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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Education

**Post-16 Education and Training in England as a  
Force for Division in Youth Political Learning and  
Practice**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **ABSTRACT**

This doctoral study examines young people's political learning and participation across post-16 education and training pathways (upper-secondary school) in England. This study is prompted by recent research from across Europe and in the UK, which finds that young people who have pursued vocational pathways after the age of sixteen tend to engage less in politics (mainly voting) than their contemporaries who have taken academic pathways. Whereas the literature on the relationship between education and political participation has largely focused on the level of education, this study differs in that the focus is on the type of education pursued at post-16 (e.g., vocational or academic). While research finds that the taught curriculum and particular classroom and social practices (e.g., open classroom climate) can have a positive effect on young people's political participation, these aspects have rarely been examined in relation to post-16 education or training pathways.

Of the few studies which have examined political learning in relation to education type in other countries the general picture to emerge is that while academic programmes explicitly and implicitly encourage the qualities required for political engagement (e.g., critical thinking), vocational programmes tend to focus more on social competence and good behaviour. This study is therefore unique since it focuses explicitly on the experiences of young people's political learning on different post-16 pathways both through their lessons and their wider school or college in England. Likewise, in terms of political practice, politics is examined in relation to not only conventional forms such as voting and political party membership, but also alternative forms (e.g., ethical shopping).

To examine this topic in the context of England a mixed-methods approach was employed (survey, focus groups, interviews, and political 'selfies' – a visual method). Data were collected from young people in eight different types of post-16 education and training institutions in the South of England. These included three sixth-form colleges, two school sixth-forms, an independent college (academic-oriented), a further education (FE) college and a specialist training centre (vocational-oriented). The findings demonstrate differences in terms of political learning experiences. Some of the main findings suggest that those on academic-oriented courses tend to report more positively in terms of having participated in political discussions in their lessons and having taken part in practice activities such as voting in school, compared to their contemporaries on vocational courses. However there are anomalies, the results suggest that there may be differences in learning for those on lower level vocational courses and those on higher levels

courses (specifically in terms of classroom climate). Likewise, it is those at the FE College that report the most positively on measures relating to experiences of student voice.

Although there are some differences in terms of political practice (e.g., those on vocational courses report less interest in politics), there are also similarities across the post-16 schools and colleges visited. The study finds that many young people are dissatisfied with conventional politics and that they have a lack of political knowledge about conventional political parties and voting. A central recommendation of this study is therefore to reinvigorate the policy debate for a baccalaureate-type post-16 education in England. This type of curriculum would include a core programme of learning for all young people that would encourage socio-political learning. This could potentially help to limit inequalities in political learning across schools and colleges at post-16.

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# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Rebecca Mollie Ridley

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Post-16 Education and Training in England as a Force for Division in Youth Political Learning and Practice

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
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Date:

12<sup>th</sup> February 2016



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# Abbreviations

ALE	Association of Liberal Education
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
BTEC	Business & Technology Education Council
CELS	Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study
CIE	Cambridge International Examinations
CITS	Citizens in Transition Study
CIVED	The International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement Civic Education Study
CoP	Communities of Practice
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GLS	General Liberal Studies
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organisation
ICCS	The International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement IEA International Civic and Citizenship Study (
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
LSYPE	Longitudinal Study of Young People in England
MP	Member of Parliament
NEET	Not in Education, employment or Training
NFER	National Foundation for Education Research
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OfQUAL	Office of Qualifications and Examinations
PLTS	Personal Learning and Thinking Skills
PRE	Philosophy of Religion, and Ethics
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SMCS	Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
UCAS	Universities & Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
WEA	Workers Educational Association



# Post 16 education and training as a force for division in youth political learning and practice

## Introduction

Participation in post-16 education and training in England has recently become compulsory. Young people must stay in school or college, embark on an apprenticeship, or partake in education or training on a part-time basis whilst also working part-time or volunteering<sup>1</sup>. What is noticeable about the sector is its diversity, which rooted in English education and social history, represents a significant domain of educational division for young people (Green, 1990; Huddleston & Unwin, 2013). Perhaps most obvious is the rift between academic and vocational study (Lumby & Foskett 2005) which has its roots in the social class divisions that have historically characterised English education. While academic study has been favoured as the quality option and the route to university (Dearing 1996), vocational routes have typically been seen as a second chance choice for those who are unable to achieve through academic study (Thompson, 2009). As Bathmaker (2005, p. 86) notes, young people follow a particular post-16 pathway not because 'they know what they want to do, but because they know what they cannot do'.

Recently researchers find that young people's political participation tends to map onto the academic-divide in education. Young people who have pursued vocational pathways tend to engage less in politics (mainly voting) than their contemporaries who have taken academic courses (Janmaat, Mostafa, & Hoskins, 2014). The purpose of this doctoral study is to explore why this might be the case by primarily examining young people's experiences of their political learning on the different post-16 pathways they have pursued at this stage of education.

### 1.1 The prompt for this study: type of education at post-16 and political participation

The literature on the relationship between education and political participation has mainly focused on the effects of level of education where it is commonly found that higher levels of educational achievement are positively related to political participation (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Emler & Frazer, 1999;

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<sup>1</sup> Young people in England must stay in some form of education and training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.



Hillygus, 2005; Lauglo & Oia, 2008; Li & Marsh, 2008; Bovens & Wille, 2009, LLAKES, 2015b). Indeed, this has led Bovens and Wille (2009, p. 3) to suggest that most Western democracies are now ‘diploma democracies’ where ‘citizens have a more tangible influence the higher level of their educational attainment, as measured by their formal qualifications’.

In contrast, this study is prompted by recent research that demonstrates a political and civic engagement gap in terms of the *type* of education a young person pursues. Broadly speaking, it is found in a number of recent studies that while young people who undertake an academic pathway at post-16 (e.g., A Levels) are more likely to participate politically, their contemporaries on lower-level vocational pathways are less likely to do so.

Across Europe, for example, van de Werfhorst<sup>2</sup> (2007) finds that participation in voluntary organisations is indeed lower in those who attend vocational upper-secondary than those who attend general upper-secondary schools. Political interest is likewise found to be lower for those who take vocational pathways. In Sweden, Persson and Oscarsson (2010) show that there are higher levels of political participation (e.g., voting and political party activities) among young people who take ‘theoretical’ gymnasium programmes at upper-secondary level compared to those who pursue vocational gymnasium programs. A similar finding to this has likewise been documented in Norway (Lauglo & Oia, 2008).

This trend is supported by Hoskins et al (2014), who conducted a mixed-methods<sup>3</sup> comparative study of educational system inequality and the reproduction of socioeconomic disparities in voting in England, Denmark and Germany. They find that in England – where vocational education has the least prestige – ‘students in general education...are more likely to vote than IVET [initial vocational education and training] students, thus suggesting a direct effect between track and voting’ (Hoskins, Janmaat, Han, & Muijs, 2014, p. 15). Although this finding is true for the three countries studied, the relationship is strongest in England.

In the UK context Henn and Foard (2014a) similarly find in their study on British youth at age eighteen that the type of qualification held at post-16 by an individual has a salient bearing on their political engagement<sup>4</sup>. Those with ‘higher level educational qualifications are significantly

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<sup>2</sup> This study used data from the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey which was conducted in the 1990s and involved 15,000 individuals from 17 countries (Belgium, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK and the USA).

<sup>3</sup> This study was carried out Economic and Social Research Council’s Learning and Life Chances in the Knowledge Economy and Society (ESRC LLAKES). The researches involved collected data from two randomly selected schools in each country between 2009 and 2011: questionnaire data and interview data.

<sup>4</sup> Henn and Foard’s (2014, p. 364) variable compare ‘those who have attained educational and vocational qualifications that are of a level sufficient to provide a route through to higher education, with those who have not’.

more confident in their own knowledge and understanding of politics than are their less qualified counterparts...[and that those with higher educational qualifications are]... noticeably less sceptical than are their contemporaries who have achieved lower level educational qualifications' (Henn & Foard, 2014, p. 374). Likewise, they find that students in full-time education and those holding 'higher level qualifications' are 'significantly more supportive of elections than their contemporaries' (Henn & Foard, 2014, p. 371). Likewise, Janmaat et al (2014) examine the effect of education track at post-16 on voting behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Using data from the *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England* (LSYPE)<sup>6</sup> they find that while 68.6 % of young people doing AS Levels in 'prestigious schools' reported that they voted in the 2010 general election, this was 51.7% for those doing vocational or other qualifications in 'less prestigious schools'.<sup>7</sup> As well, they show that students taking A Levels within less prestigious schools also report higher rates of voting than those pursuing vocational or other qualifications in the same school type. They therefore suggest that 'both type of qualification and the school environment appear to matter' in terms of determining how education at post-16 may influence voting behaviour.

## 1.2 Explaining the gap: is education a 'cause' or a 'proxy'?

One of the issues in examining why there are differences in political participation outcomes across different post-16 pathways is that it is difficult to determine the precise causal mechanisms (Hoskins et al., 2014; Janmaat et al., 2014). Researchers posit two key theories to explain why the type of education at post-16 (or 'upper-secondary' as it is also termed) might lead to disparities in political participation. Persson (2012, p. 199) summaries these as the 'education-as-a-cause' view and the 'education-as-a-proxy' view. The former suggests that educational achievement positively affects an individual's civic skills and cognitive abilities, which result in an increased likelihood of political participation. Those with higher levels of education are essentially more verbally proficient and therefore are better able to carry out activities central to political participation such as debating, writing letters, and running meetings (Nie et al., 1996; Emler & Frazer, 1999). The latter on the other hand suggests other factors related to social position, political socialisation in early life, and educational choice (Persson 2012) have an impact: It is not education *per se* that

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<sup>5</sup> This was a question which asked if (yes or no) did the respondent vote in the 2010 general election on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Janmaat (2014) use Waves 1, 2, 5 and 7 of this data set. At the time of this study, data had been collected from 2004 until 2010 and tracks the cohort between the ages of 13/14 and 19/20. The sample in this study (after merging all four waves) included 13,539 respondents).

<sup>7</sup> Less prestigious schools include for example the FE College and the Agricultural College. Prestigious schools include maintained school, independent school, and sixth-form College.

impacts on young people's propensity to participate politically but rather social background<sup>8</sup> *vis-à-vis* different educational pathways (academic or vocational) that determines political participation (Janmaat et al., 2014).

With regard to these two theories, the empirical evidence that exists is mixed as to which one yields more influence. Persson (2012) employs longitudinal survey data on Swedish students to examine the causal effects of education type on political participation. It is found that differences in political participation – both parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms – are prevalent as young people enter different educational programmes. Likewise, it is found that students' intention to participate politically does not change significantly during the first year of study on either a 'theoretical' or 'vocational' programme. This suggests that education has little effect on participation outcomes. Instead, it is shown that the number of books at home and political discussion at home are most important in explaining political participation. Persson's (2012) study therefore lends support to the 'education-as-a-proxy' view since factors external to the school are found to have a greater influence on political participation.

Snelling (2015) likewise lends support to the education-as-proxy view in analysis of the UK's Citizens in Transition Study (CITS). In this case, the focus is on voting levels in the 2010 election in relation to educational status – FE student, HE undergraduate and those in post-compulsory schooling.<sup>9</sup> Thus, although the focus is not on comparing post-16 education tracks *per se*, the findings regarding FE students are still of interest.

Snelling (2015) draws on the theory of social-positioning (also referred to as 'social-sorting' (Nie et al. 1996; Hillygus 2005) to explain why disparities in political participation may relate to education. It is theorised that young people participating in higher levels of education (in this case HE) are more likely to have access to and interaction with more influential political networks while those with less are more likely to be at the periphery. As well, Snelling (2015) states that 'being in an environment in which politics is discussed and peers are politically active can have informational spill-over effects' and encourage other peers to become more interested in, and knowledgeable about politics. Since young people in HE are more likely to be positioned in more politicised networks then they are more likely to vote. In contrast, those with no HE experience

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<sup>8</sup> Since family social background is found to be a strong predictor of future political engagement (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010; Verba et al., 1995) and students from lower social background are found to be overrepresented on lower level vocational course then this may explain the lower levels of political participation of students on these types of courses (J. G. Janmaat et al., 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Snelling (2015) controls for age in this study so that it is not the case that young people at FE college are less politically engaged because they are simply younger.

are ‘less likely to enjoy these experiences...[and are]...less likely to feel compelled to vote’ (Snelling, 2015, p. 5).

Indeed, it is found that social positioning though education may play a part in explaining political participation disparities. While HE undergraduates ‘are more likely to report interaction with politically engaged social networks’ this is not the case for those without HE experience. As well, in terms of scoring low on political efficacy indicators, FE students are found to ‘sit closer to individuals with no post-compulsory education, despite their continued presence in educational institutions. According to Snelling, this implies that ‘feelings of political ability are not shaped purely by formal learning processes as is commonly assumed (Snelling, 2015, p. 20). Interestingly, however, individual education is still found to have an effect on voter turnout despite controlling for social networks and efficacy. Snelling (2015) therefore concludes that disparities in turnout cannot *solely* be attributed to social-positioning effects and that the relationship between education and political action necessitates further inquiry.

In contrast, Janmaat et al’s (2014) study on young people in England lends support to the ‘education-as-cause’ perspective. As mentioned above, their findings suggest that the type of institution and type of curriculum (i.e., qualification pursued at post-16) seem to matter in determining the voting behaviour of young people. Although the inclusion of pre-track variables in their model<sup>10</sup> (e.g., family socioeconomic status and reading enjoyment) are found to markedly reduce the effect of educational track (students in less prestigious schools and those not in education are no longer found to have significant voting levels compared to the reference category) those taking AS Levels in prestigious schools are still significantly likely to vote based on their educational track rather than other pre-track variables such as GCSE score, taking a history course, and reading enjoyment. Janmaat et al (2014) therefore show that both the qualification pursued and the type of school attended at post-16 are important factors that can potentially impact on a person’s future political participation.

### 1.3 Type of education at post-16 and political learning

In review of the literature on this topic very few studies exist which examine *how* the type of education programme pursued at post-16 might matter in terms of political participation (Persson & Oscarsson, 2010; Janmaat et al., 2014) . It has been more common for researchers of political participation to employ measures of level of education rather than education type. However, by

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<sup>10</sup> These included gender, ethnic identity, and family socio-economic status. Other pre-track variables included GCSE score, reading enjoyment, History, Geography, and Citizenship. Post-track variables included ‘main activity at age 20’ – to indicate if a respondent (after voting or not) are in education, work or training.

focusing only on this researchers tend to disregard what exactly it is about education or a young person's environment that may foster political participation (Emler & Frazer 1999; Hillygus 2005). As Campbell (2006, p.54) notes 'to speak of education strictly by referring to the attainment level or years in school is to remain at a level of abstraction that conceals much, presumably most, of what is important about the educational process'.

Many studies have found that the taught curriculum and classroom and school practices (e.g., open classroom climate and school councils) can have a positive effect on young people's political and civic participation (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta, 2002; Hooghe & Quintelier, 2011; Quintelier, 2013;), but rarely have these aspects been examined in relation to post-16 track (Persson & Oscarsson 2010; Janmaat et al. 2014). Indeed, Persson & Oscarsson (2010) question the extent to which the norms of different curriculum types impact on students political behaviours. They also suggest an explanatory factor might be the quality of education on the 'core' courses of vocational pathways of which may be lower than those on academic pathways. While this might be true in the context of Sweden where students on both academic and vocational pathways in upper-secondary schooling pursue a 'core' course that includes social science, in England this is not the case. In fact, plans in the early 1990s to develop a 14-19 curriculum in which academic and vocational curricula were unified by a 'core' curriculum<sup>11</sup> never materialised.

As well, attention in the literature is also drawn to the more implicit role of schools in terms of how formal and informal curricula allocate, construct, and define the different roles and status groups in society through the control of access to knowledge, skills, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1996; Apple 2004; Ho 2014). From the few studies that examine citizenship and political learning in relation to education type the general picture to emerge is that academic programmes explicitly and implicitly encourage the qualities required for political engagement while vocational programmes tend to focus more on social competence and good behaviour. This is most stark in Singapore where formal citizenship curricula is specifically defined according to education track at secondary level (Ho, 2014). Ho (2012) finds that these curricula types sort students into three distinct roles which include 'elite cosmopolitan leader', 'globally oriented but locally rooted midlevel executives and workers', and 'local "heartlander" followers'. Ho (2014, p. 31) notes that the 'elite students are earmarked for leadership roles while the least talented students in the vocational tracks are allocated the role of being good followers to ensure social stability'. A study conducted in Israel by Ichilov (2002), likewise reveals that while the civics curricula (the official

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<sup>11</sup> A core/specialisation curriculum was to include 'Common Knowledge, Skills and Attributes to promote reflective, effective, social and internationally aware learners, an Extended Project; and Wider Activities' (Hodgson & Spours, 2009, p. 17)

government curriculum and textbooks) on academic routes tends to be oriented towards rationality, evaluation, cognition and ‘active intervention and choice’, vocational civics curricula tended to emphasise ‘duty, passivity, and social skills’ (Janmaat et al., 2014, p. 474).

In an examination of the more tacit aspects of education, a study conducted in the Netherlands by ten Dam and Volman (2003), who examined students social competence through six projects<sup>12</sup>, paints a similar picture. Students participating in projects at academic schools were encouraged to participate in society as critical citizens and were ‘addressed as individuals who can make an active contribution to their own lives to the desired developments of society’. On the other hand, those on (pre)vocational were ‘helped to survive in a society that expects its members to adhere to social conventions as well as cope with uncertainty and change’ (ten Dam & Volman 2003, p.131). As such, although perhaps not explicitly related to political efficacy or competences, the authors distinguish between two types of *social* competence fostered at the different schools: at the academic schools, social competence is construed as an ‘art of living’ where students were expected to make a contribution to societal change. At the (pre) vocational schools, social competence is a ‘life jacket’ whereby students are encouraged to develop skills such as self-confidence and social communication that they have not acquired at home. As well, in the American context Ho (2014) draws attention to the fact that low track academic and vocational programs in the US – which are typically overly represented by low income African Americans and Latino students – tend to emphasise ‘regimentation, control, and conformity and generally offer less complex and challenging content and tasks’ (Ho, 2014, p. 31).

In examination of specific *political* learning activities (common in the literature on political learning) across general, technical, and vocational tracks in Belgium, Quintelier (2010, p. 144)<sup>13</sup> finds that students pursuing general education are more likely to ‘discuss more topics in school and have a greater formal political knowledge’. As well, ‘active learning strategies’ (e.g., participation in a school council or service learning) are more common on the general education track than technical and vocational tracks.

## 1.4 Political learning and post-16 education type in England

At present, there are no studies in England that examine young people’s political learning across different post-16 pathways (hence Research Questions 1 and 3 of this study below). However,

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<sup>12</sup> All of the projects were part of the compulsory curriculum of the schools but were chosen by the schools themselves. General or ‘academic’ secondary education tracks included the projects ‘Young and Old’, ‘Working Together’, ‘Caring Together’. The (pre)vocational projects included ‘The Poet’, ‘The Safe School’, ‘Working with the City’, and ‘General Preparation for Work and Adult Life’.

<sup>13</sup> The data for this study was taken from the 2006 Belgian Youth Survey (Ellen Quintelier, 2010)

given the nature of the academic and vocational curricula (i.e., qualification type) at post-16 in England it is likely that some divisions in political learning exist. On vocational pathways, there is a lack of general education (Brockmann, Clarke, & Winch, 2008) and a strong emphasis placed on job-specific skills which is likely to neglect the development of young people's civic and political dispositions (LLAKES, 2015a). For the popular academic route (primarily consisting of the A Level) the picture is not much improved due to the extreme subject specialisation of A Levels. Therefore, it is likely that a young person taking A Levels for example will not acquire political knowledge directly through a given program of learning unless they are specifically taking politics or social science-related subjects (e.g., A Level politics or sociology). The fact that the post-16 sector is not 'unified' (as is the case in other countries) with a 'core' or 'general' module of learning that might include aspects of social science and civics study, may well likewise be limiting the political learning of young people in England (Green, 1998).

It is not just through the formal curriculum (i.e., a specific qualification) that political learning might be fostered. It has been repeatedly found in studies on citizenship learning that learning through the activities such as meaning-making discussions both in and outside the classroom and participatory activities such as school council initiatives have a positive impact on young peoples' future political engagement (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Judith Torney-Purta 2002; Hoskins et al. 2011; Quintelier 2010; Eichhorn 2015). Since schools and colleges at post-16 are encouraged to dedicate time for these types of activities – for example the discussion of citizenship topics in tutorials and involvement of students in participatory activities such as learner voice, youth forums, and student parliament initiatives (Craig et al. 2004; Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme. 2007; QIA 2007a; Hopkins 2014) – the conceptual framework in this study not only considers learning not only as the acquisition of political knowledge through specific qualifications but also as situated social participation. Learning is construed as part of everyday life which takes place through a constellation of community of practices (e.g., the classroom, a student council, the family, a peer group) (Wenger 1998). However, it is important to note, that in this study the focus is mainly on how young people learn politics – both through their specific qualifications and as situated social participation – at school or college since this is an area of research which is particularly lacking in the UK context.

### **1.5 What is meant by political participation in this study?**

This study seeks to broaden what is meant by political participation. One limitation of the current studies on this topic is that political participation is dealt with only in the conventional sense (e.g., voting and parliamentary politics) (Henn & Foard, 2014; Hoskins et al., 2014; Janmaat et al., 2014). Although this is clearly important given that voting remains the primary form of political

participation that is socially sanctioned and legally protected and serves as ‘legitimising tool for democratic governments’ (Edward Phelps, 2005, p. 482), ‘new’ social-movement oriented forms of political engagement (e.g., environmental, gender, or consumer politics, online engagement) are not considered in these studies. This is problematic since such forms of political engagement are argued (and found in some studies) to be prominent in late modern society and popular among today’s young people (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2003; Birdwell & Bani 2014). It is not that young people are not engaged politically but are so in *different* ways that are perceived to be more personally relevant. For Haste (2010, p. 172) these types of activities ‘have become the cornerstones of democracy’ and that ‘[e]quipping young people to be effective in such activities is at least important as equipping them to vote’.

