammer on a conversation, a lesson we learn from various political science research, even when carried out with (traditionally) politically engaged adults (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009, White, 2011). The challenge to scholars working in young people's politics is doubly difficult, as the lesson from studies with young people is, as discussed above, that politicians tend to be perceived as a corrupt established elite, we can expect extra hurdles. It is not surprising, in other words, to hear from scholars like Lawy, Quinn and Diment (2009) that young people's narrations of their own lives and civic and political engagements exclude relationships with traditional politics and political elites. This is common elsewhere in the literature – mentioning politics snuffs out political discussions – and may reflect in itself a politicized disengagement, a cynical antipolitical *rejection* of traditional politics and the elites perceived holding politics' strings. There are also ubiquitous questions connected to apprentice citizenship that scholars working with adults have more ways to deal with. White's methodology (2011), for example, is built to allow adult participants ways to discuss political subjects through their own experiential knowledge, which is potentially problematic with young people from whom 'citizenship' is demanded by adults but not fully conferred until age 18 at the earliest. Part of the problem we as researchers face, to put it simply, is that the relationship between young people and politics is so contested that it is hardly surprising to find young people employing various tactics to avoid the topic.

2.6.2. Kafkaesque narratives in young adulthood

It is proposed, arising from this review of the literature, that young people’s experiences during the contemporary transition to adulthood challenge researchers with a complex, dualistic relationship between narratives as young people make reflexive, self-narrative transitions to adulthood. The accepted narrative is something like Horatio Alger Jr.’s ‘bootstrap’ novella about the heroic self-made man; a fine example comes from Nayak and Kehily’s studies of young masculinity and femininity during the dual transition of individuals from childhood to independence, and, as a period effect, the transition of British society from an industrial one to a neo-liberalist economy (Nayak and Kehily, 2008) in which making one’s own way in the world represents both a newfound freedom and new post-industrial shackles. Yet there is dissonance between this accepted narrative and young people’s narrations of their own experiences, their hopes, and anxieties: these have also been exemplified in studies above (Lawy et al., 2009, Manning, 2012). In terms of narratives young people find the transition to adulthood less coherent with normative structures like educational pathways to a “respectable job” (Skeggs, 1997), particularly for less privileged young people since narratives of the self along such pathways are not available to all, as illustrated by the young people in Lawy et al. who narrate their lives in the typical stages between school, getting GCSEs, training, and finding jobs even if their ‘actual’ self-narrative is completely different (2009, pp. 746–748). In this dissonance young people’s narratives better resemble Franz Kafka novel *The Trial*, in which the main protagonist Joseph K. must rise by degrees up the hierarchy of power even though “to move up the hierarchy is to become confused, to be told less, to be made even more painfully aware of the epistemological hiatus on which the entire sequence of events is based” (Kavanagh, 1972, p. 243). The young person is not just constructing his own CV in advance but, like Kafka’s hero, trying to understand the code behind, and integrate with in the individual’s own narrative existence, what appears to be an absurd and arbitrary system for meting out success and failure. If we take this perspective on young people’s realities, it is perhaps the most intriguing insight provided by Lawy et al. that even in the face of the most difficult systematic frustrations – arbitrary loss of employment, for example, simply because “they didn’t want to keep me” – the young people in the investigation are determined “not to cede control of their lives to structural forces

outside of their control" (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009, p. 750). The transition to adulthood is about resolving a conflict between the reality we want to create and the increasing confusion, and increasingly painful awareness in many cases, at a normative pathway to adulthood that promises payback for civic and political engagement but rescinds citizenship at will in the same way that the economic system promises individuals control over their lives through hard work, yet subjects them to numerous systematic risks and pressures outside their control.

A familiar illustration, abiding even after a decade, that may elucidate this proposed finding is the alienation between young people and conventional politics linked to the Iraq invasion in 2003 (Mead, 2004; Cushion, 2004, 2007; Sloam, 2007; Banaji, 2008; Pachi and Barrett, 2012; Theocharis, 2012). Alienation arising from a mutual disunion between elites and the citizenry, along with the perception that politicians are an untrustworthy class, is not unique to younger generations. The disconnection between prescribed paths to engagement and adulthood, and later treatment by those who prescribed these normative pathways, is a characteristic experience for contemporary young people. There is something Kafkaesque about living in a system where adults don't appear to trust politics, yet castigate young people for expressing cynicism; where the system proposes a reality in which adulthood is reached through gradual stepping stones like joining a community and engaging in peaceful democratic action to 'get out and get heard', but cracks down on young people's demonstrations. The Iraq invasion also illustrates a tension between the *ideal* narrative of politics and the state as "demoralized" with regulatory and administrative functions (Manning, 2012) and the increasingly confusing reality as young people became involved in politics that the state and politicians are not so, that like in a Kafka novel as one moves up the hierarchy of civic and political engagement one is told less and understands less, and the more young people engaged as democratic citizens by speaking up against the war, demonstrating in public, and organizing strikes in schools, the more they were chastised for lacking good citizenship (Cushion, 2004, Banaji, 2008).

What is proposed, and indicated with allusion to Franz Kafka, is that this switch is not simply a matter of the younger generation "rebooting democracy" (Sloam, 2007) – a term used here to stand for the general democratization/empowerment

thematic central to considerations of young antipolitics in the literature, that young people are moving away from old politics to more efficacious methods for getting democratic politics done – but a dissonance in the transition to adulthood between hope and doom in their own reflexive narratives of self as well as ‘supply-side’ ones, and sensations of both alienation and opposition arising from what is referred to above as the increasing confusion and increasingly painful awareness of risk in transitions to adulthood. If we consider young people’s political engagement during the transition to adulthood through this lens it may follow to regard the politics in antipolitics as opposition. Perhaps it is possible to think of young people’s oppositional narratives during transition as politicized opposition. Returning to the example of the young working class “thick bunch” (Lawy et al., 2009) who gave conflicting autobiographies, identifying oneself “working to live, not living to work” reiterates how young people are expected to live to work, and expected when asked by an adult to fashion their identities based on transitions to employment, yet construct their own lives in active opposition.

2.6.3. Transitions to opposition

More substantial political action can be investigated using this framework, too. We can consider – and it is considered that this literature review supports such a consideration – young people’s transitions to adulthood to be a confusing and alienating process of coming into opposition with the political system, and thus their civic and political engagements to be at least partially oppositional. Whether this opposition makes itself known to the outside world through substantial political action may come down to the level of risk a young person must face, and by extension their privilege/social class etc., given the uneven playing field on which young people start their adult lives (Clark, 2007). With this proviso in mind, how can researchers learn from the literature above when investigating political and civic engagement among young people?

The greatest criticism of researchers working in the field of young people’s political engagement by scholars like Phelps (2012) is that what is argued in this section to be opposition to dissonant narratives in the political system does not manifest itself in meaningful or substantial ways among young people in ways that can’t be studied using traditional political science “life-cycle explanations”. Phelps argues

young people are “apathetic when it comes to conventional politics... [and] have opted to become involved in different types of political activity” to traditional processes, even though there are more opportunities to participate in these processes than there ever have been (2012, 295). Yet this interpretation cannot explain what this discussion of findings considered linked to antipolitics and ‘Kafkaesque’ transitions of confusion and opposition. In short, my interpretation of the above findings is that young people don’t switch off where traditional politics is concerned, in the same way that they don’t just forget about having “respectable jobs” when there are no jobs to be found. They render themselves in active antipolitical opposition, and there are “different types of political activity” that we can readily interpret using this antipolitical framework. Everyday politics has earlier been introduced as a way for young people to navigate transitions to meaningful opposition to problematic systems using familiar means, and to bridge the divide between the public sphere and the private. One example of young people’s civic and political engagement in this way is the principle of “sustainable citizenship” or “political consumerism” (Micheletti et al., 2012), a way for young people who are denied access to the political system in many ways (Furlong and Cartmel, 2012) to construct meaningful self-narratives of citizenship, even global citizenship, that it is contended cannot be fully understood without mutual interrogation alongside the “traditional” neoliberal narratives they oppose.

Flanagan (2008) points out that the tendency towards “21st century technology” and especially electronic communications media, and an egalitarian “organizational style” which tends to encourage direct democratic engagement is characteristic of politically active young people but not unique to them. She claims young people’s political engagement bears comparison with people’s liberation movements – her example being the Zapatista Army for National Liberation or EZLN, in Chiapas, Mexico (2008, p. 199) – and though one must be careful not to inaccurately romanticize youth by using metaphors like these (Selwyn, 2003)² the

² It is salient to point out that young people are often represented as digital natives with an inherent capacity to better utilize computers, the internet, etc. This unhelpful stereotype has been around since the 1980s and can serve to disempower young people and impede researchers (Selwyn, 2003, Geniets, 2010).

principle understanding, that young people are a demographic who feel poorly served by this democracy and poorly represented in its political system, and who take to an asymmetrical indirect approaches to affect a counterbalancing force against this system as their means of opposition, is compelling. Perhaps a secondary finding where opposition is concerned could be that young people's political engagement in ways Yannis Theocharis calls "online and offline... young people's engagement in political issues through smaller types of participation" (Theocharis, 2012) represent oppositional manifestations because of the nature of young people's transitions to adulthood as discussed above.

Perhaps the best way to sum up this discussion of findings is to return to the initial question: can we put the politics back into youthful antipolitics? The challenge to get real about political engagement, for the researcher trying to capture a snapshot of young people's civic and political engagements using an antipolitics framework, draws the discussion back to its starting point. Why don't young people vote? Are they disengaging, or are they engaging in different ways? Is this problematic? In the transition to adulthood, citizenship, including democratic participation, is something to be developed. This does not mean young people are a drain on their communities, nor are they inherently risky, deficient or dangerous. They should be considered assets (Flanagan, 2008), as all citizens in a democracy should be considered, for the participation and *criticism* from citizens is what makes democracy work (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). With this in mind the final question above – is this problematic? – shifts its focus from young people themselves, on whose backs the problematic has historically been constructed, to the oppositional relationship evidenced by youthful antipolitics; not a call for young people to get their house in order and stop transgressing normative pathways to citizenship, but a challenge to reconsider the relationship between our democracy and an influential portion of its citizenry. That young people are citizens and not apprentice citizens is the message arising from the literature surveyed; that they are treated as apprentice citizens (Henn and Foard, 2011), is an insight this discussion of findings has tried to bulk out by suggesting ways this may appear to young people in the process of transition, with the main discussion being that their "apprenticeship" is perceived as a risky, Kafkaesque journey towards decoding the wishes of an inscrutable and powerful oppositional system.

It is proposed, to answer this section’s initial question that the politics in young people’s antipolitics might be found in the *remixing* of traditional citizenship pathways. A remix is neither a new piece of music nor an old one, but a combining of the two. Young people do not exactly opt out of traditional processes. They show strong commitment to democracy and elections in principle, but find them ineffectual, even counter-productive (Pachi and Barrett, 2012, Cushion, 2007). Yet in this review of the literature, a key finding is that they do not abandon traditional citizenship, but requisition useful parts, rearranging and reinterpreting citizenship pathways to build new ways to make transitions. A remixed citizenship doesn’t throw out previous modes of citizenship, nor is it entirely something new or unique. Most of all, remixed citizenship is an individual matter of politics at the personal level, and cannot be regarded as a one-size-fits-all transition pathway to adult citizenship. Some young people are “activists” who strongly identify with, for example, protest movements; others display “weak” political knowledge and engagement (Sloam, 2007); the links to social and economic backgrounds, gender, etc., have also been mentioned above. The uniting factor between young people is their transition and elements of its risky nature, and, it seems, the oppositional character to young people’s relationships with the political system: a concept of remixed citizenship might allow researchers to better adapt to the pathways each individual seeks out in their transitions to adulthood, and better allow what we call “politics research” to be done in a reality where the division between the personal and political is deteriorating.

2.6.4. The exclusionary vs. the new, and “ordinary” politics

The public/private binary divides participation between traditional politics – encompassing the State, its processes and institutions, government, formal political organizations, and so on – and “ordinary” politics or “micro-politics” dealing with agency, identity, belonging, etc. These divisions also divide adults (and historically speaking, men) with domain over politics with a big P and children and young people, who are restricted to informal and personal politics; dividing between public politics and private politics in this way reflects the exclusionary nature of young people’s citizenship and participation (Lister, 2008; Skelton, 2010). This review is situated within a growing concept in academic circles that young people inhabit not just a transitional period in the lifecycle but a liminal

position between macro politics and micro politics, in both and in between the public and private spheres (Wood, 2011). Special care must be taken to introduce a link between new forms of participation and ordinary politics, that is, having claimed that politics for young people bridges the public and private spheres, it introduces a finding in the literature that this bridging is done by young people using new forms of political and civic engagement; the illustration chosen is the internet as an engagement toolbox. This section also functions to address the role that new electronic forms of political and civic engagement play, since these have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, not just because they are often encountered in data analysis, but because they form one of the strongest strands in data analysis linking the characteristic features of young people's engagement to generational effects rather than lifecycle ones.

On the subject of lifecycle explanations there is nothing new about criticizing young people for poor civic engagement – in the 8th century BC Hesiod proclaimed that he held “no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words” (Lavrič *et al.*, 2010, p. 5) – though certainly there is some consideration to be taken vis-à-vis the “start up” restrictions to formal political engagement (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Bhatti, Hansen and Wass, 2012) that could accurately be summed up as having more pressing things to do, and the cautionary intimation from lifecycle researchers that young people will “come to their senses” as they grow up and adopt their predecessors' behaviour (Hellevik and Settersen Jr, 2012). When looking at contemporary engagement among young people what this section dubs “contemporary lifestyle politics” point towards generational socialization effects (Martin, 2012); to illustrate, they suggest young people might not simply grow out of a rebellious phase, since the rebellious phase is not entirely linked to their stage in the lifecycle but to structures, norms, etc. they traverse as they age.

This chapter has already identified political activism – political engagement manifest in signing petitions and attending demonstrations, for example – as methods for doing “lifestyle politics” that young people are more likely than older age groups to participate in (Martin, 2012) which, though not exactly new forms, hold novelty through the empowering potential of petitions, demonstrations and the

like using new technologies and techniques for political protest (Wheaton, 2007). As new forms like these develop scholars have identified, to varying extents, the "good news for the future" they see in new technologies, their potential for political and civic participation, and young people's uptake of such new technologies as well as positive relationships between their use and political and civic participation (Bakker and Vreese, 2011), although there is evidence that online engagement platforms for political institutions like local councils, and government-led civic initiatives, have been less successful than hoped (Sloam, 2007, Geniets, 2010). This section takes the internet as the most prevalent illustration, though not the only one, of new forms; it speaks to a thread within scholarly literature suggesting that the meeting-place between young people's politics of the personal and political and civic engagement on more traditional terms can be found through such new forms. Certainly scholarly literature cannot substantiate claims by writers like Bauerlein who claimed modern technology, including the internet, turn the current young generation into a self-indulgent and apolitical "dumbest generation" in history (Bauerlein, 2009), but there is no consensus that it has a *positive* effect either, with the overall sentiment among scholars being disagreement (Boulianne, 2009), leaning towards the concern that young people who are already financially privileged, highly educated and motivated are the ones who benefit from new electronic forms of political and civic engagement (Theocharis, 2012). It is accurate to say that the internet represents a toolbox but not conclusively a catalyst of change in itself (Bakker and Vreese, 2011).

With the proviso that scholars haven't witnessed a political revolution as web-savvy kids revolutionize traditional politics, this chapter introduces the ways we as researchers can connect our ideas of what is politics with young people's "everyday" or "ordinary" forms of political actions in interstitial, transitional spaces between public and private. This may develop as scholars continue to explore the transformative effects of Web 2.0 tools like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter which mark a qualitative change in how online activity works, from a model based on media consumption to one of media production: a world of "informational exuberance" in which formal and informal political "organization, coordination and aggregation" is open to participation by citizens (and non-citizens!) through collective production, re-working and sharing (Chadwick, 2012: 4).

Research into participation in the behaviour Chadwick calls informational exuberance, sometimes referred to as "user generated content", have found that sharing, creating and posting even "non-political" content online is a strong predictor of both online *and offline* political participation (Quintelier and Vissers, 2008; Gil de Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril and Rojas, 2009; Kaufhold, Valenzuela and Gil de Zúñiga, 2010; Östman, 2012). Online participation by young people is, one could say, a political geography in which society, civic connections, and engaged identities may be constructed as young people employ web-enabled "tactics... to enact change, subvert or manipulate a situation, and are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society we want to live in" (Wood, 2011). The discussion of such tactics is most common in academia when it boils over into cause-oriented, media prominent or somehow capital-P-Politically effective such as the "intense and diverse use of informational tools", especially Twitter, "for mobilization and better facilitation of offline action" during anti-cuts protests and occupations in 2011 (Theocharis, 2012).

As a finding, however, this chapter suggests that the inherent puzzle in research like Theocharis's (2012). The evidence that new forms of engagement, especially online participation, provide positive effects on political engagement might be less about the technology used and more about the liminality of online spaces. Young people's participation in both and in between the public and the private may inhabit what Farthing (2010) would call the broad sphere of "young antipolitics". Though her study does not apply to online engagement, Bronwyn E. Wood's feminist critique looking at everyday politics (2011) is brought to mind, for the way she understands children not growing up by accident in between, say, their local communities and two newly-built fast food restaurants (2011, p. 343-345) but as agents crafting new self-narratives to subvert and manipulate their positions in risky transitions.

One word present in Wood but missing elsewhere is *solidarity*. Wood recounts that her participants, young teenagers about the age of 14, repeatedly checking back with her to say things they realized they did and ask, "does this count as social action?" (2011, p. 343), a meeting with two teenage participants who had found a fellow pupil, with learning difficulties, was being teased: they guilefully protected him by inviting him to share lunch with them. This, she says, is as much a

relationship between the young people in question in solidarity with a bullied comrade as it is a relationship with the school as a space. Their solidarity with the bullied represents a *personal* demonstration of civic engagement, while in *public* they show defiance both to the bullies, despite the risk that bullying will fall on their necks, and the school institutions for dealing with bullying that they must subvert or defy, since they have no power to effect change. In a similar way this chapter considers "new forms of politics" are confusing to scholars because they are neither new nor old, public nor private, but both at the same time.

This chapter suggests that Kallio and Häkli (2011), among others (such as, in Britain, Banaji and Buckingham, 2010), are informative to researchers by pointing out young people, not least because of compulsory schooling, live for the most part in adult-regulated spaces for socialization and control and adult-sponsored pro-social citizenship pathways that provide for young people to mimic adult political behaviour with their target as *future* citizenship; these spaces are simultaneously spaces of "youthful agency, subversion and resistance" (Wood, 2011).

Youthful antipolitics is a useful theoretical tool because it allows for this middle ground between agency and disempowerment, between engagement and disengagement; it also, this chapter contends, opens up research to the possibility that young people's autonomous political agency in private or micro-political spheres can be understood intersecting adult conceptualizations of macro-politics since subverting the boundary between formal and informal, private and public politics may in itself represent political engagement. Returning to online engagement, as a summary illustration, Theocharis (2012) is not mistaken to identify ambiguity in how researchers and policymakers judge political value in young people's online behaviour, even at the high end of macro-political engagement like the forming of protest communities online. Criticisms tend to return to the matter's source: if they're tweeting and writing blogs about politics, then why don't young people vote? Isn't a politics of the personal essentially a self-centred rejection of citizenship?

This chapter contends that, based on the literature investigated, the root of this ambiguity may be the interstitial nature of youthful political agency during the

transition to adulthood. What is missing from the equation may be the subversive, antipolitical space between childhood’s private sphere and the public life prescribed to adults, including macro-political behaviour like voting. Young people no longer have to wait until 18 for citizenship; they can construct their own forms of citizenship by subverting and resisting the adult public world that short-changes and opposes them (or at least is perceived to do so). Possibly, the socialization process for young citizens is now, in itself, a state of tension between self-crafted individual narrative transitions to citizenship – sailing one’s own ship – while employing tactics to navigate, appropriate and subvert adult-sponsored normative pathways to citizenship.

2.7. Conclusion

The findings above suggest that young people’s antipolitics could be a fruitful theoretical starting point for research, building on an established theme in the literature, while at the same time being able to work a new seam in data collection.

2.7.1. Unlocking narratives: Focus groups, identity and belonging

The first obstacle to carrying out research into this subject will be familiar to scholars in subject-centred political science. Revisiting Paolo Freire’s wonderful anecdote about the Spanish factory worker whose attempts to organize fellow workers into political action for better conditions was stymied by their apparent apathy and ill-education, until informal discussions were started around card games, during which political action was able to brew, teaches us that “formal, direct questions about... ideas or understandings of politics” hamper political knowledge and curiosity (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009, p. 50) even among well informed subjects.

With young people we can expect such difficulties and more, given that this literature review suggests young people’s relationship with powerful adults in the field of politics are mostly in terms of opposition, yet can be narrated – in a way that will be familiar to Paolo Freire and his anecdotal factory worker – using familiar, accepted transition narratives (Lawy et al., 2009). The obstacles between successfully talking politics and throttling talk that can be surmounted when working with adults by, for example, referring to fixed, comfortable topics like

career, family and location, or by sparking discussion on familiar political topics (as in White, 2011) are more complicated when working with young people, since their lives are both in the flux of transition to adulthood and because experiences and literacies vary so widely among young people (Lawy et al., 2009). At the same time, variation between young individuals is to be expected and may even be of great interest; since “lifestyle politics” are central to the youth antipolitical framework conceived above we as researchers should be open to non-traditional methods for civic and political engagement, as well as pathways towards political engagement that might manifest themselves in unexpected ways, such as nascent self-reflexive constructions of citizenship that lack traditional political literacy but nevertheless function in ways of interest (Street and Inthorn, 2010), not least because young people as participants in a study will be navigating complex and possibly challenging narratives with the researcher.

In surveying the literature this study discovered a general trend towards focus groups, which has been demonstrated in the breadth of papers cited for which the focus group is the primary method for data collection. This chapter suggests that the focus group represents a useful tool for gathering data from young people, with the primary focus on exploring “how people make sense of the world, not what the world is” (Saussure, in Fiske, 1990, p. 115) and including the researcher in a collaborative social context (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 10–11) with several intentions: to avoid the stultifying Ben-led traditional discussions of “politics” that have been shown to hinder data collection; to enable young people to share their own narratives since previous literature has suggested these narratives will be both varied and, in many ways, under fire from implicit and explicit normative pathways to adulthood that may oppose young people’s own narratives of the self; a semi-structured focus group process may be able to somewhat formalize discussion towards its aim to fill a particular gap in the literature with some questioning by the researcher without leading discussion entirely.

Since the goal is to “talk politics”, but previous literature urges the researcher to be careful to avoid tackling politics head-on, this paper proposes everyday spaces as a redoubt for doing politics where politics is opposed, or more accurately, in order to make a defensive position available to young participants who wish to discuss political and civic engagements but for whom politics is dangerous, unfamiliar

territory. One example of the principle at work is found in Leyshon and Bull (2011), in whose research they asked young people about feelings of belonging to and identification with rural settings, leading to politically engaged narratives about social class and transitions to adulthood that were otherwise stymied by discomfort and "established" narratives: for example, the young people studied had a complex identification with the countryside where they lived, while at the same time feeling rejected by rich, powerful adults who owned most of the land, and so their foreseen transitions to employment in urban areas were fraught with political tensions that without interrogating identity might have been swallowed up by the dominant narrative "I'll move out to get a job". The potential for identity/belonging discourses to disinhibit political literacies among young people are also prevalent in Llewellyn and Westheimer (2009) whose research subjects include two young women whose feelings towards the politics of work, unions, and welfare are wrapped in connections to family members and faith groups; and in the opposite direction, Street and Inthorn (2010) discuss the power of less directly political discourses to help young people express feelings of engagement with communities even if their political literacy fails to meet the task, as in their case with young people appropriating discussions about celebrity culture and pop music to explain their feelings about their respective individual places in the world in general, concepts of national belonging, and other political subjects like international charitable fundraising.

2.7.2. What's the point in studying young people's politics?

"Believing in progress does not mean believing that any progress has yet been made"

Franz Kafka (Wood, 1997, p. 256)

Researchers have an important role to play as co-members of society with young people, rather than powerful benefactors inviting young people to be our apprentices. This chapter intends to explore young people's politics rather than mould it to a previous conception, and as a theoretical framework, youthful antipolitics is useful for not problematizing the interstitial behaviour between engagement and disengagement as apolitics or not politics.

To appropriate Kafka’s aphorism, our role as researchers in this case may be to believe in progress but not seek out progress being made, for previous researchers that have tried to make young people’s evident progress fit dominant paradigmatic assumptions concerning what represents political engagement and what doesn’t have failed. In simple terms, the literature started off with voting its primary focus, segued into investigating what young people do other than voting, and returned to voting. There are interesting things going on, agrees the consensus, but the problem and question that started it all off both remain unresolved. Young people remain the least engaged demographic in the population by measures like – and primarily – electoral turnout; they tend not to vote when they become old enough, and continue not to vote for their entire lives (Dermod, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010, p. 442). Is this a problem, and what should be done?

It is contended that the current trajectory for academic discourse leads to a needed shift in perspective, away from the dominant binary perception that young people are either “engaged” or “disengaged” (Bennett, 2008). In this chapter this trajectory is examined alongside its development in the corpus, towards the “youthful antipolitics” (Farthing, 2010) that has not supplanted, but is supplementing the dominant conceptual binary with an assessment of the “in between” and “in both”. Antipolitics is a useful framework for bridging personal and political spheres in this way, which better captures reality for young people in which the divisions between hitherto discrete micro-political and macro-political categories are permeable and can be subverted, appropriated, and “remixed” to fit their needs. ‘Antipolitics’ also addresses a fundamental feature of young people’s civic and political engagements, which is that they are made in contested political spaces marked by oppression and opposition. It appears accurate to say young people feel repressed by dominant neo-liberal systems and their narratives of the transition to adulthood, and especially by systemic risks facing, and systemic control over, success for their own individual narratives of self. Their apparent disinterest in politics can be considered a radically antipolitical action. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, this chapter concludes that academic literature, in moving towards the theme of youthful antipolitics, is reassessing *why* we even talk about young people’s politics. Young people cannot be deprived of their own agency, even if we consider their transitions to citizenship problematic, or we

consider their agency partial. The young do not aspire to living at some point in the future, but live already, now, in transition between childhood dependence and adult independence. Maybe the point in studying young people's civic and political engagements during these complicated transitions is to study them, not just to categorize and criticize them according to binary engagement/disengagement.

3. Methodology

In this chapter the strategies employed in research are examined and presented. A basic synopsis of my aims is followed by an outline of the philosophical approach to generating data and knowledge. A qualitative, multiple site research design employing photography and focus group interviews is developed, and justification is provided for the choice of these methods. Strategies for data analysis are explained and modelled and, finally, issues arising related to the ethics and ethical responsibilities of this research project are reflected upon.

3.1. Overview: building a method for examining young people's citizenship

The current political moment has been described as one of conservatism and neoliberal hegemony amid a "crisis in politics" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 2), and with reference to young people in the UK in particular, a 'perfect storm' of political and economic disadvantage, and deleterious social changes for the young (Sloam, 2011). In this situation, participatory methods may need to go further than merely generating and analysing data. This thesis as a research project aims to make a difference to participants following previous critical and participatory traditions of research (Staeheli and Kofman, 2004; Bulbeck and Harris, 2007; Schostak, 2008; Ahmed, 2009; Dentith, Measor and O'Malley, 2009; Robinson and Gillies, 2012; Ehlin, 2014). A critical approach to young people's politics also requires adaptation to the multiplicity of young people themselves, who are not monolithic.

3.1.1. Ontology

By way of ontological summary, this project looks at young people in the liminal spaces between childhood and adulthood. In terms of research, therefore, it aims to explore ways to make sense of the intersections of structure and agency specific to young people in the UK. At the same time, it is informed by a tradition of work that calls for researchers to raise theoretical boundaries to allow for diversity among, and place in the foreground, young people's voices (Beck, 2001; Kellett, 2005; Morrow, 2008; Hine, 2009; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Sloam, 2011; Robinson and Gillies, 2012; Ehlin, 2014) and recent calls for explorative work into

new forms and applications of methods for researching young people’s politics (Morrow, 2008; Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, 2011b; Wood, 2011b).

This means building a research method that allows for exploration, as well as for fluidity in understanding the structural and temporal processes that intersect with young people’s agency and understanding thereof. Thus, in this chapter, a constructionist, exploratory methodology is proposed. Bourdieu’s theories of capital, habitus and field are used in order to provide for flexible ways of framing structure and agency (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu lays the theoretical groundwork for perceiving young people interacting and making meaning of the world, and their coordinates and potential to act in the world, during transitions to adulthood (Holt, 2010). Core theory from Bourdieu is complemented by insights on transformative agency and researcher positioning drawn from the critical scholars Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire. These scholars provide a link between a theoretical approach informed by Bourdieu and the goal of research centred on young people as “active” agents (Kellett, 2005) and as colleagues who are able to share political consciousness and subjectivity with the researcher (Rancière, 1991, 2004).

3.1.2. The thesis as a journey

A PhD thesis is not just a research project, but also an investigative journey by the researcher (Hanrahan, Cooper and Burroughs-Lange, 1999; Mullins and Kiley, 2002). This suggests the project has a pragmatic function, and Bourdieu’s work can represent a toolbox for the researcher who hopes to ‘do the work’ of exploring and interpreting participants’ practice (Bourdieu and Nice, 1990). Rancière and Freire, meanwhile, inform us of the need to share subjectivity and sensibility with fellow people who participate in our research (Freire, 1993; Rancière, 2004; Pelletier, 2009). This egalitarian aim underpins the project’s ontology. In pragmatic terms the requirements of a PhD thesis do not justify a wholly horizontal approach to analysis or reporting, but it is possible to be informed by the “bricolage” approach to research (Kincheloe, 2001), and what is suggested here to be the researcher’s position ‘remixing’ co-generated data, not interpreting it from afar. It is considered important to reflect on the researcher’s exploration of the method, and the ways that the method as it was planned to be converged with and diverged

from the method in actual fact, and for that reason chapter 8 is dedicated to reflections on the method.

Diversity in methods is sought in order to provide for diversity in voice. In summary, as Sarah Pink writes, such methods need to be context-specific, "creatively developed within individual projects" (Pink, 2001, p. 4) and functional around the co-production and co-analysis of data and knowledge. On the one hand, participatory research can allow participants to share their understanding in a creative way and on their own terms (Valentine 1999; O'Toole et al. 2010). On the other hand, the calls for developing new methods and new ways to execute research projects (Kallio and Häkli, 2011b) suggest that multiple sites and multiple approaches to data generation might help provide examples of different methods working in different contexts. In this chapter a method for data generation is constructed that combines focus groups with elucidatory, participatory and creative methods such as photography.

3.2. Approach

This project begins with the need to unpack what politics *is* for young people today. Young people have been identified by many studies "practicing politics in ways with take advantage of a permeable public/private divide" (Manning, 2012, p. 2). Political engagement may be linked to the risky transitions they make to adulthood, that is, struggling at once to "get by" while also navigating hopes and fears (Flanagan, 2008), and to the citizenship and normative pathways prescribed for their transition to citizenship (Banaji, 2008) within a political moment "in which young people are denied an effective voice in the political process and are short-changed in the policy process" (Furlong and Cartmel, 2011, p. 26). Although it is neither accurate nor helpful to identify young people as a monolithic group (Jenkins, 1998), the treacherous economic situation and disengagement from traditional and institutional politics that characterize young people in the UK set them apart from other age groups (OECD, 2010; Sloam, 2011). Young people are 'doing politics' in the UK, in other words, and the young are set apart from other age groups in various ways. Young people's politics may be a matter of finding a conceptual space for agency during the risky transition between childhood and adulthood, between the private and the public.

3.2.1. Liminality, citizenship and a contested politics of the everyday

My aim was to examine young people's perspectives and subjectivities in this conceptual space, left out in politics and left behind in economics; neither fully dependent nor fully independent, embedded in adult- controlled spaces yet possessing political agency (Wood, 2011b), in other words, occupying a liminal status and a liminal space in society. Seeking access to this liminal space drew the researcher towards "respondent-led" (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007, p. 60) research that focuses on the everyday and its "ways of operating, of doing things" (de Certeau, 1984, p. XI). This method was constructed in order to better understand "how everyday life can also operate as an arena for the contestations and transformation of dominant, often oppressive modalities of citizenship" (Dickinson *et al.*, 2008, p. 105). In this light, what is here simplified under the term 'everyday' politics could be taken to refer not necessarily to relieving young people of their place in the 'public' sphere but to a "more nuanced understanding of the relationship between [their] lived experiences and their engagement and interest in politics" (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007, p. 212) that locates young people with liminal status and within a liminal space in society, embedded within adult-controlled spaces yet possessing political agency in various resourceful and tactical ways (Wood, 2011b).

This project takes a strongly participatory approach led by young participants' voices. In the literature review critical interpretations of young people's incomplete citizenship in the UK were reflected upon, so that a focus on young people's everyday politics can help this project explore "how everyday life can also operate as an arena for the contestations and transformation of dominant, often oppressive modalities of citizenship" (Dickinson *et al.*, 2008, p. 105). Where research methods are concerned, according to Kallio and Häkli (2011a, p. 2) young people's lived worlds are typically researched "as social and cultural environments, but not as political arenas" and methodological tools for data generation, collection and analysis in the political arenas of young people's everyday lives remain "weakly developed" (Wood, 2012, p. 2). Methods that situate mostly in political arenas "led and defined explicitly by adults" can fail to consider politics as the "complex and multivalent struggle" (Staeheli and Kofman, 2004, p. 3) to construct society through variegated action. Instead, these methods conceptualize a pathway by

which children are apprentice members to big-P, public politics “where common issues are deliberated by representatives and politicians” (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 4) and where these elites engage in “the activities which create order by distributing places, names, functions” (Rancière, 1996, p. 173). Again, the nature of young people’s lived worlds and the complexity of these spaces as arenas for political subjectivity are considered to motivate this project to develop ground-up, exploratory methods that privilege deep descriptions, as mentioned above.

As such, this project joins a growing body of research that considers ‘high’ politics, its institutions and adult elites to focus on normative pathways to citizenship. Young politics in the UK is about expecting the young person to muster to their correct place within a community of inclusion, stability and security (Delanty, 2003; Clark, 2007). In a UK context, young people are also liminal *economic* actors, in flux between dependence and independence, employment and unemployment; hopeful and fearful, negotiating their transition to economic adulthood in a similarly complex and multivalent struggle. Youth is conceptualized as a “complex transition between childhood dependence and adult independence” (Pachi and Barrett, 2012, p. 224). It is a complex transition negotiated as a sailing of the self through treacherous waters and, at the same time, a narrative process of constructing the self with reference to the externalized normative “pro-social and conformist” apprenticeship to adulthood (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010) and a neoliberal social contract that does not match young post-industrial realities (Lummis, 1996; Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 40). During this transition the researcher who focuses solely on adult-controlled arenas of politics may be seen to join in with a distrusted political and economic order (Hay and Stoker, 2009). Research with a focus on adult-controlled politics has, in the past, been shown to strongly favour responses relating to the familiar, adult-sponsored normative pathways to engagement with them, and especially the construction of a CV: the voices of young people return to familiar narratives of the pathways to adulthood (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009). Speaking only about accepted topics can show bias towards accepted narratives. As above, shifting the research design towards generative, open-ended questioning and deep description was intended as a way to avoid such a bias.

This does not suggest this research, which ventures into everyday politics, is considered to have perfectly capture the everyday lives of young participants:

there remains a power imbalance between the researcher and participants one must acknowledge (Bhavnani, 1988; Morrow, 2008; O’Toole *et al.*, 2010, p. 57; Warin, 2011). It was important, instead, to find a method that could enable young people to provide depth, detail and richness in “thick” descriptions (Rubin, 2012, p. 6).

3.2.2. Exploratory, constructionist qualitative research

The participatory approach to this research project drives the researcher towards a particular format of asking questions, and a specific type of questioning, within a conceptual framework that can support the generation and analysis of this data. In other words, there is a two-way relationship between the research questions and the research model explained below. The aims of the project outlined above direct the research towards a participatory approach and exploratory model; at the same time, the underlying theory explained below continuously informs the interpretation and application of the research questions.

The proposed exploratory approach to everyday politics, and my conceptualization of young people occupying a liminal space during transitions to adulthood in the UK, can be accomplished using a social constructionist framework which, in the first place, explores “how people make sense of the world, not what the world is” (Saussure, in Fiske, 1990, p. 115). Empirical focus is shifted away from the traditional forms of ‘talking politics’ that can stultify discussion (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009; Banaji and Buckingham, 2010; Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010; Street and Inthorn, 2010; Wood, 2011b) and towards investigating young people’s lived worlds as arenas for political subjectivity while developing much needed methodological tools for data generation, collection and analysis (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, 2011b).

3.3. Building a constructionist framework

The constructionist approach here is informed by Addison, who proposes “grounded hermeneutic” research (Addison, 1992) based on five assumptions:

1. Participants are meaning-giving beings. They are encountered in the process of giving meanings to their actions, and these meanings are important to how we understand human behaviour.
2. Meaning is expressed in actions and practices as well as voice and testimony. Accordingly, we must investigate everyday practices as well as beliefs about those practices.
3. The process of giving meaning exists within a complex environment including context, social and power structures, personal history, shared practices, peer pressure, language, etc. We must be aware of these background conditions and be able to illuminate them when we encounter these conditions affecting the process, especially when in a problematic or suppressive way.
4. Meaning is mutable, ongoing and constantly negotiated, reproduced and re-negotiated. Human meaning and significance, by individuals and by groups, is not limited to pre-established categories, nor is it always fixed, clear or unambiguous.
5. Understanding human action requires a process of interpretation. The researcher cannot find truth by determining how closely beliefs match a fixed reality. Facts are value-laden. Researchers, too, hold values that are reflected in their research. (Addison, 1992)

Addison reflects in a similar way to Bourdieu that agents apprehend the world and construct their vision of it. Yet, as Bourdieu writes, "this construction is carried out under structural constraints" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18), and our work on what 'sense' participants make of the world – following Addison - requires consideration of how participants construct this knowledge in various social contexts (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003). In the context of young people's politics, the philosophy of Bourdieu breaks from traditional theories of structure and agency (Wyn and White, 1997) which have been useful in understanding young people's political participation, but which tend to lead research to "middle ground positions between structure and agency... thus reducing the option of many other fruitful explorations" (Woodman, 2010; Wood, 2011a, p. 50). Bourdieu writes that

structure and agency interact to provide the context for individual and group action, and that we can understand practice to reflect the combination of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Nice, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

3.3.1. Bourdieu's Habitus

Bourdieu defined habitus as "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. vii), and this definition "reflects his effort to escape the mechanistic tendencies of Saussure's structuralism without relapsing into subjectivism" (Mills and Gale, 2010, p. 89). Habitus itself is a concept with a long history (Nash, 1999) and, as part of Bourdieu's work, is perhaps the most contested (Reay, 2004). It is also one of the most often used, and scholars working with young people have warned that habitus frequently serves a decorative purpose, "bestowing gravitas without doing any intellectual work" (Reay, 2004, p. 432; Mills and Gale, 2010). Habitus, writes Bourdieu, is the dispositions that arise from the social context of individuals and groups that are also internalized or "deposited" within these bodies: the system of dispositions – that is, "schemata of perception, appreciation and action" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 163) – embody the structures of society. Bourdieu illustrates that the similarity of practices between individuals within social groups, families, generations and so on can be explained by the similarity in habitus generated by homogenous social conditions (Bourdieu and Nice, 1990, p. 58). Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which "tends to reproduce the society that produced it" (Cresswell, 2002, p. 379) has been criticized as deterministic in that objective structures produce culture, which determine practice, which reproduces those objective structures (Jenkins, 1982, p. 273; Reay, 2004, p. 432). Bourdieu himself challenged the view that his concept of habitus was a form of determinism (Bourdieu, 1999) arguing that although habitus leads us to reproduce the social conditions of our own production, that there are no explicit rules or principles for this reproduction other than vagueness and indeterminacy (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 77), and that "one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 87). Instead, Bourdieu claimed the goal of sociology "is to uncover the most deeply

buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the 'mechanisms' that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 1) and that habitus is a conceptual tool for understanding the social matrices that circumscribe which choices are inconceivable, improbable, and acceptable to an actor both within and embodying a social context.