Yet how young people’s engagement in ‘new’ forms of politics might play out and differ according to different social categories such as education pathway is under-examined. In this study, then, political participation is examined in terms of both conventional political participation and of ‘new’ social-movement oriented forms of participation. Hence, Research Question 2 and 2a of this study stated below.

## **1.6 Contribution and importance of study**

The purpose of this study is to explore young people’s political learning on different post-16 pathways in England. This is an interesting context to study this topic since the (historic) divide between academic and vocational education is particularly stark (Lumby & Foskett 2005; Bailey & Unwin 2008). As well, historically it was the academic pathway – primarily through the school sixth-form – that served to propagate the elite political leaders with an education that stressed the importance of the classical authors and philosophers (Reid & Filby, 1982). In contrast, vocational education, which developed largely outside the domain of formal education, had a strong focus on on-the-job training and exposed learners to limited theoretical study (Green & Lucas, 1999)

As mentioned, in the contemporary literature, studies suggest that there is a political engagement gap that maps onto this historic academic-vocational educational divide (Henn & Foard, 2014; Janmaat et al., 2014). To date, however there have been no studies in England that seek to examine how the type of education pursued at post-16 (e.g., academic or vocational) might influence political learning at school or college and in turn political participation – not only in terms of voting, as has been previously studied, but also ‘new’ social movement-oriented forms. This study is therefore intended to contribute to a fuller explanation of why an academic-



vocational political engagement gap might exist. Since there are few studies on this topic from other countries, this study likewise offers a contribution to this nascent body of research.

Moreover, this study is important in order to develop an understanding of how, and the extent to which, experiences of post-16 education and training improve or exacerbate inequalities in political participation. It may be the case that young people enrol onto different post-16 pathways on the basis of their educational achievement at GCSE level and that this invariably leads to 'social sorting' with young people from well-to-do backgrounds over represented in school sixth-forms (the academic pathway) and those from lower social background over represented on low level vocational courses in Further education colleges (Meschi, Crawford, & Vignoles, 2010). However, as Hoskins (2014, p.1, emphasis added) notes '[i]n the interests of democracy and democratic equality, [these] experiences of education ideally should *not* increase inequalities in political engagement'. This follows the thinking of Gutmann (1999) who contends that schools have a moral obligation to provide young people with an education that prepares them to be democratic citizens. 'No educable child Gutmann (1999, p. 45) argues, 'may be excluded from an education adequate to participating in [the] political processes'.

### 1.7 Research questions

This study is exploratory in nature and seeks to respond to the following research (and sub) research questions:

**RQ1:** How do young people learn politics?

**RQ2:** How do young people practice politics?

- A) To what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity?

**RQ3:** Are there differences across different post-16 pathways? If so, what can these differences be attributed to?

### 1.8 Overview of chapters

In the next chapter (chapter 2) and overview of youth political engagement in the British context is provided. This includes a review of the explanations as to why young people are apparently less engaged in conventional politics (e.g., alienation or lack of trust explanations). The 'alternative values' explanation is likewise elaborated. This is underpinned by theories of late (or high) modernity that focus on broad societal changes pertaining to de-traditionalisation and

globalisation and of which have implications for how political engagement is characterised, particularly for young people.

In chapter 3 a short background of the post-16 sector in England is drawn out. This is based mainly on two key institutions – the sixth-form and the Further Education (FE) College. The different qualifications available at post-16 are likewise discussed along with the implications for political learning. This chapter also provides a short overview of political learning at post-16 in other countries and how successive governments in England have rejected proposals to unify post-16 education and training in this country. Chapter 4 builds on chapter 3 and demonstrates how citizenship education – the main vehicle for political learning in England – is not compulsory at post-16. It shows how under New Labour in 2000 citizenship learning at post-16 was recommended as a (non-statutory) Key Skill. In this chapter, political learning via different post-16 qualifications (e.g., the International Baccalaureate or an A Level in politics) is also considered.

In chapter 5, an overview of how political learning is conceptualised in this study is provided. This is based on the idea that learning is not only the acquisition of knowledge but also that learning is social participation (e.g., participating in a debate society or student council) in a supportive context. Chapter 6 focused on the methodology for conducting this study in response to the research questions. In this chapter, the mixed-methods approach applied in this study is outlined and important aspects such as reliability and validity are also discussed.

In chapter 7, the findings of the study are presented and discussed. This is categorised according to the main research questions and explanations as to why differences emerge across the post-16 schools and colleges visited are provided. This is followed by chapter 8 – the conclusions. In this section, an overview of the main study findings is given and the recommendations are stated. Lastly, the limitations of the study are acknowledged.



## Chapter 2: Young people and political participation

As is shown in the introduction little is known about how and why political engagement might vary according to different post-16 – namely vocational and academic – pathways. Moreover, what is known is based on ‘politics’ in the conventional sense, for example voting in elections (van de Werfhorst 2007; Janmaat et al. 2014; Hoskins et al. 2014). This is arguably important given that voting in elections remains the primary form of political participation that is socially sanctioned and legally protected and serves as ‘legitimising tool for democratic governments’ (Phelps, 2005, p. 482). However, to focus solely on conventional politics can potentially yield an impoverished and one-sided view of young people’s political engagement in contemporary Britain. Rather than following a particular political party, young people in contemporary society are argued to be increasingly involved in single-issue ‘non institutionalised’ political activity because they are attracted to *doing* politics rather than spectating party politics from afar (O’Toole 2003; Marsh et al. 2007; Rainsford 2014).

In this chapter, the nature of young people’s political participation in Britain is questioned. The chapter begins with an overview of an apparent decline in young people’s conventional political engagement and some of the common explanations for this that have emerged over the last decade or so (e.g., apathy, lifecycle, alienation, lack of knowledge). The last of these explanations – the ‘alternative values explanation’ is then explored in more detail. Based on the work of theorists of late modernity and researchers (e.g., Inglehart, Beck, and Giddens) some of the ‘new’, ‘single-issue’ forms of political engagement that young people are argued to be engaged in are addressed (Haste & Hogan, 2006; Norris, 2003). This is followed by a critique of such theories and the implications for this study.

### 2.1 Young people and ‘conventional’ political engagement in Britain

The standard finding to emerge from mainstream research in Britain is that young people are on the political retreat, particularly in terms of conventional political participation (Henn & Weinstein 2006). This as Sloam (2007, p. 562) writes ‘poses specific challenges to the political system’ and as Henn and Foard (2012) warn, brings our attention to the ‘long-term consequences of such a scenario’. Young people, they argue, ‘would replace a somewhat more politically engaged older adult generation, and this would ultimately call into question the legitimacy of the conventional political process’ (Henn & Foard, 2012, p. 64).

Mainstream research on political attitudes amongst young British people lends some support to these conjectures. The Hansard Society (2013) finds that young people aged between 18 and 24

## Chapter 2: Young people and political participation

are the least likely group to agree that every citizen has a duty to be involved in politics (50 %), whereas those between the ages of 65 and 74 are more likely to agree with this (at 72 %). In its more recent Audit only 46 % of young people believe it is their 'duty to vote in all type of election' compared to 79 % of people aged 65 and over (Hansard Society, 2014, p. 3).

In terms of political interest in conventional politics Park (2004, p.38), in analysis of three cohorts of the *British Social Attitudes Survey* (1994, 1998, and 2003), finds a significant drop in (formal) political interest among younger cohorts, suggesting that modern politics is becoming ever more disenchanting to the young. Pattie et al (2004) report from *The Citizen Audit*<sup>14</sup> that young adults are not so much interested in conventional politics but rather are more involved in protest activities and informal networks and friendship groups. For those aged fourteen the data on England from the 2009 *IEA Civic and Citizenship Education Study*<sup>15</sup> likewise shows that 85% have never been involved in a political youth organisation and 83% have never been involved in a political campaign (Nelson, Wade, & Kerr, 2010, p. 88). Similar findings occur in the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study*<sup>16</sup> where, by the age of 18, 'less than 20 per cent of the respondents...[had] attended a public meeting, taken part in a demonstration or had contacted their MP or local council' (Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy, & Lopes, 2010, pp. 19–20).

The hollowing out of British political parties has also become a familiar concern, particularly in terms of the falling number of members. Again, this is most stark among 18-24-year-olds. As the recent Hansard Society (2014) audit reports '[f]ifty-three percent of them declare that they [young people] are 'not a supporter' of any political party, a significantly higher proportion than say that same in any other age group' (Hansard Society, 2014, p. 28). Likewise, only 23% of 18-24-year-olds report themselves to be at the least a "fairly strong" supporter of a party'. That is compared to 44% of those aged over seventy-five who respond the same question (Hansard Society, 2014, p.4). The society note that 'if this trend in declining partisanship continues it does not bode well for political engagement generally, and electoral participation in particular' (Hansard Society, 2014, p. 28).

Low levels of youth voter turnout out in the general election have likewise buttressed concerns<sup>17</sup>(Phelps 2005; Phelps 2006; Henn et al. 2007; Whitley 2012). In the last three general

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<sup>14</sup> The Citizen Audit was funded by the ESRC Democracy and Participation programme over 2000 and 2001.

<sup>15</sup> 2,899 pupils (aged approximately 14) from across England participated in the IEA Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) (Nelson et al., 2010).

<sup>16</sup> The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) examines the impact of statutory learning in schools of those aged between 11 and 18 (Benton et al., 2008; Keating et al., 2010).

<sup>17</sup> In the 2001 general election only 39 per cent of those aged between 18 and 24 voted. In 2005 this dropped to 37% and rose again marginally to 44% in the 2010 general election. In the 2001 General Election overall

elections lower levels of the youth vote in comparison to older age groups has become a common theme. In 2001 40.4% of young people voted, this was 38.2% in 2005 and increased to 51.8% in 2010. This can be compared in the 35-44 year-old age group whereby in 2001 turnout was at 55.7 %, in 2005 61.6% and in 2010 64.4% (Dar, 2013). The Hansard Society (2014) audit may likewise bolster these concerns. In 2013 it was found that only 12% of 18-24-year-olds were certain to vote, a decline of 10% from 2012 (Hansard Society 2013). Although more recently these low percentages have been reported to be a temporary 'blip' – the 2014 Hansard Society Audit finds a rise back to 24 % in intention to vote – it is reported that across the Audit series (which has been running for just over a decade) on average only one in four aged 18-24 would be certain to vote. They therefore warn that the 'health of electoral participation among young people' continues to be an issue (Hansard Society, 2014, p. 26).

Despite this, a recent study by the UCL Institute of Education finds that although 80% of young people have low levels of trust in politicians voting remains their most frequent type of political activity. It is found that 50% of young adults report that they were 'very likely' to vote in the 2015 May general Election and that 25% were 'fairly likely' to do so (LLAKES, 2015b). Contrary to the general picture painted by many other studies, then, they conclude that young people are not necessarily disinterested in politics and that in the context of the run up to the 2015 general election '[t]he ballot box still matters to young adults' (LLAKES, 2015b, p. 2).<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 Common explanations for youth disengagement in formal politics

Many explanations have been proposed to decipher why young people seem to avoid conventional political engagement from researchers spanning the field of political science, education and sociology. These can broadly be categorised for simplicity into three (not unrelated from each other) groups. The first group relates in those explanations, which place emphasis largely on the individual (apathy, a lack of political knowledge, and lifecycle explanations). The second group includes explanations that are more system-focused (alienation and lack of government trust explanations). The third group (broader social change explanations), of which takes up the most substantial part of this chapter, relates firstly to discussions on the role of social capital in democratic societies and secondly to the widely accepted scheme of thought that there has been a universal decline in cleavage politics among both older and younger people. Thirdly, it

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turnout was at 59 per cent, the lowest in the post-war period. This increased marginally to 61 per cent in 2005 and to 65 per cent in 2010 (Ipsos MORI 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Despite this finding the voter turnout for the age range of 18-24 year-olds in the 2015 general election followed a similar pattern to previous years with a youth turnout of 43%, slightly lower than the 2010 general election.

includes the 'alternative values' explanation which suggests that young people are participating in politics but just in different ways from previous generations.

### **2.3 Explanations that lay emphasis on the individual**

The *apathy* explanation, which is particularly bolstered by the work of Putnam (2000) and is discussed below has been a typical explanation found in British discourse on youth politics. This explanation proposes that young people do not care about politics or politicians so therefore are likely to refrain from participation in conventional political processes (Stoker 2006; Farthing 2010; Henn & Foard 2014a). Although many researchers may abstain from using apathy as an explanation to explain youth political disengagement and highlight more nuanced understandings, in political discourse it has not been uncommon. According to Kimberlee (2002) the 'apathy' explanation resounds much of the post-war youth discourse that has portrayed young people's culture as problematic and damaging to the general good of society. It has likewise been argued as one of the driving forces behind the introduction of statutory citizenship into the National Curriculum in England in 2002 and the formation of the Youth Citizenship Commission in 2008 by Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Osler & Starkey, 2003). The apparent concern was an increasing democratic deficit due to the increasing levels of political apathy among young people (Kisby & Sloam 2011; Tonge et al 2012).

This type of explanation, however, has been strongly criticised for negatively framing young people as politically deficient and portraying them as 'less good citizens' (Osler & Starkey 2003; France 2007). In Osler and Starkey's (2003) view:

'[i]t is the issue of civic disengagement, analysed by writers such as Putnam (2000), that most concerns governments...[a]s a consequence, the programmes of citizenship education in England, for example, are based on a view of young people that assumed they are apathetic because they fail to understand the political basis of the state and they are ignorant of their responsibilities and rights.'

Through a comprehensive review of the literature, Marsh et al (2007) likewise criticise 'apathy' explanations. For them the issue lies with a restricted conception of 'political' in youth political research. The failure of the existing literature to attend to how young people conceive of politics and political activity has led to the exaggeration of youth apathy, which they find in their own extensive qualitative research to be unsound. Marsh et al (2007) instead treat politics as a lived experience through for example class, gender, and ethnicity and conclude that young people are instead alienated from conventional politics. This explanation is considered below.

*Lifecycle explanations*, then, may seem slightly more positive in that they suggest that as young people mature and develop adult responsibilities young people will become more involved in politics (Verba & Nie, 1972). Quintelier (2007) notes that ‘as young people grow older, their levels of education increase, their place of residence stabilizes and integration into the community increases’. Central to this explanation is that young people are a distinct group who lack the resources that older people have which enable them to participate politically. Hence, importance is laid on a cohorts ‘specific place on a developmental continuum’ and ‘will change in predictable ways’ as young people age (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 11). However, the issue with this explanation is that it tends to reinforce the idea that young people are politically ‘deficient’ and need to essentially grow up before taking part in political processes. It may underestimate the effects of changing policy contexts and how they impact on young people’s perceptions of the political system and how they fit within it (Fahmy, 2006). It may likewise fail to consider the fact that more traditional trajectories to adulthood have become much more individualised, protracted, and unstable (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997), especially in terms of employment (Standing, 2011). Lifecycle perspectives are therefore difficult to disentangle from broader generational perspectives of political and social change (Henn et al, 2002), such as the work of Putnam (2000) and the work of social theorists such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) which will be discussed below.

*Political knowledge and efficacy explanations* of disengagement propose that in order for young people to engage in politics they require a certain level of knowledge and political efficacy (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Nelson et al. 2010; Beaumont 2010). This understanding relates to a ‘resource-based’ explanation of political action in that those who are more knowledgeable or educated will feel they are more able to influence political events. Those without such social and cognitive resources will feel powerless to make a difference (Bynner, Romney, & Emler, 2003, p. 320). Thus, more knowledge is likely to equate to more political efficacy and thus more action. Indeed, the results of the international IEA Civic Education Study indicate that civic knowledge is a key predictor in young people’s intention to vote (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Sloam (2007) finds in his qualitative research with British activists and non-activists that political knowledge was vitally important for engagement and was far higher in activist youth than non-activists (Sloam, 2007, p. 564). Henn and Foard (2014a) likewise draw attention to the confusion that young people feel with regards to the complexity of politics which may leave many feeling disconnected from the process. Through focus groups of young first-time voters who abstained from the 2010 election, ‘complexity’ was found to be a common reason for non-voting. Responses such as ‘*I didn’t vote because I don’t understand the parties and what they were offering*’ and ‘*I didn’t vote because I didn’t understand each of the parties promises and who could actually help*’ exemplify this (Henn & Foard, 2014, p. 9, italics in original). They highlight, then, the importance of political education



to help young people to form a sufficient political knowledge base in order to decipher the differences between political parties and which one they would vote for.

## 2.4 Explanations that lay emphasis on the political system

*Alienation explanations* may shed light on an outdated political system that fails to engage appropriately with young people (Kimberlee 2002; Marsh et al. 2007; Hopkins 2010). As Henn and Weinstein (2006) find, young people don't vote because they consider the political world to be sterile and 'inhabited by politicians' who offer 'very little by the way of policies and priorities that are different from their rivals, or which have relevance for young people' (Henn & Weinstein 2006, p.529). In later research Henn and Foard (2012) endorse that, contrary to the common stereotype of an apolitical generation, young British people *are* interested in politics and support the idea of representative democracy<sup>19</sup>. The problem however is that they are 'disenchanted by their experiences of conventional politics and remain relatively disengaged from the political process and from democratic institutions and players' (Henn & Foard, 2012, p. 64). In a context of individualisation (see Beck below) Sloam (2007) argues this problem is only exacerbated since the withdrawal of the state in recent decades has directly affected the lives of young people (e.g. the selling off of school playing fields and the reduction of benefits). This has 'decreased young people's attachment to the state' and 'is especially true for those who are socially excluded at the margins of society' (Sloam, 2007, p. 552).

One related reason why young people may be increasingly disenchanted with conventional politics relates to trust. Given that trust and interest in conventional politics are often found to be related to each other in adult populations (Whitley, 2012), it would be legitimate to suggest that a *lack of trust in government* is a genuine explanation as to why young people are disinclined to engage in conventional political processes and as mentioned above, are disenchanted by the political system as it stands (Henn & Foard, 2012, p. 64). Again, this shifts the issues of non-participation to those in power who need to become more trustworthy and accountable to the young. In the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Survey* it is found that political distrust increased overtime<sup>20</sup> (Keating et al., 2010). Henn and Foard (2012, p.59) likewise show that in 2011 first time voters had 'little trust or confidence in the political parties and professional politicians'. Indeed, it is found that 87 % of their sample *agreed* with the statement 'there is often a big difference between what a party promises it will do and what it does when it wins an election'.

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<sup>19</sup> Data was collected from an online national survey from 1025 British 18 year olds in 2011.

<sup>20</sup> It is noted that 'the proportion of young people reporting that they do not trust politicians *'at all'* increased markedly – from 20 per cent in Year 7 (age 11) to 33 per cent in Year 13 (age 18)' (Keating et al., 2010, p. 38)

It is probable that this particular finding resonates with Nick Clegg's 2010 election campaign promise to young people to not increase university tuition fees before subsequently joining ranks with the Conservatives and therefore not fulfilling this promise. In qualitative research, likewise by Henn and Foard (2014a), a young person for example reports that...

*'...In politics, NO, there's no one I admire. I think they all lie and deceive, and never fulfil their promises. Take Nick Clegg for example. You're not safe to trust anybody in politics'*

More often than not topics that relate directly to young people are debated on the periphery of election campaigns (Henn & Foard 2012). Therefore, when the potential reduction in tuition fees by the Liberal Democrats emerged a central topic of interest for young people in 2010 and then was negated, it is not surprising that some young people report a strong mistrust in politicians and conventional political processes.

Similarly, on a broader scale, the failure of national governments and international governing bodies to tame global international markets may be leading many individuals – adults included – to question the legitimacy and trustworthiness of government in dealing with major economic issues (Stoker, 2006). Thus, young people may be participating less in conventional politics in a global context of financial crisis and austerity because they do not trust the government and politicians to deal with such issues successfully (Hoskins & Ridley, 2013). Instead, it appears that young people's anger and distrust are increasingly likely to be vented through participation in social-movements such as the well-known 'Occupy' movement (a global protest to combat social and economic inequalities). This ties into the third group explanation considered next which is focused on the idea that young people as political, but just in different ways. This idea moves away from the idea that young people are politically deficient (as the apathy explanation above might portray) and instead suggests young people are adopting alternative political values and practices other than those centred on political parties and voting. This is by no means a new idea (see for example Kimberlee 2002) but is arguably a less examined area amongst British youth in comparison to a focus on disengagement in conventional politics.

## **2.5 Explanations that emphasise broader social change**

*Declining levels of social capital* is an explanation that largely resonates with the work of American political scientist Robert Putnam and stresses that there is a declining social base for democracy to properly operate. According to Putnam (2000) social capital, recapitulated by Stoker (2006, p. 55) as 'the networks of trust, mutual assistance and reciprocity that help to connect us', is in decline, particularly in the context of the USA. Generational trends, for example in increasing levels of TV watching, have bolstered a decline in the habits of associational activity

and people are therefore less likely to be building networks and shared sets of norms. Since in Putnam's (2000) eyes social capital is central to the process of democratic politics as it provides people with the capacity to work together to solve issues, its decline can only have adverse effects. For him this is evidenced by the apparent decline in young people's political engagement. Unlike those 'civil' generations socialised around the Second World War young people he argues...

'have never made the connection to politics, so they emphasize the personal and private over the public and collective. Moreover, they are visually orientated, perpetual surfers, multitaskers, interactive media specialists'

(Putnam, 2000, p. 259).