Indeed, habitus, through Bourdieu, provides the researcher working with young people with a conceptual tool for understanding how young people's agency is limited by social context, how social context is deposited within the agent, but how there is still room for the transformation and subversion of social frameworks as well as their reproduction. Louise Holt argues that conceptualizing habitus as embodied within individuals provides us the tool for charting the endurance of inequalities and the potential for social transformation (2008), and lays the theoretical groundwork for perceiving young people taking on, co-producing, and transforming the embodied dispositions that are inculcated during the transitions to adulthood (2010). Mills and Gale suggest that – since the objective structures of habitus are capable of guiding or constraining agents independent of their consciousness and desires (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 123) yet agents remain “not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance to laws which they do not understand” but perform actions in “complex games” arising from the “incorporated principles of a generative habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 9–10) – young people largely see themselves and are seen by others falling into two categories of habitus. On the one hand, young people can fall within a reproductive habitus, “who recognize the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and tend to read the future that fits them”; they can also have transformative habitus, recognizing “the capacity for improvisation and [tending] to look for opportunities for action in the social field” (Mills and Gale, 2010, p. 90). This example shows how habitus can be applied in the conceptualization of young people's agency during the transition to adulthood. Mills and Gale can provide an illustration for how Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides for orthodoxy and reproduction as well as subversion and transformation, and that the potential for reproduction and transformation is intrinsic to an agent.

3.3.2. Capital

The dispositions that individuals acquire as habitus depend on their positions in society, and the social conditions in which habitus is acquired reflects the individual’s endowment in capital (Wacquant, 1998; Holt, 2010; Mills and Gale, 2010). Capital is relevant to individuals, including young people, as it contains “concealed intergenerational processes that serve to reproduce socio-economic advantage, disadvantage and privilege” (Holt, 2008, p. 234). The processes that give rise to Bourdieu’s capitals – be they social, cultural, economic, symbolic or otherwise – also serve to reproduce them, as dominant structures provide a greater chance of success to those whose capital matches that of the dominant culture (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu wrote that youth is central to how dominant structures reproduce inequalities in capital from one generation to the next. By way of illustration, this reproduction occurs amid tension between two features of schooling (Harker, 1984, p. 117). On the one hand, he wrote that schools favour the cultural capital of the dominant group, and so favour those young people who already possess this cultural capital. On the other hand, education has a dynamic, innovative aspect based on the generation of new knowledge (Bourdieu, 1973, 1974). In the same way that habitus is self-reproductive but not entirely deterministic, the interconnected capital is not simply reproduced by successive generations.

In contemporary research with young people, capital often functions as a way to conceptualize divergence between individuals and groups. Young people are not monolithic, and social capital in particular – the concrete or virtual resources accrued through social relationships and connections with other individuals and groups (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) – has been used to understand differentiation between the ways young people participate in greater society (Fahmy, 2006; McFarland and Thomas, 2006; Bang, 2009, 2010; Holt, 2010). Again, although capital can be maintained during the socialization of young people, there is also room for transforming capital, class and social characteristics, participatory socialization, and so on. For example, McFarland and Thomas found that young people from privileged backgrounds were bequeathed, by the transmission of material and virtual capital, the “resources and experiences” that helped them enter and lead youth participatory organizations and then adult

political life later on (McFarland and Thomas, 2006, p. 402). On the other hand, Fahmy encountered the relationship between young people's participatory citizenship and social capital complex and divergent "across the lifecycle and in relation to the type of participation under investigation" (Fahmy, 2006, p. 115), that is, that young people were not entirely bound by the capital they possessed, but were able to swim against the tide in some cases.

Methodologically speaking, the research model must reflect the duality of the process of youth that Bourdieu wrote about in the educational context, since the transition to adulthood is reproductive of existing inequalities in capital while also being open to transformation, dynamism, and strategic change by actors within (young people themselves) and without (such as teachers, parents, peers and organizations supporting change). Capital does not irrevocably bind, but neither is it impermanent, and research must be aware of that complex relationship.

3.3.3. Field

Bourdieu described habitus and capital in relationship with field within a triad that can help us understand practice. He illustrated the relationship habitus and capital have with field using the equation:

$$[(\textit{habitus}) (\textit{capital})] + \textit{field} = \textit{practice}$$

(Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 25)

Whereas habitus is deposited *within* actors, fields affect actors from without. Although fields are not real in the material sense, they have real consequences, and are proposed by Bourdieu as a theoretical device for understanding "the relational character of social action" (Page, 2012, p. 153). The field is the sphere of action in which individuals and groups interact and struggle, and in which habitus and capital interact in the formation of practice. Within a field or a sub-field certain forms of capital are beneficial to an actor's success. To provide a salient example, we might consider the transition of a young graduate to stable employment a struggle for a combination of economic, social and academic capital: the traditional understanding that a student accumulates academic capital coexists with the struggle for economic capital that allows funding unpaid or poorly

paid work-for-the-CV, and the social capital that enables a hopeful jobseeker to ‘know the right people’ (as in Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Flanagan, 2008; Vakaloulis, 2012). Likewise within the field, actors develop field-specific habitus, a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 128) that encompasses a grasp for the rules, expectations, assumptions and boundaries on practice in a particular field: *doxa* is the name Bourdieu and Wacquant called the internalization of the field’s regularities as ‘common sense’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). The field structures the habitus by conditioning an actor’s perceptions and actions; meanwhile, the field is made meaningful by the persistent habitus deposited in the actors it encompasses. One does not determine the other; rather, the game and its players constantly interact.

Part struggle, and part game, Bourdieu described the field as a mixture between a battlefield and a magnetic field: a “patterned system of objective forces... a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter it” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 17) as well as:

“a locus of struggle to determine the conditions and the criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy, that is, to determine which properties are pertinent, effective and liable to function as capital so as to generate specific profits guaranteed by the field.”

(Bourdieu, 1988, p. 11)

This quote helps locate Bourdieu’s perception of the interaction between the actor and the field.

The generative nature of this project’s research method is informed by the need to design flexible, mutable architectures for data generation and analysis, to remain appropriate to the dynamic nature of the field. Although the rules of the game are rarely, if ever, written down, the *doxa* that constitutes these rules is a durable culture between people, and the power of its gravity arises from the social interaction between the actors who are simultaneously contained by the field and reproducing it. In other words, the field is a dynamic, contested and mutable social architecture. There is struggle over capital and position within a field, but there is

also struggle – which can be fierce – over the contested conditions of the field, its membership, hierarchy, and so on. Actors can transform their social structure, which “gives any field a historical dynamism and malleability that avoids the inflexible determinism of classical structuralism” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 18).

3.3.4. Application and adaptation: Bourdieu and young people's politics

In applying Bourdieu's theory to empirical practice the core criticism of his work – that it is deterministic – returns as the researcher tries to conceptualize the possibility for social change by actors. As explained above, Bourdieu held that change is possible. However, there is a remarkable lack of guidance for agents wishing to execute change beyond their social conditioning, compared to the work of other critical theorists: this lack is identified throughout the lineage of his work, even by those who are devoted to Bourdieu's theory, such as Diane Reay (as in Reay, 2004) and Andrew Sayer (as in Sayer, 2005). Bourdieu himself wrote that his theories were intended, first and foremost, to be conceptual tools for empirical research, to be used fluidly as ways of understanding the world (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2004, p. 439).

Bourdieu's theories, as methods of enquiry, welcome fluidity in their application. In this research project Bourdieu's work is employed as concepts of great utility, rather than theories to be pinned down. From a grounded constructionist approach, the investigation of everyday practices, meaning and beliefs about practices (Addison, 1992) combines with Bourdieu's methods of enquiry in, as Bourdieu wrote himself, a way to move towards producing “a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, woolly reality. For this, it is better that its concepts are supple and adaptable, rather than defined and calibrated and used rigidly” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 23). The researcher must remain supple and adapt to the practices and meaning-making of young participants and previous work in this field.

The identified aim is to research young people's political practices. Seeking young people “practicing politics in ways with take advantage of a permeable public/private divide” (Manning, 2012, p. 2), on reflection using Bourdieu's tools, requires access to conceptual understanding of the ways young people can

subvert and transform their conditions – for example, how they can contest the conditions of various fields – which, it can be argued, is a required addition to Bourdieu's work (Reay, 2004; Sayer, 2005).

3.3.5. Criticizing / critical sociology? Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire

Rancière's writing on Bourdieu is a powerful critique on the latter's whole philosophical enterprise (Pelletier, 2009), although not his methodological value, and with the proviso that, again, as with criticisms of determinism, Bourdieu himself denied many of Rancière's accusations, disavowing inheritance of Lacan (Steinmetz, 2006) or Althusser (Pelletier, 2009). For the purposes of this study, Rancière's critiques of Bourdieu provide a way to link these practical needs to the search for accompanying theoretical approach.

The precision with which Rancière executes his demolition job makes his critiques hard to ignore. Bourdieu's discourse, according to Rancière, "places the poor in one position in society, and the sociologist in another... the poor are objects of study rather than intellectual subjects" (Pelletier, 2009, p. 2). In Rancière's own words this recreates an "exclusion by homage" (Rancière, 2004, p. xxiv) which partitions knowledge from ignorance. A participant ignorant of the coordinates of the field in which she practices is granted her own domain of practical knowledge; while the domain of scientific, sociological knowledge is secure under the control of the Ben. 'He doth protest too much, methinks' is, in a nutshell, Rancière's critique of the sociologist. For Rancière, the sociologist who is determined to denounce the presumed ignorance of the people and the height of the walls of his castle, redoubles these walls, and fixes his sociology as a stable domain, stable in perception and performance (Rancière, 1991; Hallward and Hallward, 2006).

As an alternative, Rancière proposes that "equality is not a goal to be attained but a point of departure, a supposition to be maintained in all circumstances" (Rancière, 1991, p. 229). His most fundamental assumption is that everyone thinks – and has equal powers of speech and thought (Hallward and Hallward, 2006). This opposes Bourdieu, who, although he wrote that the "monopoly of competence" and of presumed expertise is more dangerous in sociology than in other sciences, also claimed that sociology teaches what everyone already knows, but does not or cannot perceive because the law of the system is to mystify it

(Bourdieu, 1990b). In terms of working with young people – and in young people's politics – the educationalist Gert Biesta connects Rancière's philosophy to the central questions of democratic inclusion. According to Biesta, Rancière helps us understand how the transition to adulthood is a colonization process by which the ignorant are brought into the existing democratic order (Biesta, 2009). In this, democracy is defined as the unquestioned order, the mystified field of activity, in which young people need to be better included by way of emancipation, and "the presumption of inequality which underpins the setting of equality as the goal of the education system is the very means by which the actualization of equality is infinitely deferred" (Pelletier, 2009, p. 13). This project does not take place within the educational discipline but, as explained above, the politics of youth is very much about transition, distributing equality, emancipation through acquiring citizenship, and so on. Rancière informs us that performing inequality can reproduce it.

Rancière claims that the sociologist should not give voice to the silent, nor stand as interpreter from a position of authority, but should hear and circulate these voices. Paulo Freire mobilizes a similar philosophy in his pedagogical work calling teachers to subjective, "humble and courageous witness" (Freire, 2004, p. 176). Where Rancière identifies a regime of the sensible, its fields and their respective membership policed by the sociologist who reproduces a reality under wraps, Freire calls for "a constant unveiling of reality" (Freire, 1993, p. 81). Freire's radical pedagogy is rooted in the relationship between the student and the teacher, and so cannot be transposed without appraisal onto the researcher and participant. Yet, in working with young people, the researcher enters a social context in which young people and adults reproduce a teacher-student relationship by default (Gallagher, 2008) Freire's observations can indeed be applicable; Freire's lesson to the adult that "from the moment we come into the classroom, at the moment you say, Hello! How are you? to the students, you necessarily start an aesthetic relationship" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 118) is vital. It also provides a possible connection to Bourdieu's theory. For Freire, as for Rancière, the symbolic relationship that is performed in a traditional classroom reproduces the fuzziness of coordinates Bourdieu attributed to the field; the first step towards a remedy for the oppression so coordinated is to rupture the traditional symbolic relationship and to start off with dialogue and equality (Lewis, 2009). Freire was a historical

materialist and his philosophy is aligned to revolution and the working class struggle against capitalism (McLaren, 2000). Combining Freire with Rancière is not unproblematic, and in this short section it is important to remain aware of critiques of methods that displace the kernel of Freire’s work by marginalizing the material relations of production (Lewis, 2009, p. 296) and, as it follows, abstaining from comment on the “ticklish subject” of hegemonic ideological capitalism, a response Žižek has pointed at Rancière (2000, p. 237).

Nevertheless, Freire and Rancière provide a useful accompanying philosophy to Bourdieu’s habitus, capital, and field in this project’s methodology. The decision to seek a method that is “child-led” (Kellett, 2005) has already been explained and defended. Freire advises – indirectly, through his pedagogy – that such an approach must rupture the symbolic relationship between the adult and the young participant.

3.4. Locating the method within a landscape of techniques

In this section the rationale behind the qualitative method based on focus groups is explained, by way of introduction to the method itself. First, the researcher’s motivation in pursuing qualitative research is outlined. The motivations behind participatory research with young people and the utility that focus groups provide to this project are also explained. Then, the possibilities that creative elucidatory techniques – including photography – provide to my focus group method are reflected upon. A critical approach to young people’s politics in the UK is proposed and described, along with the ramifications this approach has on the research method. Finally, a synopsis of motivations for the method is provided by posing the question: what is politics?

3.4.1. Qualitative research

In the literature review a contemporary trend towards qualitative research is identified from work by Henn, Weinstein, Wring and Forrest (including Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999; Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005). These scholars’ early qualitative research began to identify institutional politics more in terms of structural constraints. In other words, young people do not simply accept or reject dominant structures for political agency –

they do not just engage or disengage – but can negotiate these structures to create their own understanding, perception and political subjectivity. In this way, qualitative methods helped contribute “nuanced views of reality” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 422) by engaging with the complexity and “messiness” of everyday life. Qualitative study builds meaning by sharing people’s realities, not reducing the complexity and “messiness” of everyday life but engaging with it (Limb and Dwyer, 2001, p. 2).

My search for shared experience and perceptions of, and testimonies to, complexities in the space between *engagement* and *disengagement* is what motivates this project to seek qualitative methodologies, specifically participatory, generative and critical approaches to data generation. This aim would not be served by quantitative methods, such as surveys or structured interviews, since these require the researcher to frame data in order to perform statistical analysis. Open-ended, flexible and participatory research techniques allow the participant to better contribute to data generation in their own terms (O’Toole *et al.*, 2010, p. 55). Such techniques allow the participant to better illuminate their own interpretations of politics, their own subjectivity and citizenship, how and why they participate or don’t participate in politics, their perceptions of themselves, others, and the world in which they play a part, and so on.

Qualitative methods are also a response to the quagmire between non-participation, apathy and apolitics (Farthing, 2010): a side-effect, in many ways, of research approaches that predicate “the definition of political participation on the researcher’s definition of politics” and for this reason equate, along a false dichotomy, “non-participation in a set of activities specified by the researcher with political apathy” (O’Toole *et al.*, 2010, p. 56). Investigating young participants’ own conceptions of the political can help provide thicker descriptions of their political or apolitical behaviour.

3.4.2. Researcher-participant relations

If young subjects are to be involved in the generation of data, this means the research process should be shared and negotiated, not imposed from above by the researcher. The goal of making the relationship between researcher and participant more horizontal is to better allow participants to share their

understanding in a creative way and on their own terms (Valentine 1999; O'Toole et al. 2010). In applying these methods, the researcher prioritizes the authenticity of knowledge and the voice of young participants (Gallagher, 2008, p. 138). The 'subject' in participatory research is "fully involved in the research process and outcome... they share the status, sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem normally claimed only by researchers" (Dentith, Measor and O'Malley, 2009, p. 159). The assumption implicit to participatory research methods is that research itself has a problematic history, and that researchers in the past have maintained a vertical hierarchy, carrying out research on subjects, or on their behalf, and not in collaboration with them (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Heron and Reason, 1997).

This is not to say that participatory methods place the researcher on equal footing with participants. When working with young people, adult-centred power cannot be removed from the research process and must continue to be acknowledged (Barker and Smith, 2001). So, too, must we acknowledge the ability for young people to exert their own power over the researcher, as well as the constantly existing interactions and hierarchies present in research sites where young people and adults coexist (Gallagher, 2008), of which a school is the perfect example. Participatory research can help disrupt these landscapes of power. Working with participants to build a picture of their own understanding helps avoid the common issue of imposing adult definitions of, for example, what politics is and isn't. It can also detach research from the established process of responding to adult questions with adult-approved narratives (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Leyshon and Bull, 2011).

Many participatory studies with young people have used youth-led creative methods with these goals in mind, ranging from drawing and story-writing (Barker and Weller, 2003a; Wridt, 2004) to photography (Dodman, 2003; Weller, 2007; Allen, 2009; Leyshon and Bull, 2011; Wood, 2011b). One cannot assume that individual skill levels are unproblematic (not everyone is confident that they can draw, for example) nor that the appropriation of creative modes of expression are necessarily "open invitations to children to express themselves or open a window onto their inner lives" particularly when they take place in a school setting (Buckingham, 2009, p. 643). However, participatory methods have the potential to relieve pressure on young people that other methods of research – such as

political opinion surveys – can cause, should they come across as unfamiliar and obscure (O’Toole *et al.*, 2010). This research is committed to enabling young people to share their own voices and for this reason, participatory methods are preferred. Young people are competent social actors who can contribute actively and effectively to research, and “comment on the world in which they find themselves” (James and Prout, 1997, p. 23). Participatory methods help the researcher to share research with the young participants whose realities we hope to better understand.

3.4.3. Focus groups

Having chosen to undertake participatory research, it is necessary to select a method which allows participants to be fully involved in the research process and outcome. Group work, and specifically focus groups, allow for the research project to become exactly this kind of collaborative process. Research undertaken in collaboration with a group of participants creates a social context in which data is generated (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 10–11). Though individualistic research method, such as interviews and person-in-context narratives, are possible, this project uses focus groups to situate data generation within this social context. The reasons for working with young people in groups, rather than atomized as individuals, arise from the possibility of co-constructed information within a group.

3.4.3.a. The history of the focus group

The term ‘focus group’ encompasses many different forms (Stewart, 2007, p. 9). It involves a group discussion in which, together, participants focus on a topic brought by the researcher. The focus group has been around since the early 20th century, when it was best known for its use in clinical psychology and psychotherapy, and for its value to businesses and policymakers in market/audience research (Stewart, 2007, p. 7). Discussions and critiques of, and manuals for, running focus groups in their various forms in the social sciences have proliferated since the 1980s (among them Krueger 1994; Wilkinson 1998; Barbour 2005; Stewart 2007; Bagnoli and Clark 2010) and in general, the focus group is well established as a method for data generation. In the literature review, a timeline and overview of the methods used in young people’s politics was provided, and a turn towards using focus groups in order to develop and refine

research instruments like youth specific surveys, as in Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002), was identified. Focus groups have long been used in this way (O'Brien, 1993; McLeod *et al.*, 2000). Additionally, the exploratory potential of focus groups has made them – as Rosaline Barbour points out (2005, p. 16) – a method with a long tenure for working with marginalized groups and those requiring culturally sensitive methodology.

The rise of the focus group as a method for working with young people is connected to the conceptualization of young people as a marginalized and culturally sensitive group around the turn of the millennium (Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999; Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002; Kimberlee, 2002; Phelps, 2012), as explained in the literature review. An extensive history of literature utilizing focus groups with specific groups of young, marginalized people in the UK, and across the world (including Michell, 1997; Lyon and Great Britain, 2000; MacPhail and Campbell, 2001; Hillier and Harrison, 2007; Ahmed, 2009; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Bagnoli and Clark, 2010), makes it a familiar method for generating data with young people already. Working from the perspective that young people are marginalized, somehow hard to reach with other research methods, and are 'reluctant' to discuss politics along traditional lines (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005) or at least are susceptible (if the researcher is not careful with his or her method) to reproducing and complying with familiar narratives rather than sharing 'authentic' and deep descriptions of their own perspectives and meaning-making (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009) the focus group is very attractive. Young people can be reticent in talking about politics: it is also important to point out that non-activity and non-participation are critical issues in young people's politics, yet it is "enormously difficult to ask people to be discursive about non-activity" (O'Toole *et al.*, 2010, p. 57) and the function of the focus group as a way to allow participants to be guided by, and respond to, the views of other group members can help cue responses and reflexivity regarding non-activity and disengagement. The focus group is a method with considerable tenure and past success, but which allows for exploration and greater focus on participant-led generation, through the variety of group interview methods that come under the term focus group, depending on the motivation of the project in hand.

3.4.3.b. The focus group and contemporary young people’s politics

One obstacle that researchers encounter with quantitative studies in the field of young people’s politics is that the predominant definition of what constitutes politics is too narrow to accept young people’s concerns and activities which are political in nature, but which fall outside “the domain of elections and parliamentary activity” (Bhavnani, 1994; Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002, p. 168). Qualitative research such as that by C. White, Bruce and Ritchie (2000) and qualitative-quantitative mixed methods approaches as by Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002) showed the use of exploratory questioning through focus groups to escape limiting definitions of politics. The exploratory aim, which this project shares, is not just about what politics is or is not, but also about relieving participants in some way from imposed meaning and the hierarchy of power that this entails.

This starts with getting beyond ‘politics’. Paulo Freire illustrated the problem with talking politics by recounting the story of a Spanish factory worker he knew, who had worked in Germany, and hoped to organize his colleagues there to struggle for better wages and conditions. This factory worker had found his colleagues disinterested and stonily silent to his questioning about their views and attempts to run an organizing course, and on occasions when they did talk his colleagues were only interested in earning enough money to go back home. They seemed apathetic and ill-educated with regards to politics. The worker joined his colleagues in card games that they played after work, however, and gradually through informal discussions and chatting about their daily experiences in the workplace and in the community, the group began to talk in lively and open terms about politics – and eventually about prospective political action. The worker’s observation, as Freire relates it, was that the people involved were interested, knowledgeable, active and implicitly familiar with the politics and power relations involved, but that formal and direct questioning left them cold: only informal discussion exploring life from their perspective allowed ‘politics’ to be broached (Freire, 2004, pp. 110–113). The lesson for researchers is that the word ‘politics’ has a stultifying effect on discussion, even if discussants have the interest and capital to engage with it (White, 2011). Common findings in research, indicating political ignorance and apathy, “might be partially or wholly the result of unimaginative research approaches” (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009, p. 51) that

do not allow participants to contribute in more explorative ways. The focus group, in this project, hopes to provide a space for participants to make collective sense and collective negotiation of meanings through social interaction (Hare-Mustin, 1990; Barbour, 2005, p. 65). Through an explorative approach, which does not impose a definition of politics and engagement from the outset and then attempt to ascertain whether participants comply with it, the focus group method intends to deal with the power hierarchy that would be reproduced by an imposition of meaning by the researcher.

In the specific context of work with young people in the UK, a traditional and hegemonic definition of politics exists, and that it could be summed up as “the domain of elections and parliamentary activity” (Henn, Weinstein and Wring, 2002, p. 168). This definition, furthermore, rests on interconnected modalities of representing and understanding how young people make transitions to citizenship in the UK. These transitions to citizenship put the onus on young people to comply with adult-prescribed, pro-social and conformist (Banaji, 2008) pathways –an issue covered in detail above. In research methodological terms, these pathways can be reproduced in young people’s responses to direct questioning in the same way that Freire’s anecdotal workers fell back on simple profit motives as economic migrants when faced with direct political questioning. Normatively acceptable narratives about elections, school attendance, employment and so on, are handy methods for deference to powerful adults – like researchers – who can accidentally reproduce these norms by imposing adult prescribed definitions of politics (Flanagan, 2008; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009).

On the other hand, a focus group intends to elicit the co-construction of meaning and knowledge through social interaction and, for this reason, the focus group intends to overcome imposed meanings by engaging participants in the meaning-making process (Barbour, 2005, p. 68). In a focus group individual voices and the interchange between participants are the simultaneous sources of data (Myers and Macnaghten, 1999; Barbour, 2007, p. 31). In simple terms, a focus group avoids putting individuals on the spot and allows them to be stimulated by their peers, as well as providing the opportunity for individuals to join in the discussion as they desire (Barbour, 2007, p. 20). Group interaction helps provide a space for young participants that increases safety, comfort, and prioritizes explorative

discussion (Eder *et al.*, 2003). Although the researcher is still present, a focus group reduces the centrality and the power of the interviewer, and make the research encounter less threatening, relative to one-to-one or more structured researcher-group interviews (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007). The focus group, as a group method, is more a relational process than is an individual interview. Group work allows the researcher access to interactional data generated between multiple participants, and opens up the possibility to understand social processes, networks and co-produced and interdependent meanings (Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Barbour, 2007; Weller and Bruegel, 2009). Creating such a space is an ambitious goal, however, since the researcher hopes to create an open, welcoming and – as much as possible – familiar environment for discussion, while being present as an uncommon outsider.

3.4.4. Creative and elucidatory techniques for the focus group

Young people's politics is challenging to research. It is subject to contestation, the imposition by adults of meanings and narratives, and participant insecurity and reticence with regard to their own experiences and views. At the same time research methods for investigating young people's lives as political arenas are weakly developed (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 2; Wood, 2012). For these reasons open-ended, flexible and participatory techniques are proposed.

This project is likewise motivated to prefer creative thinking and innovative approaches to data generation and analysis. A new philosophical approach to childhood and youth that has flourished over the last two decades, and which regards them as social actors who are experts in their own lives rather than objects to be studied (James and Prout, 1997; Morrow, 2001, 2008; Kellett, 2005; Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010). Samantha Punch points out that although the trend towards treating young people as competent subjects in the research process can be seen as beneficial, there remain differences between children and other young people, and adults, due to each age group's perceptions of the other, the marginalized position of young people, and also because young people are inherently different to adults (Punch, 2002b). In response to differences in competencies between young people and adults, the philosophical approach to youth as competent subjects is accompanied by developments in innovative and

adapted techniques for working with young people (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 176)

Several possible techniques have been outlined in this chapter for the central topic for the focus group, which provides a substrate for the elicitation of data generation (Barbour, 2007; Stewart, 2007; Bagnoli and Clark, 2010; O’Toole *et al.*, 2010). A researcher must critically reflect on the techniques they use and how they employ them, and the selection of creative techniques for the focus group is no different. The chosen method must fit the research questions, account for the social/cultural and physical environment in which it takes place, and be sensitive to the needs of participants.

In this section, some salient examples of creative and elucidatory techniques that have been used in focus groups with young people are identified. Creative techniques are defined as those in which a participant creates something – such as a photograph, video, drawing, map, sculpture, story or performance – and this creation is used in the research process, often for data elicitation as the central topic for the focus group. In the course of assessing these methods, examples are provided for the “biography of the method” (Pink and Mackley, 2012), summarizing and reiterating some of the ideas presented in earlier works in order to contextualize my own method.

3.4.4.a. Creative methods in context

A wave of creative, and sometimes innovative, research methods accompanied the shift towards child-led research, a paradigm shift championed by Mary Kellett (2005). All the same, although innovation exists, these methods cannot be considered a revolution in research. Wiles *et al.*, in their review of claims to innovation in qualitative research between 2000-2009 identified such creative methods as the largest group of innovations among the papers identified (Wiles, Crow and Pain, 2011), although they warn that innovation tends to be “over-claimed” and better understood as adaptations of existing methods. Furthermore, innovative, creative methods do not seem to ‘stick’ very well when they are developed: an ESRC-funded study that included meta-analysis of David Gauntlett’s applications of the ‘Lego Serious Play’ method (as in Gauntlett, 2007) is widely cited, discussed, and referenced but rarely applied (Bengry-Howell *et al.*,

2011). Nevertheless, a body of creative methods has been growing over the last 10-15 years, that uses experiential, tactile and embodied “the reflective process of making an artefact, taking time, as well as the act of making something that you can look at and think about and change” as something different to generating or provoking speech (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006, p. 85).

For example, the use of photographs as stimuli in focus groups has developed alongside the reassessment of young people as political agents in their own right, into a method for young people to provide their own photographs. If we consider young people to be competent subjects, but different to adults, then inviting young participants to provide their own photographs is, fundamentally, about yielding to their competency and expertise concerning their own lives (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 182). Photography – which can include video (Gauntlett, 1997) – as a way to share competency between the researcher and participant is familiar in action research with disadvantaged groups and thus among scholars who consider young people to be disadvantaged (Purcell, 2007) while modern developments in digital photographic technology – and its decreasing cost – have helped overcome obstacles such as the researcher’s control over providing equipment, developing the pictures afterwards, and providing an opportunity for participants to reject photographs they regret (as in Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). It is clearly inappropriate to assume young people have innate digital fluency or to leave their competence with technology unquestioned (Jenkins, 1998) and access to technology is linked to social and economic capital; nevertheless, researchers have found the familiarity of digital photography as a medium has grown and that giving participants a crash course in using a camera before research can be sufficient and can even provide useful focus for introductory sessions (Leyshon and Bull, 2011; Wood, 2011a, 2012). Photographs can help put the participant in the driving seat and enable them to talk about issues of their choice; photographs can be a tangible focus and a prompt for remembering, and the visual aid a photograph provides to a participant is noted by researchers who have used photography as “leading to a far deeper understanding” and richer descriptions than conversations alone (Newman, Woodcock and Dunham, 2006, p. 301). It is worth noting that photography can be fun and engaging (Barker and Weller, 2003b) and that it can be structured to match the competencies young people in full-time education are characteristically trained for, such as project work and

group work (Morrow, 2001), though it does present obstacles should participants feel uninspired or embarrassed about their skill level (Barker and Weller, 2003b; O'Toole *et al.*, 2010). Perhaps the greatest problem faced by researchers using photographic methods is the complexity of young people's reactions to the research context – to their reflexivity, to the characteristics of the technology they use – as well as the way they read the researcher's expectations, and their understanding of photographic conventions (Jorgenson and Sullivan, 2010). This complexity must be acknowledged.

In its application, photography varies from study to study and depending on context. The Photovoice technique (Wang and Burris, 1997) is common, beginning with the basic format of collecting photographs and analyzing young people's written accounts of what they mean (Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller, 2005). Many adaptations have been tried: for example, Dockett and Perry (2005) divided a class into small groups and allowed children to collect their photographs into a book as a larger class project; another example is provided by Bronwyn E. Wood (2011a) whose adaptation of Photovoice put more focus on collective discussion as participants were recalled after taking photographs to discuss their impressions as a group. Photography can also form part of a participant's mosaic of descriptions in combination with other methods, such as life narratives in 'fotonovela' format (Kirova and Emme, 2008) or as tours of the places where they live (Leyshon and Bull, 2011).

Research with young people can take account of their competencies and training. School age children, in particular, can indeed be more accomplished practitioners in drawing and storytelling tasks than adults (Morrow, 2008, p. 50) in cases where they have been trained in drawing pictures, retelling stories, producing written accounts, and so on, and use these skills frequently in school. Drawing techniques range from creative and often narrative illustrations (as in Sartain, Clarke and Heyman, 2000; Barker and Weller, 2003b) to more specifically task oriented work such as the drawing of maps and diagrams to communicate meaning (as in Leonard, 2007). The range of techniques allows, to some extent, the researcher to address concerns that drawing pictures might suit younger age groups while coming across as patronizing or shallow to older children and young adults (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 182). Narrative writing techniques are employed in a

similar way, asking participants to employ their expertise in providing their own elucidatory aids. Diaries can be employed as long-term longitudinal studies (Barker and Weller, 2003b) while shorter term life story techniques (as in Cook-Cottone and Beck, 2007) and group storytelling and story-games (as in Veale, 2005) provide particular use in allowing young people to structure past experiences and build identity and ownership. This makes these techniques favourable for working with young people who are dealing with traumatic life experiences, and some studies have even used group narrative techniques to allow young people to share traumatic life stories by way of individual and family therapy (Hanney and Kozłowska, 2002). Narrative techniques can be oriented towards technical tasks, as well: Leyshon and Bull (2011), for example, ask children to ‘tell the story’ of specific places in their local geography.

A toolbox of focus group techniques that provide exercises as a central topic, such as card sorts (Punch, 2002a; White, 2011), timelines, matrices, pie charts, and cartoons (Pain and Francis, 2003) share with other creative and elucidatory methods the intention to provide participants with the opportunity to use their own words and frameworks of understanding (Pain and Francis, 2003; Watts and Stenner, 2005; Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010). To provide a common example, grouping and ranking exercises allow participants a simple exercise – such as Punch’s work, in which participants wrote problems onto cards and sorted them into groups as small, medium or large problems (2002a) – and this is used to stimulate discussion of the problems themselves, and thus, deeper description of meaning. Although the exercise is provided by the researcher, participation exercises can be combined with other creative methods such as writing (as above in Punch, 2002b) photography, drawing, sculpting, and so on (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, pp. 184–185).

Sarah Pink writes that creative methods must be context-specific, “creatively developed within individual projects” (Pink, 2001, p. 4). Although the creative method, as Banaji and Burn write, sometimes rests on a “rhetoric of creativity” that sees the production of photographs, artwork etc. as the free, unencumbered and empowered work of an individual subject (Banaji and Burn, 2006), there is nothing about a creative method that necessarily provides greater opportunities for participation in research, nor do they necessarily allow participants a “direct or

transparent means of ‘expressing themselves’ or ‘having their voices heard’” (Buckingham, 2009, pp. 648–649). All the same, there are contexts in which creative methods can help with these goals. A creative method must be sensitive to the characteristics and needs of participants as well as those of the research project, while taking into account its cultural and physical setting (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 181). With this critical reflection, the various creative methods and techniques – exemplified above – for working with young people can indeed be productive, enlightening, and empowering (Barker and Weller, 2003b; Sanders and Munford, 2005; Robinson and Gillies, 2012).

3.5. Data generation and analysis

In this section the research design is explained. This design begins with a task-based focus group based on the World Café method (Brown and Isaacs, 2005) and continues using another established focus group method called Photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997). This design should be taken as a whole with the preceding paragraphs on the focus group, on methods, and on general theoretical approach. This method is led by the researcher, and the researcher carries the specified intentions for the focus group and the method along with him; however, it is also generative and explorative, and for this reason at points of the design it is open ended. The ethics of the research project are addressed, including issues of access and consent. The method for data analysis is planned along with an assessment of validity, credibility, and its limitations.

3.5.1. Multiple-site sampling

This study takes up a multiple site approach, seeking to explore commonalities and differences between as well as within different sites. Looking at different contexts will also allow the exploration in gathered data of the variety of meanings the same concepts can have, since concepts are likely to take on various context-specific meanings (McLeod and Yates, 2006). Earlier in this chapter this project was introduced as part of a wider exploration of new concepts and new methods; in this thesis a concomitant exploratory approach is taken. For this reason the rationale for choosing multiple sites is not to establish a representative sample, but to provide ample variety that meaning-making can be examined relative to different background conditions, with respect to the “contextual sensitivity” of

findings (Silverman, 2006, p. 17). Research sites are selected on the following primary grounds:

1. To develop diversity in socio-economic indicators

At institutional level, according to the free socio-economic indicators available from administrative data across the UK. Disadvantage can be classified using indicators which include Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (CLG, 2010) and the Index of Multiple Deprivation – data sets for which are available from HM Government and the Office of National Statistics – and the recently updated measure of higher education participation POLAR3 (HESA, 2012). Such datasets are commonly used by charities and researchers (Crawford and Greaves, 2013, pp. 1–3).

At sub-institutional and individual level. Within institutions there will be opportunities to develop diversity of background and privilege among participants. Crawford and Greaves report, for example, that in schools, educational and economic disadvantage is “most highly correlated with whether a pupil is eligible for (or has been eligible for) free school meals” (2013, p. 2). Since free school meals are indexed by schools at an institutional level, this provides an access point, in principle, for selecting young people with less advantageous educational and economic backgrounds.

2. To engage with a range of active citizenship, institutionally engaged and otherwise

As identified in the literature review, different young people command a variety of forms of capital and habitus, and reside within various fields; some young people’s practice is readily identifiable as political activity by traditional definitions, and some is not. In other words, there are sites at which young people can be found active and engaged in institutional politics (Sloam, 2007); there are others who are left out (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009). This study selects for “active citizenship” along the spectrum of institutional engagement.

3. To provide a range of geographic places, including an urban / rural mix

The selection of geographic diversity serves to provide diversity among participants as well as to test for the possibility of both location-specific factors and features that can be identified to affect participants across different sites.

4. To select for youth as a transitional status between childhood and adulthood

Sites are selected where participants are specifically in transition between dependence and independence, and not sites where participants are fully independent of adult supervision.

3.5.2. Data collection methods

The method here outlined is a hybrid method that hopes to delve into everyday politics following scholars including Kallio and Häkli (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2007; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Kallio and Häkli, 2011a; Wood, 2011b, 2012). Wood calls for “naturalistic spaces for communication” of elusive everyday experiences and perspectives while retaining a reflexivity regarding the limits to which these methods can limit the pedagogic and ‘performance’ context – the medium in which young people produce their messages to the researcher – and the power the researcher retains (Wood, 2012). Data generation must involve building such spaces.

The first step in data generation, once participants have provided consent to participate, is to take the basic details from participants that are necessary to data sampling, such as age and gender. In this process, the thesis follows similar projects (McLeod and Yates, 2006; Weller, 2007; Gallagher, 2008; Wood, 2012) in allowing young people to select their own pseudonym – using Wood’s term ‘code name’ (B. E. Wood, 2009, p. 5) – as a way to protect their identities. Valentine (1999), and Barker and Weller (2003b) advise caution on the use of pseudonyms. Although allowing young participants to choose their own code name provides for creativity and ownership over the process, as well as a sense of fun (Gallagher, 2008, p. 148), pseudonyms can be disruptive and make readers less inclined to take contributions seriously (Barker and Weller, 2003b). Weller suggests returning to participants in the latter stages of data generation to show participants how their pseudonyms look in the text, in case they would like to change.