Not only is this potentially a derogatory statement and as mentioned above has bolstered political apathy explanations of political disengagement (Osler & Starkey, 2003), the evidence on the extent to which declining levels of social capital affect political engagement is also not clear cut (Stoker, 2006). While some studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between social capital and civic engagement and between social capital civic attitude and electoral turnout (Pattie et al., 2004; Charles Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003), others have found that a decline in social capital is less strong in Britain compared to the American context (Hall, 1999). Despite this Putnam (2002) has warned with other researchers that, bolstered by a decline in trade-unionism and conventional associations run through churches, a decline on social capital is felt more by citizens who are already disadvantaged. In advanced industrial societies social capital is theorised by Putnam (2002) to map on to class inequalities with the middle classes benefiting from new social grouping marshalled around, for example, environmental groups, new-style churches, and gender-related groups. He concludes that the class bias in social capital is likely to be related to increases in income inequality and ethnic fragmentation, prevalent in many advanced democracies.

In a similar way to Putnam (2000), Phelps (2011) argues that social group identification amongst younger generations is also different to older generations but instead he emphasises the changing nature of partisan alignments in conventional politics. This explanation has to do with the widely accepted *decline of traditional cleavages in party politics*. In this scheme of thought, it is claimed that in many advanced European democracies there has been a weakening of the capacity of social divisions that play a strong role in citizens' voting choice. Rose and McAllister (1986, cited in Phelps 2011) argued in the 1980s that politics in Britain was no longer fixed to stable partisan loyalties as a result of class and family socialisation. Phelps (2011, p. 282) further suggests this as a plausible explanation as to why young people are disengaged in party politics. Because of a decline in the 'information function' of partisan identity, 'young people are now without one of

the basic tools for their psychological engagement with politics'. Because of this apparent change in political socialisation, Phelps argues that young people's formative experiences and short term influences (e.g., 'images of political leaders, government record in office and campaign events (ibid, 2011, p.284)) will have a greater effect on political engagement than psychological attachment to a particular party that may have been more prevalent amongst older generations.

The '*alternative value*' explanation (or 'new' politics) is the final explanation discussed here. This explanation likewise agrees that traditional cleavages of party politics has weakened but alongside this suggests that there has been an emergence of a what Phelps (2011, p. 283) refers to as a 'new 'value cleavage'' rooted in moral issues that surpass the ideological boundaries of the left-right political divide (Haste & Hogan, 2006; Haste, 2004). The style of young people's political engagement is thought to be changing by becoming more diverse in terms of repertoire. They are increasingly involved in 'single issue' politics and social movements that relate to environmental issues, anti-war, and anti-globalisation (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007, pp. 134–135), consumer politics (e.g., boycotting Nestle or buying Fairtrade) and identity politics related to issues such as feminism and sexuality (Norris 2003; Haste & Hogan 2006; Sloam 2007) which can now be considered the 'cornerstones of democracy' (Haste, 2010, p. 172).

The apparent changing situation of youth politics is complex and can be read in a number of ways. From the standpoint of Inglehart (1977, 1990) economic growth and development in the context post-Second World War has led to a shift in industrial societies from 'materialist' to 'post-materialist' value orientations which have impacted on how people engage with politics. In short, this is based on the idea that once people have had their basic needs and securities met (materialism) they are likely to becoming increasingly concerned with self-actualisation (post-modern values) (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). While the former are centred on the needs of physical sustenance and safety, the latter are emphasise the need for autonomy self-expression and lifestyle and quality of life (Inglehart, 1977, 1990).

For Inglehart (1997) the growth of post-modern values brings with it a declining respect for authority therefore making the 'position of governing elites more difficult'. Inglehart (1997) notes that whereas '[i]n industrial society, the masses were mobilized by disciplined elite-led political parties' resulting in many more people voting, in 'Postmodern society the emphasis is shifting from voting , to more active and issue-specific forms of mass participation', or as Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 118) later suggest 'self-assertive and expressive public'. Because of this the traditional hierarchical party political system is 'eroding' and citizens are argued to be increasingly 'autonomous and elite-challenging' and are 'coming to value freedom of expression and political participation as things that are good in themselves rather than simply as a possible means to attain economic security' (Inglehart, 1997, pp. 43–44). From this perspective, Inglehart and Welzel

(2005) argue that the individualisation of civic orientations does not equate to an egocentric orientation but 'tends to go together with a humanistic [one]' (Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 144)

Theorists of late modernity Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck likewise argue that society has become culturally, politically, and socially different from earlier modern societies (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990, 1991) and brings about new types of risks and opportunity. For Giddens, late or 'high'<sup>21</sup> modern society is characterised by the weakening of tradition – encompassing rituals, collective memory, a 'formulaic notion truth' and 'has a binding force which has a combined moral and emotional content' (Giddens, 1994, p. 63) – and the emergence of a risk culture insofar that individuals today are exposed to day-to-day uncertainties (particularly 'manufactured' uncertainties like climate change) that previous generations were not. In this context, the self is reflexively generated as individuals are forced to make sense of a diversity of experiences. Although there are conceptual difficulties with what constitutes reflexivity (see for example Archer, 2007), Giddens uses the concept to mostly speak about how the self has become a 'reflexive project' which is sustained by way of a revisable narrative of self-identity (Giddens, 1991). Individuals ask '[w]hat to do? How to act? Who to be?' and answer these questions 'either discursively or through-day-to day social behaviour'(Giddens, 1991, p. 70). As tradition wains, the individual becomes the core of responsibility and agency.

For Giddens (1991, p. 214) with this shift has emerged a new form of 'politics' which he suggests is 'a politics of self-actualisation in a reflexively ordered environment'. From this, he differentiates between 'emancipatory' and 'life politics'. The former is the politics of modernity and focuses on the reduction of oppression and exploitation and is '...concerned above all with liberating individuals and groups from constraints which adversely affect their life chances...the objective of emancipatory politics is either to release underprivileged groups from their unhappy condition, or to eliminate differences between them'. It is a politics of 'life chances'(Giddens 1991, p.210-214). The latter, and in contrast, is a politics of 'high' modernity and is characterised by individual 'self-actualisation', 'lifestyle' and 'choice'. It is concerned with 'political decisions flowing from freedom of choice' of the era of high modernity, the 'creation of morally justifiable forms of life that will promote self-actualisation in the context of global interdependence' and includes 'ethics concerning the issue 'how should we live?' in a post-traditional order' (Giddens, 1991, p. 215). In

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<sup>21</sup>While some theorists have claimed that society has entered a post-modern era in which grand theories of social change have lost their appropriateness to the study of social life and variables such as social class and gender have lost their explanatory power, others (referred to in this study) prefer the concept of 'late' modernity or 'high' modernity (e.g. Giddens, 1991) in their interpretations of societal change to emphasise the consequences of recent socio-economic change but at the same time to express that such changes do not demonstrate a complete epochal shift (see for example Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

relation to the question of *youth* politics, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) argue that young people's politics in Giddens's interpretation is likely to be lacking in emancipatory politics, as epitomised by mainstream political parties, and would increasingly emphasise engagement in 'lifestyle politics' that, as Inglehart (1977;1990) has likewise claimed, manifest as single-issue campaigns (e.g., related to anti-war or environmental issues).

In *Risk Society* Ulrich Beck (1995) also argues that Western societies are witnessing a broad historical transformation. Older modern industrial societies are now being replaced by a new modernism whereby older 'scientific' worldviews and the predictabilities of the former are challenged by a new set of uncertainties and risks. Whereas societies in the past were more reliant on rationality, nowadays the world is seen to be a more uncertain and dangerous place which is inhabited by 'risks'. In agreement with Giddens, these may come in the form of impending environmental disasters or war, as well as risk of day-to-day living (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Beck (1992) therefore argues that in late-modernity people have to negotiate a new variety of hazards which impact on their lives instead of being guided by the constraints of older social orders. Consequently, people's lives have come to be characterised by the prevention and elimination of risks.

Because of this Beck (1992) proposes that people are more likely to seek solutions at the individual level rather than the collective he argues a new form of 'sub-politics' has emerged (Beck, 1994, pp. 42–44). Such a politics instead involves activities that reside outside the traditional domains of government in localities and communities. Politics is therefore different to what it was in the past and 'the authoritarian decision and action state' is giving way to the 'the *negotiation* state'<sup>22</sup> which arranges stages and conversations and directs the show' (Beck 1994, p.39, emphasis added). In Beck's mind...

'the disintegration of institutions makes room for the refeudalization of social relationships...Only networks, which must be connected together and preserved and have their own 'currency', allow for the formation of power or opposing power'

(Beck et al., 1995, p. 44)

Similarly to the 'life politics' of Giddens (1991), the notion of 'sub-politics' implies a shift from collective actions to more individual actions, and according to Rheingans and Hollands (2013,p.4)

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<sup>22</sup> Marsh et al (2007), note that this resonates with the arguments of Rhodes (1997) who argues that there has been a shift from hierarchically-based governance to governance based more predominantly on networks. In such a context, governance can be understood as '...self-organising, interorganisational networks characterised by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state' (Rhodes, 1997, p. 45)

‘works to both redefine the meaning and values of politics, and the spaces in which it takes place’. Beck’s work, then, arguably resonates with what political scientist Bang (2004) refers to as the ‘Everyday Maker’ (Marsh et al., 2007). This can be defined as an individual who is not defined by the state and is not opposed or apathetic to it. They are not interested in party politics or improving the political representativeness of conventional politics but instead prefer to think along the lines of think globally and act locally. Their politics is built round lived experience, local narratives, self-development and manifests as cause-driven projects. Principles for ‘Everyday makers’ include for example, ‘do it yourself’, ‘do it where you are’ and ‘do it ad hoc and part-time’. Creative types of action and multimedia use are often central for Everyday Makers (Bang, 2004, p. 24)<sup>23</sup>.

In Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2003, p. 159) more recent work they claim that young people are ‘unpolitical’ but in a ‘very political way’ which they term the ‘politics of youthful antipolitics’. In the context of late modernity, the children of contemporary society or ‘freedom’s children’, who freed from the constraints of modernity, turn away from conventional politics because it ‘acts like a dead-certain killjoy’. Instead, they ‘display an unarticulated ‘double strategy’. They are an actively unpolitical younger generation because they take the life out of the self-involved institutions and thus force upon them the Hamlet questions: to be or not to be’ however simultaneously ‘practice a seeking, experimenting morality that ties together things that seem mutually exclusive: egoism and altruism, self-realization and active compassion, self-realization as active compassion’ (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2003, p. 159). Essentially, it is argued, young people have begun to ‘live their ideology’ (Farthing, 2010).

The media, and the internet in particular, is now prominent in this respect and young people are arguably more often practicing their politics online (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; Theocharis, 2011b ; Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2013;). Since young people lack traditional social cues and tend to rely on ‘personal identification, resulting in great greater personal responsibility (and associated stress) in identity management’ they increasingly use social media as a means of self-expression. Central here is the social media that enables networking through ‘self-oriented content production’ and the sharing of blogs, videos, photos and texting. In addition, young people have shifted in the ways they think about credibility and authority and feel ‘increasingly comfortable with replacing old gatekeepers such as journalists, teachers, and officials with crowd-sources information developed through information aggregation technologies. Young people are

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<sup>23</sup> Bang (2004) also refers to the ‘Expert Citizen’ which, unlike the ‘Everyday Maker’, can be defined as someone who is likely to be a new professional and who has the capacity to deal with political and corporatist elites and sub elites; who practice negotiation before direct opposition; and who construes themselves as part of the system rather than outside it (Bang, 2005).

increasingly 'actualising' citizens and channel their interests through loosely-tied horizontal online network (Bennett, Freelon, & Wells, 2010, pp. 396–397).

As well, researchers highlight how the internet is now used for political action. Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) identify a number of 'internet-specific' political acts that are only available through the internet itself (e.g., email bombs, virtual sit ins, and online petitions). Theocharis (2011a) highlights the internet as a tool for mobilising political action. An example in this case is the role the internet played in mobilising protestors against the increase of university tuition fees in England. Bakker and de Vresse (2011) likewise draw attention to the use of the internet in the 2008 Obama campaign

## **2.6 Young people and engagement in 'alternative value politics'**

There is some mainstream empirical data to support the idea that young people are engaging more in 'alternative value' politics than their seniors (and doing this online) but this is far from clear-cut. Norris (2003) finds through use of European Social Survey Panel data that 'cause-orientated' acts (e.g., specific issues, demonstrating, or consumer politics) attract a somewhat younger profile, while 'citizen-orientated' activities, which relate primarily to electoral and party politics, attract an older profile. A study by the European Commission (2013, p.11) using Eurobarometer data finds that young people express their views on the internet and in social media in 'larger proportion' than previous generations – over 40% for the age group 15-24 compared to under 25% for the age group 45-54, however finds that across Europe young people still have faith in conventional political activity.

A study on 1136 British youth aged between eleven and twenty-one by Haste and Hoogan (2006) show that nearly one-quarter of young people have participated in 'boycotting products'. This along with a focus on 'single issue' politics (Quality of life, Sovereignty and Green values) had a weak relationship with political party affiliation suggesting the decreasing relevance for the left-right political spectrum. Haste and Hoogan (2006, p. 490) argue that this provides 'at least some evidence for potential 'single issue' politics, as predicted by Giddens and others' but suggest further research is needed.

A recent study by the think tank DEMOS likewise reports that young people today 'value bottom-up social action and social enterprise over top-down politics' and are 'as digital natives...accustomed to the speed and responsiveness and desire a politics that engages them at the same pace' (Birdwell & Bani, 2014, pp. 13–14). Based on survey data of one-thousand respondents and three focus groups of teenagers aged between fourteen and seventeen they find that young people today are more engaged with both local and global social issues than previous



generations; 80% of their respondents, for example, 'thought that their generation was more concerned with social issues than previous generations'. Moreover, they do not find conventional politics a good means to deal with social issues as only half of their sample thought that this was 'an effective way to deal with their concerns' – although interestingly they *do* find that 85% of their sample would vote when they turned eighteen. 70% also reported that 'it was important that they were involved in a career that helped changed the world for the better' and '[t]hree out of five specifically aspired to a career that helped people less fortunate than themselves' (Birdwell & Bani, 2014, p. 22). This perhaps lends some support to Beck and Beck-Gersheim's (2003, p. 159) idea that young people are now practice an 'experimenting morality' of 'self-realization as active compassion'.

Lastly, the *Demos* sample were also using social media for social action (Birdwell & Bani 2014). For example, 38% reported that they had signed an online petition, 29% has used Twitter or Facebook to raise awareness of a cause and 21% had 'liked' a political group or cause' (ibid, p.16). While this lends some support to the claim that young people are practicing politics online, as Livingstone et al (2005, p. 289) note 'the question of which online activities merit the label of 'participation' remains unresolved. What exactly must young people do online before society will judge them 'politically active' or 'engaged in civic participation'?'

In contrast to these studies, in the 2009 round of the *IEA Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS) to which 2, 889 English pupils (aged approximately 14 years old) responded, 92% report that they have 'never' been involved in a 'human rights organisation', 83% that they have 'never' been involved in a young people's campaign, and 82% 'never' in an environmental organisation. Although the highest rate of participation is 'collecting money for a social cause' (46%) and involvement in a community voluntary group' (39%) (Nelson et al., 2010, p. 88). The recent analysis of the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study* (CELS) data likewise finds that although 'young adults are using social media for political discussions', across the most recent Wave of the data only a small proportion of young people are taking part in non-institutional forms of political action such as boycotts and starting campaigns (LLAKES, 2015b, p. 1).

Together, then, these studies tend to provide a mixed picture as to whether young people are dropping conventional political action such as voting for 'new' value, and less-institutionalised types. While it may be true that across Europe today's young people are more likely to engage in 'new' 'cause-orientated' acts such as consumer politics than older generations (Norris, 2003), the evidence (particularly for British youth) tends to suggest that although spectating and discussing politics through social media is commonplace, there is not a great deal of political action relating to the 'new' politics of late-modernity that is captured in mainstream research.

## 2.7 Theoretical and methodological difficulties with the 'alternative' value explanation

One of the advantages of the 'alternative value' explanation is that young people are seen as not politically deficient as a decline in conventional political process might persuade, but are rather navigating a completely different type of society and have internalised the idea of democracy in different ways to previous generations (Farthing, 2010). In a context of detraditionalisation, an increase in individualism and an increase in 'uncertainty' and 'risk' (Giddens 1990; Giddens 1991; Beck 1992), the navigation of politics is instead more likely to be played out through the self-actualisation of political agendas (Beck, 1992). Yet, the application of these theories to the question of youth politics is not without criticism.

Firstly, Sörbom (2010), takes issue with the idea implied in the work of Giddens (1991) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005) that politics has become individualised at the expense of the collective. Here Sörbom (2010) questions why some forms of political engagement are to be seen as more focused on self-identity and life-style rather than the collective endeavours. She comments:

What is it about post-industrialized politics, to use Inglehart's vocabulary, that tells us that it is more focused on quality of life than survival? What is the environmental movement fighting for: the continued existence of the living environment or their quality of life? Are activists of the lesbian, gay, bi- and transsexual movement merely fighting for cultural recognition and their identities? Are they not fighting for the right to live openly as gays or lesbians without harassment or risk to their lives? And what about the global justice movement, struggling with the consequences of unleashed global capitalism? In what sense can that be considered "life politics"?' (Sörbom, 2010, p. 121)

(Sörbom, 2010, p. 121)

Sörbom acknowledges that the interests of such theorists is to comment on changes over time however she notes that this can overshadow 'the need for clarity of the concepts, leading them to misinterpretations' (2010, p. 121). Rather politics is *always* relational and collective and political acts are 'always untaken in relation to something greater than the individual person' (e.g., a shopper who boycotts oranges grown in Israel may do this without formal organisation membership but they but the act is still framed within a collective reference). When this is recognised she argues that the conceptual binaries between for example 'emancipatory' and 'life politics', and 'individualistic' and 'collectivist' politics disappear (Sörbom, 2010). Instead for Sörbom (2010) what matters is not 'the *degree* to which the individual is part of politics', but 1)

how she relates to politics, through membership or not, and 2) the arenas in which she does this' (Sörbom, 2010, p. 122).

Secondly, the 'life politics - emancipatory politics' binary (Giddens, 1991) may be problematic in terms of its distinction from emancipatory politics of earlier modern times. It may be the case that politics for some is not a matter of 'life choice' and 'self-actualisation' but continues to be a matter of emancipation and life chances. Indeed, Rheingan and Holland (2013) find through an in-depth case study of a recent student occupation at Newcastle University that while some of the students did not deny the 'self-actualising' elements of their protest they did report deep concern about the increase of student university fees on the life chances of students. As such some of the students they interviewed were critical of the idea that emancipatory politics were 'somehow divorced from issues of 'life style'' (Rheingans & Hollands, 2013, p. 12).

Likewise, and thirdly, reading youth politics through the lens of late modernity may obscure social differences such as class, particularly in British context (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). While it is important to note that Beck and Giddens do discuss this question – For Giddens (1991, p.6), for example, modernity brings 'difference, exclusion, and marginalization' and for Beck (1992) (despite the weakening of the class identities) the prevalence of social inequalities that have a more powerful hold at the individual rather than collective class level – Furlong and Cartmel (2007) note that class relationships may be 'obscured' due to the greater diversification of life experiences and trajectories. They refer to this as the 'epistemological fallacy of late modernity': social structures, in reality, continue to impact on young people's life courses but do so in ways that are more difficult to identify and challenge (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

The idea that young people, 'are free to re-create the world [and their political lives] in increasingly diverse forms' is therefore questionable (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007, p. 5). Indeed, a study by McDowell et al (2013) of working class workless English men does not lend support to a politics of late modernity. While expressing that political issues did indeed affect their lives, none of those interviewed were found to approach politics in terms of 'self-actualisation' or a politics of lifestyle and identity (McDowell et al., 2013, p. 17). Instead, the young men were found to lack the social and economic capital necessary to engage in the new terrain of politics (McDowell et al., 2013), suggesting the class and socioeconomic status plays a role in terms of who can assess the resources to engage in politics in this way.

Fourth, a methodological difficulty also arises in terms of the 'alternative values explanation'. Because much of the research on youth politics (and adult politics for that matter), especially those based on survey analysis, has tended to use a 'narrow' definition based on 'party political' participation (Fox, 2013; Soler-i-Martí, 2014), there has been less emphasis on how 'alternative

values' are implemented are translated into survey items. That is not to say that researchers have not tried to capture 'new' forms of youth engagement – studies have increasingly recognised different repertoires of political action such as those that relate to political consumerism (e.g., boycotting) (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Stolle, 2005) or those pertaining to online activities (Livingstone et al. 2005; Banaji & Buckingham 2009) – but it is to say that this is an area which needs to progress, particularly in survey research, if young people's political engagement is to be better understood (Soler-i-Martí, 2014). Hence, the survey developed for this study is intended to capture a broader range of political acts that pertain not only to conventional political participation but also 'alternative' forms (e.g., Stopped buying a product for ethical reasons (e.g., Nestlé, Starbucks, Primark) or used online sites such as Facebook to raise awareness of a social issue).

## 2.8 Summary and implications for research

This chapter has provided an overview of young people's political engagement in the British context. The standard finding to emerge is that young people are becoming less engaged in conventional politics, especially in terms of voting. In the literature, there are a number of explanations as to why this is the case. These include explanations that focus on political *apathy*, *lifecycle* (i.e., that as young people mature they will increasingly get involved in politics), *political knowledge and efficacy*, and explanations that stress *alienation* (i.e., the failure of the political system to engage young people) and *lack of trust* explanations. Other explanations suggest that broader societal social changes have led to a decline in the traditional cleavages of party politics and instead the burgeoning of an '*alternative value*' politics among young people (Sloam, 2007). Politics along these lines encompasses 'single issue' politics and social movements that pertain to topics such as environmental issues, anti-war, and anti-globalisation (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007, pp. 134–135), consumer politics (e.g., boycotting Nestle or buying Fairtrade) and identity politics related to issues such as feminism and sexuality (Norris 2003; Haste & Hogan 2006; Sloam 2007). According to Haste these types of political activity can now be considered the 'cornerstones of democracy' (2010, p. 172).

There are a number of theories underpinning these claims. Inglehart (1977, 1990) places emphasis on a shift in industrial societies from 'materialist' to 'post-materialist' value orientations the latter of which he argues has brought with it a declining respect for authority and political parties and a more 'self-assertive and expressive public' (Inglehart & Welzel 2005, p.118). As such citizens are 'coming to value freedom of expression and political participation as things that are good in themselves rather than simply as a possible means to attain economic security' (Inglehart, 1997, pp. 43–44). Political participation is therefore not so much about voting for political parties

but rather more issue specific. For Giddens (Giddens, 1991) 'high' modernity is characterised by the weakening of tradition and the increase of the self as a 'reflexive project'. This has led to a politics characterised by self-actualisation and 'life-style' choices that may likewise manifest as activities such as boycotting, ethical shopping, and being 'green'. For Beck (1995) tradition has likewise broken down and given way to the 'risk' society where a new sub-politics' has emerged (Beck, 1994, pp. 42–44) which resides outside the formal state in local communities. In their later work Beck and Beck-Gensheim (2003) specifically discuss youth politics and suggest that young people are 'unpolitical' but in a 'very political way'. Young people, freed from the constraints of modernity, are driven away from conventional politics and instead practice politics along the lines self-realisation and active compassion. In essence young people now 'live their ideology' (Farthing, 2010).

In terms of empirical research on the 'new' politics of British youth is in its nascent form and does not demonstrate any conclusive answers. Moreover, because young people are often subsumed into a homogenous group to examine political change over generations (e.g., in the recent *Demos* report by Birdwell & Bani 2014), crucial questions of how the politics of late modernity might play out over different sub-groups and social groupings based on for instance education (in this case post-16 education), class, ethnicity, and location, run the risk of being overlooked. As LLAKES (2015b, p. 1) there are not just '*intra-generational*' differences in political engagement but also '*inter-generational differences*'. Whilst it might be argued that research on the disengagement of young people from conventional politics has been somewhat exhausted, there is much room for further examination of the extent to which young people's politics are marshalled around the 'new' politics of later modernity. This subsequently generates one of the two research question and associated sub-questions for this study:

**RQ2:** How do young people practice politics?

**A)** to what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity?

And:

**RQ3:** Are there differences across different post-16 pathways? If so, what can these differences be attributed to?

The nature of these questions has implications for this study. Firstly, and to reiterate, the range of variables pertaining to 'new' politics in survey research needs to broaden. Part of the problem is that mainstream surveys on political engagement have tended to be underpinned by a narrow and liberal model of politics, or put another way, a definition of politics that take political to mean solely engagement in conventional (often party political) politics (Fox, 2013; Manning, 2013). This is true for many British surveys on adult political participation,<sup>24</sup> as well as for those on youth (Henn et al. 2007; Henn & Foard 2012; Henn & Foard 2014a). It is likewise true for the few studies available that demonstrate differences in political engagement across post-16 vocational and academic pathways. As noted in the introduction, these studies tend to only gauge political engagement by the measure of voting (Hoskins et al., 2014; Janmaat, 2014).

Secondly, a methodological approach is required which enables these research questions to be explored through different multiple-methods (Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010). In a world of research on political engagement dominated by quantitative survey-based methods, the benefits qualitative examination of often marginalised (O'Toole, 2003). In order to respond to the question of the nature of young people's politics in Britain it is not enough to rely solely on quantitative survey methods, qualitative methods are also necessary to explore the 'explanations..., narratives, norms, and prescriptions' that may explain young people's political action or inaction (Haste 2010,p.163). Hence, in chapter 5 the mixed-methods design employed in this study is outlined. This likewise includes a short description of how variables pertaining to 'new' forms of politics were operationalised into the self-completed questionnaire that was distributed to students across different post-16 pathways.

In the next chapter, a background to the post-16 sector in England is provided. This includes the examination of different types of institutes and also the different qualifications that may or may not be conducive to the political learning and engagement of young people at this stage of education.

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<sup>24</sup> For example Almond and Verba(1963); Parry et al (1992), Pattie et al (C Pattie et al., 2004); and Whiteley et al (2012).



## Chapter 3: The post-16 sector in England

Participation in some form of government-approved post-16 education and training in England has recently become compulsory. As of September 2013 young people aged sixteen have been required to remain in school or college, embark on an apprenticeship, or partake in education or training on a part-time basis whilst also working part-time or volunteering<sup>25</sup> (GOV.UK, 2014c). Although prior to this many young people remained in full-time study, raising the participation age to eighteen has been seen as a way to involve those not in education or training (NEET) and to provide opportunities for young people to gain the skills and qualifications that will lead to future employment. At the time of this study, the data for England shows that, in 2014, 83.2% of young sixteen and seventeen-year-olds were in full-time education and training (e.g., school sixth forms, sixth form-colleges, FE Colleges), 4.2% were enrolled on an apprenticeships, 1.3 % work-based learning, 0.6% part-time education and 0.6 % employment combined with training (GOV.UK, 2014b).<sup>26</sup>

The post-16 sector is diverse and is characterised by its different institutions and range of qualifications on offer (Huddleston & Unwin, 2013). Therefore, in this study it is defined as all those institutions and places of formal learning that a young person will study at between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. This includes, for example, not only FE Colleges and training organisations but also sixth-forms attached to secondary schools and separate sixth-form colleges. This definition therefore differs from those definitions of *further education* that encompass institutions at which only full-time vocational education study or apprenticeship learning take place and of which do not consider institutions which have historically provided more academic routes of study (Hopkins, 2014).

### 3.1 The roots of the post-16 sector

The post-16 sector can be characterised by its historical divide between vocational and academic education and its overall long and non-uniform development (Green & Lucas 1999; Bailey & Unwin 2008). As such, this section only deals briefly with the development of two of the major

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<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school>. Young people must stay in some form of education and training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. In 2013 the ‘participation’ age went up to seventeen-years-of –age and eighteen years of age by 2015 (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005)

<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that in this study those young people considered as NEETs (not in education, employment or training) were not included due to difficulties gaining access to this population and the fact that this study was primarily focused on political learning at school or college. However, at the time the study took place in the autumn of 2014 the rate of NEETs was 7% for the sixteen to eighteen age group.



places of post-16 education and training that serve to highlight its historical divide. The first is the sixth-form, which has historically played a central role in propagation of future elite political leaders. The second is the FE College which began its life in the industrial revolution as a place to train workers to operate the emerging new machinery. Unlike the sixth-form the FE College has traditionally resided outside the domain of formal education (Lumby & Foskett, 2005).

### 3.2 The sixth-form

The sixth-form has its roots in the privately endowed public schools of the nineteenth century (Reid & Filby, 1982). At its outset the sixth-form was an aristocratic institution and later also the place of learning for the youth of the middle classes. Entry to a sixth-form was determined by academic achievement and often teaching was carried out by high-ranked scholars. Those of the small minority admitted for study were often used as assistants in disciplining and organising younger students and as such received separate status from the rest of the school (Reid & Filby, 1982).

What is pertinent about the sixth-form is that historically it served to supply suitably prepared persons (at this time upper-class white men) who would assume political leadership positions in the centralised government and administration of the emerging modern state. The Clarendon Commission of 1861, for example, made curricular and organisational recommendations to the (well-known) major independent boarding schools such as Eaton and Winchester and in turn applauded such schools as the 'chief nurseries of our statesmen' (Reid & Filby, 1982, p. 63). Thus, unlike other countries which achieved the education of their modern state leaders through the development of a state system of education, England, as Reid and Filby (1982, p. 13) note, 'relied on the reform and extension of the existing privately endowed secondary schools'.

Character and discipline of the early sixth-form were central. Especially for those who went on to be political leaders what was gained from such an education was the ability to lead and follow, a genuine (and arguably narrow) concern for others and a desire to be fair and selfless (Reid & Filby, 1982). According to a thinker of the time, Matthew Arnold, such characteristics help to bolster the formation of a liberal democracy where, as Reid and Filby write...

'...though all may vote and have opinions there are some people who 'know what is best for you' and who, with your blessing, should be your democratic status as an ornament, rather than have it burden you with actual choices and decisions'.

(1982, p. 34)

To develop the capability of such a leadership position it was thought that contact with, and an acceptance of the authority of, the classical authors and philosophers was essential in order to develop the formation of 'true judgments and proper distinctions' (Reid & Filby, 1982, p. 31). As such, the curriculum of the early sixth-form was a liberal academic one rooted in the classics and was explicitly not vocational (Lumby & Foskett, 2005).

Following the Education Act of 1902, after which the state took on direct responsibility for the growth and finance of secondary education, the traditions of the early public schools and their adjoined sixth-forms evolved into the curricula of grammar schools of the twentieth century (Lumby & Foskett, 2005). Characterising the nascent formal system of secondary education was the importance placed on the sixth-form to which all other levels of education were often construed as subservient to (Reid & Filby, 1982). Thus, whilst elementary education was focused on the wider population and the early days of learning, secondary education was about weeding out those not fit for higher grade study. The sixth-form was construed as evidence of a quality school and schools tended to aspire to the 'conventional public school model' (Reid & Filby, 1982, p. 102).

By the time sixth-forms were established in state secondary schools, a clear link had also developed between sixth-forms, public examination and university entry and a Higher Certificate examination was introduced. Although not all those who attended sixth-form were aiming to study at a higher level, those who did tended to opt for the 'redbricks' universities such as Leeds or Manchester (Reid & Filby, 1982).

Following the Education Act of 1944, education was provided on a 'tripartite' basis and secondary education was split into the grammar school, the secondary technical school and the secondary modern. On the one hand, sixth-forms – a central feature of the academic-focused grammar school – grew as the 1944 Act abolished school fees and linked entry to grammar schools to a 'scholarship route'. Entry to sixth-form was likewise encouraged by the raising of the school leaving age. On the other, however, the 1944 Act undermined the sixth-form by the creation of parallel schools types (e.g., secondary technical schools) which eventually raised question as to the fairness of allocation at age eleven (Reid & Filby, 1982). In addition, few technical schools of the tripartite system were established due to the 'hostility of both parents and employers of labour' (Winch & Hyland, 2007, p. 15). Parents were keen for their children to access the prestigious status of the grammar school and employers were concerned with their loss of power with the onset of the technical school (Hopkins, 2014).

In time, many of the original grammar schools began to decline and were replaced by 'comprehensives' which sought to provide an education for young people from all backgrounds

and abilities, and particularly the working-classes who had been alienated by the ethos of the grammar school. However, these schools along with their sixth-forms (if the school had managed to set one up) continued to be modelled on the traditional pattern and therefore in turn demonstrated the difficulty of attempting to reconcile egalitarian comprehensive principles with selection by elimination of those not seen fit for academic A Level study (Harland, 1991).

Eventually, the broadening intake of sixth-formers in the 1960s and 1970s propelled the expansion of Local Education Authority (LEA) funded sixth-form colleges and the number of young people taking up O and A Level courses in FE colleges (Harland, 1991). Unlike the character of the traditional long-standing sixth-form, there were inherent tendencies towards democratisation and universalism at sixth-form colleges, both socially and academically. Thus as Reid and Filby (1982, p. 197) comment, 'it was not surprising that, in the context of a revival of hard-line political conservatism, the colleges were to become, in the early '80s the battleground par excellence of competing visions of sixth form education and...of competing visions of the meaning of British democracy in the nation as a whole'.

At present, school sixth-forms and sixth forms colleges make up a substantial portion of the post-16 places of learning in the post-16 sector (Thompson 2009; GOV.UK 2014a). Although the traditional types of sixth-form (e.g., Eaton College) can still be found in England these are few and are usually found in the private sector. However, the fact that in 2010 approximately 34% of MPs had received their education at private schools (compared to a national average of 7%) and 20 MPs went to Eaton speaks to the fact that old habits remain in terms of education's link to the formal political world (Hackett & Hunter 2010). As Hackett and Hunter (2010) write, 'Parliament today better reflects the gender balance and is more ethnically diverse, but in terms of educational and vocational background the new political elite look remarkably like the old establishment'.

### **3.3 The Further Education (FE) College**

In the nineteenth century technical education and training was characterised by a number of strands and unlike the sixth-form was largely marginalised from formal education provision. These strands included the 'Mechanics Institutes', 'work-based apprenticeship', 'self-improvement associations related to the labour and cooperative movement' and other 'adult education institutions which received philanthropic and state funding (Green and Lucas, 1999, p. 10). In the first half of the nineteenth century training was mainly apprenticeship-based and arranged by craftsmen and independent employers with little state regulation. According to Green and Lucas (1999, p. 10) this was often 'on-the-job training with little or no theoretical or academic study'

and (in contrast to the sixth-form) was 'low in status'. Because apprenticeship was often provided voluntarily by employers without state regulation Green and Lucas (1999, p. 10) note that it was 'well suited to the dominant liberal philosophy of 'voluntarism' in education and training, and in many ways set the parameters for all further developments in post-school technical education and training'.

The central precursor to the FE College, however, was the Mechanic Institute. These institutions replaced the small-scale training of the craftsmen and served to ensure large numbers of trainees were quickly and properly trained to operate the emerging new machinery of the industrial workplace (Hopkins, 2014). The ethos of these institutes was largely middle-class and as such alienated potential working-class trainees who tended to have limited initial education (Green & Lucas, 1999). As Green and Lucas (1999, p.11) note, the working-class self-education movement criticised the Mechanics Institutes 'seeing them as middle-class organisations dedicated to counteracting the supposedly radicalising effects of working-class self-education'.

In time, the Mechanics Institutes evolved into the technical colleges of the post-World War 2 that sought to train returning troops for civilian life and the 1944 Education Act made it a legal duty for LEAs to provide further education. Through the establishment and maintenance of country colleges LEAs were required to ensure vocational, physical, and practical training for school leavers (Green & Lucas, 1999). Further education, in fitting with the self-help tradition of adult education, was likewise for of 'any persons over compulsory school age' who wanted to engage in 'leisure-time occupation', 'cultural training' or 'recreative activities' (National Archive, 2012, cited in Hopkins 2014). Today, in contrast it is important to note that much more emphasis is put on further education as the domain of full-time vocational learning of those aged between 16 and 19 and, propelled by successive government's commitment to improving employment levels, skill training and apprenticeship training (Hopkins, 2014).

By the end of the 1960s, technical colleges began to transition to FE college status. At this time the number of full-time students on both vocational and academic courses expanded. This can be attributed to the expansion of higher education at the time and also the rising levels of youth unemployment of the 1970s due to global economic recession. As a result of the latter both the Labour and Conservative governments of the time sought to tackle youth unemployment through the introduction of various youth training and work experience schemes (e.g., the Youth Training Scheme) (Huddleston & Unwin, 2013). Thus, FE Colleges increasingly construed themselves as 'responsive' institutions that catered for diverse student bodies (including those following academic and vocational curricula alike) and offered a 'second chance' option for learning (Green & Lucas, 1999).

By the 1990s, FE colleges were at the centre of national strategies to raise the level of skills and qualifications and were also removed from LEA control as part of the Conservative government's attempt to limit the power of local authorities following the poll tax catastrophe. This, as Gleeson (1996, cited in, Huddleston & Unwin 2013, p, 9) notes, represented the conservative government's valorisation of market principles and broke with 'public service view of school and further education which linked schools and colleges with LEAs within the spirit of the settlement which followed the 1944 Act'.

Since this time, the FE College has remained central to successive government's proposals for increasing the participation of young people in education and training and providing basic and intermediate skills of young people and adults and generally offers a wide range of courses. Although FE colleges offer the A Level – the qualification traditionally associated with academic education and the sixth-form – increasingly they have moved towards the provision of full-time vocational courses for 16-19-year-olds and likewise accommodate for the resurgence of apprenticeships due to government concerns to increase skills training and employment (Hopkins, 2014). The FE college is likewise at the centre of the current government's Youth Contract provision for 16- and 17-year-olds which began in April 2012 and aims to reengage hard to reach young people in education, training, or a job with training (GOV.UK, 2014d).

Today, the majority of FE Colleges are also engaged in the provision of higher education study, for example the Higher National Diploma (HNDs) and since 2001 many have partnered with higher education institutions to introduce Foundation Degrees (Huddleston & Unwin, 2013). The present government, bound to market principles and the liberal philosophy of limited state intervention, have likewise remained committed to the autonomy of education institutions for schools and colleges alike. A latest development has been the government's ambition to establish 12 University Technical Colleges – *autonomous* academies which will be centred on vocational and applied learning and sponsored by local business and a local university (Avis, 2011).

### **3.4 Social background and post-16 institution type**

At present, school sixth-forms and sixth-form colleges are the largest provider of education to the 16-19 age group. FE Colleges, however, have large numbers of students in this age range and also older adult learners. In terms of social background composition, Lumby and Foskett's (2005) state that in essence the academic-vocational divide is a divide of cultural capital. 'Academic pathways are the *habitus* of the middle-class and aspirant middle-class social groups, while vocational pathways are popularly perceived as the *habitus* of working class social groups' (Lumby & Foskett, 2005, p. 63).

Indeed, empirical data suggests that old ways tend to remain in terms of social background of young people who enrol on courses in school sixth-form and sixth-form college and the FE College. Meschi et al (2010) for example show that more advantaged and higher achieving students tend to enrol in sixth-form based provision than FE colleges. Students whose parents have routine employment<sup>27</sup> are '10 percentage points more likely to enrol in FE colleges, as compared with those from professional backgrounds<sup>28</sup>' (Meschi et al., 2010, p. 6)<sup>29</sup>. Likewise, students with parents who have high and low managerial employment positions are considerably more likely to be enrolled on courses in school sixth-forms. As well, in terms of achievement, students who achieve five A\* - C GCSE grades are much more likely to be enrolled on courses in school sixth-forms. The highest percentage of students who *did not* achieve five A\* - C GCSE grades are enrolled at the FE college (see Table 3-1).

*Table 3-1: Enrolment in different types of provision at age 17 by parents' social class, and pupils' attainment at GCSE (Meschi et al. 2010)*

	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Sixth Form colleges</i>	<i>FE colleges</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b><i>By parents' social class</i></b>					
High managerial & professional	63.1	16.31	15.85	4.74	100
Low managerial & professional	56.65	15.1	24.15	4.1	100
Intermediate occupation	51.57	13.44	27.39	7.6	100
Small empl. and own work	52.16	12.11	30.21	5.52	100
Low supervisory & technical work	40.58	11.94	40.04	7.43	100
Semi-routine	45.27	9.29	37.55	7.89	100
Routine	35.47	11.68	42.23	10.62	100
Not currently working	39.42	11.29	39.57	9.72	100
Total	50.1	13.3	30.04	6.55	100
<b><i>By whether got 5 A*-C GCSE</i></b>					
0	28.54	8.02	51.87	11.57	100
1	63.31	16.58	16.51	3.6	100
Total	50.16	13.34	29.88	6.61	100

<sup>27</sup> Routine employment includes positions with a basic labour contract (e.g., bus drivers, cleaners, waitresses) (Meschi et al., 2010)

<sup>28</sup> Professional employment includes jobs such as doctors, lawyer, dentists and professors (Meschi et al., 2010)

<sup>29</sup> Meschi et al (2010) use the *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England* (LSYPE).

### 3.5 Qualifications and the post-16 sector

The post-16 sector has been particularly vulnerable to reform of successive governments. This has been the case in areas such as sector funding and also in terms of qualifications which have come to frame much of what goes on in colleges and sixth-form alike. The types of qualifications on offer are likewise vast (Huddleston & Unwin, 2013). For this reason, the qualifications discussed below are some of those that are *currently* available and are categorised as to whether they are more academic or more vocationally-orientated.

At present, the different types of qualifications on offer to young people at age sixteen in England are regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations (Ofqual) and are classified by a given level (between 1 and 8, one being the lowest and 8 the highest) (GOV.UK 2015).

What is complex about the post-16 sector is that qualification type does not necessarily coincide with institution type. While sixth forms for those aged between sixteen and eighteen – either as part of the school (i.e., years 12 and 13) or a separate sixth form college – offer primarily A levels, there are also many that additionally offer more vocationally-oriented courses (e.g., BTECs). Moreover, FE Colleges – the types of institutions traditionally associated with vocational training – tend to also offer A levels, of which numerous young people are enrolled on. As mentioned, that this is the case can be attributed to the period of the late 1970s and 1980s where de-industrialisation led to a decline in the work-based role of Further Education colleges (prior to these technical colleges) and the expansion of higher education resulted in the increased provision of academic courses in colleges, both at FE Colleges and sixth-form colleges alike (Green & Lucas, 1999, p. 21).

### 3.6 ‘Academic’ qualifications

The former type pertain largely to A levels which are the most dominant at post-16 (Hodgson & Spours 2009) and of which usually take two years to complete and can be found in a range of subjects typically taken in order progress to higher education (three A levels is the usual number needed to study at university). Such subjects are wide in variety and include anything from history, chemistry and philosophy to graphic design, physical education, and computing.

The strengths of such qualifications lay in their choice and specialisation in preparation for a single-subject honours degree. For this reason they have been construed as the ‘gold standard’ of the education system (Lumby & Foskett 2005, p.56). However, their strength is also seen as a weakness and there are those who believe that in England the A level curriculum study programme is narrow and encourages subject specialisation too early (Hodgson & Spours 2009)

and in turn does not prepare young people sufficiently for undergraduate university study (Anderson 2014). This is why following the Dearing Review of 16-19 qualifications (Dearing 1996), AS Levels were introduced in attempt to not only broaden the curriculum but also to provide a stepping-stone to a the study of a full A Level. Despite this and the recent expansion of the number of subjects taken, there continues to be strong concern that A Levels remain one of the narrowest curricula for those in post-16 education in the world (Young 2007; Young 2011).