3.5.2.a. The World Café

For the initial stage of data generation a particular type of focus group is proposed: the 'World Café', which was developed in the early 2000s by Juanita Brown (Brown, 2002b; Brown and Isaacs, 2005). It is well circulated and comes with various thorough 'instruction manuals' (for example: Brown, 2002a) as well as cautionary accounts as to its shortcomings, not least its popularity in use (and misuse) by inexperienced facilitators and for inappropriate reasons – for example, as a team-building exercise with business executives (Prewitt, 2011). In the world café, participants are divided into self-selected and largely self-facilitated small groups that attend tables where task-based activities are provided to stimulate discussion and help comparability between data sets. The researcher roves between tables to answer questions and occasionally probe ideas and keep groups on task. The goal is to facilitate naturalistic and open conversation in a social setting.

One reason the World Café is selected is that much interesting data arises from group discussions where the researcher is neither present nor listening, and when the group is allowed to talk 'off topic'. Releasing young participants from the grasp of an adult researcher allows them to shape and direct their own conversations (Skelton, 2001; Morrow, 2008), to feel more natural and less self-conscious sharing their expertise (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Wood describes at length the value to her research of unexpected topics and rambling conversation that went on at unattended tables when the researcher was away, and that were useful in later analysis of recordings provided by microphones on each table, since it was often in these that 'everyday' contributions arose best (Wood, 2011a, 2011b, 2012).

This task-based focus group method provides a central activity for participants to complete within the group (Brown and Isaacs, 2005). Task based methodologies, in political science research, can help stimulate participants to *encounter* politics in focus group discussions rather than have it forced on them (White, 2011). The tasks are open-ended and generative, to help avoid imposing adult-defined

categories (Punch, 2002a). Tasks are also specific to the second stage of the task, which in this case is a Photovoice method involving photography in everyday spaces³. With younger participants it is plausible to offer groups the opportunity to divide the labour of recording and reporting answers among delegated members of the team, as this matches the familiar set up of a classroom task (Wood, 2011a, 2012). On the other hand, it is important to provide fairness and inclusion, and not to pick the same people "who get picked for everything" (Hill, 2006, p. 77); it is also important to show respect to young people's rights and expertise (Hill, 2006, p. 85). For older groups and those outside a classroom setting the experience was considered to be more comfortable (and more fun) if the researcher is left out of the team-building process as much as possible, and allows young people to organize their own social arrangements.

This project diverges slightly from Brown's pure World Café approach by keeping groups together, rather than asking members from each group to move around and join new groups. This is because the focus is not on the pollination of ideas among individuals (Brown, 2002a) but to introduce the project and generate data from individuals and groups working to tasks. The method can be more clearly understood, more efficiently and quickly executed, and less complicated to explain if groups remain on one task. Furthermore, this project explores how young people react to the adult-imposed framework in the absence of an adult, and this requires groups to continue working without a looming researcher, or, it is possible to argue, the looming presence of the researcher at whose command participants must rotate to new groups. The procedure for group work is that each group – which will number two when numbers are small, up to a maximum of three to five – will complete the task while talking about the topic, and then return to the group as a whole in order to share findings and reflect on each other's responses. The group as a whole will discuss what patterns emerge among small group-level work, and what deeper questions might be raised by these (Brown and Isaacs,

³ I intend to leave room in this method for diversifying my approach in future iterations. The Photovoice method might be replaced, for example, with another elucidatory method such as Lego sculpture or a similarly creative classroom task.

2005, pp. 127–135). The particularities of the groups at each site are discussed in the relevant data generation chapters.

3.5.2.b. Photovoice

After the focus group, groups were invited to generate research data through a participatory visual methodology called Photovoice, already in use in research with young people (Morrow, 2001; Allen, 2009; Wood, 2012). This method provides cameras to participants who are asked to “record and represent their everyday lives” (Wood, 2012, p. 7) following prompts from the researcher, and then to reflect on them in a follow-up focus group. The intention is to provide participants with an opportunity to engage with the crossover between what is personal and everyday, and not necessarily political in the traditional sense with the social and political world. It also aims to provide the researcher a level of insight into more affective messages of experience (Leyshon and Bull, 2011). Photovoice grows from Paulo Freire’s philosophies of critical consciousness (*conscientização*) in education and social science (Freire, 1993, 2004) and functions on enhancing participant’s consciousness of the possibilities of their own action and potential for changing or celebrating the world around them, by providing them a way to reflect and share perspectives on the world. This approach is taken through two stages: providing participants with cameras and asking them to photograph their everyday lives using prompts, tasks or other stimuli; and then engaging in critical dialogue while reflecting on the photos (Wang and Burris, 1997). These prompts can arise from the initial stage of data generation, in which groups reflect on deeper issues. Otherwise, they can be provided by the researcher. It is central to the method, in any case, for the researcher to provide a prompt that works towards developing critical consciousness among participants. This means reflecting on what *is* as well as what change or action participants could *do*. In Wood (2011a) participants are prompted to take photographs with the questions: What is special or important about your place? What makes you feel like you belong? What do you want to change / take action on? What makes you angry? In other studies, such as Young and Barrett (2001) participants are given a simple prompt to take pictures of what they did and where they went over 24 hours (Young and Barrett, 2001, p. 147). It is possible, in other words, to work with minimal prompts, or with complex stimulating questions, and in this project a focus on eliciting critical consciousness

is enacted while allowing room for participants to choose the forms of participation they prefer.

Following the photography activity the photos are collected and shown, preferably to the entire group, using a projector and a laptop computer. Photographers are interviewed using a semi-structured format for which the core questions follow the Photovoice literature (Wang and Burris, 1997; Wood, 2011a):

- What's happening here?
- Why do you want to change this?
- How does it make you feel?
- What would you like to do about it?

In an early concept paper (Wang and Burris, 1997) Wang and Burris identify many strengths and weaknesses to the method – which must be addressed. Their thorough investigations and relation of various experiences, positive and negative, are of enormous value to the researcher. Some weaknesses that may be encountered in this project in particular may include:

- Familiarity with photography among participants and with – potentially – the same problem with repeating familiar narratives other studies have encountered (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009): the Photovoice method in its pure form was developed for participants who do not usually have access to cameras.
- In many cases participants will have their own cameras, especially mounted to telephones. Cameras are provided but the researcher remains sensitive to the possibility that participants may use their own.
- Wood identifies alongside ethical issues related to work with young people elsewhere described, that the Photovoice method raises some particular issues around privacy. She is right to point out specific ethical issues concerning confidentiality for non-participants in photographs of the local environment and encourages participants to take photographs of inanimate objects and people that cannot be identified; nevertheless she notes that even inanimate objects –

such as local buildings – can serve to identify locations, if not individuals, and that it is important to maintain confidentiality with this in mind (Wood, 2012, p. 8).

- There is an ethical need to maximize the opportunity for participants to involve themselves to the level that they prefer that, in the specific case of photography, means that it is entirely acceptable for young people not to photograph matters they prefer not to share with the researcher (Hill, 2006, pp. 84–85).

There are several points of value in this mixture of data generation methods. Firstly, it combines a non-visual focus group method with a second visual method. This should provide the opportunity for participants to communicate verbally and non-verbally. The addition of visual methods in other studies has shown to be helpful for participants who find it difficult to express themselves with words (Morrow, 2001), to speak in public or to speak in English as a second language (Allen, 2009). The addition of a visual method outside the classroom provides participants what Morrow calls the ability to “choose and control what they wanted to depict” (Morrow, 2001, p. 258). There is added utility in providing a ‘crash course’ in digital photography and associated ethics before this stage of research. An introduction to the ethics of using digital cameras to take pictures in public, for example, may be perceived as useful information that the researcher shares with participants, and when packaged as a sharing of expertise rather than the issuing of commands, introducing cameras with a crash course may help welcome participants as co-constructors sharing the research process. The intention, in other words, is not to introduce the photography project as a task that must be completed to the researcher’s specification. Rather, the project is presented to participants as an invitation to share their expertise as communicators of their own lives, while offering the researcher’s expertise in return.

3.5.3. Access

Doing research work with young people means gaining access and, where this project is concerned, negotiating with gatekeepers. It is considered that a researcher working with young people should welcome the opportunity to cooperate with the gatekeepers that provides access to participants. Places like

schools, colleges and youth groups “provide the safest and most suitable venues for interviews” (Masson, 2004, p. 46), and gatekeepers control access to these venues. Gatekeepers, such as teachers and other education professionals, can also speed up the process of access (Alderson, 2004, p. 105). As Wolcott (1999, p. 284) and Warin explain, qualitative research is a questionable, “inherently problematic” social situation introduced by the researcher, and that the underlying issue is one of “balance between risks and benefits that can be achieved through practices of openness and transparency” (Warin, 2011, p. 807). Although there is no legal requirement for gatekeepers and guardians to provide permission for the researcher to work with young people – even those under 18 – who have given informed consent, and although it is “increasingly recognized” that young people are able to consent to involvement in their own right (Batsleer, 2010, p. 186), it is considered that gatekeepers are providers of the balance and openness required in qualitative research.

Gatekeepers provide access to suitable venues and cooperation with them helped provide some of the “mindfulness” of gatekeepers’ specific expertise in research sites Warin (2011) calls for. At the same time, it is necessary to reflect on some of the challenges that adult gatekeepers pose to the research method. Robinson and Kellett encounter the school as a context “in which the adult-child power imbalance is particularly acute” (2004, p. 91) and the presence of gatekeepers as powerful adults is not unproblematic. For example, there is a risk that gatekeepers can perceive themselves responsible for selecting suitable candidates, (Morrow, 2008; Skelton, 2010), that gatekeepers can fall into the adult routine “as the understanders, interpreters and translators of children’s behaviour” (Waksler, 1991, p. 62), and that the power imbalance between gatekeepers and young participants can make the process of research uncomfortable or stultifying (Hill, 2006, p. 77). The relationship between the researcher and the gatekeeper is a complex one that requires constant reflection and reflexivity.

Gill Valentine writes that inviting young people to join a research project through schools usually requires a “chain of negotiation” (Valentine, 1999, p. 145) that begins by asking permission higher up in the organization – such as a head teacher or, possibly, a department head or head of sixth form – and then making contact through them with a lead teacher to work as liaison. In schools, at first

point of contact with participants, classes and groups were introduced to the project, allowed to ask questions, and provided two sets of information and consent sheets – one for participants and one for parents⁴ – to allow young participants to think about the project before deciding whether or not to participate, including consultation with parents, and in the awareness that consent is negotiated in an ongoing process (Valentine, 1999; Powell and Smith, 2009; Wood, 2011a). Consent may also be withdrawn by the participant throughout the process. A major issue that is raised by this approach to consent is that while in schools the researcher is able to cooperate with teachers and integrate with established groups and learning practices to make sure there is a wide range of voices (not just the “good talkers” or those at particular risk) (Nairn, Sligo and Freeman, 2006) outside of schools gathering available and interested volunteers may include those who indeed share what Nairn, et al., term a voice from a position of particular risk (2006; O’Toole *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, a similar chain of negotiation enabled young people to join the project in non-school situations, and participate in the study through a similar process of informed consent.

3.5.4. Consent

The process of consent and participation continues through to the end of the research project and summaries of early findings were fed back to participants at the early stages of data analysis, according to the advice in Skelton and Valentine (1997). Feedback allows participants to share in the process of data generation, and is a gesture of reciprocity on the part of the researcher. The data does not disappear into a separate world of research expertise, rather, the participatory relationship between researcher and participant can continue during data analysis and coding (Rose, 2012, p. 315); feedback can be accompanied by printed and/or digital copies of generated data in acknowledgement that participants themselves created them. For example, photographs taken during data generation will be

⁴ This study does not propose work with children under the age of 16 and so parental consent may not be necessary; in a previous study working with over 16s, the University ethics committee did not require parental consent. In this case a single information sheet will be provided, though it must be written with the understanding that some participants may share it with adult guardians.

printed and returned to participants alongside lightly coded, and summarized, findings. Reporting procedure may vary from site to site, and in some cases it is possible that participants will not be able to receive feedback, for example, if they are transitory at the site and have moved away by the time the data has been initially coded, it might not be possible to contact them. At the opposite extreme, educational institutions may be keen to extend the research process to an extra meeting, in which the researcher feeds back to the class codes as an introduction to the research process. The process of returning feedback was, in effect, extremely difficult, and this is reflected on in chapter 8.

The process of informed consent involves effectively communicating how the project itself is put together, its intentions, and the nature of participation sought in the project, to young participants and adults alike (Powell and Smith, 2009); and then allowing time for participants, and their parents or guardians, to think “before agreeing whether or not to participate” (Valentine, 1999, p. 145). The researcher must make sure participants know that they have the right to withdraw consent. Young people who participate in research are able to exert control over the research process, and this is to be both expected and promoted. Providing for the withdrawal of consent is one way to do this. It is also important to introduce the research project in terms of young people’s agency, to continually respect young people as agents and intelligent subjects, and to make sure this is communicated to participants (Barker and Weller, 2003b; Kellett, 2005). Young participants can employ many strategies to regain control over the interview process and “‘predatory’ interrogations in the quest for knowledge” (MacDonald and Greggans, 2008, p. 8). Focus groups have already been suggested as a way to better balance power between the researcher and the participant; further strategies by young people can be expected and should, according to the child-centric approach (Kellett, 2005) be accepted as young agency.

3.5.5. Anonymity

The focus group, as a participatory method, promotes self-disclosure. In this method the participants in these groups were selected from groups that will know each other – since they share institutions e.g. school classes – and this may help avoid problematic relationships. The method requires the researcher as a

moderator, using sensitive questioning and clearly establishes ground rules for participation (Krueger, 1994). It may not be possible for young people to participate at certain strenuous times of year, and gatekeepers such as tutors and co-workers are expected to play an important role in gaining access to participants (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010) as discussed above.

Young people were kept anonymous using pseudonyms (Barker and Weller, 2003b) – as has already been discussed – and research sites will be coded to avoid providing geographical links by which young people might be identified. The visual methods employed in this study yield an additional level of challenge to providing confidentiality to participants and the institutions with which they are linked. Photographs of recognizable landmarks, buildings and so on can be expected. Including young people's voices and photographs that depict these landmarks directly is to be preferred, but in some cases research sites – such as schools – may request anonymity and for these, local landmarks will need to be left out of the visual record and camouflaged in the coding process.

There is tension between the ethical obligation, which follows from participant anonymity, not to reproduce images of young people that might identify them from the researcher's position safeguarding them and their confidentiality, and young people's rights to participate in a creative manner (Heath *et al.*, 2009; Powell and Smith, 2009). Wood (2011a, 2012) and Allen (2009) both dealt with this tension by informing young people of clear constraints on what they could and could not show in their photos, and remark on the creative (and sometimes subversive) strategies young participants employed to make sure they were present in their photos, including the clever use of scenery to hide faces, paper bag disguises, and manipulation of shutter speed and aperture to over-expose and disguise faces. Explaining why constraints on what can and cannot be photographed are in place more fully includes participants in the research process.

At the heart of this project's ethical approach is the guiding principle that participants should feel comfortable sharing what data we generated with an audience that was made clear to them, and that having promised not to allow them to be identified as the participants in the thesis, to show all diligence to protecting their anonymity. For that reason all locations were carefully anonymized with

pseudonyms that do not inhibit the flow of participants’ speech – participants themselves have pseudonyms – but which do not provide an indication of the location’s real identity. The only exception to this rule is Town A, the hometown of Site A, where participants were anonymized using code letters and their town is anonymized to match.

3.5.6. Grounded theory, CAQDAS and the analysis of data including visual data

Data analysis requires an interpretive framework that in which the researcher and the participant share the mutual process of giving meaning (Addison, 1992). Grounded theory analysis gives the researcher the task of developing theory from the data by interpretation and deduction throughout the research process (Glaser and Strauss, 1968; Glaser and Holton, 2004) through a process of “progressive focusing” (Holloway and Todres, 2003, p. 348). This precludes applying theory in the abstract before embarking on analysis (Glaser and Holton, 2004, p. 14). Grounded theory is an exceptionally labour-intensive method for data analysis (Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge, 2004) that is, if anything, made more labour intensive by the use of computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that facilitates deep indexing, searching with Boolean logic codes, and automates some of the more time-consuming and mundane tasks (Kelle and Laurie, 1995) in the analysis, coding and recoding that grounded theory requires (Glaser and Holton, 2004). Utilizing the QSR-published software NVIVO, this project also incorporates critiques that grounded theory supported by CAQDAS requires thorough transparency, meta-analysis and data logging as an electronic audit trail in the researcher’s coding process (Richards, 2002; Rivers and Bulloch, 2011). Grounded theory is a process by which the researcher is to arrive at “a substantive theory” that can “speak specifically for the populations from which it was derived and to apply back to them” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 267). The process of data analysis through grounded theory is intended here as a way for the researcher to speak in a way that applies back to the participants, sharing their construction of meaning.

Some specific requirements to data analysis applying to visual data were outlined in the Photovoice procedure. Approaching visual data requires an understanding

that images are the interpretation, and distribution of interpretations, of the world that are particular to the lens of the interpreter (Rose, 2012). Indeed, Rose recommends we perceive the image having its own agency and "social effects" specific to the audience (2012, p. 26). Transparency in reporting the analysis of visual data alongside other, verbal collected data helped explore what Sarah Pink calls the relationship between visual and other knowledge "as well as the experience of producing and discussing them" (2007, p. 21). She recommends the researcher perceives and reports this collection of data as versions of the researcher's experience of reality, "as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced" (2007, p. 22).

3.5.7. Remix analysis? Critiquing and developing grounded theory for equality

Qualitative data is messy and complex, and this project retains the complexity of descriptions, meaning, contexts, and so on that surround participants and the researcher alike, without reducing them to monologues. At the same time, the approach is one of equality between the researcher and participants in shared intellectual subjectivity. This politically committed approach to research, which advocates participant equality, demands an integration of several of the strong threads of critique that have blossomed around grounded theory through its thirty years of popularity.

A useful model for critiquing grounded theory is provided by the educationalists Thomas and James (2006) who point out problems with the notions of theory, ground and discovery. They point out that grounded theory can oversimplify complex meanings that arise in generated data, restrict the interpretation of data by putting the onus on procedure rather than exploration, and can falsely claim inductive reasoning by masking the researcher's existing capital, ideology and research position. Thomas and James ask, "how is an interpreter, an ethnographer or grounded theorist to emerge with anything that is not merely reportage if that theorist is not using his or her own person to emerge with the 'theory'?" (Thomas and James, 2006, p. 781). Broadly speaking, the challenge of sharing equality with participants while also standing as an interpreter has been discussed in this chapter, but practically, utilizing grounded theory while

understanding its limitations is defended in two ways. First, the researcher in this project is able to present an extensive literature review that provides the underpinnings of the researcher as his own person (Thornberg, 2012). Second, the troubling relationship between procedure and exploration in grounded theory is approached by a more cultural approach to science through a bricolage approach, in which the researcher's procedures coexist with, rather than strictly limit, exploration of participant stories and the participants' explorations and interpretations themselves, which are shared through the data generation process.

Data analysis is informed by bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Markham, 2005; Denzin, 2010). Bricolage in research methodological terms is about accounting for the complexity linking human perception to material reality (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 326) and the production of knowledge, as Lévi-Strauss wrote, as an interaction between the producer and the world in "a particular relationship between nature and culture definable in terms of his particular period and civilization and the material means at his disposal" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 19). By using numerous data-gathering strategies (Denzin, 2010), multidimensional interpretation and multiple narratives (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 336) the bricoleur is humble to the implications of science "as culture" (Morawski, 1997). As multiple narratives intersect in the bricolage (Markham, 2005; Denzin, 2010) it provides a useful framework for preparing for the vital work of engaging with multiplicities and intersections of life story, context, lived geography, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and so on, in knowledge as it is produced and reported (Bridges, 1997, 2005; Morawski, 1997; Kincheloe, 2001; Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001; Staeheli and Kofman, 2004; Denzin, 2010).

This project, as a PhD thesis, has specific research goals. It follows that it could not be a fully bricolage project or a patchwork of equal narratives. The PhD thesis is, in the end, a pathway that the researcher forges and narrates (Brook *et al.*, 2010). However, the framework of bricolage informs the researcher of many ways to consider the relationship between researcher and participant as an interaction between multiple narratives; this may provide a practical mechanism for equality between the researcher and the participant as "a point of departure, a supposition to be maintained in all circumstances" (Rancière, 1991, p. 229). In this context the philosophy of bricolage can be accompanied by the word remix. Remix, in its

original sense, refers to editing a piece of music, especially with digital equipment, so that it sounds different. The term has already been appropriated by researchers to mean quilt-like collages and montages of knowledge (for example, in Lashua and Fox, 2007; Yancey, 2009; Cover, 2013). 'Remix' is a poetic nod to the aesthetics of bricolage as an attempt to bridge the distance between human subjects (Liu, 2011); the 'remix' may be a more intuitive word in the context of this project and its phases of data generation than 'bricolage', and the literal implications of 'remixing' match the philosophical intention to begin this project from a position of intellectual equality. Shared ownership, shared voice and equality are fundamental to the remix, and the creator of a remix is simultaneously reader and writer, producer and consumer (Burwell, 2012). Outside academic discourse the term is used to denote simultaneous collaborative and individual ownership⁵. In analysing and reporting data in this project, which searches through the contested politics of the everyday, the researcher adds a remix to participants' existing narratives. The researcher's journey through the PhD thesis (Brook *et al.*, 2010) necessarily prioritizes the researcher's voice in data analysis, but is informed by an ontology of remix, rather than demystification: shared subjectivity rather than superior interpretation.

⁵ By way of providing illustration, I would point an interested reader towards one of the most successful commercial remixes of the year this project began: Wildfire, by the high-profile rapper Drake, itself a remix of a song by the British musician SBTRKT, and the numerous interviews and reviews that use the term remix to intimate the complexities of dual ownership, and equal and independent creativity intersecting with collaboration (Caramanica, 2011; Newsbeat, 2011; Yates, 2011).

3.5.8. Image selection, coding and data reporting

In the selection of images, coding and the reporting of data the researcher remains as close to the "constant unveiling of reality" (Freire, 1993, p. 81) and to young people's expertise in their own lives (James and Prout, 1997; Morrow, 2001, 2008; Kellett, 2005; Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010) as far as the limitations of a PhD thesis as an interpretative journey by the student (Hanrahan, Cooper and Burroughs-Lange, 1999; Mullins and Kiley, 2002) would allow.

To this end the rationale of the selection of images in the thesis is identical to the way images were selected during data generation. The researcher was led by participant's own selection of cases and their enthusiasm about different topics. For example, the coding of public spaces is given primacy in analysis through the sheer force of testimony from participants. At Site B, to provide an example, the researcher asked participants to shout out when a photograph came up on the projector that they wanted to talk about. The pictures on display in this particular excerpt were Bean's:



Figure 1. Photograph: Site: A, Photographer: B

- Researcher* *Tell me if you want to talk about one*
[scrolling through photographs]
- B* *Street light! Street light! Street light! Street light!*
- X* *They look like the ones in Brixton.*
- AC* *See, street lights, I think we need more of them.*
- Researcher* *You think so?*
- X* *And they need to turn on earlier.*
- B* *It’s not even that we need, um, more of them, it’s that we need*
them to actually work=
- X* *=Yeah because some of them don’t work.*

In sharing subjectivity with participants the researcher considered the richness of their selection of cases as a source of interpretative collaboration. It was made clear by participants that the photo in Figure 1 should be selected (*“Street light! Street light! Street light! Street light!”*) and that participants were eager to interpret this photo as experts in their own everyday lives (*“See, street lights, I think we need more of them”*; *“...we need them to actually work”*, *“yeah because some of them don’t work”*). Participants knew what they wanted to talk about, and were not shy in making their expertise the cornerstone of the discussion.

Coding was undertaken with the same intention to remain as close to the data and to the contextual sensitivities (Silverman, 2006, p. 17) of their generation as possible. To this end, coding was undertaken alongside the review of the transcript and audio recordings simultaneously, through a gradual progression and deepening of the code structure. An example of the coding structure and gradual process of coding is provided below, which shows the progressive development of codes on the topic of what was initially coded as “living in two worlds” at Site B, and which in the final thematic analysis is drawn together under the theme of “autonomous spaces” (Ch 7.1) and “doxic legitimacy” (Ch. 7.2).

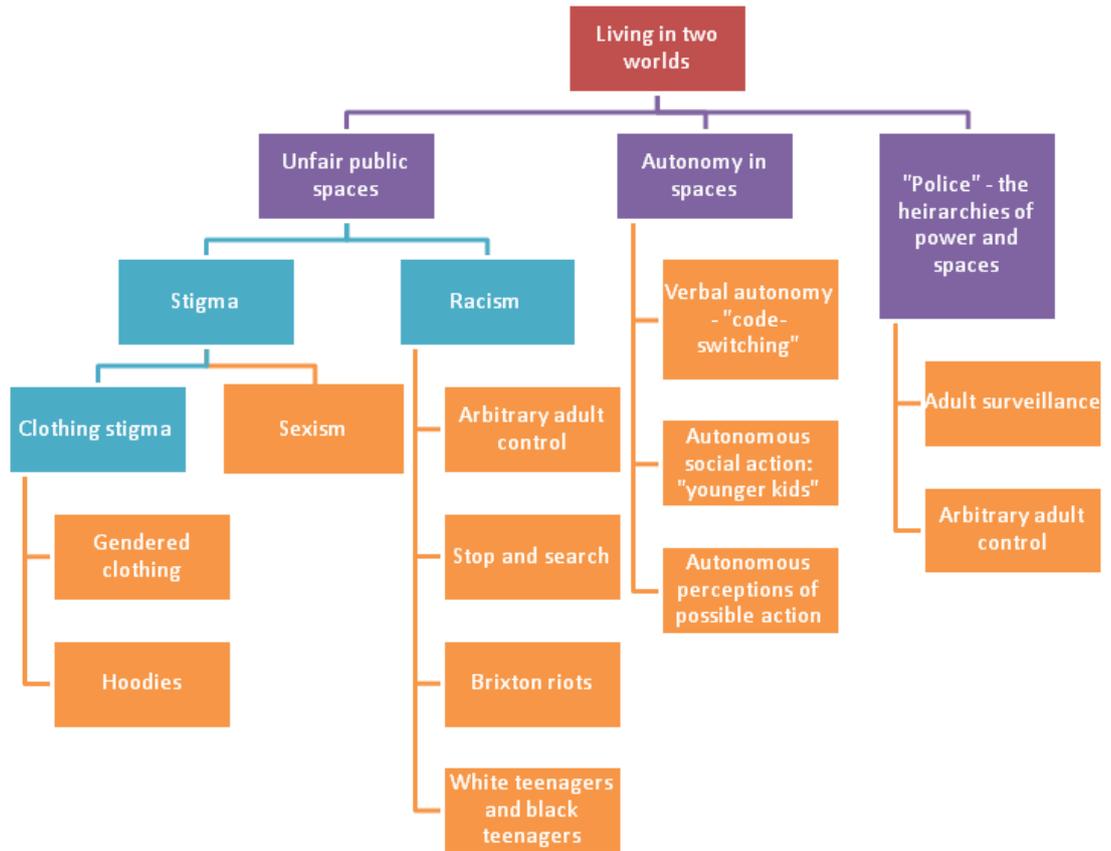


Figure 2: Sample coding structure

The development and accumulation of exploratory, interpretative codes led to the perception of cross-cutting exploratory themes. Figure 2 demonstrates how codes developed from primary exploratory code “two worlds”. Primary, secondary and tertiary exploratory codes are coloured in shades of red, purple and blue; final codes in orange. In Figure 2, returning to the original data coded as testimonies to arbitrary adult control, and the enthusiasm and rich explanations of experiences of graffiti, the clear overlap in coding brought the *example* of graffiti within the thematic realm of the code *arbitrary adult control* as a subsidiary code to *two worlds*. In other words, starting out with the code *two worlds* and developing this code while constantly returning to the original data enabled an elaborate sharing of interpretation with participants, by continuously referring the nascent coding structure back to the original expertise of participants.

3.5.9. Reliability and validity

This project is a relatively small, qualitative study using case studies to generate ‘deep’ descriptive data and explore methods in different sites. For these reasons it

may not follow to judge the 'reliability' of results obtained, and a more suitable approach to validity might be to address the results in terms of their dependability, rigour and consistency (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Morse *et al.*, 2008). In qualitative research, strategies for ensuring validity must be consonant with the different core assumptions that such research is based on regarding reality, and the nature of data generation and analysis (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1995).

Places like schools, colleges and youth groups "provide the safest and most suitable venues for interviews" (Masson, 2004, p. 46) but limit access to the family as an important arena for politics and socialization (as in McDevitt and Chaffee, 2002; Brooks, 2003; Neundorf, Smets and García-Albacete, 2013; Ekström and Östman, 2013). Although the selection of non-school sites allows this project to encounter young people who do not attend school, the research method may still limit opportunities to generate data with young people who are in full time employment, engaged in full time childcare, or who are unemployed and not in education. The research method will also limit the voices of young people who do not engage with the method itself, for various reasons including because they feel uncomfortable sharing their voices, because they feel others have more expertise, or perhaps because they do not find the method stimulating (Barker and Weller, 2003b; Kellett, 2005; O'Toole *et al.*, 2010). Transparency is necessary to ensure rigour: non-participation in data generation by young participants, for example, must be noted as a failure to involve them in the process.

Although this project engages with deep descriptions of young people's everyday lives, it has many limitations arising from the nature of its method. This study is multi-sited and aims to explore complex and nuanced forms of politics, while contributing to a growing literature on new forms and methods for researching politics during youth (Morrow, 2008; Kallio and Häkli, 2011b). Multi-sited sampling allows for establishing greater variety among participants, but excludes the value to either a more focussed, case study approach or an ethnography that selects for participants in a specific context. A single site would also allow greater closeness to participants and to generated data. Limiting diversity among participants would also allow for more focussed research questions. For example, a longitudinal study could attend to the challenge that the nature of young people's politics is

linked to the process of this specific generation’s socialization, which was mentioned in Phelps (2012), and may be beyond the limitations of this project. That is to say, it is possible that a longitudinal study might show that young people will eventually become socialized to political engagement – including voting habits – that converges with older generations. Selecting a single site, it might have been possible to commit to that site for the entire period running up to, during, and immediately after the next Parliamentary elections as a period of institutional socialization: specifically, during this period, 18-year-olds are transformed from non-voters into possible voters. On the other hand, in emphasizing young people’s interpretations of politics this project explores different definitions of what ‘politics’ entails, while restricting the project from focusing on socialization to institutional politics. Further limitations are imposed by the “contextual sensitivity” of findings (Silverman, 2006, p. 17). These may include specific limitations to each site, to particular groups, and to various other conditions during research, and are discussed in the data generation chapters below.

4. Data generation - Site A

In the primary stages of this study, in March 2012, two focus group interviews were carried out with students attending a tertiary college specializing in vocational courses in South West England, totalling 23 young people in two classes, one of 14 participants and one of 9. The participants were studying a mixture of construction and business studies courses. The focus groups were designed to be as open and generative as possible and as a source of data as well as an initial exploration of data generation on the topic using focus groups. Groups were recruited by initial contact by email, telephone and then in person with administrative staff at the college, and were two regularly scheduled classes provided by teachers at the college to the researcher.

The provision of whole classes was different to the organized plan for the session – the project had been planned as focus groups numbering between 3-5 participants – but the groups were enthusiastic. On double-checking the plan for the session with the students beforehand, the researcher discovered the class sizes were actually unusually small (it was one of the first sunny days of early Spring and both students and teachers reported that many of the students at the college had decided to take the day off to enjoy it), had been briefed by their teachers and were interested to see what was going to happen, and were also motivated by participation counting towards a required number of personal enrichment hours that each student had to record in order to graduate. The more or less unstructured nature of the data generation process at this site was partly due to taking advantage of two large and enthusiastic groups of young people who responded that they were looking forward to the session, and the researcher interpreting the situation as an opportunity that was too good to pass up.

4.1. Adjusted method at Site A

As in the rest of the study, Site A was intended to take place as a generative study in which the research method could be free from formal definitions of politics that could inhibit data collection. At Site A the participants in each group reported that they had been prepared by their respective teachers for a discussion about politics, which challenged the researcher, for the reason that “politics” as a notion can have a stultifying effect on political discussions with young people concerning

topics from workers' rights to discrimination against Muslims, reducing them to a simple 'politics is boring' or 'I don't get politics' (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009; Manning, 2010, 2012), reflecting, as has been argued above, a tension between what Jacques Rancière called politics as policing hierarchies and material orders, and politics as dissensus (Chambers, 2011). In short, the challenge at the point of contact with research participants was considered to be to avoid reinforcing any existing sense of hierarchy that defined them outside the realms of politics by defining politics itself.

4.1.1. Card sorting exercise for eliciting responses

The initial plan for the session built from a social constructionist framework, in which the goal is to explore "how people make sense of the world, not what the world is" (Saussure, quoted in Fiske 1990, 115) that focuses on individuals' identity and belonging. By taking identity and belonging as the focus of study this project intended to shift focus away from the traditional forms of 'talking politics' that can stultify discussion and towards a centring on the individual and his/her experience, which is judged to be a more approachable topic, and one that is indeed amenable to producing 'political' discussions. Llewellyn and Westheimer (2009), Street and Inthorn (2010), Banaji and Buckingham (2010), and Riley, Griffin et al. (Riley, Griffin et al. 2010), exemplified the many scholars who had been considered to have set up discussions around the individual's identity and personal experience to the same ends.

The methodology for this site was adapted from Jonathan White's *Political Allegiance after European Integration* (2011). A focus group forms the main study, and was intended to allow participants the opportunity to contribute to the research design (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010, p. 105), levelling the power balance between researcher and participants, and to extend young participants ability to consciously affect the research by steering the conversation, asking questions within the group, and suggesting topics and even methods hitherto unconsidered. White's method begins with an exercise using 10-20 illustrated flash cards that are used to build conversations about political topics with small groups. Each card has two hand-drawn pictures and a title that symbolize an issue in public life (e.g. taxation, education & training, the environment) that the participants assemble into groups

according to whether or not they 'naturally go together'. Open ended questioning is intended to explore participant responses to the cards, the groups, the stimulated discussions and the relevancy of all the above to their own lives.

The method was intended to produce a semi-structured group interview (White 2011, 58-59), a nuance that in this project may help the researcher to elicit not just talk about the world, but how young participants perceive their ability to act effectively in that world, i.e. their engagement and activity or otherwise in the world. White proposed doing this by constructing subtle "problématiques" which provide for shared understandings of complex issues and their exploration (White, 2011, pp. 58–59). Using "problématiques" is a technique that aims to dilute the authoritative presence of the researcher defining which issues are to be considered problems. The goal of the technique is to indicate by using abstract concepts that subjects for discussion can be treated as a problem, a direction for discussion that is intended to lead participants towards the ownership of their own discussion by appropriating concepts to their own experience, while unlocking avenues for participants to discuss the potential for or experiences of action to address the problems being considered. The researcher intended to pursue the group interviews as anonymous, generative interviews, and individual participants are not identified in the data as gathered.

The cards themselves are included as an appendix to this thesis. In all, there are twelve cards: environment, poverty, production, housing, finance, work, law & order, peace & war, medical care, education & training, transport and freedom. Though the card exercise is based on White (2011) its pictures and the problématiques and issues they depict are based on existing literature indicating topics that young people have shown concern for and also that the topics young people consider salient fluctuate over time (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005; Wring, Henn and Weinstein, 1999; Manning, 2012; Sloam, 2013). The card exercise was also planned as an experiment in testing out the cards themselves, and some "problématiques" were intentionally subtle while others were clearer. One card was produced including a "problématique" but with only one picture: in this one many forms of transport are shown, but in a traffic jam. The card activity was intended to elicit responses from the group about public issues, problems, experiences and the relative importance of these and other subjects for

discussion, while attempting to foreground participants' perceptions of their own capacity to react to problems. Special attention was paid to forms of political subjectivity that were encountered in academic literature on young people's politics, such as apathy ("I don't care about these problems"), anti-politics ("formal politics can't or won't deal with these problems"), political engagement including unfamiliar and non-traditional forms of engagement (e.g. "I care about these problems so I do X."), and democratic political engagement (e.g. "I can help solve these problems by voting for Y").

4.2. Data generation

In this early stage of the research project, and given the unexpected size and nature of the groups, the researcher preferred to take a hands-off approach and keep notes, trying to maintain the task while leaving the recording of speech and participation to the audio recorders for later coding. For this reason at Site A the researcher's interpretations are more dominant in the data generation than in the other two sites, where data collection included careful coding by speaker and identification of individual speakers by code name.

While at Site B and Site C there will be a separate section in the document for summarizing the researcher's field notes before the analysis of data, in this chapter, the analysis of data from Site A is divided into chronological sections based on the data generation process at the site, from the card sorting exercise through the focus group interview.

4.2.1. Card sorting exercise

The large size of the groups at the college was considered to inhibit the card sorting exercise as a way to engage participants in discussion. It was difficult to provide participants with the physical capacity to interact with the cards. In the first class, the researcher divided the class into two halves and re-organized the room into two large tables, with seven participants around each, who were set the task while the researcher floated between groups to support discussion. In the second class comprising 9 individuals the room was small and laid out in such a way that it was not possible to divide the group or move around the room effectively, and so the cards were placed on the central table and all nine shared the same set.

In each group, participants first selected the cards “money” and “work” and set them aside as a group, as the first step in the exercise of card sorting. Following this, in each group the participants then lost focus and it was my impression that, given the large sizes of the groups and the physical difficulty in reaching for and moving the cards, the participants preferred to sit back and chat rather than take leadership of the discussion by reaching out for a card. It was typical that one participant would hesitantly reach for or move a card and read the title aloud or politely suggest their personal interpretation, then sit back without forcing a definition or making a unilateral decision. This was especially true in the second class that did not form groups from the cards until the very end of the exercise. In the first class there were participants who discussed possible groups in pairs.

Although the card activity as planned out did not engage the participants, the cards themselves were well received in the first class, and groups had discussions about the topics that seemed both interesting to the groups and fruitful in terms of providing them space to come to agreements and disagreements, especially when captured in the background of the recording. In many cases, it was possible to make out the card sort exercise stimulating discussion. For example, in the first class, the whole class was listening to a participant talk about the environment when in one group, two young women (coded A and B in this excerpt) and two young men (coded C and D), were recorded talking amongst themselves in the background. This separate group is coded on the left, while the simultaneous broader class discussion is coded on the right:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| A | <i>Work, we can’t find a job</i> | E | <i>You can put these together because they’re in poverty, they might not have like, gone to school, had the opportunity so they don’t have the education to go to work. You could do a job like that.</i> |
| B | <i>Because of the environment.</i> | | |
| C | <i>Because of the environment?</i> | | |
| D | <i>Because of <u>finance</u></i> | | |
| A | <i>There’s no spaces to put any buildings for us to work at</i> | | |
| B | <i>[#exasperated ‘eye roll’ tone]
They just keep building houses</i> | | |
| A | <i>You know <I can’t go> where I walk my dog because they’re</i> | C | <i>[#to whole group] Finance causes all of them, though,</i> |

It was interesting to overhear participants discussing social and political issues like – in the above case – links between poverty, social class and flood damage; then following up with a self-deprecating comment about not really understanding the task, or only knowing about politics through cultural consumption like reality TV.