Currently, A levels are undergoing reform. In particular, the current government aims to bolster the mathematical element of subjects such as science, economics, and computer science<sup>30</sup> in order to prepare young people for employment and further study and develop what has been termed a STEM-literate society' in order to stimulate economic growth (Parliament UK, 2012, p.1). A Levels will also return to linear rather than modular form assessment with a greater focus on exams. AS Levels will also no longer count towards the A level and are gradually being phased out (DfE, 2014).

'Academic' and 'general' qualification types also include the less widespread International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme – a broad two-year program of study encompassing six subjects, including a student's own language, a second language, an arts subject, a science subject, and compulsory aspects such as an extended project and community service (Huddleston & Unwin 2013). The IB is not new and was firstly introduced in the 1960s in response to the perceived narrowness of the then newly introduced A levels. More recent attempts, however, to broaden the academic education at post-16 – along with the similar Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) Pre-U and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) – now lie in the hands of private awarding bodies.

Although this type of qualification has increased in popularity amongst private schools, the number of state schools offering the IB has declined due to the high cost of its running in comparison to A levels. Thus, there is concern that the IB has become the preserve of the well-off few (Bunnell 2008; Tesconnect 2013). This has implications for the possibilities of equality in political and citizenship learning. As will be shown below the IB and similar qualifications tend to be more favourable to such types of learning as they stress the importance of citizenship, critical

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<sup>30</sup> As well, in terms of gaining entrance to higher education, there is an emergent hierarchy between those A Levels which best serve as 'facilitating subjects' and give a young person the best options at higher education level (e.g., Mathematics, Chemistry and Languages) and those which can be relegated as 'extras' (e.g., Critical Thinking, Citizenship Studies and General Studies) (Russell Group, 2013). Thus, there is not only a deep-seated historical parity of esteem between academic and vocational learning (as discussed below), but potentially an evolving one *within* the 'academic' domain of the post-16 sector.



thinking, and community action service, the latter of which is central to the IB programme of learning (Hodgson & Spours 2009).

### 3.7 'Vocational' qualifications

The latter types of qualifications available to young people are *vocationally-oriented* and include a variety of qualifications such as BTECs (e.g., in Vehicle Technology or Children's Care, Learning and Development) and NVQs<sup>31</sup> (Health care or construction and property) in a range of areas and different levels, with Level 3 enabling access to higher education. The BTEC in particular (a Level 3 qualification) is widely used as a more work-related option equivalent to the academic A Level which enables access to higher education (Bathmaker 2013). It has, however been an ongoing difficulty that vocational qualifications do not share 'parity of esteem' with A Level qualifications (Fisher & Simmons 2012, p.38). They tend to have a lower market value (Janmaat et al, 2014) and tend to lead to a dead-end in terms of education and economic progression (DfE 2011). As such they are often regarded as a route to lower income employment in comparison to A Levels (Lumby & Foskett 2005).

In some cases, high-level vocational programmes are highly competitive to enrol on, selective in their intake, and demanding. This is particularly the case for large engineering companies such as BAE systems (DfE 2011). However, lower level qualifications are often regarded as the second choice or second 'chance' option, especially for those who have performed poorly at school. Indeed, Meschi et al (2010), find that while 70% of young people with the top GCSE scores enrol in schools at post-16 and only 11% in FE colleges - the institute which provides the majority of vocational training - , 60% of those with the lowest GCSE scores enrol in FE Colleges and only 22 % in schools. Moreover, since they find that achievement is strongly related to social class they demonstrate that at post-16 it is students from poorer background that that enrol at FE Colleges and students from advantaged backgrounds who do so in schools.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of content, vocational qualifications, unlike academic qualifications, often involve apprenticeship and work-place learning and tend to be more market-led. They also tend to involve employers and organisations both from the public and private sectors in terms of design, provision of practical work experience, and awarding (Huddleston & Unwin 2013).<sup>33</sup> Therefore, vocational qualifications, particularly NVQs, have tended to focus heavily on the job-specific competencies or learning outcomes. A major critique of this, however, is that it divorces

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<sup>31</sup> BTEC – British and Technology Education Council; NVQ – National Vocational Qualification.

<sup>32</sup> Meschi et al (2010) use the *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England* (LSYPE).

<sup>33</sup> The current government has been keen in its approach to involve the private sector in educational provision, including the awarding of degrees in higher education (Fuller & Unwin 2011)

qualifications from learning as it shifts the focus to the minimal skills and knowledge required to carry out an immediate job. As well, Brockmann et al (2008) note that such skills neglect any kind of personal development or general education and typically are not underpinned by a developed conception of citizenship. 'Skills' and 'learning outcomes' are taken at their most literal (Brockmann et al. 2008, p.562) and teachers, according in Huddleston and Unwin (2013), in a context of educational measurement, have become increasingly concerned only with that evidence to meet specific criteria, rather than the holistic development of a student's competence.

### **3.8 Post-16 qualifications and political learning in England**

Do post-16 qualifications in England foster political learning? The answer is likely to be 'yes' if a young person specifically takes an A Level in politics or a related subject (LLAKES 2015a), the International Baccalaureate or is lucky enough to have a teacher who feels confident at integrating aspects of citizenship learning into a given programme of learning (Hopkins 2014). This is discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

In general, however, the nature of post-16 study in England is argued to not be conducive to the learning of political or civic dispositions. In terms of vocational qualifications, LLAKES (2015a) argue that the strong emphasis placed on job-specific skills is likely to disregard the fostering of wider civic dispositions. Likewise to Brockmann (2008), Hopkins (2014) have noted that vocational curricula tend to focus only on the instrumental demonstration of skills and are therefore often narrow 'in terms of what it means to *apply* these skills as a professional in local communities' (Hopkins 2014, p.163, emphasis added). Due to the extreme specialisation in specific subject areas, the popular A Level qualifications can also be considered just as narrow in terms of political learning (especially if a young person does not pursue an A Level in politics or the social sciences). As LLAKES (2015a) note if a young person takes for example 'English, Maths and Chemistry' they 'won't have much opportunity to learn about and discuss socio-political issues'. In general, then, the majority of qualifications (both academic and vocational) offered at post-16 in England are considered to lack breadth (Baker 2013) and are therefore unlikely to be conducive to political or civic learning.

### **3.9 Political learning at post-16 (upper-secondary) in other countries**

This is not the case in other countries. Close to home in Wales the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification which was introduced in 2003 and of which is taken by 35,000 learners (Hodgson & Spours 2009, p.18) is an example of a post-16 framework which includes either an academic or

vocational option which are unified by a unified core/specialisation curricula model which includes 'Options' (optional subjects and qualifications) and a compulsory 'Core Programme'. This includes "Wales, Europe and the World", [the] study of political, social, cultural and economic issues...[and]... Personal and Social Education, Including an activity in the local community' (Hodgson & Spours 2009, p.18). In France young people in upper-secondary education also study *Éducation Civique, Juridique et Sociale* (civic, legal, and social education). This includes aspects such as 'Citizenship, the law and relationships at work' and 'institutions and citizenship in practice' (Eurydice 2002). On the *lycée professionnelle* track - the main vocational route – students study *éducation civique* as part of the *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*. This includes topics such as the 'rights and duties of members of the educational community', 'equality difference and discrimination', 'the citizen and the media', and 'the citizen and justice' (Hopkins 2014). Likewise, in Sweden, in order to equalise the socio-economic gap and unify general and vocational education, the reform of the Gymnasium in 1994 resulted in the introduction of a hundred lesson hours of civic education (over the course of an individual programme) for students who pursued general (or academic) or vocational tracks alike.

### 3.10 The unification of academic and vocational education in England

In the 1990s, the unification of academic and vocational learning was likewise a topic for discussion in England (Hodgson & Spours 2009). Proposals to unify post-16 education were broadly justified by on the basis that the academic-vocational division preserved a 'low skills equilibrium'<sup>34</sup> and was unjust in terms of the perpetuation of social and educational inequalities. One proposal put forward by Young (2007) was that there should no longer be separate 'academic' A levels and national occupational criteria for 'vocational' learning but rather a broader curriculum based on '*connective specialisation*' – the idea of that there should be elements of the post-16 curriculum that are common across different specialisations (e.g., a common core of 'connective' knowledge that are compulsory to all students and/or a single set of levels in which all modules are based) (Young 2007, p.161, 168, emphasis in original). This is similar to Green's (1998, p.40) contention that there should be a mandatory form of general education at post-16 in England that would include 'English/Communications, Mathematics/Numeracy and some form of civic or citizen education which would have as its aim the cultivation of political literacy, environmental awareness, international understanding and social responsibility'.

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<sup>34</sup> This is defined as the way 'a self-reinforcing network of societal and state institutions which interact to stifle the demand for improvement in skill levels (Finegold and Soskice 1988, p.22)'

Such proposals for this type of curriculum model at post-16 are manifest in various reports such as the 1990 report *A British Baccalaureate* (Finegold et al. 1990) and the more recent Tomlinson Working Group report in 2004 (Tomlinson 2004). The latter for example argued for the phasing out of separate vocational and academic qualifications and as a substitute the introduction of a four-level diploma for 14-19 education. This would involve for example a greater role for lecturers and teachers in assessment, four levels of Diploma – Entry, Foundation, Intermediate, and Advanced, A core/specialisation curriculum model students and, ‘Common Knowledge, Skills and Attributes to promote reflective, effective, social and internationally aware learners, an Extended Project; and Wider Activities’ (Hodgson & Spours 2009, p.17).<sup>35</sup> In short, a unified curriculum would include modules that could be combined in different ways dependent on subject of field specialisation, a single set of levels in which all modules would be located, and ‘a common core of ‘connective’ knowledge and skills that would be compulsory for all students’ (Young 2007, p.168).

Regardless, successive governments have resisted the pressure to establish a more modern, unified and coherent 14-19 curriculum in England. The Conservative Government’s 1991 *White Paper Education and training for the Twenty-first Century* rejected proposals for unification and stated the preference for separate vocational and academic (A Level) pathways. A decade later New Labour similarly rejected the proposal of the Tomlinson Group’s proposals to develop integrated diplomas due to the political pressure of the approaching General Election of 2005 (Young 2007). At present, the current government likewise makes it clear that they intend to retain a divide between academic and vocational learning. As Young (2011) notes, the Conservative government fail to treat the 14-19 phase of education as a whole. Favouring instead a more traditional approach to the curriculum which is subject-based and where the vocational-academic divide is reinforced through seeing GCSEs, A levels and vocational education as largely separate.

### 3.11 Summary

This chapter has provided a short background of the post-16 sector in terms of two of the key institutions – the sixth-form and the FE College – and also the different types of qualifications that can be taken. Historically the school sixth-form was the domain of the middle-classes and served to propagate the elite political leaders of Great Britain and has been the archetype from which many sixth-forms have typically been modelled (Reid & Filby 1982). The FE College, in contrast, has its roots in the Mechanics Institutes of the nineteenth century and developed largely outside

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<sup>35</sup> For an overview of the Tomlinson’s Working Group’s proposals please see Hodgson and Spours (2009)

the domain of formal education and traditionally involved on-the-job' training with limited theoretical study (Green & Lucas 1999).

In terms of the current social background of young people at these types of institutes, empirical data shows that it is middle-class young people that tend to be found in sixth-form based provision, while those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds with lower levels of educational achievement are more likely to opt for study at the FE college (Meschi et al. 2010). This therefore has resonance with the discussion in the introduction on education as a mechanism for 'social sorting' (Nie et al. 1996; Persson 2012; Snelling 2015) and suggests that social class in England may indeed impact on the development of young people's political participation via their chosen educational path.

At present, there is a variety of post-16 qualifications on offer at post-16. '*Academic-oriented*' qualifications mainly include the popular A Level and (for some) the International Baccalaureate. While A Levels may foster political learning if a young person opts for politics or a social science subject, due to the extreme specialisation of such qualifications a student studying only pure sciences (for example) is unlikely to be exposed to socio-political discussion and learning (LLAKES 2015a). Likewise, '*vocational-oriented*' qualifications, which continue to be regarded as the second chance option for low achievers, are criticised for their instrumental emphasis on job-specific skills. As such, researchers in the field argue that wider civic and political learning tend to be neglected on such programmes (Hopkins 2014; LLAKES 2015a).

In some countries, where academic and vocational curricula are more unified, young people will learn socio-political topics through a core programme of learning or 'civics' classes. However, this is not the case in England. Successive governments have rejected proposals to unify post-16 education and training and have preferred instead to retain distinct academic (A Levels) and vocational pathways (Young 2007; Young 2011).

In the next chapter, an overview of political learning at post-16 is provided in terms of previous policy initiatives and the current, and more specific, qualifications that may foster political learning and engagement.

## **Chapter 4: Learning politics at post-16: policy and qualifications**

Citizenship education or 'civics' is one of the main vehicles for political learning in England. In the well-developed academic fields of political socialisation and citizenship education there has been relatively little discussion about citizenship (or political) learning in the post-16 sector. Instead, focus has largely been directed at citizenship education in secondary schools between the ages 11 and 16 (Veugelers et al, 2014). Although a few researchers dedicate their work to this topic – see for example Hopkins (2003) –, this lack of attention is arguably curious given that eighteen is the age where young people are legally given the right to vote and that, for quite some time, it has been the norm for young people to continue in post-16 education or training. Since staying on is now (as of September 2013) compulsory for a young person the need to examine political and citizenship learning at this stage of education becomes increasingly important. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of citizenship learning at post-16 through the examination of past policy initiatives as well as current qualifications.

### **4.1 Past educational policy initiatives and citizenship learning**

At present, there is no *compulsory* citizenship education at post-16; however strictly speaking this has not always been the case. Between 1957 and the late 1970s all vocational day-release students in FE Colleges were required to take one hour of general/liberal studies (GLS) in order to develop 'the habits of reflection, independent study and free inquiry' (Ministry of Education Circular 323, cited in Bailey & Unwin 2008). In the 1960s, the Association of Liberal Education (ALE) was also established. Its purpose was to 'encourage the extension of liberal education in an industrial society that increasingly demands specialisation' (ALE, cited in Bailey & Unwin 2008, p.66). A far cry from further education's narrow current focus on assessment and skills competence (Brockmann et al. 2008; Huddleston & Unwin 2013), the ALE's values included '[t]he student's right to be regarded as an individual human being, not merely as a potential worker', the importance of encouraging the student to 'understand his place in society, his rights and duties' and that '[e]ducation in the schools, colleges and universities of the country should not be confined by narrowly vocational or over-specialised curricula' (ALE, 1972, p. 2, cited in Bailey & Unwin 2008, p.66).

However, according to Bailey and Unwin (2008) the project of GLS was unsustainable for two main reasons. Firstly, successive governments failed to ensure that the subject was protected

within colleges. This they argue is paradoxical given the introduction of general studies as an A level in the 1950s. However, because of the historical divide between vocational and general education, schools and higher education played little interest to activities within colleges. Secondly, because of the economic recession of the 1970s and a subsequent decline in apprenticeships and rise of the 'state-funded 'trainee'' the concern shifted to a focus on 'core skills' and 'communication skills', thus leading to a very different approach to vocational student's personal development (Bailey & Unwin 2008).

In addition, and prior to this time, the Ruskin College<sup>36</sup>, an adult learning institute founded in 1899, aimed to provide university-level education for the working classes so that they could perform more effectively on behalf of their working class organisations and communities. These included for example the trade unions, political parties, working men's institutes and cooperative societies. However, the Ruskin College was also a site of conflict between the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the Plebs' League. The former was established as 'an organisation which offered tutors of university calibre, and other forms of assistance, to groups of workers who wished to study' (Simons, cited in Hopkins 2014, p.100), the latter formed in opposition to the WEA because it was construed as giving excessive power to the state by way of funding adult educational courses. A debate was likewise brought into focus of who should have the control of education. Should it be the 'enlightened' middle classes 'enlightening' the working classes, or should it be the workers themselves and their associated institutions such as the trade unions? In short, 'was the purpose of education to fit workers into a capitalist society or to question and help change that society?' (Ross 2014).

Therefore, the premise of the Pleb's League was 'self'-help' and that education should be under the control of adults themselves. As such, through the creation of Labour Colleges, the Pleb's League introduced courses that were concerned with teaching working class people in a 'working class way' (Frow and Frow, cited in Hopkins 2014), a number of which had an explicit political emphasis, focusing on the study of Marx and similar socialist thinkers (Hopkins 2014). By 1926, the Labour colleges (instituted as the National Council of Labour Colleges in 1921) had gained affiliations from over twenty national trade unions and were running educational schemes for 28 unions. Although this is not how most would understand 'citizenship education' today, it was undoubtedly a form of political education 'championing Marxism... as its ideological standpoint' (Simon, cited in Hopkins 2014, p.101).

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<sup>36</sup> See Hopkins (2014) for a fuller discussion on this topic.

Although the focus at this time was largely on adult education (not 16-19 as is the concern in this thesis), this demonstrates a strong historic link between the working classes in particular, education and also formal politics. The self-help tradition and the associated sense of working class empowerment was strongly allied to Chartism and the trade union movement (Hopkins 2014). It was the trade unionists of this latter movement that founded the British Labour Party in order to offer coordinated support to Parliamentary candidates who would speak out for working people (Unions Together 2014).

## **4.2 At the level of policy: New Labour and citizenship learning at post-16**

In 2000 an attempt was made under the New Labour government to make citizenship learning an 'entitlement' to all young people participating in the post-16 sector (FEFC 2000) meaning that school and colleges could provide learning opportunities if they wish but this was not mandatory. Following this a programme of pilot projects established by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was conducted to explore how citizenship learning could be developed at post-16. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), commissioned to evaluate the pilots, and concluded that 'the projects have been successful in developing a range of innovative approaches to active citizenship in a range of post-16 education and training settings' (Craig et al. 2004, p.i). The most successful citizenship projects they found included: flexible and rigorous frameworks that recognised the need for a range of learning strategies, both taught and active; 'dedicated and enthusiastic staff with sufficient resources'; '[a]n emphasis on combining knowledge, understanding and skills with practical action' – so called 'political literacy in action'; and the 'participation of young people in decisions about their learning, and the development of student voice' (Craig et al. 2004, pp.i-ii).

Despite such efforts, it is apparent that at the level of national policy citizenship and political learning in the post-16 sector has gone off the map completely. In the context of national economic competitiveness, it seems that education for citizenship in the post-16 sector (FEFC 2000) is increasingly marginalised at the expense of the instrumental commitment to the skills necessary for individuals employment and future study. In the next section, the previous attempt to make citizenship learning an 'entitlement at post-16' is discussed in more detail.

## **4.3 Citizenship education: the Crick Reports**

Citizenship education became a statutory part of the formal school curriculum in 2002 for Key Stages 3 and 4 under New Labour. The main driving force behind this was Bernard Crick and his



lead on the publication of the report *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (or the Crick Report) which informed the subsequent Citizenship Order (Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998). The purpose of this was to address the apparent political deficit among young people and to aim at ‘no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally’ (Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998, p.7). An effective citizenship education would incorporate three main elements: ‘Social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy’ (Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998, p.11). Theoretically this had its roots in a civic republican conception of citizenship which stressed the significant civic republican elements of the common good and civic obligation (Crick, 2000; Peterson, 2011; Annette, 2010), however, also incorporated elements of liberal conception of citizenship with its focus on individual rights and responsibilities (Gifford et al. 2014).

Although not immune to critique (Lister et al. 2003; Lawy & Biesta 2006; France 2007) the Crick report represents a key point in the endeavour<sup>37</sup> for the incorporation for statutory citizenship education into the formal school curriculum for those aged between 11 and 16. In many ways it also signalled an important moment in time for the proposed integration of citizenship and political learning into post-16 settings<sup>38</sup>:

Although beyond the age of 16 there is no National Curriculum, the Secretary of State should consider how the proposed entitlement to citizenship education should continue for all students involved in post-16 education and training regardless of their course of study, vocational or academic.

(Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998, p.23)

Following this, Crick and his associates attempted to expound how citizenship learning could build on Key Stages 3 and 4 and be incorporated into post-16 education programs in the report *Citizenship for 16-19 Year Olds in Education and Training* (FEFC 2000). In terms of education and learning, the emphasis of this report is different from the more well-known Crick Report that is in part a result of there being no overarching National Curriculum at the post-16 stage. Three main differences can be identified.

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<sup>37</sup> Prior to this Conservative governments had shunned citizenship’s inclusion for being a dangerous project of the ‘Left’ (Heater 2006); Margaret Thatcher, for example had ‘simply said ‘no’’ to the introduction of a compulsory citizenship education (Kisby 2012, p.49).

#### 4.4 Citizenship as a 'Key Skill'

Firstly, due to the diversity of the post-16 sector and the subsequent difficulty of making citizenship education a statutory and common subject across different learning settings (FEFC 2000, p.8), 'Citizenship' is referred to as an 'entitlement' (FEFC 2000, p.7), of which includes 'participation' as a 'significant component' (FEFC 2000, p.7). This is as opposed to its statutory status at Key Stages 3 and 4. The report therefore states that 'Citizenship' 'should be recognised as a new and explicit *Key Skill*, not simply a plausible implication from existing *Key Skills*'<sup>39</sup> (FEFC, 2000, p. 6, emphasis in original). It should also be *embedded* though the 'delivery of other *Key Skills* in the context of Citizenship Development...[or through]...work experience programmes or programmes of volunteering which have a particular focus on developing Citizenship Skills' (FEFC 2000, p.23).

This may be plausible, but it is important to note that while some have contended that Key Skills could be a potential point of 'linking' academic and vocational learning and improving the parity of esteem between the two (discussed above) for the diverse post-16 sector (Spours, 1995, cited in Green 1998), others have argued against this. As Green (1998, p.40) has made clear. Firstly, Key Skills (originally Core Skills) 'were not originally designed with reference to the entire post-16 system of curricula and qualifications, but only vocational courses'. Moreover, while Key Skills may suit the vocational notion of 'competence' this does not bode well with the knowledge-based foundation of academic courses such as the A level.