Although it was frustrating not to have the opportunity to delve into the deep and intriguing lines of discourse, argument and enquiry that participants shared as they looked at the cards and talked, the prolific and good natured participation, and jocularity, of the group might be taken to indicate some successes for the approach. In the separate chapter on methodological reflections it will be noted that, as well as stimulating discussions in the background, the card sorting exercise is interpreted to have presented participants in the first class with an excuse to explore their own experiences and opinions without taking the task itself too seriously. The interpretation, which is summarized in this chapter, is explained in greater detail in the later methodological reflections chapter.

It is appropriate to reflect on the above example illustrating a general trend that in the first class, discussions with the researcher were directed towards the researcher's request that the cards be put into groups, and that behind the researcher's back, as it were, there were further active discussions among participants who were less interested in finding a solution to the card sort as an exercise, and more interested in the conversations the cards stimulated. In the second class the participants responded as a group and there were no side conversations. The card assignment was more theoretical, more task and solution-oriented, and had a dreary feel:

- A *Doesn't poverty... law and order and poverty go together? Because quite a few places where there's poverty there's loads of... kind of... [trailing off]*
- B *Commotion?*
- A *Yeah, crime*
- C *Yeah*
- D *Yeah, there's no order, because everyone does crime*
- E *It's kind of in the middle you know*

- D Just because they can*
- E Everything links together*
- D There's crime everywhere*

It was interesting, in retrospect, that the same participants (coded with the same letters where possible, below, in a discussion about the relationship between wages and spending) came across as enthusiastic (and jocular) as the first class in the later discussion, which is considered to reinforce the interpretation that the group found the card exercise stultifying:

- E I think insurance is ridiculous on cars*
- A Yeah*
- Researcher Insurance?*
- F I've got...*
- E I've got one thousand nine hundred – nearly two grand*
- F It's just ridiculous amounts of money*
- Researcher Is that a problem that everybody has, insurance on cars, do you have cars*
- [#group laughter]*
- A Yeah*
- D Not for him! [#laughter]*
- B It's not even that bad [#group laughter]*
- A It's bad*
- B Six hundred pounds I think is not even that bad*
- D [aside to C] If you're gonna have a Boxster [#group laughter]*
- C Yeah serious then it doesn't matter!*
- E Six hundred pounds? Is that all your insurance was*
- B Yeah. With no claims*
- E Ahh yeah it'll go down then. I've been quoted, er*
- D Mine is, mine's still like five hundred, six hundred quid, after=*

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- B =Christ!
D =like a year. After two years sorry
F My insurance is eight hundred after four years of driving solo
E God!
F It's so much worse for guys

For another illustration, after the group was later discussing the difficulty in getting a job even when they had the requisite qualifications, because it was easy for employers to deny applicants who did not have experience:

- F =It's easier to get education than experience
Researcher =So if you've got that, kind of situation... sorry I didn't mean to interrupt you
F No it's fine! I was just, thinking out loud [#laughter]
Researcher That's, that's... that's what I need actually [#group laughter] um, if you've got this sort of situation then, that you're describing to me, do you feel like you can change it?
A Not on your own, no
E No not really
Researcher I see some shaking heads and some deep thought
A It's not something you can... you can't change it by yourself I mean, it's not something you personally have control of...
E It's only...
A ...it's controlled majorly by the government nowadays
B You can't really make people employ you can you
A No
G And you can't make people create jobs
D You could hold a gun to their head [#laughter]
B That would change it
F I don't think you'd get the job though [#laughter]

D *[#pointing finger like a gun] Give me the job now!*

The second class were talkative and came across as enjoying the group interview, and were comfortable in the group interview to talk among themselves and not just respond in a question-answer fashion with the researcher.

4.2.2. Focus group interview: overall summary

In this section the data is presented and gradually analysed to give the reader simultaneous insight into the focus groups themselves and the researcher's subsequent analysis. The overall feeling arising from the data was that young people were radically anti-political, after Farthing (2010). They were neither apathetic nor apolitical: in neither of the groups did participants match the stereotypical perspective that young people "don't vote, won't vote, don't give a damn and they're smug and self-righteous about it too" (Wring, Henn et al. 1999, 2). The groups talked with enthusiasm on political topics such as healthcare, taxation and immigration as academic literature suggests they do (Wring, Henn et al. 1999; Henn, Weinstein et al. 2002), in complicated discussions in which a framework of youthful anti-politics (Farthing 2010) was dominant. They seemed to reject traditional forms of politics. For example, only two of twenty-three participants suggested voting might be a way to "solve problems", and of these one immediately qualified the statement saying he was sceptical that changing one group of "corrupt" politicians for another would make any difference; another misidentified the EDL as a political party from Luton that she could vote for. Furthermore, all participants agreed – in one participant's words – that if we "the people" all got together we could "stand up" against the government. Apart from the one participant who spoke strongly in support of the EDL, no participant had any views but cynical ones concerning traditional political forms, from political parties of any kind to trade unions. The only positive mention of traditional political action came from one participant who said it was possible to "strike about things", to disagreement from the group, and after a short debate they concluded that although they knew teachers held strikes they didn't see how striking made any difference, and the only way striking could work in principle would be for "everyone" to strike all at once, "more like the French".

In this way, the politics inherent to their somewhat radical aversion to institutional politics was nuanced by the perception of political action as a hope that people can change things if we all chip in together, while considering little political action possible on the personal level. They identified, in other words, with a group identity (“we”) that they felt concern for (Street and Inthorn 2010, 472), and they expressed enthusiastic engagement with all discussions about political problems – participants eagerly established their own lines of conversation, especially about taxation and the foreign politics of war, that explored government policy making, the nature of the economic system, and so on – the participants had extremely few suggestions for ways young people like them might effect change or make things better. When a question was posed along the lines of, say, “can you suggest any ways a person like you might make this problem better?” silence would fall on the group. Though all agreed there were problems that could be solved, the most common way to suggest resolving these problems was to pause in silence, and then for one participant to suggest that an individual should try to “just get by”, which according to the analysis of data better fit a general feeling of resignation to private anxieties (Flanagan 2008) linked to poverty, a contention defended in more detail below, that dominated all discussion, than any sort of individualistic or apathetic political sentiment.

The only suggestion that raised much enthusiasm from the group was one that came up repeatedly, that “if everyone got together we could stand against the government”. At this point in one such discussion a participant held up the card marked “peace and war” to grins around the table. The identity of this “everyone” who could get together was somewhat ambiguous and may have varied between participants: the first group agreed with one participant who said “we” should be “more like the gypsies” as a tight-knit and rebellious nation; the second group suggested the 2011 London riots and a current Facebook campaign against Ugandan rebel Joseph Kony as examples of “we” rising up. They agreed that to make any real progress such a rising up needed a charismatic “celebrity” to lead it. One participant added, “like Bono!” which raised a laugh. It’s worth noting the participants agreed with this not enthusiastically but in a cynical way: for example, one said “yeah, everyone listens to celebrities” while sighing and rolling her eyes. Again, the analysis considers this evidence of a tendency to link political hopes

with public action – we can make it better if we all pull together – which is similar to Flanagan's work (2008).

4.3. On public hopes and private anxieties

Flanagan (2008), whose definitions come in their first instance from C. Douglas Lummis (Lummis 1996), wrote about young people negotiating the contemporary transition to adulthood in which there is a psychological tension caused by the modern social contract that evokes both public hopes – namely that if people 'pull together' they can effect positive change in the world – and private anxieties based on an awareness that life in modern capitalism is unstable with, to give a simple example, none of even the most basic stabilities like marrying and becoming a housewife to taking on one's father's career in a local mining community that older generations were able to fall back on are as tenable today.

As such the study followed Flanagan's theory with political ideals restricted to public hopes ("if people got together..."), while on all more private, personal topics politics took a back seat to a "you have to be self motivated" perspective in which individuals had to just get by on their own. Even from the first group in which the discussion was charged with nationalist vitriol, suggests that politics did not enter into identity construction or belonging beyond the anti-political boundary construction between us, the people, and them, the "corrupt" malfeasant government. The dominant framework of discussion in which identity and belonging played a part was instead related to economics, poverty, and jobs, and in analysis was deemed best understood as an identity of collective resignation to private anxieties linked to economic difficulty, to use Flanagan's terminology (2008). Participants seemed to have little difficulty expressing conflicting public hopes and private anxieties: for example, in the audio recording during the first group's card session three to four young women can be heard picking up the card marked "housing" and launching into a discussion about a local housing project and its pros and cons, their hopes in the future that social housing will be provided to them through housing benefit schemes, and problems in the area for residents who need homes but can't afford them; in the later discussion the same group speaks against social housing benefits in principle. It seems in the analysis of complex discourses like these that the young participants hold public hopes of

politically engaged but their real-life experience of personal instability trumps all ideals as they hedge their bets against private anxieties (Brooks 2007; Flanagan 2008, 201).

4.4. Private hopelessness?

Flanagan, an American scholar, finds among her high school interviewees some quite strident and unquestioning support of "capitalism" and the "American Dream" (example: 2008, 197), in other words, that success was possible if one works hard enough; British theory tends to find young people keenly engaged in stockpiling qualifications and paid and unpaid experience and even gap year travel for future job applications (Simpson 2005; Brooks 2007), not entirely dissimilar since it presupposes these future applications will be successful after the hard work is done. The private anxieties of the young people in this study did not fall along these hopeful lines. Firstly, and this was touched on in the previous section, it is not accurate to say they thought a hardworking person could succeed. They were dismayed by their experience of the world as adults so far, and described it as "shit", "disheartening", and said "you just want to give up. I just go sign on". They felt like as children they were promised success in exchange for working hard, but on reaching adulthood they found the very best to hope for was to keep one's head above the water. One participant who had spoken about his hard work trying to start on a chosen career pathway said, "you hit the age when you've got to earn and it's not as easy as you think... it hit me hard ... I've been looking [for a job] for a couple of years [and] I've only just got a job".

Furthermore, their interpretation of the "system" diverges from the challenging, unstable, but for a hardworking young person, ultimately negotiable system Flanagan (2008) presents. Not only did they perceive a low likelihood of success, they constructed this system as arbitrary to Kafkaesque proportions in its doling out of poverty and unemployment. The second group spoke together about the pathway of transition from studying and getting good grades, to applying for jobs, to being given a job; participants shared examples from their own experience that real life didn't work that way, to nods and hums of solidarity from the group. One said it was mystifying that he had worked hard in school but found that those who "don't get the grades" were favoured by the faceless system. Several spoke about

the problem of “experience”, which was constructed not as “something for the CV” (Brooks 2007) as a gatekeeping tool used to dish out jobs in an arbitrary or, more often, corrupt way: “it’s not what you know but who you know”. The education system received the most criticism, as a pathway the government encouraged (“[the government] say everyone should go to Uni”) but that seemed more a procedure for extracting tuition fees than one for bettering a student’s future prospects (“... easier to get a qualification than to get experience, even though it does cost”). In the first group when jobs came up two vocal participants would turn discussion back to immigration and “too much human rights”, but there were suggestions of this same systemic hopelessness. After the first group had concurred there was no hope of solving any economic problems – “it’s too far gone” – one participant recommended the researcher should “just go into [Town A⁶], you’ll see what we mean”.

These results from the study point to something resembling, but markedly divergent from, what was encountered in the literature review from scholars, such as Flanagan’s “private anxiety” (2008) and Brooks’ action “for the CV” (2007). They did not perceive their world as an unstable system in which they were anxious about succeeding, nor one in which by hard work and a good CV they could get ahead. They constructed it as an arbitrary, oppressive system in which they had become resigned to failing. The tension between “public hopes” – for example, discussions in theory about various political topics in which participants engaged with gusto – and private hopelessness may explain the silences, mentioned above, that fell on participants when asked questions like “what might people like you do to change things for the better?” or “could you be more specific about who “the people” are?”. It would fit the researcher’s impression of each group if participants had wanted to be helpful and suggest some way for this to happen, but simply had the experience that there is nothing they can do, the world is arbitrary and hopeless, and that the usual answer after a pause of “you can’t change it, it’s up to you to manage it yourself” is not the drive to manage success

⁶ Town name anonymized.

(as in Flanagan's interpretation, 2008) but a resignation to maybe, with luck, managing a menial job and housing benefit, after a couple of years hopeless searching.

5. Data generation – Site B

In August, 2014 data generation was undertaken at Site B, a youth engagement group run by a young people's drop in clinic in South London. The group's motivation for providing health and wellbeing support was considered a potentially interesting feature, given that young wellbeing and health are disproportionately poor in the United Kingdom relative to other developed European nations (Wolfe, 2014a), although the topic did not, in the end, arise in the focus group. The group was recruited through initial contact by email, and then a face to face meeting, with youth workers serving at the drop in centre. The group attended as part of their regular scheduled summer meetings at the centre although they had been informed beforehand by the youth workers of the planned activity, and had been provided brief sheets and participant and parent information and ethical approval forms.

The constituency in which Site B is located is neither a wealthy region nor an exceptionally poor one. It is listed by the 2014 End Child Poverty report in the top 30 out of 74 constituencies for child poverty, with approximately 35% of children in the constituency living in poverty after housing costs: above the national average (25%) and above the London average (30%) but closer to that average than to the poorest region in London, which is Bethnal Green and Bow at 49% (Hirsch and Valdez, 2014).

5.1. Summary of site notes

After an initial meeting with the youth workers on site, I volunteered at a group session and, as part of the session, ran the card sorting exercise with roughly fifteen young people: there were young people constantly dropping in and out, and the exercise did not capture the attention of the group nor individuals in it for very long. As I discuss in the later chapter on methodological reflections, the diversity of ages appeared to fragment the group; additionally, I later received feedback from two participants that they had been informed by youth workers that I was a professional photographer running a skills workshop and were disappointed to find out otherwise.

After the card sorting exercise I joined a group discussion which was partly led by me and partly by youth workers in the group, and which concluded with agreeing on the questions for the photo project. The group were invited to join me and the youth workers on a roving photo project, in which we walked around the local area accompanied by young people who were invited to take photos according to the questions we had agreed. I accompanied a group of five young people plus one youth worker, four young people went with another youth worker, and the remainder were invited to return for the second session with photographs they had taken independently.

The group that I accompanied for the walk included four participants from the final focus group – B, Bean (BE), Assassin's Creed (AC), and Teddy Bear (TB). All the participants responded to me that they were not from that area but that they knew it well. I am not from London and they drew my attention to features I might not be aware of (for example, B pointed out varieties of trees and especially the London Plane, which he explained gives many people allergic reactions) and interacted with me on the basis of my difference (I had a conversation with Assassins Creed about whether I might one day move to London and when I asked about things to do, she told me "I think my idea of fun is going to be different to your idea of fun").

There were some complex interactions during the walk that were not photographed, of which two examples: Assassin's Creed and Teddy Bear were taking a photo of a road when an adult man riding in the passenger seat of a vehicle held up his middle finger in a way that was not unambiguously intentional, but which I noticed made the group put down their cameras until the vehicle had passed; we walked by a café with a Wi-Fi sign that led the group into a chat about why Wi-Fi should be free, and different ways you can get the password for private Wi-Fi network without, for example, patronising the café that runs it. These two examples illustrate the overall feeling which was a mixture of familiarity and hierarchical contest; I coded my notes from the walk as an experience that was both comfortable and uncomfortable, welcome and unwelcome, belonging and not belonging at the same time, and these codes were similar to those that arose in the discussion of the photos afterwards.

Five of the participants of the walk – B, Bean, Assassin’s Creed, Teddy Bear and Xylem (X) – returned for the focus group. Only Bean came with photos taken independently but the group was enthusiastic about talking so we agreed to use photographs from the walking tour. The focus group was held in a circle, in a quiet room with the photographs shown by projector on a screen. The group was accompanied by a youth worker to begin with, but the youth worker left after 20 minutes and I coded a noticeable change in the discussion after she had gone, that the group seemed more relaxed, ‘jokey’ and that Xylem in particular was more comfortable speaking. I noted in retrospect that racism was discussed with great energy only when the youth worker was out of the room, though it might have been a coincidence, or in some way linked to the apparent lack of clarity between the youth workers on site and participants about whether I was a photographer or something different. I could have investigated the effect of the youth worker with questioning, but the group seemed content and I did not judge it appropriate to try and lead discussion in that way.

5.2. Park politics



Figure 3: Photograph: Site: B, Photographer: B

B It depends on how many people say "build a park". Like, if I was to email someone to say, please build a park, they're gonna literally laugh at the computer screen and say, it's one person, why should we build a park for one person? And then, if me, and somebody else wrote them, they're gonna be, well, it's only two people. But if a whole committee of people start sending texts and emails saying, build a park, they're going to have to listen, because the need, want for a park is going to be in high demand. So in the end they're going to be like, you know what? Let's build a park.

The photograph above, Figure 3, and the following interaction, came from Site B, where the group were discussing how a community might get a park built if local residents felt they needed one. The quote at the beginning of the chapter encapsulates the feeling that building a park is the job of a local Council, that parks are expensive and that a Council will be reluctant to shell out the cash, and that the only hope is to generate a swell of public opinion in support. At the beginning of the project, one potential elicitation question was "take pictures of brands we like" and I wanted to explore how the group perceived the relationship between public spaces and marketplaces in the modern agorae of British public life, so I asked the group about having shops to choose from with the question, "do you think that's something you are able to do? What do you think about that?"

AC So, what, if we're asking the council to build [Raised eyebrow voice] a shop?

Researcher Yeah or... you know, if you feel your area is lacking something like that. If you feel like something is lacking... do you feel like you're stuck with it if it's not there? Or...

AC It depends what you're asking them to build. Some things make more money, make more profit than others. So if you build like, a Sainsbury's, or a Tesco's, then you're gonna get more money then, than say a pawn shop. So obviously if they're gonna put a Sainsbury's in... it kind of depends what you're asking for. But if you ask for a park, then I highly doubt they'll listen to you. Because look how many houses they're building... other places they are knocking down they could build a park but instead they're building houses.

Researcher *How do you feel about that decision?*

AC *It doesn't really affect me yet*

Researcher *Do you think it will?*

AC *[#With a smile] I think eventually*

B *Sometimes houses, when they're new, they're more expensive, because they need the money back to buy more houses and more land and make more houses, so. And the people around that trade land, that's meant to [be for the] London Crossrail train, are knocking down houses. Making the rate of homelessness, it's going to be going up, if they do build the train.*

It is beyond the scope of this project to speak on behalf of young participants' political needs or activity, but this snippet illustrates some key findings in the relationship between these young participants and the institutions that serve to represent them. Firstly, although as a researcher I was in a position of relative power, Assassin's Creed was straightforward about correcting me in case I had any doubt that she knew how shops came to be built in an area: they're not council business, but profit driven. Secondly, she returned the discussion to parks and to housing, as council business, and (with B's support) to discussing a complex relationship between public policy – building Crossrail, decreasing homelessness – and money matters.

The photograph of a park plus the question about improving spaces led directly to discussions about local councils as an adult institution that either pinched pennies or, at least, needed an organized public voice to force them to spend. Site B did not report direct experience of interacting with the council as a political institution, and as this chapter later explains, their experience of local politics was probably better encapsulated as an experience of navigating institutional racism.



Figure 4: Photograph: Site: B, Photographer: Bean

Researcher How does this make you feel?

AC Like people do care about what's happening. Just because it's not where you're living doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a say in what's going on. Because... yeah, it's just...

B You shouldn't always turn a blind eye to things that you can't see. Like, one of these days it might happen to you. So, say Israel and Gaza were all fine. And then it's like, between, I don't know, London and Scotland. Like, Israel and Gaza could do something to help us. When, because, we've tried to help them.

Researcher So, do you feel like some people turn a blind eye? Is that what I'm sort of picking up?

B Obviously toddlers and people like that - children and that, they're not going to learn what all of it is, but older people they do things like, donate to charity, all sorts like that. Send over money=

AC =You kind of... at the end of the day, you kind of, just, it's how much of a... not so much how much of a person you are, but how much sympathy you have for other people that you don't know because like... children and stuff like are dying, and it's like, they have

nothing to do with it so it's like, by this happening it kind of tests how, how much and how we use our empathy skills towards others.

It was interesting that although the idea of being too young for the issues at hand was raised ("it doesn't really affect me yet", in the previous section) there was great eagerness to discuss issues of local importance. None of the issues stimulated a discussion of national political institutions like elections, however, even when the groups discussed more macro-scale and international political issues, as in the case of the photo of a local park which was hosting a protest against an (ongoing at the time) Israeli ground invasion of Gaza (Figure 4). In the group discussion Bean summed up the feeling that it was tough to make a difference on your own:

BE Yeah, photos like that make you feel upset about what's going on, and you want to make a difference to it, you want to stop it

Researcher Ok. Do you feel like you're able to make a difference? Could you tell me a bit about that?

BE Well, WE can't, really. Well we could, if we got, like, lots of people to make a statement about it, and how we feel, maybe we could make a difference

Nathan Manning writes that young people in his study "described the ways in which they engaged with issues as they arose rather than in a broad systematic fashion according to a particular ideology or set of principles" (Manning, 2012, p. 29), and a similar discourse is illustrated by the examples above. The political issue of Gaza, which is encountered by witnessing a street protest – and, in the group interview, discursive reproduction of encounters with the Israel-Palestine conflict through news media and especially the television news – is interpreted as a reflexive issue in which young people must understand and practice politics by employing, in this case, skill sets of empathy and charity.

5.3. Spaces in the adult gaze



Figure 5: Photograph: Site: B, Photographer: Xylem

BE They’re just parks. I remember this park

The group at Site B had been discussing rubbish on streets in their local area prior to this photograph of a climbing frame, Figure 5, which was taken in a local park by participant named B. The researcher began asking about participants’ experiences by asking, “Does that look like a good one? It looks pretty good”. The group had mixed experience of it and B offered the discussion of a problem:

B Again. Rubbish problem.

Researcher Yeah? You get rubbish in the climbing frame?

B I climbed up it once...

X And there’s graffiti, up the top it has swear words [#group laughter]

B Yeah, graffiti, swear words

X Yeah like, and it’s not good for like, little kids because they’re gonna go to school and they’re going to start swearing at the teachers...

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B I wish it was far cleaner, that I could just pull a bucket and sponge out of nowhere and clean it off

AC It's annoying

X Sometimes they swear about other people? And if they have the same name as you it's offensive [#group laughter] if they are calling them names

B I'm lucky because I have a quite foreign name so you wouldn't expect to climb up and like, see my name and then, "B is a..." and then a rude word, like, but say you've got "George is a...", someone could be called George and climb up, and say, "who knows me?" [#lots of laughter in group]

Researcher So it's not just like little kids who - it also sort of offends you, right? do you think it's worse when little kids see it, or worse when you see it?

I asked this question to try and draw out a few of the quieter members of the group. B was a talkative member throughout, but after this question Xylem and Assassin's Creed both responded quickly. Assassin's Creed held the group's attention when she said:

AC It's kind of a reflection on our generation because people like that do stupid things like that people stereotype all teenagers – [#group murmurs of agreement] - because like, when you go out - firstly, I don't like wearing skirts and stuff and when I go out in a tracksuit and trainers people tend to stare. And you can tell that they're, they have their... I don't know if I can use "stigmatizing" but they stigmatize teenagers as loud, like, no manners, and stuff like that. And it's rude, because not everybody's like that.

B =Especially black teenagers

X =[#trying to get into the conversation] I... when they... swearing...

AC =Because yesterday I went to look for halls for my birthday and the woman said, you're going to be 16? and I said, yeah! and she was like, well, you can't hire it because all 16-year-olds are rude... Like, you can't say that, because not all teenagers are like that.

It is an accurate thematic depiction of all three group discussions that discussing the park as a public place drew out experiences of facing stigmatization, being watched and being judged by adults. On a deeper level, the group explained a relationship between three distinct groups: young children and young adults ("little kids" and "teenagers" and according to B, "especially black teenagers"); and adults who gaze upon both. During childhood, autonomy in public spaces has been called the freedom to play and "mess around" (Bourke, 2014). For young adults in the UK, in policy terms, spaces can end up divided between adult controlled youth centres – "safe, useful place[s] that reasonable young people will want to attend" – and public spaces – "like the forest of fairy tales, a place where feckless mobs roam" (Davies, 2012, p. 86). The consequence of the boundaries enforced is that use of public spaces by young people is restricted according subjective definitions of acceptable or unacceptable behaviour: in one area ball games will be allowed, but not in another; a 'no loitering' sign will warn young people their very presence is considered disruptive or even threatening to other people.

One way that the liminal boundaries of young spaces were manifest in the corpus of data was in the discussion of graffiti. Rude graffiti, the group made clear, is a problem because it is offensive, but also because it contributes to a broader societal attitude that teenagers roam in public as feckless jobs: and although some people do things like that, as the group heard below, not everybody is like that. I asked the group if they had experienced the stigmatization Assassin's Creed and B were talking about:

B *It's just those... stereotypical people like um*

X *It's worse when you're on the bus. Because, I was on the bus with my friend and then - um, because the seat was there, and she was sitting there and then this old lady came on and she said like, "oh, you're a disgrace to Oakfield"=*

TB *=[#to researcher with a clarifying tone of voice] Oakfield School*

X *We didn't do anything, we just got off the bus and like-*

AC *It's the way you conduct yourself in public. Because, if you're given a reason to talk then obviously they're going to say something. So, you have to... you have to be careful what you say around certain*

people because they're, you're giving them reason to say, oh, "teenagers are this".

Assassin's Creed explained the sort of conduct she found teenagers had to use:

AC *In a way you have to code-switch because when you're with your friends you can talk any way you want. But when you're in public, you have to talk as formal as possible so people don't get the wrong impression of you. So.*

What stands out from the groups' respective experiences of public space is the sense that young participants' low hierarchical place put them under the control of more or less arbitrary normative rules for how young people should behave. These are, indeed, pro-social and conformist norms (Banaji, 2008) for the civic. The segment of discussion above, in which Assassin's Creed explained that she had been turned down a birthday venue because "all 16-year-olds are rude", was one that seemed to garner a strong response from the whole group, including quieter members like Xylem and Teddy Bear. Xylem waited her turn and spoke (with support from Teddy Bear) to explain the space of the bus – a public space being shared by Xylem and her friend, in this case – as a space where you don't have to do anything wrong to be told you are disgraceful. The bus was also encountered as a space where young people can have their autonomous behaviour challenged over simple things like sitting in a particular seat. There are unclear boundaries being reproduced, and defended, by adults who can take advantage of being able to have a go. This seemed like an issue that got the group talking and so later, I returned to it while the group were discussing graffiti.

5.4. Good graffiti, bad graffiti

The first mention of graffiti, as recorded above, was rude graffiti with swear words written inside the climbing frame: as discussed, graffiti stimulated a conversation about different groups using the climbing frame, wanting to clean off the graffiti rather than let younger children see it, and the problems arising when graffiti reinforces stereotypical positions held by adults about young people and their rightful place in society. Graffiti returned to the group interview as a response to

this photograph of a small shop nearby the centre; the wall says “NO RUBBISH DUMP” and there was a pile of rubbish standing next to it (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Photograph: Site: B, Photographer: Xylem⁷

Researcher Who do you think writes “no rubbish dump” there?

B I dunno, maybe it might have been—a graffiti guy

AC =The public [#forcefully]

B Imagine that, walking along, they got spray can in their pocket, why they gonna think ‘Noooo...’

The researcher did not perceive this as graffiti at first glance, but rather an issue of provision of street cleaning services, according to the interest of the group in street cleaning and the local environment, illustrated later in the chapter. The participants, however, were not hesitant to lead the discussion onto graffiti:

X There’s rubbish graffiti in Marksbury⁸. If you go out in Portway⁸ they spend all their time doing that and then they’re just going... gonna take it away

⁷ The street sign in this photograph has been censored to provide anonymity

⁸ The names of these London boroughs have been anonymized by the researcher. Marksbury is the location of Site B, Portway is another nearby borough.

- Researcher* Do you mean rubbish graffiti like, it's rubbish, or like it's about rubbish
- X* The graffiti itself isn't good
- AC* It's tags from like, gangs, and.
- Researcher* The names, squiggles, yeah
- X* They just write it, like. In that one string. And if you go up near the Common or the station... and you can go like, near Portway and you get that good graffiti and they're just going to take it away.

Xylem was a quiet member of the group generally, but she was animated on the topic of good graffiti (and especially that good graffiti gets taken away) and the group were eager to join in on the subject of graffiti murals:

- BE* Some of them are just fun
- TB* Tags, they're like, they're big and it's just, messy like – the way they write, say like, there was this tag with an S, it's like, Reese. Feels like the devil's, devil's horns like, that kind of...
- B* What a fork?
- TB* Yeah, that...
- X* Pitchfork
- TB* Yeah and like, it's just a message
- AC* But good graffiti, it kind of shows like - obviously it's colourful and stuff, but like - it kind of shows that people like us can use the...
[#searching for the word]
- TB* Yeah! Yeah, the...
- X* It also makes it more vibrant because we have like some boarded shops
- AC* The citizens... like, the town's kind of, I wouldn't say modern...

Teddy Bear and Assassin's Creed seem to be searching for the right words for what makes good graffiti good. In their hunt the words that Assassin's Creed uses are community and action oriented – "people like us can use the...", "the citizens" – but was left to think about it while Teddy Bear and Xylem talked about local

regions, which turned out to be because Teddy Bear had an example to share, after the researcher tried to investigate Xylem’s comment about making areas with boarded shops more vibrant. The group was quick to correct the suggestion that graffiti was only for derelict buildings:

- Researcher* *What about if you had a shop that wasn’t boarded up? You wouldn’t want it on there?*
- X* *Some,=some...*
- B* *=I would actually*
- TB* *But if it’s like graffiti it is=...*
- AC* *=But some...*
- B* *But nah if they’re hiring an actual person to make a mural or whatever*
- TB* *[#suddenly and enthusiastically] There is a shop! Sorry! There is a shop [#group laughter] Stop! There’s a shop, I think in Lindburn⁹, and it’s like a clothes shop, and they’ve graffitied it to make it look modern and it’s like, yeah*
- AC* *It’s nice*
- X* *The places some graffiti is, like, when I’m walking up near... I can’t remember where I saw it, but going into Portway, and there’s like this car shop, and you can see that there is graffiti like, high up on the building, and there’s no way they can reach it.*
- AC* *How do they get that high?*
- X* *Is that out by the train station? Exactly how do they get that high? [#To researcher with great emphasis] And you can’t be seen doing it because you can get arrested as well!*

There is a rich literature in the UK and internationally about graffiti as a complex, interstitial act on the threshold of art and vandalism, and as a practice in the urban environment (Ferrell, 1995; Halsey and Young, 2006; Brighenti, 2010; Halsey and

⁹ Nearby London borough anonymized by researcher.

Pederick, 2010; Light, Griffiths and Lincoln, 2012) that has been variously approached by academics on a spectrum of understanding from a criminal act to be prevented to a cultural "youth phenomenon reflecting wider issues of power, subversion and containment" (White, 2000, p. 253) and tensions between what is illegal and legal, socially accepted and antisocial, creative and destructive, recognized and underground, personal identity and public community (Hedegaard, 2014; Watzlawik, 2014). Xylem's explanation, in this particular case, that graffiti sometimes being a skilled enterprise (how do they get that high) came with the emphasized comment "you can get arrested as well": the researcher hoped to explore this as a connection between graffiti as an action and perceptions of being arrested as a point of contact – and conflict – with adult-led institutions:

Researcher Do you think should be arrested? Or you think not?

X It depends what they write

AC If you compare that to the other stuff that people are doing, like, it's nothing. So... just talk to them, maybe put them under house arrest but

X It's about community service

TB Yeah they can clean off what they did

Researcher Who decides that? If they arrest them, or give them community service, whose decision?

AC I think it has to be made a law

Researcher Gotta make it a law?

AC If you left it to the police to decide what happens to them, like before, the racism, it's quite obvious what's going to happen. So. I think if you make it a law then everybody has to abide by it and then they won't make any mistakes.

Assassin's Creed's comment on racism is noted elsewhere in this chapter and the group were supportive of her statement, non-verbally and verbally:

Researcher So let's say it wasn't a law and you thought they should make it a law, how would that go, how does that go, do you think?

X *It comes down to colour*

There was some disagreement between how "good" graffiti should be done, which is appropriate to the complicated and contested nature of the act

Researcher *So, like, if you thought there was a place that there should be graffiti that – could be more vibrant, um, how would you get that done?*

X *Get the council to see if they <were going to>*

AC *But... there's all those times they do it without the council's permission so why do you need someone's permission, why do you need someone's permission to make, to do graffiti and it's positive?*

Researcher *Just go out and do it?*

AC *Yeah*

X *But it's possible you go out and do it and it's negative...*

It was at this point that the facilitating youth group needed the session to finish and Xylem was cut off. The participants are interpreted to have identified several conceptual conflicts in their discussion, especially, as Assassin's Creed and Xylem were discussing, the difference between spontaneous graffiti turning out positive and being negative, as well as the complicated relationship between citizens, the police, the law and the council.

5.5. Everyday streets

Participants used several opportunities to move discussion towards the experience of everyday life and experiences. Bean brought a picture of her family dog during a holiday in Yorkshire and the researcher hoped to bridge the discussion to the rest of the group by connecting it with their experiences closer to home:

Researcher *How is it having a dog in London by the way? Do you have pets, generally?*

AC *I did have, yeah. We don't have a dog but we did have*

Researcher *Is it good to be a dog in London? Good place to be a dog?*

- Group *[#Responding all at once]*
- AC *It is, I don't think=*
- B *=They want to fine you a thousand pounds for your dog mucking in the park!*
- AC *That's your fault, pick it up! [#group laughter] But with=like a dog*
- B *=It's not really your fault because it's your dog's fault for mucking in the first place*
- TB *=But you need to clean*
- X *=You have dog bins though*
- BE *=Yeah but you need to*
- AC *NO! You get fined*

Talking about dogs brought up an experience of everyday life that Teddy Bear and Assassin's Creed wanted to share

- TB *There's these dogs here that like, the owners, it's like the owners don't actually care how they react to stuff. Say they saw another dog – like, the owner would allow it to bark at the other dog or whatnot... it might start a fight, I'm not sure, remember that?=across the road*
- AC *=Across the road, oh my God*
- TB *They, there was this*
- AC *You're not telling the story properly. Across the road, across the road they have three dogs*
- TB *It's more than three*

Assassin's Creed and Teddy Bear had a short argument about how many dogs there were and stopped short, and the researcher perceived their body language and the response of the group to indicate that they might have felt eager to tell the story, but were concerned that it was off topic. As the researcher I interpreted the tone of the discussion that this was a story the two participants wanted to share but were not sure it was welcome, and I interpreted Teddy Bear's and Assassin's Creed's tone – they were joking around before Assassin's Creed suddenly

switched back to directly address the researcher's question – that it was appropriate to encourage them to discuss their experience rather than answer what I had asked in the first place

AC *[#to TB] That wasn't even the question so I don't think you know where you're going. [#To researcher] In London there is better vet care for animals like if you went to a different country... if you go to different countries they don't have the facilities that we do. Obviously America does and maybe Japan but*

B *Haha, oh yeah.*

AC *Well, well, oh, obviously America, but.*

Researcher *OK. But, the story about the dogs across the road, I wanted to hear it, it sounded funny.*

AC *Uh... yeah! Somehow the three dogs across the road attacked the dog that was walking past... it was walking past*

TB *It was the dog that was living in the house. They... No, somehow it was this tag team on one dog, and like, there was like*

AC *You get this one woman, basically the owner of the dog that was like, had to drag all the three, four dogs that was attacking her dog=*

TB *=Nah, remember? She was like*

AC *"Aaah no!"*

The anecdote was told in a jovial tone but there was something serious about it and I wanted to provide an opportunity for the participants to relate the story as an anecdote (as Assassin's Creed said "this is my little talk!") to their subjective positions

AC *And that shows how careless the owners are with their animals. Because you're meant to train your animal not to do that*

Researcher *So does that make you feel sorry for the dog? Scared of the dog? What do you think?*

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- AC *Scared of the... dog... but... it, it... [#whispering]=I feel sorry for the dog*
- B *=But if it, like, your dog... I like, um... you could go up to the police and tell them about it*
- X *The owner is stupid, like.*
- Researcher *The owner is stupid, you think?*
- X *Yeah, if you've got a dog, just make sure you have sense*

The discussion outlined above brought out two important themes in the group's explanation of their everyday lives, which were – as Assassin's Creed put it – the simultaneous concern for untrustworthy dogs and fear that they might attack, which may or may not have contributed to the next topic the group talked about, with great enthusiasm

- B *Street light! Street light! Street light! Street light!*
- X *They look like the ones in Portway*
- AC *See, street lights, I think we need more of them*
- X *And they need to turn on earlier*
- B *It's not that we need, um, more of them, it's that we need them to actually work*
- X *Yeah because some of them don't work*
- B *Most of the time I'm walking down the street and they've got one street light on, and the rest of them don't work*
- AC *Cause you see on some streets you have streetlights but you know you have big trees that block out the sunlight and stuff, they do that and it's still dark. So, it's either you cut out the leaves that are blocking the street light or you make the=lighting better*
- X *=Need to make the lights better*

I thought the group might be able to elucidate their experiences of street lights in their everyday lives, so I asked an exploratory question

- Researcher* This will sound like a really obvious question but when a street light is broken what's the problem? Like, what
- B* Bulb is down, uh...
- Researcher* I mean like, if it's broken, how does that change your life?
- B* =If you're walking under a tree someone could jump you
- X* =Because my street, yeah, it hasn't got trees and the lights don't turn on until like 9
- TB* =Man if...!
- X* It takes so long for them to turn on as well
- AC* It makes you uncomfortable. If there is street lights on then you still feel uncomfortable because it's like... there used to be this road that I used to walk through when we had the house in Portway and when it's dark, it's a long road.

The group chatted about where the street was and when they had figured out who knew it and described it for those who didn't

- AC* That road, when you step onto that road you get a vibe, it's not a nice feeling. It's everything, it's not nice. So without street lights... even with street lights you're going to still have the same.
- BE* Um, well, my street's OK but round the corner there's like, you know those small houses all packed together? There's like... and I have to walk past it to get to school...
- B* I was walking down a pretty well lit street once and then, like, all of the street lights turned off...

The difference between B's response to the question of street lights – in an enthusiastic tone – was characteristic, but as the researcher I found it interesting that the young women of the group seemed to turn inward on the discussion of street lights and street safety. In the thematic analysis chapter of this study I compare this discussion with one at Site C, in which two young women discussed the challenges of using unisex public conveniences and the experience of sitting in on both discussions was very similar. Maximising interactions between participants is very much the goal in a focus group (Kitzinger, 1994) and so the density of

interaction in this case was welcome, but the silence and change in body language among young women in the group when B joined the topic felt like a distinct change. As a researcher I felt it inappropriate to pursue the meaning meant by the group's silence, as I perceived it, because I preferred to negotiate my various differences (in age, but also in race and gender) with participants by relinquishing my control of the group in this case. Although shared race and gender between participant and interviewer does not guarantee "truer" data (Archer, 2002, p. 29) I reflected on the group's sharing of detailed accounts of their lives up to this point as a possible indicator that their silence on the subject of feeling unsafe at night on the street was a topic in which I might be constructed as an outsider to the group (Dyck, Lynam and Anderson, 1995). Accordingly, in the thematic review in chapter 7, the data generated in the group's discussion of the safety and danger of everyday streets is coded alongside a discussion of gender, as well as the challenge of choosing when to overcome difference between the researcher and participants, and when to accept it.

5.6. "You can make a difference to it": institutional racism and hopeful agency

There was a scarcity of young people's depictions of institutional participation in their discussions, which makes it difficult to make direct interpretations as to participants' formal participation with political institutions. However, relationships with political institutions were explained, and racism arose at Site B is central feature in these relationships. The following excerpt came about as the group responded to B, who had explained an occasion when he and a friend had been stopped and searched by the police, and had then discussed the 1981 Brixton riots:

AC *You can't blame the police 100% for the way they think=because*

Researcher *=No?*

B *=No not 100% because most of the time it's black people [#lots of group laughter] that commit=the crimes*

[#Field note: the rest of the group laughed, perhaps because B was the youngest in the group and suddenly took a severe tone of voice on the matter]

- X *=yeah like... [#pausing for laughter to stop] if you're teenagers then you do get a lot of racism*
- Researcher *You get a lot of racism?*
- AC *I do, I don't understand, a lot of black teenagers think - I don't know, they're growing up too fast - and they think they're able to do things- they're doing things that they shouldn't be doing like- what is the point of you carrying a knife to school like what are your intentions. People there just=*
- X *=at Parkham Academy¹⁰ people were like, bringing=knives*
- AC *=Yeah like, why?=
=fighting with guns, they're=*
- AC *=And then it's like, if you're- OK personally I haven't like been to a prison, to like look at the race population but, it's quite obvious that there's a lot more black people that are in prison or that have a criminal record than white people, so obviously the police are going to be... if the police are doing a stop and search and there's like, a white group of teenagers and a black group, it's quite obvious they're going to go for the black group first because, the amount of trouble that they have caused.*

The group was clear that they were talking about racism in relationships with institutions – specifically the police and prisons – but again, and reflecting an “issue by issue” conceptualization of politics (Manning, 2012), they explained in detail the experiences and issues leading to the racism they perceived, rather than, for example, making broader ideological points about race and the establishment. Later, the question of dealing with institutional racism arose in a discussion about public graffiti:

¹⁰ Name of academy anonymized by researcher.

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AC *If you left it to the police to decide what happens to them, like before, the racism, it's quite obvious what's going to happen. So. I think if you make it a law then everybody has to abide by it and then they won't make any mistakes.*

A little later Assassin's Creed explained how she expected the process of making it a law would work out:

AC *It's what they will, what they will do, if it's brought up as an issue. I don't think they will do a law, because graffiti isn't much of an issue at the moment. [#Pause) Well, it is, but it's people that <we're talking> about. So if you bring it up they'll... they might consider it, but I don't think they'll do anything else... but, there's all those times they do it without the council's permission so why do you need someone's permission, why do you need someone's permission to make, to do graffiti, and it's positive?*

Group W's discussion of police racism is encountered at a complex middle ground. The police are at once powerful adults who define behaviour by more or less malleable normative rules: as in the case of the rich homeowners at Site C who used adjoining private property to "have a go" at young people playing football, the police are encountered employing preconceptions about black teenagers' behaviour to stop them and search them. At the same time participants were vocal about the behaviour of some peers – identifying guns and knives as particular problems – contributing to an atmosphere of prejudice, though both Xylem explained that white teenagers are rude themselves ("They're really facety") and B said he had experienced being stopped with a hoodie while white teenagers had been ignored.

B *See, me and my friends, right, we - on Thursday, me and my friends were walking home from school, and one of them was wearing a hoodie and the hood was up, and um, the police pulled over, stop and searched him, because me and my friends were around him, they stop and - they stopped and searched us as well. And um, the police said, "terribly sorry", and got back into their um, in their car and drove off. While still giving us an evil look as if to*

say, we were hiding something. And in my head I was really annoyed because it was like, just because we were around him and um, two of us were black, and um, there was me and my friend, and he had his hood up... but across the road there was a white person with his hood up. The police, right, they were right behind the man but they never stopped and searched him. But that's because me and my friend were black, he got stopped and searched.

Between the response of the police and the young people as described by participants, there was a relationship of distance and detachment. B explained what had started the Brixton riots:

B It makes me feel the police are racist in a way, because that's why they started the 1981 riots... was it 1981?

Researcher In Brixton?

B Yeah Brixton's 1981 riots. Um, that started because of racism, because um, one guy got stabbed, and um, stop and search was still going, and what they did was, there was this man who was stabbed and he still had the knife in his back, and he ran up to the police, and the police started thinking that he brought it upon himself by being in a gang or something like that. And rumours spread that... that the police weren't helping him. And it's right! They wasn't! Because they were like, are you a gang? And the man's still screaming, he's on the floor still crawling around saying, nah, I'm not in a gang, can you just help me?

The detachment of the police, as depicted, is in participants' perceptions of contemporary society bound up with the powerful sense in all studied groups that -

BE We can't really <make a difference>. Well, we could, if we got lots of people

- and that institutional inertia against the people's actions was a matter of elite divergence from the People as a polity:

AC *but it's the people we're talking about*

Both Site B and Site C are connected by the perception of feeling distant from the adult community in their everyday lives, but what sets Site B apart is the experience of racism. The richness of the discussion of 'the People' existing between institutions like the police and problem groups like young people fighting with knives or the complexities of crime and stereotyping surrounding young black people is expanded in the analysis chapter, along with reflection on the process of discussing race and racism across a difference in class, race, age and gender between participants and researcher, from the researcher's point of view.

6. Data generation – Site C

The third and final group for data generation was carried out in November, 2014. One focus group comprised of four members was held at a secondary school in South West England. The location was selected as it falls within the informal catchment area of the tertiary college visited for Site A, and provided some opportunities for comparative study for that reason. In the data, there is mention of a local tertiary college: the college which is Site A in this study are one and the same, though both are rendered anonymous here, as are all locations depicted in the photographs and focus group data.

Participants were all Year 10 students attending a mixed comprehensive school which had recently become an academy. In terms of child wellbeing and poverty, the town is an average town compared with other towns in its county. The nature of the town is reflected in its overall comparatively low ranking for poverty – roughly 13% of children in the town and its surrounding community area were assessed to be in poverty by census data before housing costs, compared to the English average of 18% – while strategic assessments published by local government were found to identify as a particular challenge the diversity in poverty between rich areas and poor areas, particularly poor rural areas lacking infrastructure such as reliable transport links. The school attended at Site C is one that provides an education to comparatively more disadvantaged student body than other schools in the local area. As an indicator of the nature of the school, the proportion of students for which the school receives a pupil premium – that is, public funding for the support of disadvantaged pupils through the provision of learning materials, breakfast clubs and lunches, increased staffing, after school activities and so on – is near to 30%, compared to a county average of 7% and a national average 15%. The particular challenges of growing up in a rural area are reflected in these data, presented in brief here to lend greater anonymity to the site, are assessed later in this thesis.

6.1. Summary of site notes

Contact was made through the head teacher of the school, who delegated a member of the teaching staff to work as a liaison and who brought four volunteers for the group. The staff gatekeeper made clear that she had invited the volunteers

on the basis that they knew each other, were a friendship group and were looking forward to participating. After an initial meeting with the teacher to discuss the process of the project, and after participants had returned the participant and parent participation forms, an initial focus group and card sorting activity was undertaken, followed by a weekend in which participants were able to take photographs, which they returned to discuss in the second focus group interview session.

The participants came across as having enjoyed the task of selecting code names. Andrew (A) and Bob (Bo) thought through different code names based on fictional characters before deciding on the names they took for the project. Barbie (Ba) and Ken (K) settled on their names almost immediately.

The researcher continued to take a hands-off approach to supporting participants in the photo project, but after recalling that at Site B, participants had found it easy to forget to take photographs independently, the researcher provided a printed hand-out to the pupils including the questions and time frame for the photo project. The researcher also remained in contact with the teacher filling the role of gatekeeper at the school, who ensured that each participant's teachers were aware of their participation. The school was a more orderly (and compulsory) institution for the young people included in the study than the youth group in Site B, and so it follows that participants were better prepared and supported in carrying out the task which was set.

6.1.1. Ethical notes

There were three notes on ethical matters that reflected some challenges to the researcher at Site C with respect to the consideration and care for participants' needs. First, the disclosure late in the project of one participant's specific mental health needs which may or may not have been adequately met by the project. Andrew explained that he had brought one photo he had taken at a previous date, and one which was not his own, because he had forgotten to take photos for the task:

Researcher What have we got here?

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A *Lewin Castle which I didn't even know about and The Moonraker*

Researcher *OK, can you tell me more about Lewin Castle and why you took the picture, how it makes you feel? ... What do you think about this picture?*

A *I don't know, I haven't actually been there. Basically they were last resort*

Researcher *That's OK. How did you find the photo task?*

A *Difficult, basically due to my short term memory I forgot all about it!*

Researcher *Is there... that's really useful information for me because you know, I'm a student so I'm trying to learn and do things better, so is there a way I could have made that better for you?*

A *No, it's probably just me because I forget things easy*

Researcher *OK. Well, what's in this picture?*

A *The Moonraker*

Ba *It's like, it's a pond*

K *And there's loads of ducks in there but it's like, really dirty*

The researcher asked "is there a way I could have made that better?" as an attempt to find a constructive way to continue the interview. The goal was to address Andrew's experience of the method as a reflection of an opportunity for the researcher, as a student, to learn a way to better include participants with similar experiences in the future. When Andrew responded that "it's probably just me" it was considered a comfortable moment to move on and discuss the photo on the table, and Andrew appeared to be able to contribute to the interview generally. At the end of the session, when the rest of the group was leaving the room, Andrew reported to the researcher, one-to-one, at the time of the group interview that he was unable to participate in the taking of photographs because, as he disclosed, one part of his experience of autism was that he could be forgetful, but that he had brought prints of two photos he had taken before the project to discuss. In my role as researcher I reassured Andrew that I was grateful for his participation and that he was equally welcome in the group, and included Andrew's photographs in the set for the project. I also told Andrew that since I had designed the project I would be really interested in any feedback he had that could help me

better accommodate participants who might have trouble remembering to take the photographs, so that I could improve it for next time. Andrew offered to report back if he thought of anything. I reflect on this disclosure and its implications on the researcher's duty of care towards participants in the ethics section of chapter 8.

Second, the two young women in the group, Barbie and Ken, took, and apologized for taking, a lot of selfies (i.e. self-portraits). Although these are not reprinted due to the agreement between the researcher and participants that photos depicting participants would not be shown, selfies in principle are discussed in chapter 8 under methodological reflections, as a manifestation of a contemporary mode for photography that has begun to attract the attention of scholars for its potential to redefine the photographer and the mediated subject (Ehlin, 2014; Murray, 2015).

Third, on distributing the cameras Bob asked if he was able to take photographs along with a friend. I advised him that although I would be happy to include his friend in the study I had to obey by the rules on participant safety and parent permission, that his friend would need to hear about the project and decide whether or not to participate for himself, but I gave Bob an extra set of permission forms for his friend in case. Bob informed the researcher at the beginning of the interview that his friend had decided not to participate. Along with the other two ethical matters arising, Bob's request is reflected on as a methodological issue in chapter 8.

6.2. General synopsis

The photo activity and group interview were met with enthusiasm and good humour by the group. To illustrate, at the beginning of the session, as the researcher was pointing out the audio recorders it was clear the group were eager, so the interview was started while the researcher was still setting up the computer:

Researcher *Who would like to start?*

K *Me! [#Forcefully, to group laughter]*

Researcher *OK! [#More laughter]*

Ba *We did it together*

- Researcher* OK. So let me know what you did... you went out together?
- K* Yeah, we were out on Sunday and then Barbie was like, oh we need to take the photos as we were sat in the leisure centre
- Ba* And Ken was like, let's take some selfies [#group laughter]
- K* So there's like a couple of selfies on there by the way... [#laughter]
- Ba* ... there's loads...
- K* Yeah. Sorry about that
- Researcher* That's alright [#group laughter] So you went out, and
- K* Yeah, we went to the leisure centre and we walked - because we were going to Greenmont¹¹ so we just like, took photos on our way to Greenmont
- Researcher* Did you know what photos you were going to take before you went? Did you go exploring or... what was your feeling about it?
- Ba* We sort of went exploring

The researcher fumbled a bit with the computer at this point so Barbie and Ken stopped and waited. This project hoped to aid young participants in taking control of the discussion by building on friendship networks and social support to allow them to better outweigh the relative power of the researcher, and in chapter 8 this method is reflected as having worked extremely well with Barbie and Ken, who took control of the topic and tempo of discussion from the outset. Barbie and Ken made a point of joking about their code names by placing emphasis on them when they first came up in discussion. Ken was confident in controlling the interview from the outset, perhaps picking up on the researcher’s invitation to speak (“that’s alright – so, you went out, and...”) and completing the sentence alone (“yeah, we went to the leisure centre”).

¹¹ Name of park anonymized by researcher.

6.3. Park politics



Figure 7: Photograph: Site: C, Photographer: Barbie

K That's Greenmont Park, there's more of it behind but it's not very clear

Greenmont Park was, for the participants of Site C, a two-tier provision of equipment. The photograph above, Figure 7, depicts a section for younger children, while in the background, obscured by the trees, there is another area set aside for older users. As in group W's case, participants made a distinction between younger kids playing under parental supervision and themselves as older visitors to the park. Participants valued their autonomy over the older one's space. They explained the younger section was in need of an upgrade, and that they were concerned that as the younger kids' section deteriorated, younger children and their parents were coming across to compete for the better equipment. This encroached on an important space to them for spending time outside school:

K That's where we normally all stay on Saturday and Sunday and after school, which is just like... there will be little kids there and... you've got to watch it but because it's quite far from the actual other park bit, you don't have to be, but you still have to be careful what

you say, but it's... you have to be less, you don't have to be as careful. You don't...

Ba You don't have to be as careful, it's so far away that, yeah, they won't be able to hear you unless you shout

Bo Obviously the equipment is very nearly always... I think you said, it was the fact that there's some swings about over here and they're actually getting really bad.

Ba They improve the big bit but they didn't do anything to the kids' bit.

Bo Yeah, they just left it.

Researcher Could you tell me who they are? Who improved it?

Ba I don't know, the Council.

Bo The Council.

K The Council, I think.

Barbie, Bob and Ken agreed that the park had been improved by the Council. A hesitant diction and tone may indicate the response that this question was testing them on the correct answer. "I don't know" and "I think..." also stand in contrast to more confident, explanatory word choices like "it was the fact that..." Participants in these two research sites responded to their different parks – one with an "older bit" and one without – in a similar way, in that both identified public spaces in terms of their struggle to find autonomy away from the adult gaze and away from young children, who have different social needs and very different competencies.

6.4. Spaces for autonomy, spaces for stigma

K Yeah, it's like - if there's a fight in Greenmont or something, and obviously you're going to be like, swearing and all that, then the parents will be like "can you calm down with your swearing?", but they don't know what's going on so they don't know why you're swearing or, why you're arguing and all that stuff. And like what <Barbie's real name> said... [#corrects self] Barbie said... [#group laughter]

Ba Barr-rr-rrbie! [#In emphatic West Country accent, group laughter]

K If you go on the swing I think parents expect you, because you're

older, to get off and let their kids go on it, but then when you get off it and when you want to go back on like, other kids run to it and you're like, I wanted to go on that but you can't like say anything because they're only little.

Barbie's observation that *"if you're swearing and there are little kids on there..."* and the ensuing discussion with Ken – *"parents obviously won't be happy because... they're only little"* – is similar to Site B's experience of sharing park space with little kids and their parents. In both groups it was clear what the participants shared of their experience of parks as public spaces. The overall sentiment seemed to be that parents of little kids presumed teenagers would be *"loud, no manners, and stuff like that"* though *"not all teenagers are like that"*, and in fact both groups explained that they went out of their way to get off park equipment and *"calm down"* when little kids were around. Parks in the discussion groups were places where participants tried to find space to live their own lives, wear their own clothes, argue and enjoy park equipment while navigating nebulous rules enforced by adults. Some of these norms were said first and were clear, such as not swearing around younger children and allowing them first choice on park equipment. Others were subject to the varied perceptions and behaviour of adults, including stigma, staring, protection of private spaces like gardens, and general misunderstandings.

Site C suggested that nearby adults would have less to complain about if the park was better separated from their private gardens. I asked the group what they thought about the Council's work on the park and it seemed clear that having an autonomous space away from adults was as important, if not more important, than equipment:

Ba They did a good job of what they did but they could have done more

K Like, also, right at the back there's like, is it two houses? Three houses?

Ba What, like the massive...

K With the grass area. There's like massive houses and then it leads onto a grass area, but then I think they get annoyed because it's

like, all the kids go there, and we play football with other people's...

Ba I was sat on the wall the other day and someone told me off because it was on their house but it was like, part of the park as well.

Bo It's quite confusing.

K Yeah. Also like, you're doing something or, and also when you play football if it goes like, on their actual garden bit, because they have loads of flowers if you damage one and they come out and have a go at you, you be like, "yeah but it's not our fault", it's like, the way they've done it.

Bo They could actually put up a fence.

K =Yeah

Ba =Yeah

Ken and Barbie's tone of voice speaking about the massive houses seemed to reflect an imbalance of power and social status. One benefit of growing up outside the city is the availability of space to roam, with the drawback that such spaces are typically "not formally controlled by by-laws or other means of legally restricting access, but... clearly coded by adults as spaces in which young people are out of place and in which their activities are unwelcome or inappropriate", especially when such adults can take advantage of their control, possibly legitimized by a class divide (Leyshon and Bull, 2011, p. 169):

Researcher How do you feel about it, how does that make you feel?

K It's not very nice because it's a park, there's obviously going to be people there messing around and playing football and stuff, and if someone kicks a football over there then it's like, it's not really a non-normal sort of thing, obviously you didn't mean to.

Ba And also, they're taking advantage of being able to have a go at us and stuff.

The paradox of living in a small community is feeling safe and secure in familiar environments on the one hand, while experiencing isolation, exclusion and surveillance on the other (Tyrrell and Harmer, 2015, p. 2). It was intriguing to hear

participants explaining the boundary between the park – a public space for messing around and playing football – and the massive houses with grass areas and flower beds, as sharing a blurry and liminal boundary area. The area between the park and the massive houses was the kind of space described by Leyshon and Bull above, and precisely the lack of formal control or boundary restriction (“they could actually put up a fence”) allowed powerful adults to take total control over which activities are unwelcome or inappropriate (“they’re taking advantage of being able to have a go at us”).

Site C, however, had all experienced political action, especially through crowd fundraising drives and events. In the next illustration, Ken, Barbie and Bob had just been discussing how they could poll kids and parents on changing a park layout (“*because it's obviously not just about what we want like, we have to think of other people as well and their views*” – Ken) and I asked, once they had collected views, what their next step would be:

K Don't they have like a Greenmont Council thingy?

Ba Yeah, they have like, people that work at the park and pick up litter and make sure things are OK

K Yeah. I think that I would like, go talk to them and be like, we gathered this research and all this and we want to make the park better, could you like, figure out a way of like, making it happen, like we've got research from little kids and all that could you like, help us to make it better

Researcher How do you imagine their response would be?

K I think it would be, "well, we ain't got the money",

Researcher Yeah?

K But they do like loads of Halloween stuff, and=Christmas stuff

Ba =Yeah they put like loads=of events

Bo =Festive stuff

K And then the bank gets a lot of money and also we could probably do like, cake sales and start other bits, to like, raise more money like, to make us enjoy it, and like all the other people, and also the

little kids

Researcher *Have you done that, that sort of thing before? Have you got experience of that, or people you know?*

K *I've only done it in school, like=do cake sales and stuff*

Bo *=Yeah in school*

Researcher *Like what sort of thing? Cake sales?*

K *Yeah, because we, every year, like, every year we have a couple of cake sales on, like for each tutor and we have to go around selling them and stuff like in the hall, and tell them the prices and all that, and raise a lot of money*

The relationship between participants and the researcher is perhaps evident in Ken's phrasing of *"I've only done it in school"*, and given the terms and tone of the discussion, it appears that participants perceived fundraising in school as partially, but not quite entirely, *"that sort of thing"*, as the researcher posed the question. Schools as adult dominated arenas of activity provide training and experience in ways to take action in public, but what set the two actions apart in this piece of discussion was that the original idea of talking to the Council and advocating park improvements started from taking research from *"little kids and all that, could you... help us to make it better"*. What distinguishes the next step of lobbying the Council from the experience of fundraising in schools is the autonomy of young participants in the process and the perception that a well-advocated groundswell of public opinion (*"little kids and all that"*) provides vital legitimacy; while at school, the framework for action is tutor groups and hallways. Although it is difficult to interpret too much into the commonalities between this group and the group at Site A, who were older and further along in transitions to adulthood, it is appropriate to note the similarities in their approaches to the democratic legitimacy of social action. Getting things done starts with getting a lot of people together, whether that is a large number of concerned people behind a celebrity, or a community of *"little kids"* with the advocacy of older, secondary school pupils with the experience and connections to collect their research, take it to the Council and fundraise in supportive drives. The perception that political institutions could be expected to respond *"well, we ain't got the money"* to requests for public funding reflects a strong theme throughout all three groups of a kind of *"everyday crisis narrative"*

(as in Stanley, 2014) perceiving political institutions at all levels as bodies that cut funding in the first place, and that progress must be devolved to individual morality and hard graft. In the case of Site C, this is reflected in the perspective that the way to fund a public good is to raise money from the public by selling cakes. The strength of feeling and deep descriptions by participants of such actions as spaces for autonomy is discussed in chapter 7.

6.5. Spaces for belonging and identification



Figure 8. Photograph: Site: C, Photographer: Bob.

Site C took place in a rural area and, in line with the academic literature surveyed, rural everyday spaces played a vital role in participants' perceptions of their selves, political subjectivities, and the ways they fit into wider society (Tyrrell and Harmer, 2015). Two particular discourses in the group exemplify the perspective of the participants, which has already been partly indicated by the previous discussion over autonomous use of spaces: i.e. the role of rich landowners and other class structures in the reproduction of those structures in rural spaces for movement, recreation and autonomous action. Bob brought a photo of a tree in a small clearing (Figure 8) and shared it with the group:

- Bo* *There's also another, which I'm quite proud of, which is...
[#scrolling through computer folder to find photo]*
- Bo* *It's just like a small woods*
- Ba* *Is that Brooks Pond¹²?*
- Bo* *No, that's um, round the back of my house near, um, I don't know what the street is.*
- Ba* *I think I know where it is.*
- K* *Yeah I recognize it.*
- Bo* *These trees where you just go and sit there. I think I took a picture of that one... Yeah, I took a picture of it and, it's just somewhere you can go and sit.*
- Researcher* *=OK*
- Bo* *=You just go and sit there for a couple of minutes or with, my friend, on Halloween, we just speak and for about five hours and we only thought it was two minutes*
- Ba* *But the floor's dirty*
- K* *Yeah*
- Bo* *You just sit up in the tree*
- Ba* *I can't climb trees!*
- K* *I can't even climb a fence(!)*

Barbie and Ken's playful comments about climbing trees and a fence are an in-joke: in a previous discussion the group had talked about a town graveyard with a run-down fence, to which Bob had suggested the Council should improve the fence:

- K* *Yeah but then if there's a fence over it then people will like, climb over, just because they're idiots*

¹² Location anonymized by researcher

Benjamin Bowman *"They don't know what's going on": Exploring young people's political subjectivities during transitions to adulthood in the UK*

Ba *Make it tall enough so they can't*

K *Barbie, we're kids, we're going to climb over!*

Ba *I don't see you climbing over any fence, so you shut up! [#group laughter]*

Ba *You'd rip your leggings!*

K *[#laughter]*

It is a significant finding of this project that photographs of everyday spaces were very productive in terms of providing young people a discursive entry point into talking about their experiences and perceptions of society. The discussion of this quiet space as a spot to spend time with friends led the group into sharing experiences of growing up in a rural town:

Researcher *What makes this spot different from, other spots do you think?*

Bo *I would say it's just, it's=close to my house*

Ba *Yeah, and it's like closed, well, it's not closed over but it's like, really quiet and I like it... [#thoughtful pause]=People*

K *=Yeah but then people think, when you're sat in like, a woods or in a closed area they think you're up to something*

The notation of this discussion indicates Barbie and Ken speaking at the same time, and that is an accurate depiction of the interaction. They appeared to think of the same thing at the same time, and the ensuing discussion was animated:

Researcher *Yeah?*

K *Because like ...*

Ba *Yeah, because we're teenagers*

K *Yeah*

Bo *Yeah=I...*

K *=Some people, like... I don't know why, they think we're all=druggies and loud*

Ba *=They're really judgmental because of our age*

- Benjamin Bowman *"They don't know what's going on": Exploring young people's political subjectivities during transitions to adulthood in the UK*
- K *But like, they were teenagers once and they probably done all of that stuff.*
- Researcher *Do you think it will be different in the future? = Do you think*
- K *= I doubt it.*
- Researcher *Yeah? Why do you think that?*
- Ba *Cause like, Ashland¹³ is like, a really small town and like people like, don't bother with it, it's only small, we need to sort out the bigger towns. So it's always like, last for things to get sorted out*
- K *Yeah, like, there's only... there's like loads of pubs and cafes but we don't need all of them.*

The group talked about the poor selection of shops in Ashland, mostly supermarkets. Ken and Barbie suggested there were too few "boy's clothes shops"; Bob and Andrew agreed to a point:

- Bo *Yeah it's the same from my experience but my mum goes well, shopping in main because, just the fact that it's close but she goes there specific days when it's more quiet*
- A *To be honest I don't think that there should be more clothes shops, I think there should be more games shops for gamers*

Much like park spaces, the tree was depicted by participants as a welcoming area where young people could be autonomous, enjoy time with friends, but where their interactions and behaviour were surveilled by adults and subject to the control of adults according to hazy normative structures of public propriety. Much like the discussion of adults enforcing power over young people's autonomous action by "having a go", the group explained how even secluded areas near to their homes were places where *"they think you're up to something"*. It was extremely interesting to the researcher that the group were quick to link the discussion of the tree as a public place for recreation and socializing, to wider depictions of the town

¹³ Site C's location town name anonymized by researcher

as a limiting public space, with a restricted selection of shops and its areas for socializing restricted to *"loads of pubs and cafés"*. The nature of these was made clear by Ken and Barbie:

K ...they have free Wi-Fi but you're only allowed in there if you buy something. So like, if you want to use their Wi-Fi you have to buy something which is giving them more money because you can only get it when you're sat in, or like, outside of it

Researcher So do you think it should be free?

K I think some of them, like more shops should be free because I can only think about four...

Ba =I think like some of the parks should have Wi-Fi

K =Like a specific...

Ba =Because people are always like, oh I have no signal, no Wi-Fi or anything so I can't get hold of my parents

Shopping centres are key spaces in public life, where young people can roam and share time with other people, but also ones where their behaviour is subject to adult control and their legitimacy as actors within the space can be subject to their economic status as consumers: unless they are buying something, they may not be welcome (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2006). The geography of Wi-Fi provision is an interesting approach to the conundrum of a space that resembles a public space but which is essentially a private one run for profit. Free Wi-Fi, like free spaces to talk, might be interpreted to represent the desire to exist in public without having to comply with adult structures of propriety or businesses entry fees. The participants at Site C made it clear that they thought a lack of local amenities and funding for important local public spaces and institutions was due to Ashland being, or at least being considered by participants to be, somewhat of a rural backwater. In a discussion on improving the local campus and facilities of the county college:

Researcher So what would you do to improve it, do you think?

Benjamin Bowman *"They don't know what's going on": Exploring young people's political subjectivities during transitions to adulthood in the UK*

Ba Make it bigger

K I think they don't get... like in Ripley¹⁴ and that, they get like more money incoming and like, to make it better and improve it but I don't think that college doesn't get...

B ... much funding ...

K Much money to make it better, to like, it's just been there and... I think, for me I think it would be a back-up college so like, if you can't get in the college you want then you'll go to ours until you can figure out which one you want.

As well as the perception of their local area as sometimes difficult to inhabit and more than a little underdeveloped as a rural town, the study at Site C was carried out in November, and so it was unsurprising that the group found an opportunity to talk about Armistice Day, with a discussion of the town war memorial, which was a source of some pride and local identification:

Bo So, I took this picture...about um, because it's, I'm quite proud of it, how how we're showing um

Ba Respect

Bo Yeah, respect, to the men that died in the First World War, and it's all the men from the town.

There was nodding in the group and they discussed the Armistice Day memorial artefacts around the monument:

Ba It's like, it's really nice and like, all the black things like, these things have all the names on from the people that have died and stuff, and then every year people put poppies there and everything to show their respect

K And in year 8, year 9, I can't remember what year, we do a history

¹⁴ Neighbouring town anonymized by researcher.

project where we have to go to the memorial, take a photo, and then we research it and do an essay

Ba We have to find one person and research them

K And you have to take photos, and they give us books and you, go on the internet and research about it . It's nice to know that they like, died for... and especially that it's the town, they're like from our town.

The researcher asked a specific question about the war and again, the group talked about the smallness of the town:

Researcher Again, this is going to sound like a dead simple question but it's because I'm interested in what you say, and this is really good - um, what do you think about the First World War? What's your thought about it? Or about this remembering of it?

Bo Yeah, uh, it was a very, it was our first proper brutal war where actually loads of people died, I think it was near enough - for both sides - about 2 million.

K They risked their lives for us so like everyone, well, most people have respect for them and want to go pay their respect, to show that we do care

Ba But it is quite small though

Bo Yeah

A Yeah

K Yeah that's basically what it is, as it's a small town

The group remembered school projects concerning the memorial and the town, and were clear that *"everyone, well, most people have respect for them and want to go pay their respect"*; the group agreed that the best way to improve the memorial would be to make it bigger since, as Barbie said, when there is a memorial service *"everyone stands on the street"*. The memorial clearly played a role in the group's identification with the town, its history and their experiences of sharing memorial events with, at least, *"most people"* in their community.

7. Thematic Review of Data

In this chapter, the researcher's interpretation of the generated data is presented in order to draw together the main themes. Those themes are connected to the strands of analysis as they were constructed through the research encountered in the literature review, and, where appropriate, possible findings and opportunities for future research are identified.

7.1. Autonomy: thematic introduction

In the first section of this chapter, the theme of autonomy is examined in detail. In the first place, this section depicts autonomy as a theme arising from the data as it was generated. By autonomy, this thesis refers back to the Rancièrian model of the political regime he calls 'police' as "an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and that sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task" (Rancière, 1999, p. 29) and politics as "the mode of acting that perturbs this arrangement" (Rancière, 2004, p. 226). Catsoriadis explains a concept of autonomy derived from an individual's ability to "look inward, wondering about its motives, its reasons for acting [and] its profound inclinations" (Catsoriadis, 2007, p. 89)

In the thematic analysis of data this thesis encountered young people discussing their autonomy as the independent exercise of competencies in conceptual spaces that exclude these competencies; a form of political behaviour, to use Rancière's terminology, that "makes visible what had been excluded from a perceptual field" and "makes audible what used to be inaudible" (1999, p. 36). Participants in the study expressed the desire to perturb the allocations of pro-social and conformist (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010) apprentice citizenship in their public behaviour. They spoke up for independent living, for unhindered movement in their local areas, and about searching for spaces away from the surveillance and control of adults. In this analysis, autonomy is also taken to extend into conceptual space: participants also wanted to be able to think about subjects in a way that utilized their competencies and personal interests. Thematically, it was coded that autonomous spaces were considered to be constructed and reproduced by young people against the external imposition of boundaries by adults. There was also a strong theme of contestation and power struggle between young people, in their

construction of young people's spaces, and adults, who are able to bring superior arsenals of social and economic capital - as well as the adult dominance of the public sphere - to bear on contested spaces where young people's behaviour was seen to cross an invisible line of propriety.

Invisible lines of propriety crisscrossed young people's geographic and psychic spaces in the collected data. Participants felt their spaces divided according to class divides and inequalities of access due to gender. They perceived certain spaces as unwelcoming to young people for the arbitrary reason that local adults would not welcome their presence. They perceived the same stigma in spaces dedicated to young people themselves, a problem raised in the data generation process in groups that spoke about the struggle to find a welcoming space in parks. Among older participants – namely, students at Site A – these invisible lines extended from the public spaces of the town into the job market and education sphere. Just as younger participants perceived geographic space to be divided by adult-controlled and often arbitrary boundaries that limited where young people were welcome as participants in their community, so older participants explained the search for a stable transition to adulthood - from finding housing to getting a job - as a struggle against arbitrary selection processes based on adult readings of social capital, gender inequalities, the politics of insensitive adult elites, and so on.

7.1.1. Illustrating the search for autonomy: talking in public

Transitions to adulthood provide liminal spaces in which young people are encountered on the threshold between the private sphere and the public sphere (Manning, 2012, p. 2). Standing astride that conceptual threshold, the young person is not an entirely unwelcome voice in public spaces. "Giving young people a voice" is one of the most commonly stated goals of civic projects from community beautification programmes (Hart, 2013) to electoral registration drives (Mycock, Tonge and Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom, 2014, p. 10). It is not uncommon for spaces dedicated to young people to be easy to find in plain view, from playgrounds - in which descriptive category one can include the more advanced "older" equipment depicted in photographs by the research participants - to skate parks, which are a particular hub of young civic visibility, typically being a striking combination of colourful paint and towering concrete

constructions, the hubbub of activity and clatter of skateboards, and the obvious diversity of behaviour from the physically active to the social and recreational function of the park as a space to meet friends, neighbours and others with whom one shares the community (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack, 2003; Taylor and Khan, 2011; Tani, 2014). Although not entirely unwelcome, neither are young people entirely welcome. The liminality of youth is reflected in public spaces where young people are partly welcome, as apprentice voices that adult society expects to 'engage' on the one hand; and as a threat or, at least, a loitering nuisance to adults on the other (Brown, 2013). Importantly, as reflected in the data generated in this project, there is typically no clear division between spaces where young people's voices are welcome and spaces where they are not.

Young people's talk in public is subject to constant challenges to its legitimacy from adults seeking to redraw and redefine the spaces around younger users of public areas. As Ken put it, although *"they don't even know what you're talking about"* an adult will typically feel it is legitimate to surveil and restrict young people's talk in public. The governance of young people's talk by local adults, if it may be put as such, is not dependent on young people's input when judging their behaviour, nor to be of benefit to young people when dispensing that judgement. The same theme was generated in discussions in all three sites. In Xylem's experience of sharing bus spaces with controlling adults – *"We didn't do anything! We just got off the bus..."* – the result of arbitrary adult restrictions over spaces and places where young people's talk is welcome and unwelcome is that young people may indeed feel unwelcome everywhere, or at least under the constant policing "order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying"(Rancière, 1999, p. 29).

Autonomy, as a theme of discussion, encompasses the desire among participants for spaces where talk can take place without the risk of adult intervention. Such spaces are political in that they disrupt the arrangement and allocation (Rancière, 2004, p. 226). Talk, friendship, argumentation, debate and conflict resolution are vital to young people as members of a community, as they develop the skills and capital necessary to take their place as citizens, while also seeking to act as citizens in their communities. As Ken said at Site C:

"Yeah, it's like - if there's a fight in Greenmont or something, and obviously you're going to be like, swearing and all that, then the parents will be like: "can you calm down with your swearing?", but they don't know what's going on so they don't know why you're swearing or, why you're arguing and all that stuff. "

Ken, Site C

Autonomy can be sought away from the adult gaze, in other words, at the same time that adult action forces young people from public agorae into the private sphere, as in the case of Assassin's Creed's birthday party for which the proprietor of the venue was not prepared to allow access to, in Assassin's Creed's words, "Sweet Sixteens". At Site C, Bob explained the value of a quiet place where he could spend time with friends was that it was secluded. Bob's experience of finding autonomy could be considered to be an experience of crafting space from the nooks and corners adults did not want in an adult-dominated environment, away from adults who could judge young people to be loitering or disturbing the peace (Site C), and separate from adult claims to the priority of access to physical space, like park facilities or bus seats (Site B), as well as psychic spaces like the class boundaries defining at what point the legitimate region for football ends, or when social pressure makes it necessary to leave a bus.

From the perspective of this project, the shrinking of young people from the public sphere is no surprise, given that the disappearance of young people from the agorae of public life has been called an incipient crisis for UK democracy (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007; Farthing, 2010). At the same time, as reflected in the corpus of data generated for this project, the public sphere may exclude the young people we, as a society, hope to call to muster in it. For example, even in the contemporary context, when working at a job could be described as the main source of young legitimacy in the public eye (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Duckworth and Schoon, 2012; Mendick, Allen and Harvey, 2015), participants, along with their fellows in the broader academic literature, perceived the labour market as dominated by adults who can deny young people a foot into the public sphere for unfair reasons, especially "it's not what you know but who you know" (as explained at Site A).

7.1.2. Perturbing boundaries? Autonomous action in everyday spaces

The search for autonomy is also reflected in participant's lived experiences of finding space for activity within the coordinates of adult control and surveillance, the "the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and that sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task"(Rancière, 1999, p. 29). At Site C participants discussed the facilities on offer to young people as enjoyable but that one could never rely on being able to use them: partly because adults could decide that the sound and number of young people was unwelcome, but also because adults could force young people off the equipment to make room for their own children. In the data generated with participants "younger kids"(Site C) and "little kids" (Site B) were considered worthy users of the space. Indeed, at both sites B and C the groups talked with enthusiasm about improving facilities for younger people, whether by scrubbing off rude words that had been painted onto play equipment (B, Site B) or generally considering the quality of equipment available to younger people to be below par and in need of repair (Bob and Andrew, Site C).

At Site C, participants discussed the problem they faced when using public spaces for recreational activities like football. The call for autonomy in this case is reflected in the challenge they explained in defining the boundaries of the acceptable space for football. In the spot where there was enough grass to play, the group explained, it was adjoined by large houses owned by adults who could "take advantage of being able to have a go at us and stuff" (Barbie), and who would deny young people the use of the space. As well as the adult enforcement of propriety - ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying – the group was noted in the researcher's field notes to emphasize words denoting indicators of economic wealth – as in Barbie's excerpt above, "*massive houses*" and "*loads of flowers*" – in what appeared to be the perception of a class boundary in action between young people and adults who were owners of expensive houses with precious lawns. The discussion of football in front of massive houses reflects a theme present in the literature review of young people, particularly in rural areas (Tyrrell and Harmer, 2015) navigating transitions to adulthood while seeking their own space in a class hierarchy.

Young people's spaces for autonomous action were also restricted by safety. In both sites B and C, participants explained how local infrastructure affected their ability to live their daily lives. These discussions addressed access to facilities like public toilets, which, if not maintained properly (and particularly if there was a single unisex toilet in a public area) put young women in the insecure position of sharing with adult men who might be able to enter through an insecure door (Barbie and Ken, Site C). They also concerned the need for street lighting in order that young people could walk in the dark. Xylem identified the connection between community participation and safe public spaces when she explained that unlit streets made it difficult to attend community events like extracurricular activities at school, because it was unsafe to return home afterwards (Site B).