Secondly, Key Skills, with their narrow emphasis, cannot serve as a common core for academic and vocational courses. As Green (1998, p.40) argues 'no curriculum area derived from the world of work, with its minute division of labour and multiple social stratifications, can achieve the kind of universality which would allow it to serve as a common foundation for learning'. Not only have Key Skills tended to fall short of providing adequate basic skills (e.g., mathematical literacy and verbal articulacy) but neither 'impart a foundation of scientific and humanistic culture adequate to the demands of active citizenship in modern societies' (Green 1998, p.40).

Green (1998, p.40) therefore advocates a mandatory form of general education that on par with France's notion of *culture générale*, should include 'English/Communications, Mathematics/Numeracy and some form of civic or citizen education which would have as its aim the cultivation of political literacy, environmental awareness, international understanding and

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<sup>39</sup> The Key Skills referred to here were: 'Communication; Application of Number ; Information Technology; Working with Others; Improving Own Learning and Performance; and Problem Solving (the last three referred to commonly as the Wider *Key Skills*)' (FEFC 2000, p.16). These have now evolved and today are known as Functional Skills, however include similar themes.

social responsibility'. Key Skills, are for Green (1998) are an 'ineffective surrogate' for a more substantial general (or citizenship) education that might serve to provide a solid base of curricular unification across post-16 pathways. On a more practical level Hopkins (2014, p.34) likewise contends that the format of the new 'Functional Skills' offers 'worryingly little room...to explore citizenship (or other important social issues)', coaxing vocational students 'towards being literate and numerate workers rather than confident citizens'.

## 4.5 Citizenship as 'experiential'

Secondly, less emphasis is placed on 'taught' citizenship knowledge at the post-16 stage than is the case at Key Stages 3 and 4. It is stated that because citizenship after 16 becomes more 'experiential' and more about 'rights and responsibilities' then it follows that a different approach to learning is required (FEFC 2000, p.14). From this, recommendation is focused on the 'development of a set of skills' which are referred to as 'the skills of Citizenship'. These are to be developed through activities whereby young people are '*learning about [e.g., citizenship]...*' or '*developing and demonstrating an understanding of...*' rather than being '*taught about...*' (FEFC, 2000, p. 14, emphasis in original). Hence, the favoured approach to citizenship education and practice is that of more informal learning through 'everyday experiences' (FEFC, 2000, p.12) rather than a 'formal' curriculum *per se*. This idea is akin to more recent learner voice initiatives as suggested in *The Foster Report* (2005),<sup>40</sup> in Further education colleges (Hopkins 2014) and also student parliament and youth forum initiatives across the whole post-16 sector (Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme. 2007; QIA 2007b).

## 4.6 A common 'framework' instead of a common 'curriculum'

Thirdly, rather than a *common curriculum* for citizenship learning as is the case for Key Stages 3 and 4 a 'light touch' *common framework* is developed which is aimed to be adaptable across different post-16 learning contexts. The framework is based on key roles (e.g., community member, consumer, family member, voter, and worker) that students are likely to perform and are listed in a matrix that can be adjusted across various further education contexts. Through these roles students are to explore specific citizenship-related issues from different perspectives (e.g., combating prejudice and discrimination or demonstrating an understanding of the rights

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<sup>40</sup> In 2005 Sir Andrew Foster, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, was commissioned to undertake a review of FE. The "voice of the learner" formed a main strand of this evaluation, and the report included a number of recommendations to bolster mechanisms which support learners to assist with the design and delivery of the education and/or training they receive.

and responsibilities associated with a particular role). 'Citizenship', then, is stressed as comprising of a multitude of perspectives and roles in society and is very much linked to employment and the transition of young people to adulthood (FEFC 2000, p.4; Peterson 2003).

#### **4.7 Summary and of the report *Citizenship for 16-19 Year Olds in Education and Training* and further comments**

In short, the report *Citizenship for 16-19 Year Olds in Education and Training* (FEFC 2000) framework can be construed as an attempt to bring more *informal ways* of citizenship and political learning (e.g., through everyday experience, work experience and volunteering programmes) into more *formal locations* of learning (e.g. colleges and schools). To reiterate, there is no current common or rigorous framework in the post-16 education sector, despite the efforts of the NFER evaluation and others concerned with such matters (see for example, Peterson 2003; Peterson 2005; QIA 2007). There continues to be no 'clear statement of policy' from the Department of Education of the main principles and aims underpinning the provision of post-16 citizenship (Craig et al. 2004) that would be required if post-16 citizenship learning were to be rolled out nationally. Although, the NFER have advocated for a campaign to 'raise awareness about post-16 citizenship (Craig et al. 2004, p.69), this has yet to fully materialise. Despite recent battles to retain citizenship as a statutory subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 which were successful (Citizenship Foundation 2013), the current government has put little emphasis on learning citizenship or learning about politics in post-16 education settings in a way that fully recognises young people as politically engaged citizens. This has only been exacerbated by financial cuts to FE Colleges which has hindered the developments of citizenship activities (Pope & Joslin 2014).

Instead, in the context of heightened concerns about Islamic terrorism, recent governmental initiatives for schools and post-16 institutions have focused on 'fundamental' British values, particularly through the teaching of Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (SMSC)<sup>41</sup>. These have been defined as '...democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.' (GOV.UK 2014c, p.5). These values highlight 'respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes' (GOV.UK 2014c, p.5) and emphasise respect for public institutions and other people and the tolerance of different cultures and faiths. This, then, could be construed as a form of political

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<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that SMSC development is not mandatory in Further Education institutions (ALEP 2013). Additionally, due to the focus on exams after the age of fourteen it is found that the involvement of pupils in SMSC development activities declines markedly both in school and colleges alike (Peterson et al. 2015).

education that has recently come into play in British maintained schools and may affect young people's political learning at post-16.

Specifically, for FE colleges, there has likewise been a strong emphasis on the prevention of Islamic radicalisation. In the recent *Prevent Duty Guidance for further education institutions in England and Wales* it is emphasised that:

...institutions to demonstrate that it undertakes appropriate training and development [to prevent radicalisation] for principals, governors, leaders and staff. This will enable teachers and others supporting delivery of the curriculum to use opportunities in learning to educate and challenge. It will also allow leaders and teachers to exemplify British values in their management, teaching and through general behaviours in institutions, including through opportunities in the further education curriculum.

(HM Government 2015,p.5)

It is important to note however that the focus of *this* guidance is less about the SMCS of young people and more specifically about the prevention of Islamic radicalisation in FE colleges. The emphasis is on therefore on the surveillance of young people and is likely to continue the stigmatisation of Muslim students and break down of trust between students of faith and non-faith, as was the case in the Trojan Horse affair.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, as the Race Relations Institute has noted, '[a]ttention will be focused away from the much-needed work that develops pupils' independent and critical thinking, and that challenges prejudice, discrimination and bullying related to race, religion and culture' (Bollten & Richardson 2015).

## 4.8 Political and citizenship learning through specific qualifications

One way political learning may take place within the post-16 sector is through AS and A level qualifications such as Citizenship Studies (AQA 2014a) and AS and A Level Politics (AQA's, for example, Government and Politics). Political learning may also take place through courses such as AS and A Level Sociology (AQA 2014b; AQA 2014c), which although are not related directly to politics *per se* may be linked in many ways. In the summer of 2013 there were 794 candidates for the AQA's A Level in Citizenship Studies and 3814 for the AS Level. There were 3879 candidates for A Level Government and Politics and 5331 for the As Level; and there were 25,193 candidates for A Level Sociological Studies and 42,127 for the AS Level (AQA 2014d). Although candidature

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<sup>42</sup> The Trojan Horse affair was an alleged plot by hard-line islamists to take over a number of schools in Birmingham by the ousting of non-Muslim school staff. This led Ofsted carrying out inspections in many schools.

numbers are low, these qualifications represent some of the only rigorous ways for formal political learning in the post-16 sector.

Hence, one of the advantages of young people taking these types of courses is that they can potentially develop a sound knowledge base for political and citizenship issues that they may have otherwise not developed. For example, in the specification for AQA Government and Politics it is stated that students will develop...

‘...a wide range of skills including the ability to comprehend, synthesise and interpret political information; analyse and evaluate political knowledge; identify connections, similarities and differences between the areas studied; select relevant material and construct and communicate arguments clearly and coherently using appropriate political vocabulary’.

(AQA 2014b, p.2)

At AS Level, candidates develop ‘a broad knowledge and understanding of the political system in the UK’. At A2 candidates can choose different module options such as US Politics and Political Issues: Ideologies in Action (AQA 2014b, p.2). For Citizenship Studies, it is explicitly stated that the course builds on citizenship learning at Key Stages 3 and 4 and addresses at AS ‘the relationship between the individual, the law and the state and the nature of identities. At A Level candidates learn about the ‘characteristics of justice systems, the nature of representative democracy, the role of the parliament in the UK and contemporary global citizenship issues’ (AQA 2014a, p.2).<sup>43</sup>

One issue, however, is that such courses tend to only be delivered by mainstream providers, namely sixth form colleges and schools (Craig et al. 2004, p.36). As well, it is usually more academically-focused young people choose such a course. As one teacher in an NFER<sup>44</sup> evaluation suggested the danger was that citizenship might be targeted at more ‘academically able young people’ who ‘were going to get degrees and have the ability and opportunities to function as responsible and active citizens anyway’. The teacher thus raised the question ‘*[w]ho are the people who really need it?- that’s what they [policy makers] have got to consider*’ (Craig et al. 2004, p.77, emphasis in original).

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<sup>43</sup> Since this study was carried out Citizenship Studies at A Level has been discontinued. (CitizenshipFoundation 2015a)

<sup>44</sup> The then Learning and Skills Development Agency ran a number of citizenship development projects (the Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme). The programme included colleges, school sixth forms, training providers, community organisations and youth groups and set out to develop ways – e.g., taught qualifications, individual research projects and group tutorial programs – to encourage active citizenship among young people (Peterson 2003). A subsequent evaluation of the development projects was carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Craig et al. 2004)

Likewise, such acquired knowledge may not be sufficient for engaging young people in 'real' or valuable political or citizenship activities. As the NFER evaluation made clear, successful citizenship projects at the post-16 level combined 'knowledge understanding and skills with practical action...as opposed to a narrower political knowledge approach' (Craig et al. 2004, p.vii). Teachers in the evaluation likewise generally felt that that exam courses in citizenship were very 'knowledge based' and did not encourage or recognise *active* citizenship (Craig et al. 2004, p.59). This is contrary, however, to Paterson's (2003, p.15) view that the decontextualisation of political knowledge from activity is in fact important during the political learning process. He argues that '[s]tudents must appreciate and understand the nature and meaning of key principles and processes' in order to be able to reapply this knowledge to a variety of different contexts. In this sense, an A level in politics-related subject may be appropriately useful for setting the bedrock for an individual's political engagement.

Another potential concern is that candidates' may solely be taking these courses in order to progress to higher education. The focus may therefore be on exams and UCAS points rather than citizenship or political learning as a good in itself. It arguably the case, then, that in a post-16 characterised by assessment and accreditation citizenship and political learning may be reduced to instrumental assessment rather than encourage any real and meaningful citizenship or political activity.

It is questionable, then, whether taught courses such as A Levels alone are beneficial for political learning. However, as the NFER evaluation pointed out, one aspect of successful post-16 citizenship provision is '[a] flexible, yet rigorous, framework which recognises that projects are developing citizenship programmes in a wide variety of ways, from *taught* to more *active* approaches, according to the specific needs and circumstances of their organisations, staff and young people' (Craig et al. 2004, p.i, emphasis added).

It may well be then that the IB Diploma Programme (as discussed above), through its very nature of a broader post-16 curriculum, offers a more active and holistic possibility for political and citizenship learning along with an important knowledge dimension. Although there is not an explicit focus on political learning, the Diploma aims to 'prepare students for effective participation in a rapidly evolving and increasingly global society' through a core programme of study which includes an extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, and service (CAS). The latter part of the programme may benefit citizenship learning directly since students must participate in some form of community service. Theory of knowledge likewise supports the development of critical thinking skills and the extended essay has the option for 'students to focus on a topic of global significance' (IBO 2014b). The programme is therefore imbued with the wider

‘the principle of educating the whole person for a life of active, responsible citizenship’ (IBO 2008, p.1).

Research carried out on the relationship between the IB Diploma Programme and the civic-mindedness indeed demonstrates a link. Saavedra (2014) for example found in a study in California that the IB’s heavy pedagogical reliance on debate, discussion, written work, oral presentation and teamwork enables students to develop the skills that are often deemed necessary for civic engagement. The study likewise found that students enrolled on the IB compared to a nationally representative sample of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students scored higher on out of nine of ten items that tested knowledge levels of US government functioning, structure and history. Responses from a survey likewise found that the sample enrolled on the IB has a social-justice orientated conception of citizenship.

#### **4.9 Political and citizenship learning: the potential integration into existing programmes of learning**

Hopkins (2014) is one of very few who has explored how citizenship education might practically fit into exiting post-16 qualification in England,<sup>45</sup> albeit only in terms of full-time vocational education and apprenticeships (see Peterson (2005) for similar guidance). Here integration is preferred over an allotted citizenship subject since England does not have a strong tradition of general education in vocational training as is the case for other countries such as Germany and France (Hopkins 2014)

Hopkins (2014) firstly puts forward that Diplomas for 14-19 years of age – introduced over the last few years and abandoned under the previous Coalition government – may have meant the integration of citizenship into single programs. This view was likewise adopted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in their suggestion that ‘[a]ll Diplomas provide opportunities for citizenship links at varying levels, for example the public services Diploma makes a lot of obvious links, as does society, health and development’ (QCA, 2009, cited in Hopkins, 2010). The fact that Diplomas had included Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) with a framework that included aspects such as reflective learners, team workers, and effective participators, may have proved conducive to the integration of citizenship learning. However, the QCA had not stated citizenship as compulsory and the potential comprehensiveness of citizenship

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<sup>45</sup> It must be noted that in his work Hopkins (2014) refers only to full-time vocational education and apprenticeships for young adults aged between 16 and 19 and *not* A Levels courses or school sixth-form.



education applied in this way, as Hopkins (2014) notes, was still far less extensive in scope in comparison to Key Stages 3 and 4 of the National Curriculum.

As Diplomas have been dropped by the coalition government, Hopkins (2014) further explores the potential of the integration of citizenship into non-Diploma vocational programmes (e.g., the BTEC). This also includes the opportunity to draw out PLTS onto different units studied within a course. Hopkins (2014) provides the example of the 'BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Art and Design' in which 'Unit 13 Edexcel of the programme, 'Working with Interactive Media Brief's' encompasses aspects that could relate (albeit loosely) to citizenship learning: 'adapting ideas to changing circumstances' 'managing discussions to reach agreements and achieve results'. In a similar way, although not discussed by Hopkins, aspects of some BTECs do include citizenship. This is the case, for example, for the Level 3 BTEC in Applied Science by Edexcel. Within this citizenship is (somewhat marginally) included as 'Wider curriculum mapping' and pertains to learning about 'equal opportunities' (edexcel 2012).

However, in terms of implementing citizenship teaching in practice Hopkins (2014) argues that this raises issues such as inspiring teachers to cover citizenship or political themes in such programmes, the training of teachers who specialise in citizenship education given that most teacher in further education are not 'citizenship' trained (with the exception of those colleges that offer A level and GCSE citizenship) (Hopkins 2010), and the problem of teachers 'treading a lone curriculum path into areas where they do not feel fully confident' (Hopkins, 2014, pp. 33-35).

#### **4.10 Summary**

This chapter has shown that citizenship education – one of the main vehicles for political learning in England – is *not* compulsory at post-16. Alongside the introduction of citizenship education 2000 citizenship was conceptualised at the level of national policy as an 'entitlement' (FEFC 2000). Schools and colleges could provide citizenship-learning opportunities if they wished but that this was not mandatory. As such the authors of the report *Citizenship for 16-19 Year Olds in Education and Training* (FEFC 2000) recommended introducing citizenship as a 'Key Skill'. However, since Key Skills (now Functional Skills) have been designed with reference to only vocational courses, they are likely to be an 'ineffective surrogate' for a more substantial general or citizenship education across the post-16 sector (Green 1998). In the same report emphasis is also put on experiential citizenship learning rather than being 'taught about' citizenship and a common 'framework' is provided instead of a common 'curriculum'.

This chapter also considered how political and citizenship learning might take place through specific formal qualifications such as A Level Citizenship Studies, an A Level in Government and

Politics, and, for a small number of young people, the IB diploma programme. The A Level in Government and tends to predominately focus on subject 'knowledge' (Craig et al. 2004). The IB on the other hand combines both knowledge and *practice* (i.e., participation in some form of community service) and is concerned with the holistic development of a student for a life of active and responsible citizenship (IBO 2008). In terms of vocational qualifications, Hopkins (2014) work on how active citizenship learning might be integrated into existing programmes of learning was discussed. Through qualifications such as the BTEC Hopkins (2014) explains how certain units of the programme could relate to citizenship learning (e.g., managing discussions to reach agreement and achieve results). However, he raises the issue of teacher competence in this area given that most teachers are not 'citizenship' trained or fully confident in teaching citizenship and politics-related topics (Hopkins 2014).

The purpose of the next chapter is to conceptualise how political learning is understood in this study. This combines two parts. The first focuses on the acquisition of political knowledge through 'civics' lessons and the A Level in politics. The Second focuses on learning as social participation and includes more practical and experiential types of political learning such as participating in a student council or discussing politics with peers.



## **Chapter 5: A conceptual framework for examining political learning**

There has been wide normative agreement in the field of citizenship education in England and elsewhere that education should contribute to the development of democratic citizenship. Students internalise democratic norms and values and acquire the knowledge about the political system in which they live (Gutmann 1999; Arthur et al. 2008; Annette 2010). Over the last two decades there have been concerns about young people's declining political awareness and activity (Biesta et al. 2009) and how they are to deal with living in complex and culturally diverse societies (Osler & Starkey 2003; Peterson 2011). As such, there has been a renewed interest in the role of the school in fostering democratically engaged citizens, largely through the means of citizenship education, in the hope that young people will eventually actively and meaningfully participate in public life. Indeed, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, just over a decade ago citizenship education became a compulsory part of the National Curriculum in England for Key Stages 3 and 4 and adjoined to this citizenship learning was regarded as an 'entitlement' for young people in post-16 education and training (Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998; FEFC 2000).

According to Peterson (2011) this renewed interest has coincided with, and is linked to, a revival of civic republican thought in Western political philosophy. From this perspective, to be a citizen is essentially 'practice' and involves active participation in community life and decision-making processes (Sandel 1996; Oldfield 1998; Ridley & Fülöp 2015). In this sense citizenship is relatively demanding but can also be described as more intrinsic in nature in that the obligations members of a community have towards each other form part of who they are as citizens and as human beings (Peterson 2011).<sup>46</sup> Although it is not always certain as to how schools can facilitate political learning along these lines (Quintelier 2013), researchers stress the importance not only of citizenship or 'civic' education but also specific school learning processes and practices which are understood to foster the development of young people's political participation (e.g., participation in school student councils) (Torney-Purta et al. 2002; Judith Torney-Purta 2002; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011).

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to conceptualise how political learning is understood in this study. The framework outlined below draws on previous empirical research that demonstrates some of the different ways in which young people's political participation is fostered at school. It is important to note that much of this research has focused on political learning at the secondary

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<sup>46</sup> See Ridley & Fülöp (2015) for a short overview of the different understandings of citizenship.

stage of education. This is because, in England at least, programmes of citizenship education have been mostly targeted at the eleven to sixteen age group (Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998). As well, in the most mainstream political socialisation studies– the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement Civic Education Study* (CIVED) and the *IEA International Civic Education Study 2009* (ICCS) – the survey respondents are young people aged approximately fourteen and therefore half way through their secondary schooling (Torney-Purta et al. 2001).

In contrast, in this study the focus is young people’s political learning at post-16<sup>47</sup> and therefore young people aged between sixteen and nineteen. As shown in the introduction, a small number of studies from other countries suggest suggests that political learning experiences may indeed differ depending on whether a young person takes an academic or a vocational course. From these, the general picture to emerge is that academic courses are more conducive to political learning than vocational programmes of learning. For example, in Belgium, Quintelier (2010) finds that students pursuing general education (or academic) courses are more likely to discuss politics at their schools and hold a greater formal political knowledge than those on vocational programmes. Participation in wider school active learning strategies such as participation in a student council are likewise more highly reported by young people on general education tracks than those taking vocational courses.

In the context of England, this study seeks to examine the political learning experiences of young people on different post-16 pathways both in terms of the type of qualification they pursue and also wider school or college practices.

## **5.1 A conceptual framework for examining political learning at school or college**

The conceptual framework for examining political learning in this study encompasses the lessons, practices and processes at school or college that are demonstrated in the literature to be important aspects of political learning. It must also be noted that the term political *learning* is preferred over the concept of political *socialisation*. This is because the latter tends to portray young people as passively socialised by their parents or schools, or as Haste notes ‘at the end of a

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<sup>47</sup> Although the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Survey* (CELS) data includes variables on some aspects of political learning, the data from the CELS study is not suitable for responding to the research questions of this study, and in particular school-based political activities beyond compulsory education, due to low numbers of respondents in Wave 4 of the study (personal communication, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

conduit of “influence” (Haste 2010). The former on the other hand, places more emphasis on young people as active in their own learning processes. Hence, the learning theory that underpins part of this conceptual framework is based on learning as social participation (Lave & Wenger 1991).

The framework is divided into two parts. The **first part** consists learning and formal citizenship education and is focused on the acquisition of political knowledge through specific subjects at school. The **second part**, which is more substantial, is based on the idea of learning as situated social participation. In this part, the focus is on meaning-making and participatory activities at the school or college.