It is an important lesson to those of us studying young people's political subjectivity that, despite public pronouncements of a digital generation, physical spaces for communication and action are vital to young people's participation in their communities, to their lived experience of sharing space with fellow citizens, and to their simple access to that fundamental feature of a democracy: other people.

7.1.3. Traditional politics and exploring political potential in autonomous spaces

At Site C, opportunities to run funding drives were clearly taken as an opportunity for social action, as in Site B the protest for Palestine (which Bean, Teddy Bear, B and Assassin's Creed discussed) was perceived as an opportunity to carry forth personal repertoires of empathy – "empathy skills" (Assassin's Creed) – into the public, and indeed the international, sphere of action. At Site A, public spaces through protest were also considered a valuable way to take action. In their explanation, the English Defence League shared a conceptual space with French labour strikes ("strike like the French" and "the only party I'd vote for is the EDL") and the Stop Kony campaign on Facebook as a way for young people to join a politically active community.

In each case this thesis interprets the manifestation of what is a strong theme in academic literature: young people tend to steer away from political elites, traditional institutions like political parties, and from hierarchical structures. Where political institutions need to be consulted - such as to seek funding and

improvements for local facilities - generated data reflect a strong sentiment that the best way to take action is to gather as many local voices as possible. This could be headed by a vanguard of young advocacy (at Site C, where the group suggested collecting "research" (Ken) on what young people wanted and taking it to the council to ask for their support), in direct appeals to local authorities (as at Site B, where the group talked about sending so many emails they could not be ignored), or by public action headed by a visible and powerful celebrity (for instance, both groups at Site A suggested Bono). That there needed to be a critical mass in order to pressure elites into action seemed to be a clear message across all three sites. Bean at Site B brought a photograph of a street protest against Israeli military action in Palestine, and as part of that discussion, B suggested that people who wanted to be good people should ask themselves: *"do you donate to charity? ... do you do anything to help with um [pause] war?"*. To encourage a little more detail on participants' everyday experiences of this general issue, the researcher asked the group, "do you feel like you're able to make a difference? Could you tell me a bit about that?"

"Well, we can't, really (..) well we could, if we got, like (..) lots of people, to like, make a statement about it, and how we feel, maybe we could make a difference."

Bean, Site B

At Site A, as at B and C, participants shared a strong sentiment that effective change required a general public agreement and coming together, plus an action of some sort that proved public commitment to the cause, that would then be communicated to political elites in charge, in the hope that they would be swayed by public opinion. It was interesting that although all three groups were vocal about their local Council holding sway over the administration of their everyday lives ("Don't they have like a Greenmont Council thingy?", "Yeah, they have like, people that work at the park and pick up litter and make sure things are OK" – Ken and Barbie) no group raised the possibility of changing Council policy through Council elections, either through young people's votes, voter advocacy, or, for example, by pressuring family members of electoral age to vote in a particular way. The Council came across as a static institution of power that was not so much subject to citizens' oversight and democratic representation but could be pressured through an etiquette of ritualized contact (Banaji, 2008, p. 543). It was also coded

that the groups seldom talked about *lived experience* of the political activities they suggested. They were aware of the etiquette of ritualized contact, but, perhaps, had seldom, if ever, performed rituals of lobbying and petition. Some members of Site A had participated in online activism, and Site C had experience of raising money for charity although, to quote Ken, "I've only done it in school". It was interesting to compare Ken's only partially enthusiastic tone concerning fundraising at school with the eager conversations at Site C, and at the other two sites, about participatory methods for democracy in principle.

7.1.4. Politics between public ritual and private autonomy

In coding the complex relationship between political activity in principle, and political activity in lived experience, the researcher considered autonomy an important factor in participant's self-defined political subjectivities. Both sites B and C through the course of their photo projects expressed a will to collect opinions concerning local infrastructure and to use that to pressure for change, but in both groups participants came across as doubtful of their ability to do so in effect. Their experiences were "only" in school (Ken), through adult-sponsored channels, or in their private lives, in the form of "empathy skills" (*Assassin's Creed*) towards other people in their close contact. The shrinking of participants away from the public sphere of political action is considered to also be reflected in the lack of expressions of interest in traditional political activity. In the same way that young participants shared their feelings that local adults would be unlikely to respond to calls for change, they did not discuss with the researcher adult-led institutions for change or for social action.

Rather than reflecting something necessarily apolitical or anti-political, it is considered that this theme in the literature may show the importance of autonomy in the crafting of political subjectivities by young people. Parks and public spaces, after all, were explained to the researcher as spaces where autonomy was sought and contested with adults and adult authority. It follows that participants would - and indeed, they did - express a desire for autonomy should they have the potential to craft agency in changing and improving said spaces. All three groups appeared to be deeply held and in participatory way, democratic, believing that change came from direct action by local communities and face-to-face interaction.

Their preferred modes of action were in the first place communitarian: petitioning, face-to-face data collection, questionnaires, bake sales and activities that included other age groups such as the aforementioned "younger kids"/"little kids". The discursive framing of change as something that - to quote Bean, Xylem and Assassin's Creed - "the people", "it's the people we're talking about" can make a difference in if they get together was a theme identified in the literature review (as in Bang, 2010; Manning, 2010; Neundorf, Smets and García-Albacete, 2013), reflected in the data generated in this project. Participants had a particular sense that they wanted to make the world a better place and perceived the best way to do that as getting people together in a shared voice that could pressure the powerful into making change. The central role of autonomy is reflected in the subjective position participants put forward for themselves in this political process, which was as independent gatherers of data or agents themselves for community action, rather than working as agents for adult led change or, for the most part, joining groups like political parties (to which the support by some participants in Site A for the EDL is a noteworthy exception).

It was telling that the obstacle to effective political action that participants most often gave was institutional budget restraints: Assassin's Creed explained the pressure on service provision as "it depends what you're asking them to build. Some things make more money, make more profit than others... if you ask for a park, then I highly doubt they'll listen to you", with the most likely response being, in the words of Ken, "*well, we ain't got the money*". This project took place at a time of local and national cuts to services and a general political discourse of budget austerity (Scarpetta, Sonnet and Manfredi, 2010; Heyes, 2013; Stanley, 2014). It is the case that young people's services have been among the worst hit by the austerity period (Hodkinson and Robbins, 2013; Arthur, 2015), and this will not be the first research project to suggest the political environment of austerity has had an impact on young people's perceptions of their political subjectivity (King and Waddington, 2013; Stanley, 2014; Vromen, Loader and Xenos, 2015). Throughout the course of the study participants expressed little hope that change could actually be brought about. It was intriguing to share discussions with participants about opportunities for democratic action, for talking about change with local communities (by email in sites B and C, over Facebook and in strikes in Site A), and for young people to express a desire to approach local elites armed

with the legitimacy of community voices and autonomous, self-led action (in all three sites). It was disheartening to hear the change in aspect and tone of voice among participants when asked about their expectations for the efficacy of the actions they spoke about. Participants seemed to feel like when push came to shove, community action would hit against an austere budget like a brick wall: as above, "we ain't got the money" (Ken) or "it's too far gone" (participant at Site A).

Drawing these themes together - autonomy, possibilities for political action, and the challenge of advocating action during a period of government austerity - this project suggests autonomy may be a vital variable for us to include in the understanding of, and provision for, young people's crafting of political subjectivities. It is considered that autonomy in the form of young people acting or speaking independently to "[make] visible what had been excluded from a perceptual field" and "[make] audible what used to be inaudible" (Rancière, 1999, p. 36), including when the above takes place in private and everyday spheres of activity, must play a central role in young people's politics as a field for welcoming our fellow citizens into the broader community. Through accepting and encouraging actions that rupture the accepted structure of their public roles (Rancière, 2004, p. 226) we should allow young people to deliberate on public issues, hold political institutions to account and seek to conceptualize the public arena as a space where they can think and act with autonomy.

7.1.5. Autonomy, austerity and social legitimacy

Political autonomy rests on a young person's perceived legitimacy in the public sphere. During the contemporary period of austerity, this is in no small part an economic issue (Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Stanley, 2014; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015; Vromen, Loader and Xenos, 2015). The boundaries of power created by socioeconomic class were clear in the discussions at Site A, where participants discussed their search for independent housing, paid work and jobseeker's allowance, and qualifications that would enable them to improve their economic lot. At Site A the discussion was charged with a strong sense of exclusion on the part of young people who felt left behind as citizens of wider society because they inhabited a lower rung on the economic ladder: from the reflection on lived experience of the transition to adulthood that "it's shit",

"disheartening" to the sarcastic perspective on the possibility of having ones opinions represented in policymaking processes "yeah, everyone listens to celebrities". There was a charged discourse on the legitimacy of economic support for young mums that reinterpreted, from the researcher's perspective, the clash between a dominant framing discourse around legitimate citizenship in the United Kingdom that shames young people who require financial support, and the lived experience of young people needing support in the economic crisis.

Autonomy in the form of personal economic independence can perhaps be taken as a prerequisite for acceptability as a citizen, in the case of economically active young people, who are further along in transitions to adulthood and may well be working, studying or living independently. If so, autonomy, which in the younger years of the transition to adulthood is crafted in uncertain and undefined spaces like parks and unwanted corners of the town, takes on the conceptual framework of neoliberal economics in later years. The moralistic requirement to work, to earn a wage and to relieve the community from supporting you colours the lived experiences of young people. The very legitimacy of young people existing in communities is based, according to this framework, on earning and learning.

If the crafting of autonomous spaces during transitions to adulthood was a theme among younger participants in the study, it is appropriate to argue that the search for autonomy in early adulthood may gradually take on the additional baggage of labour in an economy that problematizes young people who are unable to find work, who need social support structures, and so on (Flanagan, 2008; Vromen, Loader and Xenos, 2015). Participants at sites B and C came across as worried about the potential for young people to succeed: for example, at Site C the group discussed the difficulty of finding profitable work while living in a rural area where local colleges were not funded to the extent others are elsewhere, and the lack of choice available in college courses. What was coded as a deep sense of dread at the prospects for economic success at Site A were already present in inklings of the discussions at the two following sites - a foreboding sense at group B expressed and which was coded by the researcher during the card sort discussion, when talking about the "housing" card, and which arose again in the focus group when Assassin's Creed talked about housing not affecting her "yet". This thesis's perspective on autonomy, based on the coding and reading of the

data as well in a reading of the existing literature, suggests that the apprentice model for young citizenship may be an appropriate one for understanding how young people perceive their own transitions to adulthood.

Political subjectivity may well be considered a contest for legitimacy in which young people hope for the opportunity to craft independent and creative political subjectivities but fear political action will be ineffective against looming hierarchies of influence, social capital and economic and political power, as well as a historical trend away from representative bodies making changes and towards those bodies minimizing the demand on their austere budgets. At the same time, efforts to participate in political action must be weighed against the risk of falling outside the bounds of respectable citizenship through the loss of work, low wages, motherhood or homelessness, or circumstances that would otherwise see them placed in the risk category known as NEET - not in employment, education or training - along with the increased stigma and decreased social legitimacy that brings. Autonomous spaces, it is argued in this assessment of the thematic review of the data generated in the light of existing literature, may reflect young participants in search of stable opportunities to craft political subjectivities in physical and conceptual spaces that are separate from adult control. These include the crafting of the self as a democratic subject in the local community, illustrated by the desire to find autonomous spaces for young people to talk, relax, resolve conflicts and so on. They include the expression of hope concerning youth-led political activities, like funding drives, in which full public consultation including young voices as equals can be utilized to pressure elites into action in a local area. The search for autonomy may also inform us to some extent why young people might craft political subjectivities that are averse to economic risks, to the extent that the risk of falling off the accepted path to citizenship can leave a young political subject open to disenfranchising and delegitimizing definitions as a problem teenager, risky youth, benefits claimant, or suchlike shame categories of low economic and social status.

7.2. From autonomy to legitimacy: doxic dreams and shattered Utopias

In reviewing and assessing the collected data, the researcher intended to apply loose interpretation, and constant reflexivity. This keeps to Bourdieu's (and

Wacquant's) theoretical intentions to construct "a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, woolly reality. For this, it is better that its concepts are supple and adaptable, rather than defined and calibrated and used rigidly" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 23). On the other, it was the researcher's intention to construct a shared subjectivity and sensibility with young participants in this research (Freire, 1993; Rancière, 2004; Pelletier, 2009), and, within the limitations of the PhD thesis as an interpretative study, adapt interpretative frameworks to the idea that the researcher is an active participant rather than a more passive interpreter, receiving data from participants and applying theoretical concepts from an objective position.

In reviewing the themes that were determined to run through the data, this thesis identifies, as a possible interpretation, an imagining of doxa through discussions of field. The field is taken as the space of play (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 19) full of players who seek the prizes it offers. In turn, this makes the field a conceptual product created by converging habitus. The field presented by general society, for example, which is manifest in the data by societal interactions in physical spaces like parks and on buses, if it is to be a shared field between young people and adults, can be said to exist if these individuals perceive and practice the same game.

7.2.1. Tracking theoretical approaches

The major divisions in the academic literature on young people's politics might be described as questions of *field*. What Phelps (2012) encapsulated in apathy and anti-apaty schools, and what is also intimated in the definition of young adulthood as a liminal space between childhood and adulthood (as in Wood, 2011b) is at least partly a discussion of whether or not young people and adults share the same political field. To explain young marginalization by apathy argues that young political practice is affected by a change in the field in which it is constituted, relative to older generations. Apathy towards politics reflects a different set of rules, a different perception or at least a different valuation of the prizes on offer, and therefore a different field of play; what Phelps identify as a responsive 'anti-apaty' approach is about reconstituting young people – particularly young non-voters – as participants in the *same* field with a *different* capital, as abstainers in a

calculus of the utility of elections rather than not caring about those elections in the first place.

As explained elsewhere in this these, the generated data includes a striking lack of discourse about elections, but judging from the strong presence of local councils perceived as having authority over local matters it is considered an unnecessary leap of assumption to say participants were apathetic towards electoral institutions. At the same time, the lack of discussion of elections suggests a different perception of *field*, since there was no thematic manifestation of differences in electoral capital between young people and older generations, even though these would have been easy to fit into the discussion – for example, in discussing the ability to change council decisions over the provision of local amenities no participant mentioned elections as a tool denied to under-18s. It was quite remarkable, in a literature and public discourse so dominated by elections and the question of young abstention, that neither elections nor abstention were present in the data.

7.2.2. Beyond the field

As an exploration of young people’s political subjectivities, this thesis suggests the liminal conceptual space of young adulthood may provide the opportunity for young people to imagine, represent, contest and reproduce doxic understandings of unspoken limits that are put into practice but not discussed, because they go without saying (Bourdieu, 1984).

‘Doxa’ refers to the apparently natural, unspoken and agreed acceptance of social limits arising from assumptions of the legitimacy of capital. Doxic imaginations rise through in this project’s discourse through verbal and non-verbal shrugs of acceptance – as in Site A’s participant: “I just go sign on” – as well as perceptions of the transition to adulthood as a navigation of fields where social limits go without saying because they come without saying – as in the discussion of the housing card at Site B, where Assassin’s Creed raised her eyebrows and smiled and said, “it doesn’t affect me *yet*”. Thematically, this reflects a dissonance between the data generated by participants and the perspective that their political subjectivity can be assessed with respect to “young politics” and “adult politics” as separate fields for practice. The difference between young people and adults, as portrayed in the

generated data, in other words, is contended to be a difference in the unspoken and accepted legitimacy of their relative capital –in doxa – rather than a difference in structured spaces for social interaction – in field.

At the same time, habitus, being “a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices” (Bourdieu, 1979, p. vii) can be useful in conceiving of the ways participants perceive, appreciate and act (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 163) in ways that – at least to some extent – tend to reproduce the society that created them (Cresswell, 2002, p. 379), in complex games of cat and mouse between a reproductive relationship with societal pressure and individual transformative autonomy to behave differently (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 9–10). As Mills and Gale outline them, these two categories allow young people to, on the one hand, “recognize the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and... read the future that fits them”, and on the other hand appropriate “the capacity for improvisation and [tending] to look for opportunities for action in the social field” (Mills and Gale, 2010, p. 90).

7.2.3. Why doxa?

Interactions between young people and adults are frequent in the generated data. In Bourdieu’s framework for habitus, capital and field, the goal is to assess and interpret the actions of young people through their interactions with the researcher, while maintaining a constant relationship between that interpretation and the understanding of the field or overlapping fields in which the participant is positioned.

If the field is considered to be where resources are valued, apportioned, claimed and contested by inhabitants of the field, Bourdieu identifies conflict between various actors to be generated not just by contests over capital but also over the definition of what constitutes capital itself, and how that capital is to be valued. Groups and individuals within a field of practice challenge each other for capital but also to define and redefine what constitutes legitimate capital in the field. Thus constituted, the “fundamental law” of the field, which Bourdieu called the *nomos*, is the set of measures by which capital is defined in the first place (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 96). This regulative principle is maintained as the constitutive structure of

the field. As such the *nomos* is what makes up the doxa of the field. It is the rules of what is thinkable within the field and the unspoken agreement on what goes without being said.

There were many fields in the data, from education and work to the literal fields of social interaction in public park spaces. What arose from the discussions of young people through the data generation is interpreted, thematically, as a discourse working towards an imagining and questioning of the unspoken doxa of young people’s political subjectivities during transitions to adulthood as they were navigated in multiple fields. The fields changed but the unspoken rules of capital and propriety stayed the same; not only that, they remained boundaries of the thinkable. What united the diverse discussions of habitus, capital and practice, in other words, was a single thematic identification of a unifying foundation of doxa.

7.2.4. Consciousness and subjectivity

What stands out about this foundational doxa is that although it was extremely rare for participants to engage directly in the discussion of what was thinkable, the identification and questioning of underlying doxic structures arose through jarring experiences of transitions to adulthood. In this section, an interpretation of this theme of doxic imaginings is presented alongside a discussion of how structural consistencies in the value and legitimacy of capital in various fields, i.e. consistencies of doxa, imposed themselves on participants in the generation of data as realities of transitions to adulthood shattered crystallized social understandings of the links between habitus and practice. You do what is expected of you, but things do not always turn out like they are promised to turn out. With one foot on each side of the threshold to adulthood, participants were conscious of the dissonance between doxa and lived experience, and this consciousness provided a conceptual space for political subjectivities.

7.2.5. Private anxieties and public hopes: the crystallization of social limits

“You can put these together because they’re in poverty, they might not have like, gone to school, had the opportunity so they don’t have the education to go to work”

Participant, Site A

Young people develop and carry out practice during transitions to adulthood in the form of activities and abilities, in Bourdieu’s terminology, that are learned and which are guided by dispositions. They are not learned in the sense that the individual studies practices and adds them to a toolbox of potential action. The learning of practice is a process of integration into the social spaces in which the individual, in this case the young person, interacts with other individuals. Habitus, for Bourdieu, is a way to explain the framework of judgement that guides the individual in selecting practices.

Approaching doxa as the crystallization of social limits to what practices are thinkable is considered to help understand the challenge of private anxieties and public hopes identified in the corpus of generated data and named elsewhere in this document using the term provided by Flanagan (2008). Young participants in the corpus described complex understandings of practice in public and the hope that moral judgements, social actions and so forth would yield positive results in capital terms. They discussed taking petitions around to support a case for social amenities in Site C, email campaigns to councillors in Site B and study as a means to increase economic capital through better paid employment in Site A. What brought all these examples to the point of identifying and questioning the operative doxa was precisely the conflict between the public hope that it would all work out, and the private anxiety that it would not. In principle, participants explained the ways that thinkable practices would have the desired result in a great many fields. When this discussion turned to practice, and participants discussed whether they had experienced or expected to experience the relationships between practice and capital that were articulated in the discussions, anxiety or, frequently, silence dominated.

7.2.6. Saying what goes unsaid

Silence was powerful. Frequently, familiar, straightforward semi-structured questions like “how might you change this for the better?” that the researcher expected to return, at the very least, generalized answers about voting in elections led to silence. Silence, as well as resigned responses like “you can’t change it, it’s up to you to manage it yourself”, you “just get by”, or, for example, public parks with no restrictions on young people’s activity will still render young people subject

to adult control of their behaviour, are presented in this analysis as better understood as participants demonstrating consciousness of the crystallization of social limits of propriety, while deciding, for whatever reason, not to articulate practices by which participants can effect change, etc. The term 'deciding not to' is chosen carefully here: it would be a leap of faith to assume participants were unable to perceive and articulate practice when the lack in the data might also be due to the presence of the researcher as a powerful adult in the room.

The theme addressed here is that when participants were presented with the question we might pose as the pseudo-mathematic construction: 'what can you do to change x in given field y', a puzzle which the researcher expected would yield insights into their political subjectivities in terms of the perception of capital and habitus, what appeared to happen was participants ran into a recalculation and re-imagining of doxa. As discussed below, it is a possible finding of this study that the liminal spaces in transitions to adulthood provide for young people to comprehend, and possibly to craft new imaginings and negotiations of, the unspoken doxa binding youth as a social space in the UK.

7.2.7. Legitimacies of capital

In the literature review of this thesis, numerous approaches to young people's capital were discussed, from individual political capital leading to discrete actions like voting and protest (Sloam, 2014; Manning, 2015) to cultural capital and lifestyle politics (Riley, Griffin and Morey, 2010; Miles, 2015). Through the course of data generation and analysis what arose was not the discussion of capital through practice, however, but rather, discussion returned again and again to the continuing processes of clarifying what capital was legitimate and what unspoken rules determined the playing of the game, so to speak, in numerous conceptual fields.

On the one hand, the binding doxa of young people's transitions to adulthood was discussed as an unspoken web of stigma and surveillance by adults, constantly defining and reproducing the boundaries of propriety of capital, which actions were permitted within the given field, and the distinguishing lines between groups within society. To provide an example, this approach helps explain the complexities in the discussions in sites B and C about interactions with adults, younger age

groups and shared spaces. What was coded as the theme of autonomy was not simply a recurrent discourse about the ability to do, but also the very ‘thinkability’ of doing. The way that adults would be perceived to “have a go” at young people (to use Barbie and Ken’s terminology) came through across all three groups as a perspective on adults limiting young people’s right to act in certain fields. It was also about a unifying doxa in which the very principle of young people’s subjectivities in public spaces were outside the realm of the thinkable. That an adult next door to a football field would disapprove of young people playing football and monitor and control their behaviour was not linked to the behaviour of the young players nor the adult neighbour, since it did not require young people to encroach on the adult’s territory, nor was that territory bounded by any defined limit. In the same way, the bus at Site B became a space in which the adult woman was able to dominate Xylem and her friend’s behaviour without, according to the group, any behaviour on Xylem’s part, nor any overt link to the boundary constructions (such as racism and stigma against young women) that the group were discussing at the time. Critically, the woman on the bus did not force Xylem and her friend off the bus (“We didn’t do anything! We just got off the bus...”). At Site A the ‘unthinkability’ of action is considered to have arisen in data generation through the same word of resignation “just” – just giving up, just getting by, just signing on – as a rhetorical throwing up of the hands at the immovable object blocking the way. This immovable object, it is argued, represents the binding assumption that young people’s capital is not legitimate. No amount of pushing from the young will sway adults from control of the unspoken boundaries that bind the field, the bus or the job market. The young capacity to take such action is outside the unspoken doxa of what is and is not possible.

7.3. Crafted subjectivities and community action

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, participants were recorded providing little in the way of perceived or discussable potential actions for political change, especially at sites B and C, where questions on this theme were met with an uncomfortable or uncertain silence. That is not to say, however, that there was no discussion of action for change. Change was made thinkable in various ways, which are discussed in this section. In a related sense, the relationship between silence over change and the discussed potential for change was considered to be

a constructive theme for analysis. Citizenship through inclusion in social processes (Liebel and Saadi, 2010, p. 152) provided for the crafting of political subjectivities, and these arose in everyday spaces. One example of this in the generated data is the theme of discussions surrounding “little kids” (Site B) or “kids” (Site C)¹⁵, younger-aged members of society, especially as fellow park users.

In both Site B and Site C, parks were both a conceptually and a physically liminal space, as they provided for participants a measure of both childhood and adulthood, independence and dependence, freedom and surveillance. On the one hand, parks were spaces to relax and interact with friends outside of adult-controlled arenas like school. They were spaces to use recreational equipment, play sports and spend weekends. On the other hand, the presence of younger children put participants into a conflict with local adults, as described in chapter 7.1.

The reaction to this in both groups came across as a combination of, in the first place, adapting to the uncertain requirements of adults, and in the second, perceiving and explaining opportunities that might arise in which social action would allow them to care for and improve the lives of younger children. Discussing the needs of younger children raised the curtain on a great many types of remarkably traditional political action, from direct intervention through volunteering to the lobbying of representatives in local government. Some examples included scrubbing rude graffiti off play equipment, discussions of concerns about the quality of play equipment for younger children and ideas about collecting money with bake sales, gathering names to a petition or emails to put pressure on local councillors, and perhaps – although it was not voiced in such clear terms by Bob at Site C – the suggestion that equipment and funding that had been dedicated to older groups should be shifted to younger children.

¹⁵ In my interpretative work I have attempted to keep as close to the original wording “little kids” without drifting away from the respectful address of the group by referring to them as younger children.

7.3.1. Practice, practice, practice

Everyday spaces for young people’s politics can include schools, which, although they are subject to adult surveillance, dominance, and control (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010; Kallio and Häkli, 2011a) provide practical opportunities for “youthful agency, subversion and resistance” (Wood, 2011). Participants at sites B and C made it clear when asked about their experiences of taking action and working towards change, school had provided practical arrangements for agency and young leadership. One example in the data was school fundraising: bake sales, charity drives and, at Site C, the provision of international links for fundraising and volunteer work trips to schools in poorer countries abroad. At Site B, the generation of data concerning schools as a space for agency was accompanied by the discussion of “empathy skills” – in the words of Assassin’s Creed – as the way that people were to develop a consciousness of events occurring in Israel and Palestine, and to turn that consciousness into productive action. Schools, in both groups, were spaces for youthful agency, as well as a liminal, in-between taking of leadership. Within the space of the school, though an adult controlled space, there are opportunities for young people to undertake their own projects. Thematically, this reflects the findings of the literature review.

What draws participants’ discourse about action in everyday spaces into this thematic assessment of doxa is the complex relationship between participants’ elucidation of opportunities to take action through school on the one hand, and the silence that sometimes – but not always, as discussed below – fell on participants when discussing action outside of everyday spaces on the other. Much like Paolo Freire’s example of the political activists who did not speak about politics (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009, p. 50), young participants who were enthusiastic in their discussion of doing politics in connection to schools appeared to find it difficult to address questions about political activity outside of them, at most expressing lack of confidence in their own ability to make change (“*Well, on the news, you can see what’s going on. But like [with emphasis] I personally can’t do anything about it*” – Bean, Site B). In the same way, streets as everyday spaces provided a welcome space for activism to support the development of community facilities and vibrancy.

7.3.2. Why are politics thinkable in everyday spaces?

Everyday spaces for political subjectivity (Bang, 2010; Wood, 2011b; Percy-Smith, 2016) were discussed in the literature review and the theme of everyday spaces came through the generated data as, potentially, identifying parks, streets and schools as arenas where participants provided interpretations of their own crafting of political subjectivity.

Through the thematic analysis of generated data, it is suggested that everyday spaces could be considered as a legitimizing intermediary, providing the potential for political subjectivities, crafted amid doxic limitations on the legitimacy of young people's politics. In other words, the liminal state of young adulthood – partly dependent, partly independent – makes political subjectivity thinkable. It can be utilized by young people as a way to subvert limiting perceptions of young adulthood as an apprentice citizenship. It was clear from participants at Site C, in their discussion of public protests against recent Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip, that they were opposed and eager to protest.

Firstly, liminality can provide the opportunity for young people to express political actions in terms of personal development. It was interesting that the group discussed it in overtly *educational* terms, that while older people donate to charity (as B said) participants explained a connection to "empathy skills" (as Assassin's Creed put it), which they reported were taught in schools. B also described how learning about empathy in school could be linked to environmental action for "saving the planet". Rather than taking time out from the accepted citizenship pathway, as it was described by Banaji (2008), it is possible that schools provide a legitimizing role for young people's political subjectivities as they develop. Empathy skills as learned in school were not downloaded wholesale, in other words, but utilized as an explanatory framework.

The school was not (or at least, it was not only) a source of capital in terms of providing young people with the tools and techniques of political subjectivity. School was an adult institution that could be subverted by young people to express what could be called transformative habitus (Mills and Gale, 2010, p. 90) without stepping beyond the rules of proper behaviour: modes of action learned

and practiced in school may be useful as ways to push the boundaries of action because they have been approved by adult supervisors.

Schools played a central role in the experience of social action and political subjectivity at Site B when participants explained the problem of running into adults and adult-led institutions who say “well, we ain’t got the money” (Ken). The group discussed ways that inertia for public projects could be overcome by fundraising. Ken said: “I’ve only done it in school, like, do cake sales and stuff”. The fact that the group had experienced it in school came across strongly as a testament to the *possibility* of the action, although not the *actual experience* of it (“I’ve only done it in school”). There is no consensus over what ‘counts’ as civic action in academic literature (Marsh, O’Toole and Jones, 2007; e.g. Lister, 2008; O’Toole, 2015) and Ken and Barbie’s conversation about fundraising as possible social action was reminiscent of the school pupils at B.E. Wood’s school fieldwork site asking whether things done in school count as social action (Wood, 2011a, pp. 160–161). Fundraising for the improvement of local facilities was different to fundraising in school but having done it in school, potentially, provided a legitimizing tool for making the action thinkable outside of school.

7.3.3. Political imaginaries: from hopeless realities to vibrant communities

Negotiating the legitimacy of political subjectivities came through the discourse at Site A in several different ways which were considered related to their older age. Site A perceived a striking difference between talking about politics and experiences of real life that manifested itself, as discussed in the data generation chapter for the site, in contradictory perspectives on hopelessness. In the first of the two focus groups at Site A, the same participant who had said the only political party she would consider supporting was the EDL, and who had led a discussion about immigration, the unemployed and the problem of “too much human rights”, explained – and raised laughter in the group – that these were not really her opinions but that you could read them in the newspaper, or “I was watching TV, right...”. The conversation, as outlined in the data generation chapter, turned to real experience and one participant summed the hopeless feeling of the group up as “it’s too far gone... just go into [town], you’ll see what we mean”. The

conversation – and the researcher's questions – centred on questions of plausible change, and so what was coded as private hopelessness in the review of the site data also relates to the difference in what is understood to be an issue where change is plausible: in the broader sense, political and economic issues might have been considered to be mutable if governments are able to control, in the group's example, immigration: "coming for free money, free food and free shelter". In the narrow sense of experienced life, however, change was not considered plausible. Social decline was considered "too far gone". The hopelessness of change was also documented across the theme of discussing job prospects at the transition to adulthood, as a process of navigating an unchangeable system of risk and arbitrary failure.

One complex example of the dichotomy between *principle* and *practice*, i.e. broader ideas of politics where change is imaginable compared to experienced everyday lives where change is not, was captured on the recording at the first group in Site A. While the researcher was talking at the other table, a group of young women – one of whom had an infant child – were recorded in their response to the card marked "housing", discussing a local housing scheme, the difficulty in finding a house as a young mother, the expense of living and scarcity of unemployment support, and why local government needed to provide more. Nevertheless, the group later discussed social housing as a deleterious influence on society *in general*. This conflict came to a conclusion when one member of the group blamed young mothers for having children in order to "get benefits": "what's the point? If you're just going to live off the dole, get housing and get benefits... it's ridiculous?", and a young woman from the group who it later turned out had been speaking with the young mother in their card exercise, spoke up in disagreement that it was appropriate if a mother was in work or in education; to which the group began discussing people they knew or were aware of who were young mothers and who they suspected might have started a family, particularly for the chance to live in independent housing, with the participant who asked "what's the point?" addressing the young mother present with "but obviously no offence to you... you come to college". As mentioned above, there was laughter throughout the discussion, which was difficult to interpret in any way other than through the words of the participant who said the things they were discussing were discussed in the full knowledge that newspapers and TV were untrustworthy; while, simultaneously,

the group had the sense that if you actually stepped onto the streets of the town, you would see how hopeless the situation was for people living there.

Political subjectivities can be crafted in the interstitial space between these two understandings of what is "thinkable" for the young person as a member of society. One way that this is explored in the generated data is in the discussion of graffiti, and generally action to increase the vibrancy of communities, as a plausible opportunity for political subjectivity. Participants at Site B presented graffiti as a discussion topic, at first, by identifying and discussing a photograph of graffiti that they thought needed to be cleaned off. What developed, elicited by this photo, was a conversation about good graffiti and bad graffiti. As discussed in the data generation chapter, good graffiti is graffiti that "makes it more vibrant" (Xylem) and which shows that "citizens" can use the space (Assassin's Creed). Good graffiti was perceived as skilful, too, with the group discussing the difference between simplistic tags and murals, including some that were physically demanding due to their height above the ground.

The identifying feature of graffiti as for the people (per Assassin's Creed) was the perspective that good graffiti went through the legitimizing process of community involvement. Firstly, graffiti could be done through the direct involvement of the community as a group, as a complex practice in the urban environment (Ferrell, 1995; Halsey and Young, 2006; Brighenti, 2010; Halsey and Pederick, 2010; Light, Griffiths and Lincoln, 2012) that participants perceived could provide the opportunity to make positive, social change if it was done through legal structures that would protect young graffiti artists from arbitrary arrest or punishment. The group identified racism as a particular issue that needed to be overcome, and making the legality of any graffiti project was explained as a vital first step. After that, the process of community graffiti was depicted as best undertaken through adult gatekeepers. It was suggested that shop owners might want their shops beautified with murals, or than certain neighbourhoods might, as a community, come to the decision that graffiti was welcome and support artists in that way. What stands out about the perception of the 'thinkability' of graffiti as "citizens" action (in the participants' words) is the absence of governance, of any kind of speaking out, or any general description of political change. Rather, the action is perceived within the doxic understanding of young people as social apprentices

undertaking civic action (Banaji, 2008). Young citizenship is legitimized as familiar pro-social activity, along the lines of picking up litter or participating in community get-togethers.

7.3.4. The realm of the thinkable: young citizenship as etiquette

In the literature review, this thesis identified the concept of apprentice citizenship as one way to model young people's citizenship in the United Kingdom. In the analysis of collected data, it was remarkable that, in the same way there are "virtually no serious calls for the representation of young people" in democratic institutions (Furlong and Cartmel, 2011, p. 26) and a tendency to discuss young people's citizenship as a status of being and a more or less passive "integration into pre-existing collective identities" (Percy-Smith, 2016, p. 5), there were virtually no calls by young people to be better represented, and they predominantly discussed externally defined citizenships into which they could fit.

This research suggests that the lack of calls for representation generated by young people might be understood as apprentice citizenship, as an unspoken doxa, made manifest by rendering other ways of doing unspeakable. Apprentice citizenship is a ritualizing citizenship. It remoulds the desire for, concept of and action in pursuance of political change into rituals of public etiquette (Foucault, 2002, p. 201). Young people's civic activity orbits a notion of community that is focused on inclusion, stability and security, and which subjugates young people's political subjectivity to the perceived need to get them 'engaged', via social ties to community networks (Bowman, 2014, p. 92). In this context, it makes sense for young participants to elucidate practices involving community engagement, such as fundraising at Site C, but to find formal practices of citizenship such as elections harder to grasp. It also makes sense that, at Site B, participants were enthusiastic about the idea that community-led projects for making their area "vibrant" but said, as Assassin's Creed put it, "you have to make it a law" because of racism; in both cases, and in especially stark terms in Site B, participants appeared to perceive the toolbox of actions available to them to be selected and legitimized by complex unspoken rules about what is and is not seemly for young people – and, in a connected way, to quote B at Site B, "especially black teenagers" – to do in the public sphere. Exploring the ways young people may be

found “practicing politics in ways that take advantage of a permeable public/private divide” (Manning, 2012, p. 2), using Bourdieu’s tools, requires access to conceptual understanding of the ways young people can subvert and transform their conditions – for example, how they can contest the conditions of various fields – which, it can be argued, is a required addition to Bourdieu’s work (Reay, 2004; Sayer, 2005).

7.3.5. Legitimacy through liminality

Young capacities for political action, I consider in my assessment of this data, could be generated through power relations, struggles and social dynamics (Staehele, 2011). Overtly traditional political struggles – meaning relationships between young people themselves and representative bodies and institutional politics – were rather limited. In both groups the Council was proposed as a body that could build local facilities. At the same time, the Council was depicted by all participants as subject to complex power struggles between, for example, the community and their needs vs. the Council and their budget. There were complex social dynamics in institutional relations just as there were in the claiming of autonomous spaces, and especially in the interactions that participants perceived between young people and the more powerful adults and less powerful “little kids” that shared and competed in the community. It is worth reflecting on the data that in each discussion, I would strongly suggest, provided the opportunity for participants to be apolitical, and it would not have been surprising given the age range of each group for them to respond that they did not have any power to change things. Instead, in each group, there was a perception that change could be made, with an emphasis in both groups on the perception communities can be forced into political action by pressures put on local budgets. This intriguing feature that may reflect the dominant public discourse of austerity and budget cuts in the period of study (Heyes, 2013; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015). It may also be related to the socializing experience of education and youth work each participant was undergoing: at Site C, especially, members discussed experiences of fundraising drives and charity work.

Liminal spaces at transitions to adulthood – as outlined in the literature review – provide opportunities for young people to contest, subvert and transform the

conditions that define the field of practice. Citizenship through involvement in communities and the experience of social forces like racism and poverty (Roche, 1999), inclusion into social processes and action to change what is going on around them (Liebel and Saadi, 2010, p. 152), are all available to young people in various forms despite the overarching system of young citizenship as an apprenticeship.

Young adults take part in society at the same time as society limits how thinkable it is that they can take part. In other words, transitions to adulthood provide young people a conceptual space where they are considered sheltered from social forces, excluded from social processes and marginalized in their capacity to take action at the same time as they develop experiences and subjectivities related to social forces, involvement in communities and social processes, and so on. As a relationship between political subjectivity and a superstructural doxa limiting it, the struggle to conceive of and legitimize social action could be considered to take place in precisely those everyday spaces where social action is experienced, even if the prevailing doxa renders young political action more or less unthinkable.

7.4. Discussion: Drawing themes together in a landscape of academic literature

The generated data and the thematic analysis of that data are, in this section, analyzed and synthesized into a collection of overall findings with respect to existing academic literature on young people's politics as discussed in the literature review in chapter 2. As well as drawing together themes and relating them back to the literature review, this section identifies the themes in the literature review and indicates where they are considered to be reflected in the generated data. By doing so, this section places this research project directly into its wider academic context and suggests further opportunities for research arising from the findings herein.

7.4.1. Hard politics, soft methods, and the Vote

One of the most important features of the landscape of research concerning young people's politics is the question of young people's marginalization from traditional forms and methods of politics, and especially from political institutions such as, in

the UK, Parliament and Parliamentary elections. The bottom line is that academic research is driven by the question of resolving young people’s disengagement or engagement relative to older generations (Marsh, O’Toole and Jones, 2007; Banaji, 2008; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010; Garcia Albacete, 2014; Sloam, 2014; Akhtar, 2015) or perhaps, the negotiation by researchers of whether or not young people’s political activity leads us to judge them as apathetic political subjects or not (Phelps, 2012) and whether or not young people’s political activities, inactivities and general situation represents a crisis for the political system (Farthing, 2010; O’Toole, 2016).

The possible barriers to the discussion of traditional, adult-centred politics by traditional, adult-centred modes of data generation was discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis and this project drew together the major questions of young people’s politics in the UK with the call for naturalistic and everyday spaces for the discussion of young people’s politics (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2007; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Kallio and Häkli, 2011a; Wood, 2011b, 2012). In simplistic terms, this thesis hoped to utilize soft methods in its approach to the hard political questions of young people’s subjectivities.

The use of participant photography, a focus on everyday spaces and a participant-led, egalitarian focus group situation in which participants were instructed to lead the discussion and supported by unstructured and semi-structured questioning was a very soft method indeed. Avoiding overtly political topics and language, and especially the word politics – which can stultify discussion (Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2009, White, 2011) – this research hoped in part to explore the ways political subjectivities were accessible in young people’s repertoires of discussion about their everyday lives.

In each group participants elaborated on their perceptions of and interactions with institutional politics, and particularly with local politics. The Council was discussed at each site as the gatekeeper of funds, the controller of public spaces and the institution you lobbied if you wanted change. In Site A, where participants were older, there were discussions about the national Government as well. Soft methods were clearly able to draw these discussions to the fore: or, more accurately, the participants in each group were enabled by the methods to engage

in the generation of data about these subjects. With that in mind, it is a significant finding of this research that elections were remarkable in their absence. Despite running alongside the early stages of a General Election, at neither sites B or C, in the latter half of 2014, did participants mention national Government or elections to that body. Similarly, although Councils took a prominent role in participants’ discussions of their local areas, things that were good or not so good about them, and procedures for lobbying for their improvement, no participant talked about Council elections.

In each group a complex repertoire of political subjectivities was developed. From anger at immigration to opposition to Israeli military action in the Gaza Strip, from the provision of local parks to the building and budgeting of the Crossrail project through London, the young people in the study were informed about issues and enthusiastic in their discussion. They were also elaborate in descriptions of approaches to political action, from protests and boycotts to lobbying Councillors and online methods for petitioning. In no group, under no topic of discussion and at no point did elections arise as a means for doing politics. To use the parlance of existing academic literature, young people in this project were enthusiastically *engaged* with politics *per se*, but even in the overt exploration of their political repertoires for action by the researcher – through questions like “how do you think you could change that?” – voting as an instrument for power, deliberation or legitimacy was absent.

7.4.2. Do apprentice citizens vote?

Applying the findings of this project to the wider landscape of research, it is important to reflect on young people’s citizenship as a pro-social apprenticeship (Lister, 1998; Banaji, 2008, p. 553) and a political existence “where common issues are deliberated by [adult] representatives and politicians” (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 4). The absence of the vote from discussions may reflect the tendency among participants to prefer, or to prefer in their discussions, pro-social ‘good neighbourliness’ forms of citizenship. In other words, that politics in the first place should be a realm for individual moral behaviour, “empathy skills” (to quote *Assassin’s Creed*) and civic duties within accepted and institutionalized realms of behaviour rather than questioning or disrupting those through critical

consciousness and political action. Within the boundaries of the research method, this interpretation makes sense should the researcher be interpreted as a powerful adult to whom the deliberation of common issues should be deferred.

The relationship between the researcher and participants, and the role of young participants in wider society as apprentice citizens must certainly have had an effect, but at all sites there were also discussions of disruptive political action and questioning of hierarchies; examples abound, from the deliberations over child support and economic policy at Site A, to the discussion of racism and interactions with the police at Site B. On the other hand, at Site C, there is a weaker thematic role for discussions of subversive or counter-institutional political subjectivities: to provide an example, in the rich discussion by participants of the "massive houses" with adults who take any opportunity to "have a go", there was not the same level of critical discussion as at Site A (where participants proposed strikes, protests and online campaigns) or at Site B (where participants discussed long-term historical trends or the need for legislative action). Site C's participants were the only group who were interviewed in a school, and undertaking compulsory education at the time. It is important to reflect on the school as a space, as Kellett says, "in which the adult-child power imbalance is particularly acute" (2004, p. 91). It may be that apprentice citizenship results in the absence of elections from the political toolbox through something of a circular feedback mechanism: it is a mode of political activity in which the adult-child power imbalance is acute, but in the spaces where that imbalance is most in line with young people's real and experienced political subjectivities, young people also find themselves the most strongly urged to undertake pro-social apprenticeship forms of participation. It was very interesting, in this regard, to hear participants discuss learning empathy skills, fundraising techniques, cake selling and petition taking at school, and to be enthusiastic in generating discussions about the value of such actions to bring about change in their everyday lives; at the same time, no participant mentioned learning about the vote in school. The lack of clarity over citizenship education in UK schools and the uncertain outcome of citizenship education and the conceptual dissonance between improving young people's access to tools for political change and training them in volunteering is clear in academic studies elsewhere (Mycock and Tonge, 2012; Tonge, Mycock and Jeffery, 2012). In any case, it seemed as if participants were ready to take action and had been trained in methods for doing

so, but predominantly these methods were based around individual morality, charitable donations and volunteering.

7.4.3. Austerity, depoliticization and real life

The absence of elections from young people's explorations of their political subjectivities coincides with the strong thematic trend towards explaining public issues as situations where, primarily – in the words of Ken at Site C – *"well, we ain't got the money"*. Austerity, budget constraints and the intractability of public officials when confronted with calls to take action are the ubiquitous features of participants' experiences and imaginings of political institutions and actors. The crisis and austerity period has been described in contemporary literature as having a profound effect on the perceptions of everyday citizens' responsibilities and the competencies of government (Stanley, 2014). In a similar way, participants at all three sites shared the perception that public life and big-P politics was most of all an argument between citizens who wanted something and governing institutions and policymakers who refuse to pay out. In a way that also reflects the perceptions of citizenship as a 'neighbourliness' pro-social etiquette and a toolbox of empathy skills discussed in section 7.4.2, participants in all three sites, as a unifying theme, perceived the responsibility of 'doing' to fall on the head of morally responsible citizens. This is reflected in the frequent discussion of fundraising at all sites, for one example. As a single thematic trend, politics is proposed as an issue of cuts. The responsibility to make changes falls on individual citizens who should lobby elites for it, but the most common result is that those elites will say there is no money. Interpreting this theme in the data, it might be possible to suggest elections come across as inefficacious due to a long established depoliticization of governance in the UK, the strategy of distancing politics from decision making by one step, by devolving responsibility to management or market processes (Burnham, 2001).

The prominent counter examples as assessed by the data analysis process were two in which responsibility was clearly placed on the shoulders of institutional actors, and to which solutions were put forward that required specific policy and legislative outputs. In both cases the distinguishing features of the issue were that they were directly experienced by young people in a way that changed their

everyday lives. First, at Site A, the group discussed problems finding housing and the struggles of young mothers – at least, those young single mothers who were morally sound and who turned up to college or to work – to provide for their children with State financial support. Second, and most clearly, at Site C, where the group discussed experiences of systemic, and especially police, racism and the reality that without legal protection for people like graffiti artists, in Assassin’s Creed words, “*if you left it to the police to decide what happens to them, like before, the racism, it’s quite obvious what’s going to happen*”. The perceptual framework of politics at a time of austerity (Bramall, 2013), and especially in a period of policies through which the state is being rolled back, cut or dismantled (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011) may be ruptured by young people’s experiences in everyday life, even if their discussion of the same issues are completely different when they are encountered in principle – as in the discussion of single mothers at Site A, where the perception of mothers in *principle* was far more an individual moral issue about selfishness (Biressi and Nunn, 2014) class/gender prejudice and the demonization of dependency (Valentine and Harris, 2014). Depoliticization and desocialization may well go hand in hand, as the example of single mothers can illustrate. If public issues are the fault of private individuals’ moral failures in principle, then the solutions are to be undertaken at an individual level. If, however, young people are provided experience and autonomous action as part of society in practice, it may well be that their crafting of political subjectivities is more rooted in consciousness of the social and systemic issues at hand.

7.4.4. Further development: depoliticization and liminal spaces

Earlier in chapter 7, the analysis of themes presented a connection between the findings of this thesis and those in the landscape of academic literature generally: the opportunities arising from liminal spaces at transitions to adulthood. During the complex transitions “between childhood dependence and adult independence” (Pachi and Barrett, 2012, p. 344) participants generated discussions on the crafting of political subjectivities in their everyday lives as social and cultural environments (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 2), partly private and partly public, partly autonomous and partly dependent on adult frameworks and support.

One example of this thematic trend in the generated data, where liminal spaces between the private and public allowed conceptual space for the crafting of political subjectivities, was in the discussion of graffiti at Site B. Participants shared expressions of respect and awe at what they considered good graffiti, which unified artistic expression with physical skill and subversive, rule *bending* if not exactly rule *breaking* streetwise savvy (Halsey and Young, 2006; Hedegaard, 2014):

- X *The places some graffiti is, like... When I'm walking up, near... I can't remember where I saw it near, but going into Brixton, and there's like this car shop, and you can see that there is graffiti like, high up on the building, and there's no way you can reach it*
- AC *How do they get that high?*
- TB *Is that out by the train station? Exactly how do they get that high?*
- X *[with emphasis] And you can't be seen doing it because you can get arrested as well*

Grffiti as a liminal form of expression, partly physical, partly artistic; partly legal, partly illegal; secret and subversive while simultaneously famous and on public display, was clearly perceived as an opportunity for the crafting of political subjectivity, too. Xylem said the defining feature of good graffiti was that it makes a public space *"more vibrant"*, while Assassin's Creed said the identifying feature of good graffiti was that *"citizens"* could be active subjects in their everyday environments: *"good graffiti, it kind of shows like - obviously it's colourful and stuff, but like - it kind of shows that people like us can use the [space]..."*.

As well as providing participants a discursive opportunity for explaining how citizens can act to improve the space, graffiti was a conceptual political space that allowed participants to develop discussions about political subjectivities that were conscious of political structures, hierarchies and doxa of acceptability (Rancière, 2004, p. 226) and particularly of systemic racism. As Xylem said, *"it comes down to colour"* what powerful people will do to graffiti artists, as it comes down to race what local councils will do to support citizens using local spaces:

"It's what they will, what they will do, if it's brought up as an issue. I don't think they will do a law, because graffiti isn't much of an issue at the moment... [pause]... Well, it is, but it's [these] people that we're talking about. So if you bring it up they'll... they might consider it, but I don't think they'll do anything else"

Assassin's Creed, Site B

The issue of graffiti provides the group a discussion space for explaining a two-tier public hierarchy, in which racism is a strong feature of governance, where elites are perceived to crack down on the actions of everyday people unless those actions are specifically sanctioned by law – *"If you left it to the police to decide what happens to them [i.e. graffiti artists], like before, the racism, it's quite obvious what's going to happen. So. I think if you make it a law then everybody has to abide by it and then they won't make any mistakes"* (Assassin's Creed) – a perception that strikes the researcher as very much in the same vein as Jacques Rancière's conceptualization of Police (Rancière, 1999, p. 29), especially taken in conjunction to the group's discussion of graffiti as a means for citizens to use the spaces where they live, to make them more vibrant, and to participate in community –led decision making on which buildings can be painted:

"But [---] there's all those times they do it without the council's permission so why do you need someone's permission, why do you need someone's permission to make, to do graffiti, and it's positive?"

Assassin's Creed, Site B

Not asking for permission in order to take positive action in a community reflects a thematic understanding, and crafter subjectivity among participants, of politics as "the mode of acting that perturbs this arrangement" (Rancière, 2004, p. 226).

The theme thus described and illustrated correlates with the theme of antipolitics and depoliticization as a governing strategy (Schedler, 1997; Burnham, 2001) can be correlated with contemporary political theory on citizens' action and, as such, effective and egalitarian democracy as a detestable manifestation of selfishness, consumer thirsts and what Rancière depicts as the perception of the flock trying to overthrow the shepherd (as in Rancière and Corcoran, 2009). In the literature on young people's politics this project discovered similar perspectives on young

people's activity as placing society in jeopardy (Forbrig, 2005, p. 7) through their abrogation of pro-social and conformist road maps for their proper transitions to full adult citizenship (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010). The connection that was discovered through discussions with participants was the perspective that governance is precisely depoliticized. All three sites perceived local administration by the Council to be a matter of answering citizens' requests with "*well, we ain't got the money*" (Ken, Site C). The process (or governmental strategy: Burnham, 2001) of depoliticization by deferring political issues away from democratic governance and into the realm of private enterprise or natural or market forces is a familiar feature of politics in the austerity period (Bramall, 2013; Stanley, 2014)

7.4.5. Hopes and insecurity

For at least the last twenty years, academic and institutional attention to young people's politics has been drawn to the apparent disconnection between young people on the whole, and politics and civil society. The dominant assumption that "most young people are apathetic, civically unaware, disassociated and excluded" (Edwards, 2007, p. 543) is considered a problem if it means that young people are now, or are becoming, disengaged from the entire public sphere (Banaji, 2008, p. 543) and especially from representative democracy and associated mechanisms for administering and regulating public life (O'Toole *et al.*, 2010; Garcia Albacete, 2014, p. 5). This project explored the suggested retreat of young people from traditional political life by examining their descriptions of their everyday experiences to explore their political subjectivities crafted in everyday lives. At the same time, it considers research that indicates there has been no "uniform shift towards 'new politics', value systems and orientation" (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005, p. 573) and that young people remain concerned by traditionally 'political' public issues (Henn and Foard, 2014). These two factors – the retreat of young people from the traditional political arena, while still retaining interest in traditional political matters, and still struggling with the matters that traditional politics tackles, from healthcare to employment – taken together pose a very important question. Where has the politics gone from young lives?

The relationship between public hopes and private anxieties identified in the literature review – and using the terminology of Constance Flanagan (2008) –

came through strongly in the descriptions by participants of their lives and interactions with broader society in the UK. Insecurity as a fact of life (Stanley, 2014; Vromen, Loader and Xenos, 2015) provided participants with a framework for perceiving the world in a complex way beyond the promise of winning big by working hard (Mendick, Allen and Harvey, 2015). Thematically, the dissonance between hopes of success and experiences of arbitrary unfairness and failure was reflected throughout all three sites and is drawn together here in the discussion of participant's perceptions of economic risk, powerlessness in everyday spaces and experiences of adult stigma.

Economic risk was the primary topic of discussion at Site A, which reflected the particularities of the everyday lives of participants in that group, in their late teens and early twenties, undergoing vocational training. However, that did not stop younger participants at sites B and C identifying housing, employment and education as major issues in everyday life and as issues they explained they knew they would need to worry about eventually. At Site A, the discussion of economic risk in principle was distinct from the discussion of economic risk in everyday experience. On the one hand, both groups at Site A described the failure to get a job, to earn money or to live independently from social support to be an issue of individual "*laziness*", selfishness and moral failure (Biressi and Nunn, 2014). On the other hand, when discussion was rooted in everyday lives, their perceptions and explanations were very different. Arbitrary failure despite hard work and sufficient qualifications could come in the form of preferential employment for people who knew people, difficulty finding a place to live because affordable housing was scarce in the town, or the complex life experience of going between fluctuating work and worklessness that one participant at Site A described with a shrug as "*you just want to give up. I just go sign on*".

Powerlessness was a strong unifying theme among participants at all three sites. Participants were as enthusiastic about possibilities for taking action as they were up front about how hopeless they perceived those actions to be, judging from experience. At sites B and C, complex and hopeful plans for bringing together community support for needed public improvements were singularly expected to fall on stony ground when they reached local authorities, who were expected to say, "*well, we ain't got the money*". In a contemporary period of austerity in which

young people's services have been among the worst hit by cuts (Hodkinson and Robbins, 2013; Arthur, 2015) it is unsurprising that participants perceived local authorities to be reluctant to fund even well organized community proposals. As well as in interactions with local authorities, participants frequently described their interactions with adults as experiences of powerlessness and failure. Two examples are the experience of Xylem at Site B, who explained how she and a friend had had to leave a bus after being harangued by an adult passenger as a "*disgrace*"; and the experiences of participants at Site C, where a local field was useful as a site for playing football except for "*massive houses*" adjoining the field, from which adults could impose an arbitrary boundary on young people's use of the space and "*have a go*" simply because they could. The hopelessness of young people attempting to participate in public arenas as equal members of society came across reliably in participant's discussions of real life experience, even though in principle, they were enthusiastic about the potential of working with adults to gather signatures for proposals, support email campaigns, and so forth.

Powerlessness in public spaces and in interactions with adults was a powerful theme that coincided with participants' descriptions of experiences of stigma and prejudice. In the above example of the park, the "*massive houses*" with "*loads of flowers*" were taken to suggest the nature of transitions to adulthood in rural areas, where young people can have their legitimate use of public space challenged by adults from higher social classes and economic capital (Leyshon and Bull, 2011). At Site B, the experience of systemic racism and stigma has been discussed in detail in this chapter, and provides a further example of participants explaining their everyday lives as, in practical terms, an environment in which their actions and public legitimacy is constantly subject to networks of adult surveillance, judgement and control over which they have little power.

8. Methodological reflections

One intention of this project was to develop a methodological approach for exploring young people's political subjectivities crafted in everyday spaces, and to assess the method itself is therefore an important task undertaken in this review chapter. Technicalities arising from each site are considered, the process of data generation is analyzed and, in the conclusion of the chapter, the researcher presents suggested findings from the experimentation with method.

8.1. The thesis as a journey – multiple site sampling

As discussed in the methodology, a PhD thesis is not just a research project, but also an investigative journey by the researcher (Hanrahan, Cooper and Burroughs-Lange, 1999; Mullins and Kiley, 2002). The researcher's progress through the project was negotiated through multiple sites, seeking a variety of contexts for analysis (McLeod and Yates, 2006) and the process of selecting and sampling these sites was a major part of the project itself.

8.1.1. Identifying sites

The journey of this project provided for a useful and varied set of analysis contexts: varieties of age, economic, social and ethnic background and gender. The sites included differences in rural and urban areas, and differences in institutional setting. It was particularly interesting, given the methodological focus on everyday geography, to have selected two photography-based sites which were from such different areas, as city and rural living are mutually divergent where young people's experiences of the transition to adulthood are concerned (Tyrrell and Harmer, 2015). Multiple sites were intended to tap into differences in young people's political subjectivities, but also to provide the opportunity to investigate structural issues that might influence young political subjectivities in different places.

8.1.2. Unvisited sites: Site W

Within the restrictions of this project three sites turned out to be sufficient. Of the many potential sites contacted and gatekeepers spoken to, four further sites were identified and significant planning made for data generation. In three of these, the

early stages of research were carried out, in terms of contacting and liaising with gatekeepers. In the first (which will be referred to as Site W, a youth centre in a deprived area of a medium-sized English city), contact was first made in December, 2013; the first meetings with youth centre staff and an agreement to run the project was made in March, 2014. Over the course of the spring, the researcher worked to coordinate a focus group with the centre, through several visits to the centre, was assigned a youth worker with the requirement that all research had to be done through the assigned gatekeeper, before being told close to the date of research that the volunteer had departed the service. An initial meeting with potential participants was made in July, 2014, but the site was written off due to the absence of the agreed youth worker and the response of the two potential participants that the project would take a lot of personal time when they were planning school trips and summer holidays. Site W was the closest to a working field site of the three aborted sites.

8.1.3. Sites X, Y and Z

The second, Site X, was an arts-based youth centre located in a large city in the north of England first contacted in May, 2014, at the time when Site W was appearing to be an unlikely site for research. After initial interest from centre staff in the project and an agreement to participate, and following phone and email correspondence in preparation of booking the project, the youth centre had a turnover in staff over the summer, and contact was lost by September 2014, by which time Site B had been completed and Site C was in preparation. Site Y was to be a return to the same college visited at Site A after preliminary discussions had been held with staff members following the first visit about the possibility of coming back, and the college was contacted twice, once in March, 2015 and once in June, 2015. On both occasions the researcher was informed that it was possible, but that the appropriate member of staff was extremely busy. Calls and emails were not returned by this member of staff, and so the researcher took this as an indication that a visit was not welcome. Site Z was a research site that was planned as an attempt to develop data generation in a site where young people were employed as waged workers, arising from the development of themes in chapter 7. In February 2015, a free house pub in a small English city was approached with the aim of recruiting bar staff for the project. The manager was

supportive, but during the interaction with staff via email, spoken contact and recruitment posters and flyers from March through August 2015 it was not possible to recruit enough members for the group that could attend at the same time without disrupting their working schedule.

8.1.4. Methodological review: Sites A, B and C

In review of the method in the three successful sites, this project presents three findings. Firstly, that working through gatekeepers might have been better considered as including those gatekeepers in the data generation process itself, especially at Site B; secondly, that the project's goal of returning to sites for participant feedback and debriefing responses from gatekeepers was not successful at any of the research sites, a methodological challenge that will be discussed; and thirdly, that the progress and success of the project relied on a lot more of a scattered approach to site selection than was predicted in the method design.

Access is not a one-stop process. The need to build a rapport with adult gatekeepers in order to establish spaces for data generation with young people is clear (Punch, 2002b, p. 10) but in each site for this study, it is considered by this methodological review that gatekeepers continued to have a presence in data generation throughout the study. To synopsise examples from each site, which have already been mentioned: at Site A, the promise of extra credit for participating in the research kept the gatekeeper 'in the room', so to speak, throughout, and in the case of the first focus group at Site A, the long internal windows that adjoined the room provided the feeling that the students' instructor might turn up to peek in (although she never did). At Site B, it was marked by the researcher that the participants' discussion was drastically changed by the presence of the centre youth worker, first when the group was starting to speak and before she had left, and then again when she returned at the end of the session. In particular, it was recorded by the researcher that the participants were in energetic discussion and the return of the youth worker rather stopped them in their tracks. It is clear that the presence of gatekeepers can hinder young people in the generation of qualitative data (Hill, 2006, p. 77). In practice, unfortunately, it was unavoidable. At Site C, a member of school staff was present at the back of

the room throughout, marking student papers, which did not seem to change the ways that group members participated, but was noted in the field notes. The presence of adult gatekeepers was not planned for in this study.

At each of the sites, the researcher attempted to keep contact with gatekeepers in order to organize follow-up debrief meetings, but at none of the sites did this turn out to be possible. At Site A, the plan to return to the site was made difficult when gatekeepers did not respond to contact. At Site B, youth workers responded, and received an early set of codes alongside a return of participants' photos, but did not respond following that. At Site C, the lead teacher for the project responded to initial emails but time constraints on staff at the school meant follow up meetings were not possible.

8.1.5. Final analysis of site sampling

The negotiation and renegotiation of sites in this project was expected to be difficult, given the complexity of arrangements with young people and with gatekeepers in a variety of settings (Leyshon, 2002; Morrow, 2008). At site X, negotiating with gatekeepers included multiple visits to the site and additional agreements with the site on what the researcher considered ethical grounds, in the promise to work with a set youth worker for the project. The complexity of negotiations necessary was a significant challenge to the project.

The site sampling strategy was successful in the sense that three extremely productive sites were selected, in which data generation was completed, and yielded extremely rich data. A variety of contexts and of participants was achieved. The process of organizing focus groups was generally straightforward, and the model of research appeared to be familiar to gatekeepers and participants alike.

The site sampling strategy was unsuccessful in that it failed to provide any sites in which long-term collaboration turned out to be possible. No gatekeepers were interested, in the end, in participating in the debrief or further research. At site X, the assigned youth worker was very interested in undertaking the research, and time was taken to inform him of the procedure for data generation, but as noted above, the youth worker ended his term at the centre before data generation could commence.

It is a finding of this thesis that the creative, but complex methods proposed in this study were difficult to run when working with institutions like schools, colleges and youth groups. The complexity of negotiations made it a long and difficult process to set times for meetings, agree on project timing, dispatch and return consent forms, and so on. Each institution had its own policies which had to be kept to, and at each institution the willingness of gatekeepers to participate in the project finished with the end of data generation. Neither in planning nor in retrospect is this considered to be a flaw in the model of the project: the researcher's responsive mode to gatekeepers was a challenge but one that grew from a perspective of openness and cooperation with participants and gatekeepers alike.

8.2. Cards and focus groups

At each site a focus group was carried out according to the methodology, but with adaptations that were intended to allow participants the opportunity to contribute to the research design where possible (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010, p. 105). This meant that the researcher stayed flexible to the needs of each site – gatekeepers and participants – and the method was slightly different in each case, as discussed in the data generation chapters for each site. In this section, each stage of the method is reviewed and assessed.

8.2.1. Card sort and World Café: method review

The card sort was adapted from Jonathan White's *Political Allegiance after European Integration* (2011). In each site the set of cards used was identical. Field notes taken at each site note that in every case participants responded, in the first few seconds with the cards on the table, that they didn't understand what was going on. Responses coded as 'not understanding the card sort' continued throughout the process from beginning to end, and included participants who were involved in the process itself. This is reviewed as an important feature, and is interpreted to reflect the social discomfort in coming to terms with sharing one's own expertise (Morrow and Richards, 1996) as well as, perhaps, attempts by participants not to be the ones "who get picked for everything" (Hill, 2006, p. 77), i.e. resident experts to the detriment of the inclusion of others. Overall, each group was able to develop a discussion of the topics and formulate groups from the cards, and so the card sort was judged successful. One of the experimental cards

of this project’s own devising was ignored by all the groups in the project – the card marked Freedom – and in future projects this card would be eliminated from the set.

Reflecting on the card sort, which was based on a research method for working with taxi drivers in pubs (White, 2011), this thesis made significant changes in both the types of participants and the setting. The project allows the comparison between two educational settings – a college at Site A and a school at Site C – and one non-educational youth group. At all three sites, the researcher’s field notes on participant interactions with the card sort are remarkably similar. The tendency to select work and education as the primary group, and the tendency to ignore the Freedom card, are presented as examples of cross-site coding of participants’ convergent responses to the method. At sites A and B, participants were noted to have approached the researcher to comment on the illustrations. At Site A, on first seeing the cards, one participant asked the researcher “did you draw these yourself?” At Site B, participants talked about the polar bear on the Environment card. The researcher’s assessment of the cards was that the style of drawing brought participants into a more equal relationship with the researcher than might have been the case with more professional-looking cards.

The World Café plan for focus groups on tables, information sharing and discussion building (Brown, 2002b; Brown and Isaacs, 2005) was impossible to keep to, in practice, at least according to the methodological literature that planned out the activity. In keeping with the method, however, the table setup and provision for discussion is judged to be a success. In each site groups were able to discuss the topics provided and come up with independent points of analysis as well as group constructed agreements. By way of review, several adjustments which were made in situ are recorded and suggested here.

8.2.2. Adjustments and suggested adjustments by site

First, there was a significant difference between the discussions participants had between themselves during the card sort and following the card sort, when the researcher called each group back to assess the groups they had come up with. It was appropriate to do this, given that each site had to be kept to a time limit for the data generation project, but it might also be possible to dispense with the return to

report to the researcher. With audio recorders running at each group, it might have been possible for the researcher to divide site participants into two groups at different tables, and then indicate to them a time for them to report their results to the participants on the other table, prolonging the engagement of participants with the exercise without the direct questioning of the researcher. This might have been an opportunity to collect additional data.

Second, at Site B, the presence of youth workers in the card sort made it difficult to assess the value of the discussion, since youth workers were eager to prompt participants at whichever table the researcher was not standing by. While at sites A and C, participants who said they didn't understand the task were left to proceed without intervention unless they specifically requested guidance, at Site B participants who responded under the code 'not understanding the card sort' were prompted with suggestions by youth workers. This was not considered a major hindrance.

Third, the field notes taken by the researcher record a physical reticence in each group at all three sites. At Site A, as mentioned in the data generation, this might have been due to the physical constraints of large tables, and to a lesser extent the size of the group for the card sort at Site B might have made it uncomfortable for participants to move. At Site C, however, the small group and small table was expected to make it easy for participants to engage physically with the cards and move them around the table. In fact, this was not the case, and participants apparently preferred to sit still and wait for someone to move the cards. This was not entirely surprising, and might be another reflection of participants' desire not to be the one who gets picked for everything (Hill, 2006, p. 77). In future projects a few ideas were noted by the researcher: stacking the cards rather than laying them out, so that they only became visible after participants took charge of moving the cards or producing very large cards and laying them on the floor. This did not have any major discernible influence on the generated data, but suggests that some changes to the card sort might allow the method to generate additional data during the card sort stage.

8.2.3. Group discussions: method review

In this method, participants were intended to encounter a hybrid setup for providing a "naturalistic" space for young people (Wood, 2012) to discuss everyday experiences of the social and political (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2007; Lawy, Quinn and Diment, 2009; Kallio and Häkli, 2011a; Wood, 2011b, 2012). The natural feel of discussions were noted to ebb and flow as the participants fell into and out of conversation. At times a semi-structured approach was taken by the researcher to bring the group to discuss certain topics, or to encourage participants to speak about their photographs. This tended to produce direct answers from single participants. In Site A, at both of the two groups, participants generally spoke as a group when they spoke together, with no discernible smaller groups or partnerships, with the exception of the young mother in the first group at Site A and the young women who had been talking with her during the card sort. At Site B, Assassin's Creed and Teddy Bear were sisters and shared several conversations, often raising laughter among the rest of the group; B frequently spoke at length alone while the rest of the group laughed or talked separately; Xylem and Bean were quiet at the beginning of the session but became more involved later. At Site C, Barbie and Ken had undertaken the photo project together and were clearly good friends, which goes some way to explaining the vibrant nature of their dialogue. Existing friendship groups did not stultify conversation: indeed, the enthusiasm of Barbie and Ken, and Assassin's Creed and Teddy Bear, seemed to put other participants at ease in a more natural environment for talk. It was noteworthy that the card sort and focus group model on which this project's method was founded (White, 2011) was developed for adults, but that it appeared to provide an amenable environment for open talk, spurred along by enthusiastic social interactions between close friends and relatives within the group.

8.2.4. Pseudonyms

The selection of pseudonyms was certainly a source of fun to participants (Gallagher, 2008, p. 148) and participants discussed their code names and rationale with each other. At Site A, the unexpectedly large number of participants led the researcher to abandon this part of the methodology, but it was carried out at sites B and C. In both cases participants turned up at the group session with

their pseudonym ready chosen. At Site B, Bean and Teddy Bear reported that they just liked the names. Xylem was learning about plant structures and liked the letter X at the beginning. Assassin's Creed named herself after her favourite video game. B, as he noted in the group discussion about graffiti, was proud of his "foreign name" and didn't want to lose it in the data, but suggested as a compromise that he would just go by the first initial. At Site C, Barbie and Ken wanted names that came as a duo and Barbie made the group laugh by emphasizing the R in the name in the regional accent. Bob thought Bob was a good anonymous code name, which also made the other participants laugh. At first, Andrew was using a different code name but changed part way through, choosing Andrew as simply a name he liked. Although some scholars warn pseudonyms can be disruptive (Barker and Weller, 2003b), in this project they contributed to the data by making the conversation more humorous and therefore more welcoming. They enabled friendship groups to be valorized in a small way, contributing to the naturalistic environment for discussion. They also, in the review of the method, helped in the process of informed consent, since it was a simple way to introduce the idea of being present in the data but neither identifiable nor entirely de-humanized. While in Site A the participants were simply anonymous, at sites B and C the individual character of each participant is, in a small way, retained despite anonymity.

8.3. Photovoice and photography

As a way to generate data, photography was intended in the first place to elicit the discussion of participants' everyday lives and experience, and in the second, to build discussions about potential change and action within those spaces (Wang and Burris, 1997). In this section, I review the adaptable implementation of Photovoice and of photography in general as a method for drawing participants into discussions.

The major finding and major success of this study, with regards to photography as a technique for generating discussion, was the frequency with which discussions in focus groups concerned locations and physical and conceptual spaces *beyond the boundaries* of the photographs provided. This is discussed in each individual site section.

8.3.1. Review of photo project at Site B

At Site B, photographs were taken using the provided cameras by each participant individually, who then returned with the cameras for a second focus group session. It was noted that participants tended to explain their own photos following the semi-structured interview questions from the researcher, before broader questions to the group were able to bring in fellow participants to discuss wider issues and experiences. Typically, the photographs were discussed in terms of what was not depicted – as in the case of the park in section 5.3, where the obscured nature of the inside of the climbing frame allowed B to explain to the researcher, from a position of expertise (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 182), what is typically found inside climbing frames of the sort depicted – and the utility of photographs to generate discussion of locations elsewhere, off shot, is reflected on as a success.

8.3.1.a. Misunderstandings arising from the photo project at Site B

At Site B, there was a major problem arising from the photography project. This was that gatekeepers at the site had informed prospective participants that the researcher was a professional photographer and that the project was, in fact, a skills workshop for learning to use cameras and to take better photographs. The researcher made this misunderstanding clear to participants in the initial meeting, and although a large number of young people were present for the card sort, the misunderstanding left most of them disappointed with the event, the limited crash course in photography and ethics, and the below-professional quality cameras available. Only five participants returned for the focus group. It was discovered that in previous years there had been a regular photography project and it is possible that this project had been assumed to inherit the mantle. It is an important finding from this project, then, that while photography is not uncommon as a method used by young people as participants in research projects (Morrow, 2001; Allen, 2009; Wood, 2012) researchers must take great care to temper what may be a common misunderstanding that photography is an easy technique to teach or that anyone can do it, and to pay attention to misinterpretations of projects that use visual methods as essentially art projects rather than discursive, generative focus groups. Although this had been made clear in writing and verbally at Site B, it appears that photography projects may simply be so common that certain assumptions go without saying. After the initial misunderstanding, the project itself

worked extremely well as a way to elicit discussions about everyday spaces and political subjectivities. Photographs of a local park, of graffiti and of street scenes were particularly effective. Still, there were problems with the method regarding the perceptions of gatekeepers. Although I received no feedback from youth workers at Site B to confirm my suspicions, I strongly consider that the gatekeepers at Site B were disappointed that the photo project returned a great many photographs of bins, broken paving slabs, graffiti and so on, and it was my suspicion in the field notes that gatekeepers were expecting an art project that would return higher quality, aesthetically pleasing photos that could showcase the group's work in the neighbourhood.

8.3.1.b. Special note: Place, race and whiteness at Site B

The rich and committed descriptions of racism at Site B leap from the discourse on the pages of this thesis as they did in the focus group session, both in explaining and describing experiences of racism to the researcher, and in the sharing in the group of conversations on racism and particularly experiences of public spaces where young people of colour had to navigate individual and institutional racism. These discussions are welcomed and respected as at other sites, but the richness of generated data it is considered worthy of reflection.

The whiteness of the researcher at Site B and the participants' mutual construction of the (in this case, white and male) researcher as an outsider (Best, 2003) is reflected in the data at Site B, where race struck the researcher as accurately depicted as a social process rather than a static category, very much something you *do* rather than something you *are* (Morris, 2007). Methodologically speaking, participants were intended to be invited to an interactionist and negotiated conceptual space for race by the blank spaces rather than tick boxes on the "personal information" participant cards discussed in section 3.5.2. As well as reflecting participants' own self-identification, this is considered to have been at one and the same time a process of the social construction of the researcher's whiteness.

In reflection, it was vital to welcome the expertise of participants at Site B over their own negotiation and performance of race, both through their own self-identification and the process of negotiating the researcher's identity, and this

process combined well with the place-based visual method that was explicit about yielding expertise to young people when they spoke about their own lives (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 182). It is considered clear in the generated data that race was inhabited and used by participants to be experts in their everyday lives: in other words, these data are considered to reflect on the participants' race and on the researcher's. In the same way that participants were empowered by the method to inhabit *places* that the researcher (from the University of Bath) did not, and therefore be experts in it, the method was considered to empower participants to inhabit *races* that the researcher (a white PhD student) did not, and therefore negotiate expertise in the same way.

From the researcher's perspective, it is also clear that the researcher himself undertook no clear process of self-identification by filling out a card, and so if the method is to be reflected on as allowing participants the space to negotiate their own masculinity, femininity, blackness, Jamaican-ness and so on, then it must also include the process by which the researcher himself was constructed as male and white. This was a relationship between the performance of the researcher's pale skin, male voice and so on, the conscious mentioning of his own whiteness by the researcher during the group, and the research process *itself* as a mutual process of constructing whiteness. It is important to reflect that if the researcher in the same way as empowering young *place* expertise by saying "I'm a University researcher", empowered young *race* expertise by saying "I'm a University researcher", and in so doing embodied the University researcher as a performance of whiteness in itself. This project aimed to reflect on the method itself for possible developments for stronger, better research and in future, it is considered that the researcher could be clearer about the sharing the process of identification with participants through a more fully up-front and mutual construction of the researcher's whiteness, rather than assuming whiteness (and hence perform a normativity of whiteness) through silence over the researcher's race. Practically, this could start with the researcher filling in a "personal background" card alongside participants.

8.3.2. Photo project at Site C

At Site C, Bob reported that he took photos alone. Ken and Barbie walked together and shared a camera, while Andrew forgot to take photos and had brought two photos he had previously taken, printed from his computer. At Site C, as at Site B, the discussion of photographs led participants to talk about what was not depicted. In the case of the park photographed in section 6.3.1, the group’s discussion mostly concerned a second park just off shot. Again, the nature of the discussion was interpreted to show the photo project had provided for participants to speak from a position of expertise (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010, p. 182), not explaining what was clear for the researcher to see, but maximizing relative competency by talking about what the researcher could not see at all.

8.3.2.a. Special note: Selfies at Site C

One unexpected outcome of the photo project was something Ken and Barbie reported when they showed their photographs to the group: “we took a lot of selfies”. In the introduction to the photo project the researcher and participants discussed excluding any photos that clearly showed the participants for reasons of protecting anonymity, and Ken and Barbie explained they had simply enjoyed taking selfies, and that we should exclude the photos. The selfies still elicited discussion: for instance, a conversation about rural amenities and the local college began with a selfie Ken and Barbie took at the entrance to a building owned by the college.

It is considered worth reflecting on Ken and Barbie’s taking ownership of the method in this way. The method invited participants to explore their political selves and subjectivities. As such, this is also an invitation to explain reality through a performance of the self: Butler writes that in our culture “self” is the measure of reality” (Butler, 1997, p. 93). The selfie comes with a complex history and performative aspect as a medium for the self, bound up in cultural phenomena including the depiction of the young self in online social media (Gabriel, 2014) and the use of lower quality and more casual styles of photography to regain “that certain something, the aura, which photographs lost with the arrival of high-quality lenses” (Bartholeyns, 2014, p. 65). Although the selfies themselves are not included in this project, they raise the question of the value of the selfie in projects

such as this that invite young people to perform the self in creative and expressive ways. The developing literature on the selfie could certainly provide us with an avenue for creative methods for data generation that invited young people to include themselves in the frame of their photographs.