## **5.2 Political learning and formal citizenship education**

### **5.2.1 No formal citizenship education at post-16, only specific qualifications**

As discussed in chapter 4, citizenship education (or ‘civics’ as it is also referred to) does not form part of the post-16 curriculum in England. The opportunities for young people to develop their political literacy through the formal curriculum (i.e., the qualification type they pursue) are therefore limited unless they are studying towards the International Baccalaureate or specifically take for example A Level politics or related humanities subjects such as history or sociology. In some cases tutorials may take the form of civics lesson at post-16 but the delivery of a quality lesson may be dependent on staff commitment to the topic (Craig et al. 2004). In this study, then, formal citizenship education can only be considered in terms of the specific qualifications (e.g., A Level politics) and tutorials that may aid the development of student’s political knowledge base.

### **5.2.2 Citizenship education, specific qualifications and the acquisition of political knowledge**

There is a general consensus in the literature that formal citizenship education should ideally increase young people’s political literacy – that is the knowledge and understanding of political process, institutions, and related issues (Galston 2001; Denver & Hands 1999). This is important since an increase political knowledge base is found to have a positive influence on citizen’s participatory attributes. Delli Carpini et al (1996) show that civic knowledge bolsters promotes civic participation. In this case, civic knowledge is significantly related to the probability of voting. Popkin and Dimock (1999, p.142) likewise show through regression analysis that ‘knowledge about politics stands out as a consistently strong factor shaping the decision to vote’. They also show that citizens who are *less* informed are more likely to base their political judgments on the

personal character of politicians rather than the content of political party programmes. According to Galston (2001) a sound political knowledge base likewise matters because it means citizens can better understand the impact of public policies on their individual interests and are less likely to feel alienated from public life.

There is mixed evidence, however, that taking citizenship classes actually makes a difference on young people's political knowledge. Early studies demonstrated that taking citizenship classes did not influence young people's political participation (Langton 1969). However, more recent studies do suggest that studying a specific citizenship curriculum or studying towards specific qualifications do lead to increased political engagement. Niemi and Junn's (1998) find in their seminal study, for example, that specific aspects of civic education lessons are important in raising levels of political knowledge – civic coursework alone was found to raise overall levels of political knowledge by 4 percent. This increased to 11% when considered in tandem with a wide range of topics and regular discussions of current events in the classroom and therefore highlights the importance of discussion activities in political learning as discussed below.

Likewise, Whitley (2012) finds through the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study* (CELS) that studying citizenship education in England positively influences a young person's levels of political knowledge and that other factors such as socio-economic background have little influence in this case. In the most recent analysis of the CELS data it is found that '[s]tudents who report receiving a lot of education about citizenship at school are more likely to hold positive attitudes towards civic and political participation, and to feel that they can effect change in their communities and in the political sphere' (LLAKES 2015b, p.7). The CELS researchers also find that students who report having received a lot of citizenship education at their secondary school are those that attend a school that provides separate citizenship classes for forty-five minutes or more per week.

In the context of England and Wales Denver and Hands (1999) report on a study carried out to examine whether studying for an A Level in Politics makes a difference in terms of young people's political knowledge. From a series of surveys with sixth-formers in 154 schools and colleges they find that doing politics A Level as an independent effect on factual political knowledge, issues and ideological awareness, media consumption and political participation and efficacy. Indeed, they find that more politics A Level students than non-politics A Level students would be certain to vote in a general election. They conclude that 'young people who take Politics at A Level are distinctively more knowledgeable and politically aware than their peers'. A criticism of this is, however, is that it is probable that those who take A Level politics were more knowledgeable about politics because they are more interested in the topic than those who do not take the subject at A Level prior to beginning the course. Therefore, although the findings of Denver and Hands (1999) are of interest here, they do need to be taken with caution.

### 5.3 Political learning as situated social participation

In this section, political learning is understood as situated social participation and consists of three parts. The first part provides an overview of how learning as situated social participation. The second part focuses on **meaning-making activities** (e.g., discussion with teachers) and **participatory activities** (e.g., voting for a class representative). In this study more importance is placed on learning through meaning-making and participatory activities since research tends to show that they have a positive association with young people's intentions to participate politically (Hoskins et al. 2011; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011; Quintelier 2013). As well, although the emphasis here is on the school or college, the focus on learning as social participation means the emphasis is not only on the acquisition of political knowledge but also on the social practices of young people, their teachers, and parents in the wider learning environment (Torney-Purta et al. 2010; Hoskins et al. 2011).

### 5.4 Learning as situated social participation: an overview

Learning as situated social participation is based on the work of learning theorists Lave and Wenger (1991) who understand all aspects of learning and development as situated in social context<sup>48</sup>. The individual is seen as a participant in cultural practice (Cobb 2007) and is important in so far as they learn in relation to others. In philosophical terms, then, Lave and Wenger's theory rests on a nondualist ontological assumption in which the mind and world cannot be separated, but rather are implicated (Packer & Goicoechea 2000).

For Lave and Wenger, individuals develop habits and identities when they are meaningfully engaged in a community of practice (CoP). A CoP involves people engaging over a period of time in a shared activity such as a netball team, participating in a student council, or running a political campaign with classmates. The shared activity sets the membership of a CoP since this demonstrates what membership entails. Central to Lave and Wenger's theory is that newcomers to a CoP learn skills from 'masters' (or more experienced group members) to move from peripheral to central participation. This approach to learning therefore sees the individual as an engaged agent in the learning process and who develops a growing sense of belonging to a CoP. The learner then is involved in the construction of knowledge and skills, which entails the development of his or her identity through the process.

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<sup>48</sup> Lave and Wenger's theory of learning is based on their anthropological studies of different sites of learning. These include apprenticeship and self-help groups (in this case Yucatec midwives, Vai and Gola tailors, US Navy quartermasters, meat-cutters and non-drinking alcoholics).



Wenger (1998) later developed the CoP theory and advanced four dimensions of learning central to the process. As Hoskins (2011) recapitulates these include: 'practice = learning as doing; meaning-making = learning as experience ; community = learning as belonging; and identity = learning as becoming'. For Wenger (1998) meaning-making is an active process. Meaning arises as a result of past interaction and develops through new patterns of interaction with others. Practice is learning as 'doing' in a social context that gives structure and meaning to what people do. Community is a way to talk about the 'social configurations in which our enterprise are defined' (Wenger 1998, p.5). Identity is a way of talking about how learning changes individuals and as Wenger (1998, p.5) notes 'creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities'.

According to Wenger (1998), then, learning can be construed as part of everyday life and takes place through a '*constellation of practices*' (Wenger 1998, p.126, emphasis added). These are 'pervasive', all around us and are an integral part of our everyday lives, however 'rarely come into explicit focus' (Wenger,1998, p.7). Individuals are involved in a number of them at any one time; this could be for example, at work, in college, home, in a local community, or within leisure interests. They also vary: some may be more fluid (e.g., a peer group) and some more static (a college class). Some may be found in formal settings (e.g., a school) some may be found in informal environments (e.g., the local community, or online) some may have names, others not (Wenger 1998).

### **5.4.1 Communities of practice and political learning**

Although the academic literature does frequently stress the importance of learning contexts beyond the school (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Hoskins et al. 2011; Quintelier 2013), in this study the CoP concept is used to examine political learning primarily in the school context. In addition, the literature on political learning suggests that learning through social participation is indeed associated with the learning of political knowledge, attitudes and participation (Hoskins et al. 2011). For this reason, the concepts of 'practice' and 'meaning-making' are discussed below since they are applicable to the literature on political learning, particularly in the school or college context. These are drawn out separately to enable clarification of how these relate to concepts in the literature. The concepts pertaining to political 'learning as becoming' and political 'learning as belonging' are not included in this framework. It felt that to examine political learning in this way would require different, perhaps more extensive biographical, methods

#### **5.4.2 Practice activities**

For Lave and Wenger (1991) learning is practice or 'doing' in a social context that gives structure and meaning to what people do. In terms of political learning practice, a participatory school culture is therefore important. Activities might involve taking part in a school debate club or a learner voice initiative or taking part in a campaign with peers. These activities may likewise set the context for meaning-making – learning as experience, which is discussed below.

In the literature, learning as practice does tend to be associated with political knowledge and skills. In the 1999 CIVED study, school councils were found to be an important factor in the learning of civic knowledge (Torney-Purta 2002). This is confirmed by Hoskins et al (2011, p. 441), who in analysis of the same data set find that it is not only school councils that are significantly important for explaining participatory attitudes but also volunteering, collecting money for charities, and participation in drama and dance activities. In analysis of the 2009 ICCS study, Hooghe & Quintelier (2011) find that participatory activities in the school context are associated positively with young people's intentions to participate politically across thirty-four countries that participated in the ICCS study. As well, Quintelier (2013) finds that along with talking about political events, participation in a student council had a strong relationship with Belgium sixteen and seventeen-year-olds propensity to political participation.

Of course, as is the case with many of the findings from such survey work it is difficult to determine the causal direction of the relationship between practice and intended or future participation (Hoskins et al. 2011). In this case, that practice activities tend to be associated with increased intention to participate politically may be because people who decide to take part in such activities are already politically engaged. The same may also apply for meaning-making activities.

#### **5.4.3 Meaning-making activities**

A CoP, sets the context within which meaning is negotiated between different members. Meaning arises as a result of past interaction and develops through new patterns of interaction. It is an active process (Wenger 1998). A daughter may discuss with her father which is the best political party and who to vote for. A student may discuss a political issue in her college class. According to Hoskins et al (2011) meaning-making activities can also involve activities a young person who decides to read a newspaper or searches the news online to make sense of a political issue. Discussion meaning-making activities may promote political learning because they necessitate the expression of political views as well as force individuals to develop more thoughtful viewpoints (Eveland, 2004). Discussion may also help people develop deeper understanding of particular

issues, however topic exposure may only be as diverse as the network a person is situated in (Conroy et al. 2012).

Indeed, Hoskins et al (2011) find, through a multilevel study of young people's citizenship learning, that it is meaning-making variables<sup>49</sup> which focus on dialogue and interaction that have the strongest links with the development of citizenship participation. This is in contrast to the number of hours spent studying history or social studies that is found to be unrelated to participatory citizenship attitudes. Eichhorn (2015) likewise finds a similar outcome in analysis of survey data on young people leading up to the Scottish referendum in which sixteen-year-olds were enfranchised. In this case, while discussing the referendum in class and with parents is strongly related to political interest (although the casual direction cannot be determined!) this was not the case for civics lessons<sup>50</sup>. Taking civic lessons was found to not be related to political interest. Quintelier (2013) likewise finds that 'talking about political events' at school had a strong relationship with young people's political participation for young people aged between sixteen and seventeen in Belgium.

#### **5.4.4 Open-classroom climate as an enabler for meaning-making activities at school or college**

Through the lens of Wegner (1998, p.47) social practice can also be tacit and include 'implicit relations' and 'subtle cues'. In the school context, the presence of an open classroom climate can be understood as one of the more 'tacit' process of political learning and an important enabler of political discussion (or meaning-making activities). Torney-Purta (2001, p.137), define open classroom climate as 'classrooms as places to investigate issues and explore their opinions and those of their peers'. Ichilov (2003, p.653) likewise defines it as 'students' feeling that they can freely participate and express themselves in a supportive environment'. In this sense importance is laid on the style of teaching since as Hooghe and Quintelier (2011, p.4) note 'a more participatory, interactive and less authoritarian school climate is associated with more democratic and tolerant attitudes'. This therefore has resonance with what Giroux and Penna (1979, p.22) refer to as the 'hidden curriculum' – 'the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal as well as the social relations of the school and classroom life'.

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<sup>49</sup> Talking with parents and friends about national or international politics, open classroom climate, talking with teachers about what is happening and listening and watching the news.

<sup>50</sup> Civics in Scotland is termed Modern Studies that some schools offer in Scotland and combines the study of various social science subjects, such as politics, sociology and media studies.

Open classroom climate is found in many studies to play a vital part in young people's political learning and also the likelihood of their future participation (Torney-Purta et al. 2007; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011; Hoskins et al. 2011; Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Hooghe and Quintelier (2011) find through analysis of the 2009 International and Civic and Citizenship Education Study that young people who experience an open classroom climate are more inclined to participate politically. Hoskins et al (2011) find that an open-classroom climate is positively associated with cognition about democratic institutions. As well, Torney-Purta et al (2007) find that 'active participation in the classroom encouraged by teachers relates to a stronger positive attitude toward immigrants' rights among Latino students'.

## **5.5 Summary and implications for research**

The purpose of this chapter has been to conceptualise how political learning is understood in this study. The framework outlined is split into two parts. The first part deals with political learning as the acquisition of knowledge through, for example, civics lessons (in this case certain qualifications such the politics A Level). Research in this area tends to show mixed evidence as to whether taking such classes increases young people's political knowledge. While older studies showed that taking civics did not influence political engagement (Langton 1969), more recent studies do suggest that certain courses to have an impact. Of particular interest is the study by Denver and Hands (1999) which shows that taking politics A Level has an independent effect on factual political knowledge and increases those students' intentions to vote.

The second part of the framework is based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of learning as social participation and therefore deals with some of the participatory learning activities that are found in the literature to be important in terms of fostering political engagement. Practice activities, for example, can include school debate societies, student councils, and political campaigns and are found by a number of researchers to play an important part in youth political learning (Torney-Purta et al. 2002; Hoskins et al. 2011; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011; Quintelier 2013). This is likewise the case for meaning-making activities and an open-classroom climate teaching style (Torney-Purta et al. 2007; Hoskins et al. 2011; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011).

This study offers a unique contribution to research since it examines the lessons, learning processes, and practices, which have been found to be conducive to the development of political engagement, at the level of post-16 study. To date, there have been no other studies in the context of England that have sought to examine political learning at post-16. To this purpose, and taking into account the literature discussed in chapters 3 and 4, a central research question of this study is:

## Chapter 5: Toward a conceptual framework for examining political learning

RQ1: How do young people learn politics?

And:

RQ3: Are there differences across different post-16 pathways? If so, what can these differences be attributed to?

In terms of the implications for research, the quantitative survey research instrument developed for this study includes items that seeks to gauge the lessons that young people on different post-16 pathways perceive to be important in terms of their political learning. Items pertaining to wider school participatory activities, meaning-making activities, and classroom climate are also included in this survey. As well, the use of qualitative methods (i.e., focus groups and interviews) offer young people space to discuss in greater depth their own experiences of political learning on their different educational pathways. These are the topics for the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6: A mixed-methods design for examining youth politics and political learning across different post-16 pathways**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of how this study was conducted with regard to the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How do young people learn politics?

**RQ2:** How do young people practice politics?

To what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity?

**RQ3:** Are there differences across different post-16 pathways? If so, what can these differences be attributed to?

This chapter begins with a short justification for a mixed-methods approach in the examination of youth political participation and learning. This is followed by a discussion on mixed-methods research and the philosophical standpoint of this research; an outline of how the data were collected and details of the sample; a discussion on quantitative and qualitative inquiry and the merits of these approaches, and the associated methods, for examining the topic of this study. The data analysis procedures for each respective approach are then drawn out and the subjects of reliability, validity, and ethics are discussed.

### **6.1 A short justification for using a mixed-methods approach in the study of youth political engagement**

Much of the research on political socialisation has been 'dominated' solely by the paradigm of positivism, with the aim of producing objective, causal and generalisable research findings about the relationship between different social phenomena (Marsh et al, 2007). This has had the disadvantage of closing political socialisation inquiry rather than opening it up (Connell 1987). As argued by Crick (1999, pp.342–343), research is quite often driven by 'over-structured (adult) concepts of what constitutes political', leaving 'relatively little space for the 'political language and lore of school children'. It has likewise resulted in what Habashi and Worley (2009) describe as the 'missing component' in political socialisation research – a space where young people talk about their political world. The 'missing component', Habashi and Worley (2009) argue, is

attributed to, 'a methodological constraint that researchers impose on the research design process where paper-and-pencil, self-report surveys are used as the primary, or in many cases only means of data collection' (Habashi & Worley 2009, p.43).

In order to contribute to the repair of the 'missing component' in youth political research, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach. This approach creates a space not only for the commonly used quantitative survey but also for the use of qualitative methods through which a number of young people on different post-16 tracks can engage in a conversation on politics and their political learning. This is unlike much of the contemporary mainstream research on youth political engagement and citizenship learning (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Schulz et al. 2010; Nelson et al. 2010; Keating et al. 2010; Hoskins et al. 2011) which tends to rely solely on quantitative methods and tends not to engage young people in a more real-life capacity. This is particularly important because researchers know very little about how young people on different post-16 pathways learn about and practice politics and how these compare. Moreover, what we do know about this topic is based predominately on findings derived from quantitative data collection methods (van de Werfhorst 2007; Janmaat et al. 2014). The use of a mixed-methods design (in this study a *convergent parallel design*), which gives more weight to qualitative methods, serves to gain a more holistic and deeper understanding of this issue (Creswell & Clark 2011).

## 6.2 What is mixed-methods research?

Mixed-methods research has emerged as a popular approach to social science research over the last twenty years. One reason for this is that it offers an alternative to a strict binary divide between quantitative and qualitative research – often underpinned by the paradigms of either positivism or constructivism, respectively – that has tended to colour the social science research field ever since the 'Paradigm Wars' of the 1980s<sup>51</sup> (Gage 1989). Another reason for its increased popularity is that it is an approach that can provide more sophisticated answers for increasingly complex research problems. As such it is of benefit to practitioners, policy makers, and other researchers who require numerous kinds of evidence to inform their research problems and/or public decisions (Creswell & Clark 2011).

'Mixed-methods' as an approach to research has no one static or definite definition. In the past Greene et al (1989) defined it as the incorporation of quantitative methods (the collection of

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<sup>51</sup> In the 'Paradigm Wars' of the 1980s interprevists and critical theorists attacked the objectivity-seeking nature of quantitative research (see for example, Gage 1989). This sanctioned an increased qualitative methods and also the partial eclipse of dominant quantitative methods, and in turn gave way to mixed-methods approaches (see for example Cohen et al 2011).

numbers) and qualitative methods (the collection of words) but *did not* link method to any particular paradigm. Later, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) defined it as mixing in all stages of the research process, and instead suggested in was a *methodological orientation* that did in fact include the mixing of philosophical standpoints. Johnson et al (2007), likewise in keeping with the idea of mixed-methods as a methodological approach, emphasise the *rationale* for such an approach suggesting that it has ‘the purpose of [gaining] breadth and depth of understanding and [also] corroboration’ (Johnson et al. 2007, p.123).

Undeniably, it is clear from the expanse of literature in the area that there are many ways to rationalise a mixed-methods study (e.g., the enhancement of a study with a second method or a need to generalise initial exploratory findings) and a plurality of associated designs to choose from (e.g., equivalent status or sequential designs) (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2010; Creswell & Clark 2011). More recently, Creswell and Clark (2011, p.5) imply an acceptance of a variety of definitions of mixed-methods research and consequently rely on a ‘definition of core characteristics’ which includes the key components for what the mixed-methods researcher does. These include the points that a researcher ‘...collects and analyses persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);...gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the researchers emphasizes); and...frames...procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses’ (Creswell & Clark 2011, p.5).

Along with the practicalities of executing mixed-methods research (discussed below with specific reference to this study), it is the latter of Creswell and Clark’s (2011) points – the framing of mixed-methods in particular philosophical worldviews – that has been and remains a difficult topic for those dealing with mixed-methods research. Methodological purists, for example, argue that ‘paradigm’<sup>52</sup> plays a lead role in determining how research studies are carried out. From the purist stance, paradigms are incommensurable and research is carried out with reference to only one paradigm (Greene & Hall, 2010a). Thus, mixed-methods research can only take place under the banner of one paradigm (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2010) and methods which reflect different paradigms are ‘incompatible’ (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004).

A recent response to this comes from Greene and Hall (2010a) who argue that a researcher should avoid construing paradigms as ‘packages’ and argue that it is not the case that epistemology and method are synonymous (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). This is supported by Biesta (2010a, pp. 98–99) who suggests that the ‘lumping together [of] heterogeneous

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Kuhn (1970) referred to a paradigm as a set of generalisations, beliefs and values by a community of specialists.



assumptions' into 'paradigm' tends to serve as an excuse 'for not having to engage in discussions about the assumptions that underpin research'. It likewise, he argues, polarises methodological discussions rather than encouraging the exchange and interaction (Biesta, 2010a). Indeed, most proponents of mixed-methods reject the purist 'incompatibility thesis' (Greene & Hall, 2010a, p. 123) and instead reframe discussions to the attributes that each different paradigms brings. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), for example, reframe paradigm qualities – such as inductive and deductive or value neutral and value involved – on a continuum rather than as a dualism. Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005) likewise suggest that 'confirmatory and exploratory research' would better replace 'quantitative' and 'qualitative'. They contend that not all quantitative approaches are necessarily positivist and not all qualitative approaches hermeneutic. For example, statistical methods (e.g., factor analysis) can be categorised as exploratory and qualitative data analysis methods may be confirmatory whereby the 'replication of qualitative studies is conducted to assess the replicability of previous emergent themes...or to test an extant theory' (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005, p.383). From this, Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005) hold that the focus should shift from methodological strictness to methodological pragmatism in seeking to respond to research questions.

Indeed, a pragmatic approach to mixed-methods study has gained momentum in recent years, so much so that Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 16) suggest it is mixed-method's 'philosophical partner', or at least one of them.<sup>53</sup> The focus of this approach is the attention to the 'consequences of research, the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods and on the use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problems under study'(Creswell & Clark 2011, p.41). In short, it is useful because it proposes a middle position both in terms of philosophy and methodology and 'offers a method for selecting methodological mixes that can help researchers better answer many of their research questions' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.17).