8.4. Methods for further study

Reflecting on the methodological review, this section proposes findings by identifying prospects for further study. In this section, possible adjustments that could be made to future projects are also examined.

8.4.1. Card sorts and focus group interviews

A selection of suggested findings have already been made in section 8.2. The main finding from the card sort exercise, and the subsequent focus groups, is that this project was correct in planning for small groups of 4-5 participants. Sites B and C were this size, and were manageable and easy to record, while at Site A, where the groups were larger, it was not possible to reliably record every individual comment and attribute it to a participant.

For participants to shape and cultivate their own conversations (Skelton, 2001; Morrow, 2008) rather than reproduce the researcher's words or perspectives, this project reflects on the card sorting exercise as a mixed success. As was suggested in the methodological literature, participants were able to collaborate in making sense of the group exercises (Hare-Mustin, 1990; Barbour, 2005, p. 65), and this was most productive when the researcher was not present (Wood, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). At sites A and B, the groups for the card sort were large enough that the researcher could go walkabout, but at Site C, the small size of the group meant the researcher was always there. In both cases, the discussion functioned in a different way, but it is a finding of the project that, indeed, participants spoke more and were more able to collaborate when the researcher was absent for periods of time. It might be appropriate, in a small group project, for the researcher to leave the room with the recorder running, in order to achieve the effect of an absent researcher in stimulating group interaction. Similarly, and as noted above, this project considers that it is important to take account for the presence, either physical or implied, of gatekeepers in the focus group. Whether they were present

or merely had the potential of turning up, gatekeepers clearly were not absent from data generation.

8.4.2. Selecting sites and negotiating with gatekeepers

The recruitment of sites and negotiation of dates, group makeup and times with gatekeepers were a serious issue that was somewhat underestimated at the outset of the project. On the one hand, the response in the course of this project was based on maximizing contextual sensitivity (Silverman, 2006, p. 17) and so it was judged appropriate to accommodate gatekeepers' needs as much as possible, and to maintain relationships with potential sites for as long as possible before judging them unlikely to come to fruition as data generation sites.

It is one finding of this methodological review that in terms of drawing out discussions of political subjectivities in a way that can support young people as participants who are able to take more ownership of generating and remixing data (Burwell, 2012), it might be more appropriate for studies to focus on a smaller number of groups, but to work in closer contact with participants. A longitudinal or more sited ethnographic approach would likely lose the variety of participants that this project enjoyed, but, on the other hand, a closer connection to a few participants might have led the project into deeper, participant-led analysis of the main themes.

It was unfortunate that site X was unable to participate in the project, as the youth worker at the site professed to be a keen photographer with an interest in creative research methods. In future projects it might be productive to utilize gatekeepers as a way to engage more fully with the complexities of human-mediated reality (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 326). For a gatekeeper to generate data for the project at the same time would be an interesting and perhaps productive way to bring young participants into constructive, consciousness-building for all parties, and illuminating discussions about the differences between life at transitions to adulthood and life beyond those transitions, through the shared medium of a research project.

8.4.3. Photo walkabouts and photo projects

At Site B, youth workers suggested that the researcher, the youth workers and young people as participants walk around the local neighbourhood as they took photographs. Although this may have limited the ability of participants to generate photographs independently, it also illustrates the key finding from the photographic method: participants spoke more about what was *not* in the photo than what was in it. As such, the photographs themselves were elucidatory. They were used as a tool for participants to choose and control what they discussed (Morrow, 2001, p. 258) rather than forming the basis of the discussion in and of themselves.

This project, in other words, was not so much a photography project as a creative methods project that stumbled on photographs as a useful method. On reflection the nature of photography as a commonly accepted way for young people to have a voice or “get heard” (Buckingham, 2009, pp. 648–649), and the mistaken assumption at Site B that a project involving cameras was going to have photography as an art form as its central feature, may suggest that future projects could use different, less familiar methods. As a creative method that might achieve a similar effect – illustrating public spaces in a way that allows participants to take ownership over what is depicted – but which does not use cameras, the recording of sounds from local areas might provide future projects with a productive tool for data generation (as in Levack Drever, 2002; Wood, 2014).

9. Conclusion

The defining contemporary problem that drives study in this field is that young people appear to do politics differently, and that the UK as a political system is unsure how to respond. On the one hand, the problem of young politics is reflected in dismay at the ways young people avoid traditional modes of political participation (Henn and Foard, 2014) and encapsulated by now familiar commands to resolve an incipient democratic crisis caused by “the young of today [who] are jeopardising the future of democracy” (Forbrig, 2005, p. 7). On the other, a rich academic literature focuses on alienation and disaffection among young people as influences turning them away from institutional political participation (Marsh, O’Toole and Jones, 2007; Banaji, 2008; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010; Garcia Albacete, 2014; Sloam, 2014; Akhtar, 2015). This thesis approached the question of young people in UK politics from the perspective of young people’s everyday experiences, and the discussions of political subjectivity that can be generated through in depth, focus group interviews with a small-N study group of young participants.

By investigating everyday spaces as realms for politics (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a; Percy-Smith, 2016) this thesis provided an exploration of young political subjectivities by inviting participants to explore their own encounters with institutional and non-institutional politics. The concluding chapter of this thesis outlines the major findings with regard to young people’s political subjectivities, the overall outcomes of data generation and interpretative results, and a reflection on the utility and potential for the focus group method which used digital photography. Finally, this chapter returns to Shakuntala Banaji’s formulation of the key issue for research in the field, that “the idea that young people are disengaged from politics and civil society, indeed from the entire public sphere – through no fault of their own or systemic constraints, or because of something that typifies that particular age-group – has become something of a mantra now in this field, and it is almost unthinkable not to state it” (2008, p. 543). This chapter assesses young people’s politics in light of the research carried out, and provides final reflections on possible research opportunities arising from the data herein.

9.1. Overview of findings

This thesis is constructed around three primary research questions and that tripartite structure is recalled below in order to provide an overview of the main findings of the project.

9.1.1. Tools for political agency

Research question 1: In the complex transition from childhood to adulthood in the UK, what tools for political agency are available to young people, from traditional modes of institutional participation to new grammars of action and everyday politics?

In the generated data, participants at all three sites were motivated by issues in their everyday lives, mindful of political institutions and able to elaborate on experienced and potential acts to perturb the political arrangement of functions and legitimacies in their lives (Ranci re, 2004, p. 226). Their tools for political agency were characteristically participatory. They experienced and imagined political action being done by local citizens or local people in general, and by young people in particular. Older groups elaborated on participation through political protest, celebrity-driven lobbying platforms and online campaigning. Younger groups more often discussed direct lobbying of local Government, typically through petitions and fundraising. Tools for political agency were depicted by participants in a complex relationship with inclement doxic understandings of what is and is not seemly for young people in UK society: for example, younger groups at sites B and C tended to elaborate on political action by explaining they had learned to take signatures, raise money, and so on, in school. The relationship between adult institutions and adult-led understandings of politics, and the utility of institutions like schools as a legitimizing tool allowing young people to craft political subjectivities that are within a broader framework of young people's acceptable citizenship etiquette (Banaji, 2008, p. 543), is vital to the understanding of participants' political behaviours.

At Site A, tools for political agency were discussed through their consumption of news media and other sources of world current events. In the first focus group at Site A, participants made it clear: that they had seen protests on TV, and

participated in the 'Stop Kony' Facebook campaign for example. Following the actions of the EDL and French strikes on TV were mentioned by participants when speaking about ways to effect political change in their lives. The toolbox of political behaviour they shared in their discussions was almost entirely practical methods such as protest, boycotts and petitioning. At the second group at Site A, they explained the most likely way to make political change was to join together behind a celebrity "*like Bono*".

It was clear from participants at the two sites B and C that they perceived their political agency through direct, participatory tools of action. These included petitions and email campaigns to lobby local Councils at both sites; at Site B, protests against international events and local community action supported by business owners and "*citizens*" of which the example was graffiti projects to make their local area more vibrant; at Site C, fundraising of various types and volunteer work. It was clear at both sites B and C that schools played an important role in learning the tools of the trade, such as running cake sales and collecting signatures, or developing young people's "*empathy skills*".

The absence of elections and adult-led, adult-sanctioned political tools as effective tools for political agency was striking at all three sites. At Site A, where participants were all of voting age and where there was even one mention of political parties (although the participant mistakenly identified the EDL as a political party) it was the participation by young people in protests by that group that stimulated the discussion of the EDL in the first place. It was also striking in the two younger groups, at Site B and Site C, that their perceptions of potential political action although involving adults (such as community leaders and business owners in the local community at Site B's graffiti project, and schools as institutions providing training and legitimacy in political methods) were fundamentally led and involved the action of young people. Also worthy of remark was the perspective throughout all three sites that young people perceived adult-led institutions and especially the Council to be open to receiving young people's voices but singularly reluctant to take any action that cost money.

9.1.2. Crafting political subjectivities

Research question 2: In what ways do transitions to adulthood in the UK provide the opportunity for young people to craft political subjectivities, in the liminal spaces between childhood and adulthood, dependence and independence, and the private and the public arenas?

The relationship between young people and their lived worlds as political arenas was considered in this thesis, following the generation and analysis of data, to be a question of participants encounters with socio-political frameworks of propriety, legitimacy and doxa. This follows the findings of the literature review in terms of identifying youth as apprentice members of public arenas “where common issues are deliberated by [adult] representatives and politicians” (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 4). The complex nature of young people’s transitions provide for numerous ways to craft political subjectivities in the liminal spaces they inhabit, partly legitimate actors in the public arena, partly marginalized apprentice actors, and partly excluded from that arena.

a. Political subjectivities were legitimized as good citizenship etiquette

Firstly, it is clear from participants’ descriptions of political activity in their experience and in their suggestions for potential action that pathways and etiquettes of citizenship can be adapted or subverted to the end of crafting political subjectivity. This perspective is exemplified by the participants at Site C explaining how, even if a Council is reluctant to take action on an issue, schools provide a mediating and legitimizing structure for young people to be heard and take action themselves. Similarly, participants at both sites B and C discussed pressing for changes to local services by placing the needs of younger children first, and appealing to adults as advocates of those younger children. At Site A, the crafting of political subjectivities through the adaptation of citizenship pathways was less clear, but the approach was still present, particularly through the perspective shared by participants that change had to be done by large groups of people coming together, ideally with the legitimizing and signal-boosting presence of a well known celebrity “like Bono”. The relationship between political subjectivity and the liminal spaces of youth was also made clear in participants legitimization of public, political actions for private, individual reasons. For example, at Site B,

participants spoke about taking action in public to protest military action in Gaza as a question of using *"empathy skills"* which had been taught in school. Rather than a political platform or ideologically motivated political action, participants explained their political subjectivities in reflexive, personal terms and on an issue-by-issue basis (Manning, 2012).

- b. Political subjectivities were crafted through community identities and perspectives on the potential for cooperative action

Secondly, participants explained their political imaginaries and practice in powerful terms of community building and coming together. Action was rarely considered within an individual's capacity: as B said about insulting graffiti on a climbing frame at Site B, *"I wish that I could just pull a bucket and sponge out of nowhere and clean it off"*, but as the group continued to discuss, they explained that cleaning up parks required collecting a large number of local residents and organizing to contact the Council together. Everyday lives were depicted by participants as arenas where people could get together and cooperate to raise their voices and combine their efforts to make a change. At Site A, for example, topics ranging from the use of child soldiers in Uganda to the building of more social housing in the local town were all raised in the discussion as opportunities for people to join together in one stronger voice for change. At Site B and Site C, petitioning and community action have already been discussed above; participants at these sites also generated deep and complex discussions about community building among young people. These varied from the use of local geographic locations, especially parks, to join up with friends, spend recreational time, resolve conflicts and generally establish a space for autonomous behaviour; to perspectives on citizens in a local area coming together to use public space for graffiti projects in order to make them more vibrant.

Community building in the liminal spaces at transitions to adulthood sometimes had an additional quality of resistance about them. For example, participants explained facing stigma in public spaces like buses along with friends, and leaving together; they talked about seeking out spaces in their local area where they could sit and talk with friends away from the adult gaze, such as the tree photographed by Bob at Site C. As identified in the literature review, young people's transitions to

adulthood are subject to a doxic understanding of a pro-social, predominantly conformist framework for proper citizenship etiquette (Banaji, 2008). These limit, in particular, the legitimacy of young people as equal occupants of public spaces to roam, play, speak and act (Taylor and Khan, 2011; Davies, 2012; Bourke, 2014). For this reason, participants appeared to utilize their liminal status to enable them to roam in public spaces and act autonomously, from the perspective at Site C that although fences were legitimate boundaries young people would always climb them because *"we're kids, we're going to climb over!"* to the complex rearrangement of hierarchies in park spaces that Site C's participants explained could allow them to justify their own claims for more autonomous space away from prying adult surveillance by, as Bob suggested, improving the section of the park that younger children used through, in Ken's plan, surveying the younger children and collecting a petition of their concerns. Participants perceived themselves standing in a middle ground between younger children and adults, neither possessing the full independent capacities for action of adults nor being dependent on adults. As inhabitants of a conceptual middle ground, they were discovered in this project adapting and utilizing their liminal status as young adults to legitimize action, perceive potential for change, and make claims on – for example – geographical spaces to spend time with friends. Community building was also clear in the explanations of participants at Site B of the differences between black teenagers and white teenagers, and struggles with stigma and police attitudes: that although there were things all teenagers shared – as Xylem said of white teenagers, *"they're really facety"* – there were differences in the measurement of crime statistics (as Assassin's Creed said) and in everyday experiences, not least of being stopped and searched by the police (as B said), that set the two groups apart. Racism was a problem participants saw affecting their lives, particularly in the unfair application of adult power and privilege between different groups, to which there were two possible answers, being clear legal protection (Assassin's Creed) and community action: *"we can't really [make a difference]. Well, we could, if we got lots of people"* (Bean). Getting lots of people together was a strong thematic trend between all three sites, with participants at all three perceiving change to be something you advocated and enacted with the empowerment of a large swell of public opinion.

c. Political subjectivities were crafted in autonomous spaces

The role of autonomy in everyday spaces arose from the complex reality of young adulthood in public, neither entirely accepted by wider society nor entirely excluded from it. Parks are a typical illustrative and practical space for young people to experience the liminal status of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack, 2003; Taylor and Khan, 2011; Tani, 2014), and the nature of the photography project in this thesis perhaps further encouraged young people to present the park as a key site, since they are visible, colourful and easily photographed public spaces. What stood out about these spaces, however, was that the park was made manifest as a political space in young people’s descriptions of their experiences in their everyday lives through the perception, legitimization and contention of autonomy in those spaces; and particularly the autonomy of young people to speak and act in opposition to adult-imposed doxa of understanding that considered young autonomous public action illegitimate, undesirable and antisocial.

Parks were autonomous spaces insofar as participants perceived them as arenas for roaming, spending time with friends, resolving conflicts, and so on. Conflict resolution was raised by participants at Site C who provided a good example of the role of autonomy in parks as generative of political subjectivities in their discussion of adults “having a go” at young people for shouting or arguing even if they didn’t know the nature of the discussion. The competition for space was not so much about young people arguing for *more* space or *better* facilities – indeed, both sites B and C argued specifically for better facilities and more space for younger children to the detriment of young people of their age groups. It was about autonomy in those spaces and the ability to do and say what they wanted without having to conform to adult-imposed and arbitrary norms of propriety and social etiquette. As Site C discussed, they perceived increased spending on park equipment for older age groups detrimental to their use of the space, because younger children and their parents had begun to encroach on a section of the park that they valued as a space to get together with friends and talk openly. It is a significant finding of this project that participants explained a desire for equality and autonomy first, even in the discussion of improving public amenities like skate parks and recreational areas. The contested nature of these public spaces generated participants’ political subjectivities in terms of identifying the need for

autonomous spaces as well as perceptions of ways to take action to protect these spaces or better bring them about.

Autonomous action was also presented by group participants as a question of effective local ownership of local issues and spaces, which came up, in one example, at Site B in the discussion of local graffiti projects to bring vibrancy and a modern look to local surroundings, and to show "*citizens*" can use the space (Assassin's Creed). The perception of public space as a site of contestation between local communities and governing elites – in the case of this example, the Council and the police – for legitimizing action was clear in the descriptions by participants of their experiences and suggestions for improving local areas. In the example of graffiti at Site B, participants explained that graffiti projects to enliven local areas could be put together with the support of local businesses and community members, funded by the community in the face of budget cuts and elites more interested in raising profit than providing local amenities, and that community action also required specific legislative frameworks to stop arbitrary control by elite actors. Particularly, this referred to the police arresting graffiti artists on the site: to quote Assassin's Creed, "*If you left it to the police to decide what happens to them, like before, the racism, it's quite obvious what's going to happen*" and Xylem, "*it comes down to colour*". Autonomous spaces were not just about young people and communities being able to do what they wanted. The perception of autonomy in public spaces was fundamentally a perception of conflict between young people and local communities on the one hand, and elite institutions on the other; who, for normative reasons of political control, or for budgetary inertia or in placing profit before local autonomy, sought to control the autonomy of young people and local communities. At Site A, practices of autonomous action were made very clear as oppositional actions, and participants explained they thought their local community needed to be more like "*the Gypsies*" or "*the French*" in standing together as a community, protesting against elite institutions and governing bodies, striking to put pressure on officials, and so forth.

d. Political subjectivities were crafted where public hopes and private fears collide

The dissonance between public hopes and private fears (Flanagan, 2008) was identified in the literature review and in the data generation chapters as a vital way

to perceive young people's transitions to adulthood, normatively and publicly constructed as safe and hopeful transitions to independent living, but experientially treacherous and subject to the deleterious effects of young people's political and economic marginalization (Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Flanagan, 2008; Lawy et al., 2009; Manning, 2012; Pachi and Barrett, 2012). At Site A, participants were of the age that their transitions to adulthood involved vocational training, qualifications and finding stable work as well as housing, and were beginning to undertake independent living including parenthood of their own children. At this time, the dissonance between their public hopes and private fears were generative of political subjectivities. The search for jobs in an economy where *"it's not what you know, it's who you know"* as one participant in the second group at Site A said raised the question of whether the economic system in which attendance at college and work experience was supposed to bequeath young people with stable transitions to permanent employment and good working conditions in theory, but did not do so in practice, was fair.

The experiential factor, that is, the difference between young people's everyday politics and their perceptions of politics in the grand scale of national governance and media coverage of current events, was reflected clearly in the discussion at Site A of different categories of single mothers. On the one hand, the group perceived an imagined community of single mothers outside the room who would have children only to increase the amount of social benefit to which they were entitled, and to get a house; on the other hand, they explained that single mothers in their lived experience, like the single mother in the room, were hard-working, turned up to college and to work, and were trying to support their children. The experience of political divisions between the powerful and the powerless intruding on everyday lives was a generative factor at Site B, too, where participants explained historical racism in their community and in dealings with the police, including an explanation of riots in the 1980s, of stop-and-search, and racially differentiated treatment of black and white teenagers. As at Site A, the difference between politics *in principle* and politics *in everyday life* was clear. Assassin's Creed explained that although *"OK personally I haven't like been to a prison, to like look at the race population but, it's quite obvious that there's a lot more black people that are in prison or that have a criminal record than white people, so obviously the police are going to be [biased]"*, in actual, everyday experience

police racism, and prejudices in general against black teenagers of both sexes, was an unfair controlling of people's ability to be, speak, and act autonomously in their everyday lives, which needed legislative outputs to counterbalance racial bias.

9.1.3. The study of young people's lived worlds as political arenas

Research question 3: In methodological terms, in what ways can research that is applied to young people's lived worlds as political arenas contribute to an identified need for new methods and new explorations of those arenas?

This project employed a generative, participant-led focus group strategy to use a gradually developing method, constructed and applied differently at all three sites. As such, findings are presented in reflection on the method itself as to the utility of the method and methodological approach, particularly in terms of approaching young people's lived worlds as political arenas (Kallio and Häkli, 2011a, p. 2). These findings were explained in Chapter 8.4.

This project specifically invited participants at sites B and C to speak about their everyday lives by taking photographs of real locations in their lived worlds. In contrast, at Site A, participants were merely invited through semi-structured questioning to talk about their real lives and everyday experience. It is hard to overstate the enthusiasm with which participants at sites B and C joined the researcher in discussing the social interactions, adult surveillance and search for autonomy in their everyday lives by pointing out real, existing locations and taking on their role as experts in their own lives – a vital part of this study's methodological philosophy (James and Prout, 1997; Morrow, 2001, 2008; Kellett, 2005; Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010). It stands out that participants who were able to take and discuss photographs of their lived environments were confident in developing and explaining plans for action in those environments to improve local amenities or overcome systemic constraints on young people's potential political action. In a similar way, participants at Site A were supported in discussions of real experience and everyday politics, rather than politics in principle or in current events, when subjects of everyday experience were brought to their attention in storytelling in the room: a good example is the single mother in one group who

was clearly a challenge to assumptions some members had about the morality of claiming social support for raising one's child.

What stands out about the photography at sites B and C is that almost all the topics of discussion, though they were elicited and legitimized by participants as arising from a photograph, referred to locations or subjects not depicted in the frame of the photo: for example, the discussion of the park facilities at Site C where the park participants were talking about was just out of the frame of shot; the discussion of the graffiti at Site B where the climbing frame was depicted but the graffiti was inside. In all these cases, it was considered that participants used the photographs as a legitimizing structure for discussing the topic of their everyday lives as political arenas – and 'ticking the box' of participating in the researcher's project as defined by the researcher – while claiming full expertise over the subject of discussion, which, as it is slightly out of shot, cannot be seen by the researcher, who must give up full authority over the subject to the participants, who are familiar with it from everyday experience. Therefore it is concluded that such methods may not just support young people in discussing their everyday lives, but also reinforce them in their expertise over them.

If so, it is vitally important that the researcher is not just sensitive to the complexity linking human perception to material reality (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 326), but actively supportive of it. In both sites B and C the researcher was open with the participants that they could change, adapt, appropriate and remix the method in an ongoing bricolage of photography, talk, experience, imaginings and arguments (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Markham, 2005; Denzin, 2010). Participants were supported by the researcher in talking about subjects out of the frame, for example, which was a subversion of the method that provided welcome and productive results for data generation.

9.2. Possible outcomes through future research

The project suggests several opportunities for future research, which are documented here in a non-hierarchical list.

- Specific applications of this research in future research on electoral participation.

The photographic method for eliciting discussions might be used to good effect over the course of an electoral cycle by inviting participants to photograph the everyday manifestation of their election experience – for example, the polling station – and in doing so, generate discussions about the process and politics of elections that embedded their political subjectivity in their lived experiences. Based on this study, it would be advisable for future scholars to pay particular attention to allowing participants to discuss things that fell *outside the bounds* of the photograph they used to elicit discussions. It is considered highly likely that, for an illustrative potential example, a photograph of a polling station might in fact stimulate discussion about a bus stop located behind the polling station and not visible in the photograph.

It is considered that participants younger than voting age – as many participants in this study were – would be welcome participants in a study on elections in everyday lives. A photo project of the type used in this study could invite participants too young to vote to discuss what they expected from elections when they were old enough.

- Identifying liminal spaces within doxic parameters of political activity

The richness of data on adult and institutionally sanctioned modes of action, such as fundraising and petition-taking, suggests that the method employed here would be useful as a data gathering and reflection tool for young people involved in such projects. Schools, councils and other organizations hoping to involve young participants in reflecting on projects like local fundraising might consider giving a small number of young people involved in the project the post of project photographers, to invite them to undertake a photo project of the type undertaken above, and to discuss their findings, perceptions and results in focus groups following the project. The goal of this would also be to identify the precise relationship between young people’s experiences of transitions to adulthood and their crafting of political subjectivities during those transitions while undertaking such projects. It is clear from the data generated for this project that citizenship education, fundraising, charity events, and so forth present an intriguing liminal space for young people to craft opportunities for autonomous action.

- Race and gender specific studies

The vital themes of racism in Site B, and sexism and gender stereotypes, including perceptions of young mothers, across all sites is unsurprising given the importance of these on daily life. However, it is a finding of this study that the method described above is able to generate data on such issues, and for this reason, it is recommended as a method for future research focusing on these and related issues. One potential starting point identified by participants at Site B is perceptions and experiences of police racism in the UK.

- Full remix methods

It is a major finding of this study that providing young people the opportunity to adapt and subvert methods – for example, by allowing participants to take photographs of places in their everyday life and then discuss different places that were slightly out of shot, maximising their authority and expertise in depicting them – was extremely important and useful in the generation of complex data linking material reality (and the photographs) to human perception (and the discussions of the photographs) (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 326). Although this thesis was limited by the remit to produce an interpretative report, future work could be able to develop on the ‘remix’ perspective of adaptive methods open to subversion: perhaps allowing participants to choose their own method for recording everyday spaces including video or sound recordings, or offering participants time between photo collection and the data generation focus group to discuss the subjects independently with friends, or perhaps edit photos without the researcher present, in order to maximize the opportunity for participants to bend or break the rules of the researcher’s game, and in doing so provide them maximal expertise in the generation and interpretation of data.

9.3. Researcher’s note: final reflections

This thesis is presented in a traditional format with a traditional and academic reporting style. Nevertheless, the driving force behind this project was the researcher’s strong personal belief that we must stand as advocates for young people in UK politics. In addition, fieldwork was carried out in a friendly and open manner with the researcher staying clear about his own position as a hopeful

advocate for young people's voices and power in political matters, and welcoming young people as equals as contributors to data generation. For this reason, in this final note, I have decided to answer the same questions I asked my participants. I explain what everyday experiences led me to this point, what I am proud of and what I think could be improved in the future.

I began this research with a professional background in young people's politics, having worked in youth engagement for the web-based engagement company *Gallomanor Communications, Ltd.*, then of Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, and having previous experience working in youth-oriented civil society organizations as a young volunteer myself, in the UK, the US and in Russia. My interest in the field as a space for political research began when I read Shakuntala Banaji's article *The Trouble with Civic*, and especially as a response to the way "the idea that young people are disengaged from politics and civil society, indeed from the entire public sphere – through no fault of their own or systemic constraints, or because of something that typifies that particular age-group – has become something of a mantra now in this field, and it is almost unthinkable not to state it" (2008, p. 543).

If there was one thing I learned working in youth engagement it was this: young people always had something to say if they were given an equal voice and a space to talk that had meaning. It struck me that the problem with the disengagement of young people from the public sphere, as described by Banaji, must be at least in part a question of whether young people, in their navigation of their own developing political subjectivities, perceived that public sphere to welcome their voices and would, indeed, allow young people not just a voice but meaning, and power.

Although I was unable to give young people power, or to enable them to hold institutions and policymakers to account, I am excited by the clear message in this study that young people of various backgrounds, and even of very young ages, are able to generate deep and meaningful discussions of their everyday lives that reflect complex perceptions of the interaction of citizens and institutions, calls for democratic legitimacy, concerns about their livelihoods amid austerity and insecurity, and many associated political topics. I was concerned by what I consider the constant, deep perception of exclusion among participants, who

discussed their inability to make change, their fears of falling off the accepted path through transitions to adulthood and the hopelessness of political action to change anything.

I conclude this project with a sense of excitement and a feeling of urgency. This project further emphasizes the need to consider young people as potential doers (Bang, 2009) with a complex political toolbox (Sloam, 2014). At the same time, we must take account of their contemporary situation in which citizenship is more etiquette than democratic efficacy (Banaji, 2008, p. 543) and young adulthoods are as much about the perils of life without safety nets as they are about the potential of the future (Flanagan, 2008), as much about social stigma and moral panics as they are about welcoming young people to broader society (Tyler, 2013; Bowman, 2014), and as much about old barriers to participation (like racism) as they are about new technology and new modes of civic and social action.

We need a full approach to young people's politics. Arising from my public research outputs for this project, I travelled as a consultant to a Europe-wide campaign for the Vote at 16, run by the European Youth Forum, member state youth councils, and associated European-level youth organizations. I asked the campaigners, many of whom were young people themselves, a simple question: why vote at all? I think the question is reinforced by the data generated in this study. Politics is a matter of complex interactions between everyday lives, institutions and hierarchies of power, and the perception of issues beyond our everyday lives. Voting as a matter of young turnout dissolves all that complexity into a question of citizenship etiquette, rather than democratic control, deliberative input and a valued place for young voters in wider society. Young people craft complex political subjectivities as individuals and as members of communities. Participants in this study had a lot to say and were ready to engage, in a deep and participatory sense, with the social and political world around them. Full electoral turnout and participation in officially sanctioned organizations are modes of engagement achieved in any dictatorship. We need to think about ways to include young people, as valued, equal citizens, in democracy.

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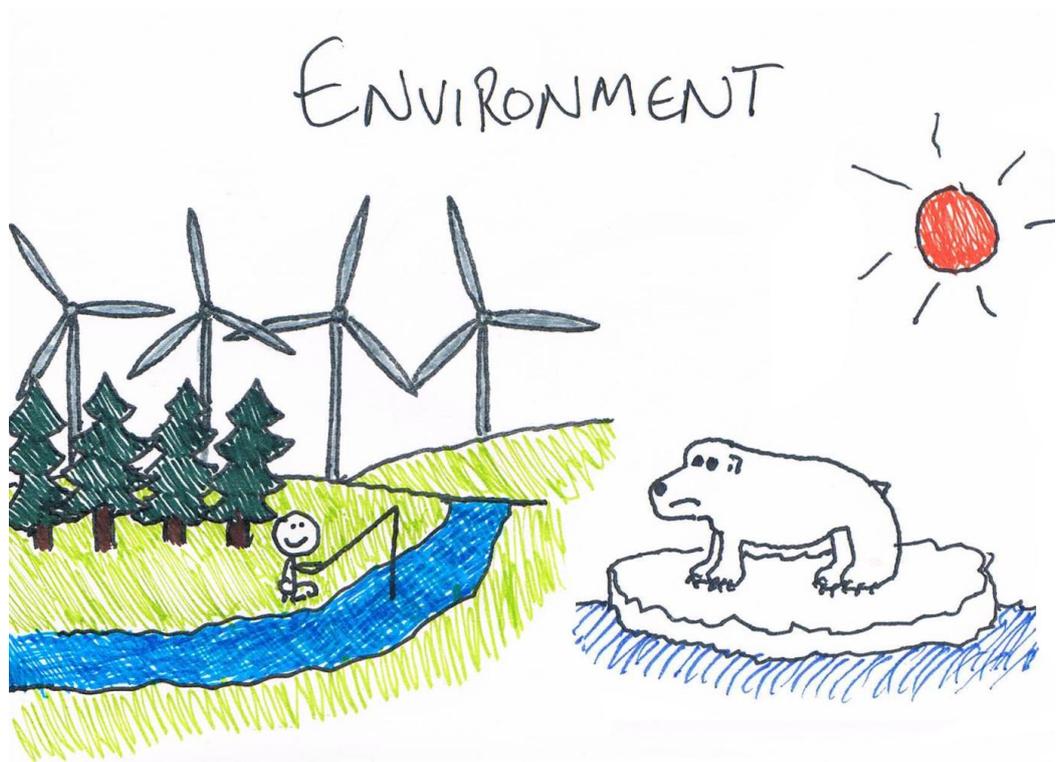
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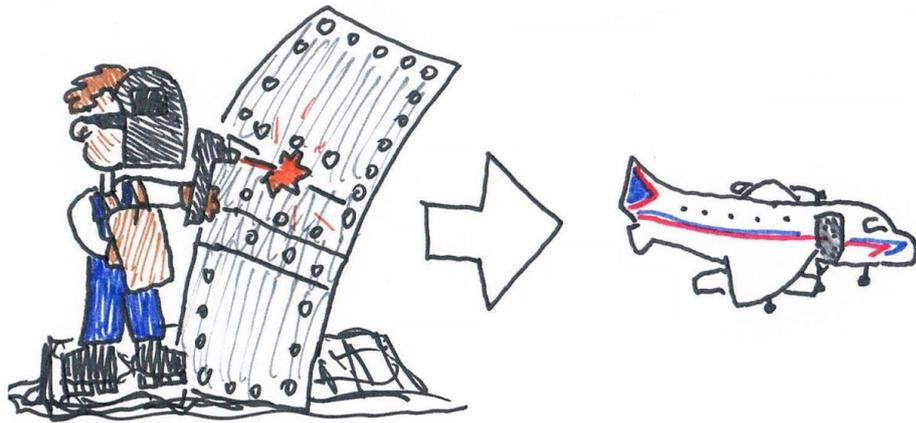
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Card illustrations from card sorting exercise



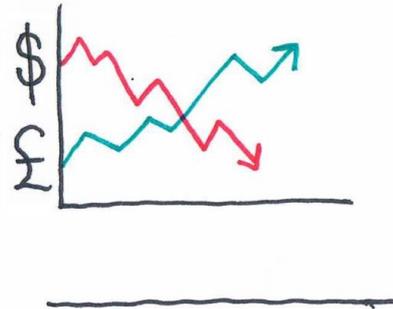
PRODUCTION



HOUSING



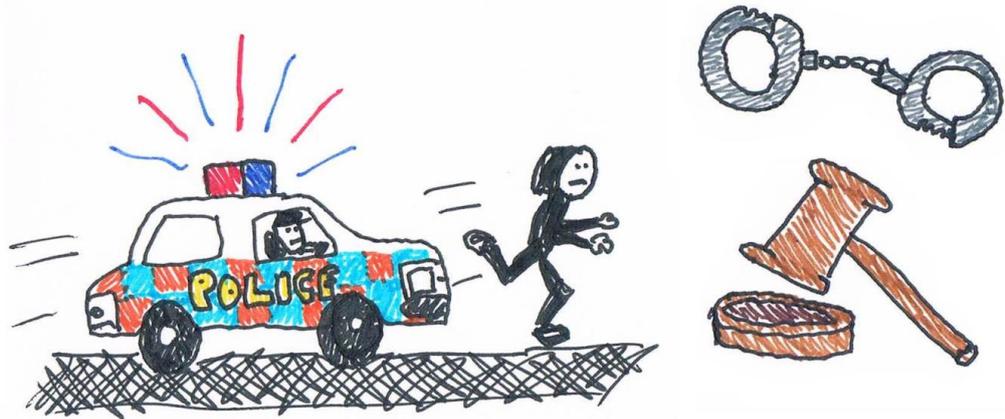
FINANCE



WORK



LAW + ORDER



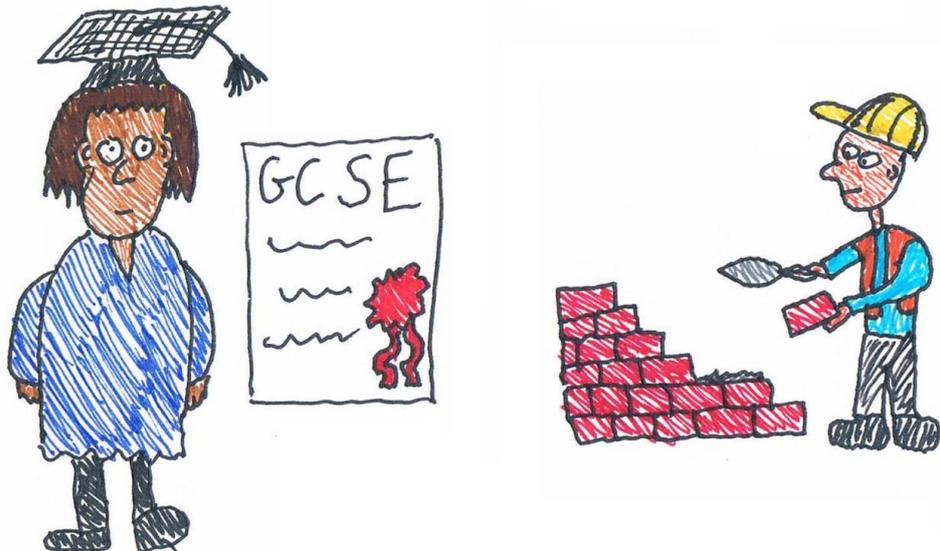
PEACE + WAR



MEDICAL CARE



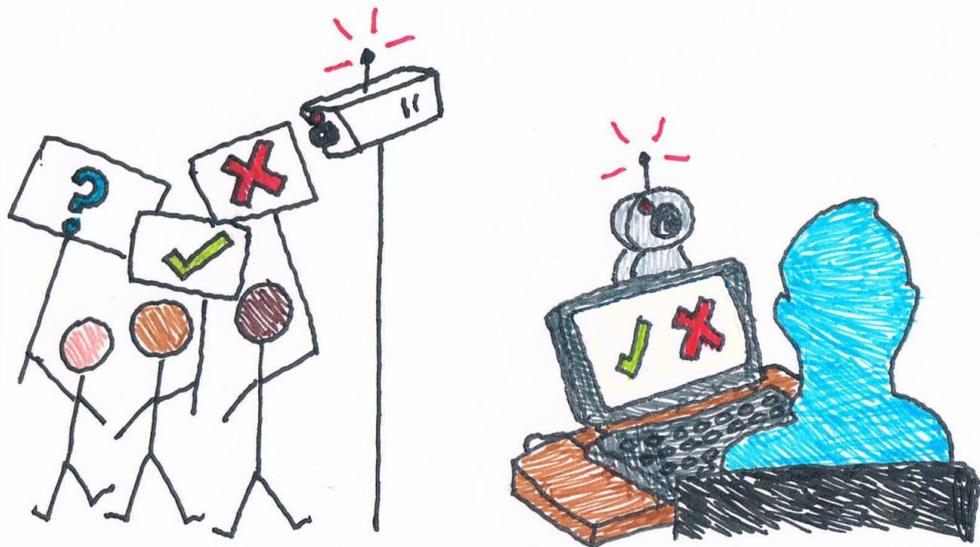
EDUCATION + TRAINING



TRANSPORT



FREEDOM



Appendix 2: Key to transcription notation

Notation		Meaning
=	Equals sign	Participants speaking simultaneously
(!)	Exclamation mark within parenthesis	Participant's jocular tone
_____	Underline	Participant's emphasis
...	Ellipsis	Participant's pause
[]	Square brackets	Researcher's note
[#]	Hash symbol within square brackets	Researcher's note directly pertaining to participant speech e.g. tone of voice
< >	Triangular brackets	Unclear speech with researcher's estimate
[...]	Square brackets with ellipsis	Denotes where researcher has abridged transcript by excluding some speech

Appendix 3: Example participant information card**Current status**

This section is so I know a bit more about you.

It is all optional – you can fill it in or not.

You can also fill some parts in and leave others.

Age	Gender
Background / ethnicity	
Optional: current status (e.g. school year, employment, college course?)	

Appendix 4: List of participants at Site B

Code name	Age	Gender	Background /Ethnicity	Optional
Assassins Creed	16	Female	Black British	
B	12	Male	Black British	Year 8
Bean	14	Female		
Teddy Bear	14	Female		Year 10
Xylem	11	Female	Jamaican	Year 10

Appendix 5: List of participants at Site C

Code name	Age	Gender	Background /Ethnicity	Optional
Andrew	15	Male	Disabled British Mancunian	Year 10
Barbie	14	Female		Year 10
Bob	14	Male		Year 10
Ken	14	Female		Year 10