### **6.3 Pragmatism as a philosophical 'tool' for mixed-methods research**

This research on young people and their political practice and learning across post-16 pathways employs a mixed-methods design which is based on Biesta and Burbles (2003) and Biesta's (2010) interpretation of John Dewey's pragmatism. Their theoretical work emphasises that pragmatism does not offer a blueprint for conducting educational research, rather it can be understood as a

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<sup>53</sup> Other philosophical standpoints include for example critical realism and the transformative paradigm (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2010).

set of 'philosophical tools', or 'insights' which can be used to address research problems (Biesta, 2010, p. 97). Moreover, Biesta's (2010) recent discussions on mixed-methods research also serves as a sound base on which to build contemporary mixed-methods research. It is important to note that there is not scope to review the entirety of Dewey's theory and Biesta and Burbules interpretation and discussion of this matter within this thesis. Therefore it is only the important aspects that pertain to his theory of 'knowing' and 'reality' that are drawn out.<sup>54</sup>

Dewey's pragmatism does not start with the epistemological question of whether knowledge is completely ' "of the world"' (positivism/objectivism) or 'of the mind' (constructivism/subjectivism) (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 11). He turns these ideas on their head and, instead of asking which option is (epistemologically) best, starts with a different set of assumptions. His theory of knowledge (or theory of knowing) is not based on the distinction between mind and world but rather starts with the premise that knowledge is manifested through 'interactions' or 'experience' with the world (Biesta, 2010, p. 106).

Biesta and Burbules (2003) note that Dewey rejected 'the idea of knowledge as a mirroring of an eternal, static reality' and instead 'took his point of departure in the ever changing organism-environment transaction'. 'Knowing' for Dewey 'is not outside of this process but part of it' (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 55). This is reflected in his theory of learning which is not based on the idea of the acquisition of information from an external social world but is essentially seen as a 'process of trial and error' in the lived in environment. He further developed this idea into the notion of 'intelligent action' (Biesta, 2010, p. 107). The difference between a 'trial and error' understanding of learning and 'intelligent action' is thinking, the "dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing lines of action (Dewey, 1922, cited in Biesta, 2010, p.107).

Thus, 'systematic inspection of a situation' is the only way to solve a problem (Biesta, 2010, p. 109). Thought and reflection are important but alone do not result in knowledge. It is only when action follows that the value of analysis and a solution can be recognised (Biesta, 2010). For Dewey, then, knowledge (or knowing) is essentially about the relations between (our) actions and (their) consequences. As Biesta (2010, p. 109) notes, ' [w]e need overt action to determine the worth and validity of our reflective considerations. Otherwise we have, at most, a hypothesis about the problem and a hypothesis about its possible solution'. Moreover, because knowledge is about the relation between *our* actions and *their* consequences, it can never give us certainty but only *possibilities*. This is the reason why Dewey referred to the 'outcomes of inquiry and research as "warranted assertions" instead of truth' (Biesta, 2010, p. 111).

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<sup>54</sup> For and in depth account of Dewey's pragmatism see Biesta and Burbules (2003) or Biesta (2010).

Thus, for Dewey, reality is not something we can acquire and hold on to, as is the case with positivism, for example. All types of experience are 'equally real because they are all modes of the transaction of living organisms and their environments' (Biesta, 2010, p. 107). Things, everything, or anything are 'what they are experienced as' (Dewey, 1905, cited in Biesta, 2010, p. 107). Thus, Dewey's idea of reality-as-what-we-experience is fallible. However, as Biesta (2010, p.111) notes, this is not 'because of an alleged gap between ourselves and the world but simply because we can never be sure of what the future will bring...we are not spectators of a finished universe but participants in an ever evolving, unfinished universe'. Reality, for Dewey is therefore understood in *temporal* terms in that it is 'dynamic and self-evolving' and continuously in the making. (Dewey 1903, cited in Biesta & Burbules 2003, p.52). This is why Biesta and Burbules (2003) refer to Dewey's theory as a kind of *transactional realism*.

Additionally, Dewey's theory cuts through the dualism of objectivism and subjectivism. Some of his critics have suggested that he completely rejects objectivism and is therefore concerned with subjectivism; however, Dewey's response to this is the concept of *intersubjectivity*. He does not see an issue with subjectivity; we construct our worlds to deal with our own individual purposes. However, when we begin to interact with others there is a need for the 'coordination of our subjective worlds with the subjective worlds of others'. In this instance, by interacting, cooperating and communicating with one another we construct a common '*intersubjective* world out of our individual, subjective worlds' (Biesta, 2010, p. 112, emphasis in original). The alternative to objectivism, then, is not relativism, but 'intersubjectivity'.

## 6.4 Two key implications for (this) mixed-methods study

### A focus on knowledge claims

Biesta (2010) spells out an important implication of pragmatism as a 'philosophical partner' to mixed-method research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). As shown, Dewey moves away from the alleged epistemological hierarchy between different knowledges (namely objective and subjective) and therefore demonstrates that there is no knowledge that can offer us a more deep, real, or true view of the world. 'Different knowledge's, Biesta (2010, p.113) writes...

'...are simply the result of different ways in which we engage in the world. They are, in other words, the consequences of different actions. This is tremendously important for the field of mixed-methods research as it does away with the alleged hierarchies between different approaches and rather helps to make the case that different

approaches generate *different* outcomes, *different* connections between doing and undergoing, between actions and consequences’.

This is important because it reorientates attention to *claims to knowledge* and the requirement that researchers judge their claims pragmatically. Emphasis is on the knowledge generated through the research process that is only defensible based on the choice of a particular methodological design and the methods employed (Biesta 2010). Accordingly, as is shown below, different methods are employed in this study because they enable different knowledge claims (e.g., descriptive, associative, correlational, causal (Gorard 2010)) to be made on youth politics and political learning.

A mixed-methods approach is therefore ‘in service of the inquiry problem at hand’ (Greene & Hall, 2010a, p. 131) and allows for ‘methodological eclecticism’ (Teddle & Tashakkori 2010, p.8); researchers can select the methods they require to respond to different aspects or levels of their research and research questions. This has commonly featured in the literature as a ‘needs-based approach’ to empirical research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.17). As Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) state:

‘In some situations the qualitative approach will be more appropriate; in other situations, the quantitative approach will be more appropriate. In many situations, researchers can put together insights and procedures from both approaches to produce a superior product’.

(Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.17)

It is important to note, however, that some (as mentioned, notably purists) argue that assumptions from different philosophical traditions cannot be encompassed into a mixed-methods design (Greene & Hall, 2010b). It may likewise be argued by some that a pragmatic-based mixed-methods study that derives qualitative and quantitative data simply exacerbates the dualism between the traditional epistemological stances that it originally set out to overcome. In response to this it is important to reiterate that philosophical pragmatism does not mix assumptions from different philosophical traditions because it has its own coherent system of thought (Greene & Hall, 2010a) and its own understanding of reality.

In this study different methods are employed, but this is not because they signify the partial adoption of a given dominant philosophical tradition (i.e., positivism or constructivism) and their respective associated positions on knowing and reality. The emphasis on Dewey’s *reality* as dynamic, self-evolving and temporal, and the researcher’s *knowing* as part of this, remains (Biesta

& Burbules 2003). Each method employed in this study represents a different way of engaging with different aspects of this temporal and dynamic reality. The findings reflect neither a concrete reality, or a complete subjective reality, but are construed as a product of a researcher's actions. Hence the focus on 'warranted assertions' and the fact that research can only ever demonstrate what 'has been possible, not about what is or will be the case'(Biesta, 2010,p.113).

### **The utility of the research**

Another important implication of pragmatism relates to the utility of (this) research, whether that be mixed-methods or not. To reiterate, Dewey suggested that knowing is essentially about the relations between (our) actions and (their) consequences and that in order to discover the meaning of an idea we should ask for its consequences (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). Therefore this throws up the question of the purpose and usefulness of research, or what Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) refer to as value-orientation. Thus, as Feilzer (2009, p.8) notes 'any inquiry begs the question of "what is it for" and "who it is for" and "how do the researchers" values influence the research'. Given that a claimed weakness of the pragmatic influence in mixed-methods research is the lack of emphasis on, and the vagueness, of *utility* (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004) it is explicitly stated here that this research has an clear *civic* purpose. It is (in part) an attempt to unravel the predicament of why some young people who take vocational pathways are seemingly less engaged in (formal) politics (Janmaat et al. 2014; Henn & Foard 2014a). This research is likewise useful in that it may importantly contribute to our understanding of how, and the extent to which, (post-16) education pathways function as a tool for democratic and political equality. This follows the thinking of Flyvbjerg (cited in Kvale & Brinkman 2009, p.257) who argues for, qualitative research in particular, to contribute input 'to the ongoing social dialogue and praxis in society, rather than to generate, unequivocally verified knowledge'.<sup>55</sup>

## **6.5 A convergent parallel mixed-methods design**

This study seeks to explore the extent to which post-16 education and training pathways are a force for division in political learning and practice and why this might be the case. It does so by asking young people on different pathways about their political learning and practice at school or college. In order to do this a *convergent parallel mixed-methods design* is employed. This is a commonly used design (Creswell & Clark 2011) and has the benefit of employing methods to

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<sup>55</sup> Flyvbjerg et al (2013) argue that it is imperative that researchers in the political and social sciences strongly consider the relevance of their research and suggest that the public, policy, and political impact of research should ideally be prioritised over impact based on journal citations.

‘obtain different but complementary data on the same topic’ and therefore enables the development of a more holistic understanding of the research problem (Morse 1991, p.122).

The *convergent parallel mixed-methods design* is distinct in that a researcher ‘collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data during the *same phase* of the research process and then merges the two sets into an overall interpretation’ (Creswell & Clark 2011, p.77, emphasis added). The ‘mixing’ of the methods takes place at the interpretation stage of the research rather than at the analysis or data collection stage. Moreover, although data are collected independently via different methods, this only takes place in *one* phase (Creswell & Clark 2011). This design, then, differs from, for example, a sequential design where results from one phase of the study influence the development of a research instrument to be used in a second study phase (Morgan 1998).

One challenge of the *convergent parallel mixed-methods design* is that collecting data in one phase of research requires a lot effort and expertise of knowledge about different data collection methods (Creswell & Clark 2011). To deal with this issue the researcher undertook training through the doctoral programme in both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The researcher was likewise organised in terms of when she collected the data and kept to a tight and well-prepared schedule. A second challenge is that there may be disagreements between the different types of data collected (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) (Creswell & Clark 2011). However, this was not a concern since it was felt that any contradictions that would emerge in the data would be beneficial in terms of providing further insights into the topic of political learning across different post-16 pathways. Of course, it would be advised here that (if resources would allow) future research on this topic could investigate these contradictions further.

Furthermore, this study is cross-sectional in that it presents a ‘snapshot’ of a given population (young people on different post-16 pathways) at one time (Cohen et al, 2011, p.267). The cross sectional method is chosen because it allows for a considerable amount of data to be collected in a relatively short space of time and because it offers a greater likelihood of participation as it only requires one-off involvement. This is therefore of benefit to the young people involved in this study who may not have time to be involved on more than one occasion due to the time they may be required to dedicate to studying. The disadvantage is that a cross-sectional design on youth politics and learning cannot capture changes or development over time as would be the case in a longitudinal study.

The main justification for the use of a convergent parallel mixed methods design is therefore a practical one. The length of time allotted for the study does not allow scope for the researcher’s

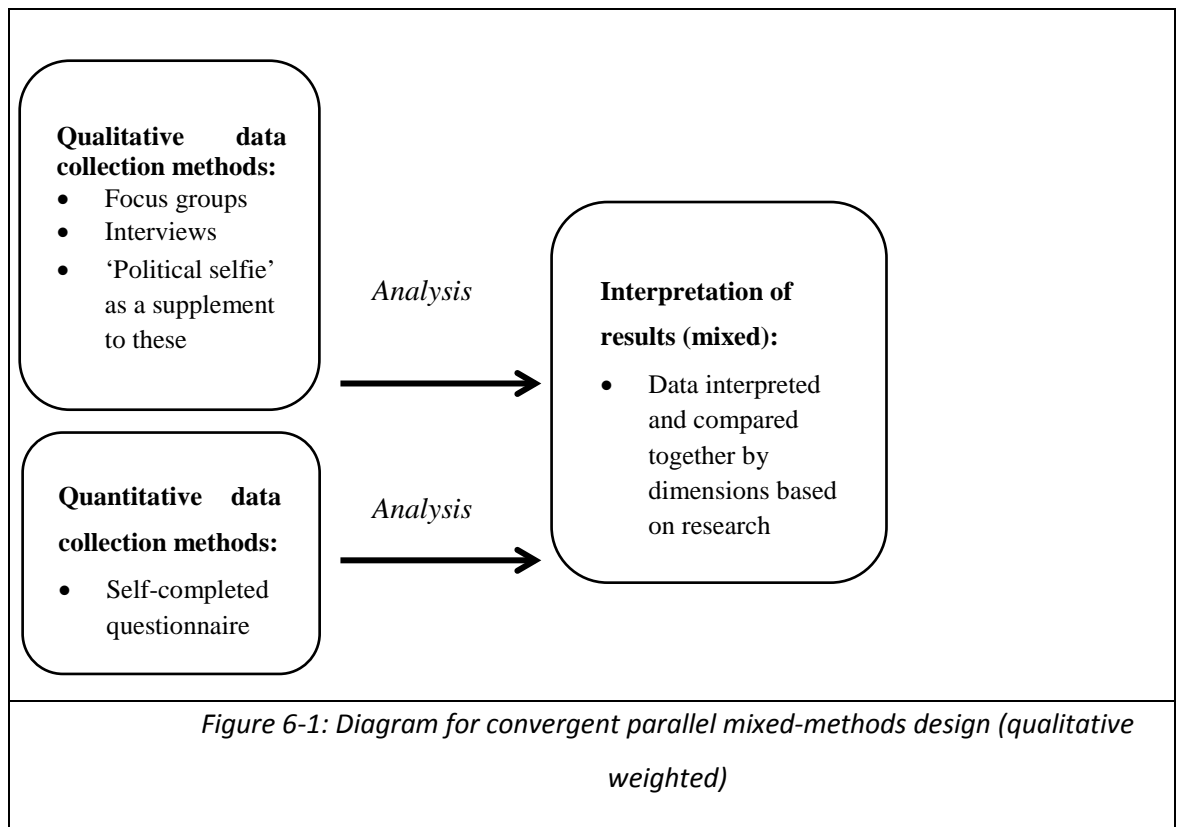
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preferred two-phased sequential design (where focus groups and interviews would serve the development of a survey instrument). Therefore the researcher requires an 'efficient' mixed-methods design which allows for just one period of time to collect data from the field (Creswell & Clark 2011).

As mentioned, this study is influenced by pragmatism which enables researchers to select the methods they require to respond to their research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). Given that the nature of the main research questions (see questions 1&2 below) are characterised by 'how' this study gives prominence to methods from which *qualitative* data can be derived (Cohen et al, 2011, p.25).

This is primarily justified because political socialisation research has been and continues to be dominated by positivism (Vromen 2010) and associated data collection methods that do not engage young people in a more real-life capacity (Marsh et al. 2007; Habashi & Worley 2009). Likewise, researchers know very little about how and why young people's politics and their political learning differ according to different post-16 pathways. Yet what *is known* is based predominately on quantitative data collection methods and not those of a qualitative kind. By likewise adopting a qualitative data collection method, this study aims to bring depth of understanding of the issue to the field.

This is not to completely discount or oppose quantitative data collection (namely surveys) as an approach to examining political socialisation – in Dewey's understanding this is simply just one way to generate certain 'knowing' outcomes (e.g., more generalizable data) (Biesta, 2010a) – however, it is acknowledged that such methods tend to dominate political socialisation research (Torney-Purta et al, 2010). This study therefore seeks to balance the tendency towards solely quantitative research by adding a strong qualitative dimension (focus groups and interviews) to a mixed-methods design that seeks to collect both types of data. This is illustrated by the following design diagram and expanded on below in the discussion and justification of each method employed and associated data analysis techniques.



## 6.6 Data collection

### 6.6.1 Sample and sampling

#### 6.6.1.1 Sample

The sample included young people between the ages of sixteen and nineteen from five different types of post-16 institute who were studying towards different types of academic and vocational qualification. These included three sixth-form colleges (A Levels and BTEC); two school sixth-forms (A Levels); one Further Education college (vocational Levels 1 and 2); one specialist training centre (Higher National Diploma (HND)); and one independent college (International Baccalaureate). In total eight post-16 institutions were visited for this study.

This age group was chosen as it is between these ages that young people are in some form of post-16 education and training.<sup>56</sup> Although the researcher was open to the participation of first year students, those in their second year of sixth form or college were preferred as it was thought that those who had been at a given institute for longer would be better positioned to discuss and

<sup>56</sup> As of 2015 it is compulsory for a young person born on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1997 to remain in some form of education or training until the age of eighteen (GOV.UK 2014d).



reflect on their learning. However, the focus group participants and interviewee at Sixth-Form College A were in their first year. At Independent college F the participants were a mixture of first and second-year students (Appendix A). For the quantitative data collected 97 (45%) respondents reported that they were in their first year of study, 112 (50.9) their second year, and 9 their third (4.1%) (Appendix A).

#### **6.6.1.2 Sample size**

The specific sample size differed somewhat depending on each method. For the focus groups, 62 young people took part in 9 focus groups with between 4 and 11 participants in each. This was seen as a sufficient sample size to make some preliminary comparisons across post-16 pathways given the time limits of the research. 49 political ‘selfies’ were created and 5 young people took part in the interviews. This was seen as adequate to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the political practice and learning of some of the participants in the study. Along with the focus groups, these numbers were likewise constrained to produce an amount of data that could be viably transcribed within the timeframe of the study.

For the self-completed questionnaire, 235 young people responded with fully or almost fully completed surveys. Surveys where few questions had been answered were not included in the data created on SPSS. 235 respondents was not the best number to produce the most generalisable findings but was sufficient to yield some satisfactory claims. An overview of sample numbers for each method can be found in table 6-1 below. A more comprehensive table, including numbers of participants studying towards different qualification types, can be found in (Appendix A).

#### **6.6.1.3 Sampling framework**

An overall *purposive* sampling strategy was employed in combination with *convenience* sampling. This can be defined as a ‘mixed purposeful sampling strategy’ and ‘involves the mixing of more than one sampling strategy’ (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007, p.114). While purposive sampling can be defined as ‘selecting (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’ question’ (Teddlie & Yu 2007, p.77), convenience sampling is a technique used when a researcher selects ‘individuals or groups that happen to be available and are willing to participate at the time’ (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007, p.114). These were combined because the aim of the research was to compare groups (Teddlie & Yu 2007) of young people based on what post-16 pathway they were on - taking into account both qualification type and type of post-16 institute. However due to a lack of time and financial

resources, the researcher could only gain access where schools and young people agreed to participate.

*Table 6-1: Number of participants who took part in each part of the study by school or college*

Type of post-16 institute	Focus group participants	Interview participants	Political 'selfies'	Survey respondents
<i>Sixth-form college A</i>	5	1	5	35
<i>Sixth-form college B</i>	12	0	0	21
<i>Sixth-form college C</i>	11	1	11	41
<i>School sixth-form D</i>	9	1	9	21
<i>School sixth-form E</i>	10	0	10	28
<i>Independent college F</i>	6	1	6	6
<i>Further Education College G</i>	4	1	3	59
<i>Training Centre H</i>	5	0	5	24
<b>Totals</b>	62	5	49	235

The sampling framework included four stages. **Stage one** involved overall purposive with convenience sampling whereby post-16 institutions were selected from across one region in the South of England based on their type and whether or not they agreed to take part. This was the most important stage as it determined access to young people who were on different post-16 pathways. The researcher gained access to the various institutes through colleagues and previous contacts she had made through her public outreach work and emailed the contacts provided. Email correspondence between the researcher and teachers at different schools and colleges spanned approximately sixth months from initial contact.

**Stage two** involved purposely sampling participants for the focus groups based on their post-16 pathways (e.g., A level, diploma, apprenticeship). To ensure comparability the researcher aimed for each focus group to be homogenous in terms of post-16 pathways. This was more

straightforward in institutions which were primarily academically-orientated (e.g., the school sixth form with offered mainly A Levels), however was more complicated in colleges which offered a mixture of pathways. In most scenarios the researcher relied on gatekeepers (namely tutors or teachers) to put each focus group together and find a room for the discussion. There was however, difficulty recruiting focus group participants at the Further Education College. Despite having visited the student's union a number of times prior to the research to meet some of the students and the engagement officer, many students declined the invitation of the researcher to take part. In this case, the students that took part were those who were already engaged in the college's student council.

In **stage three** convenience sampling was used and participants who volunteered to take part were selected from the focus groups to take part in an interview. The sampling framework therefore had a sequential element (Teddlie & Yu 2007) in that in most cases the interviewees were drawn from the focus groups that had been previously purposively sampled. At the end of each focus group the participants were invited to take part in an interview. The researcher was interested to speak to any student who volunteered but in a number of cases – particularly at sixth-form colleges A and C and School sixth-form D – the students who volunteered were those who were construed themselves as politically active. In some cases, those who were interviewed had not participated in the focus group as they had a lesson that clashed with the scheduled focus group.

**Stage four** was likewise based on purposive with convenience sampling and involved the researcher disseminating the survey to any young person aged between sixteen and nineteen in a given institution who volunteered to complete it. Again, access to participants was gained through gatekeepers such as teachers and tutors (discussed below).

A survey was completed by each focus group respondent at the end of the focus group. At the training centre, the researcher was able to present and disseminate the survey to the respondents. This was beneficial in order for the researcher to clarify any questions the young people had. At the Further Education College, the researcher had a 'lucky dip' stand at the student fresher's fair. As it was difficult to get students to complete the survey without an incentive they were invited to take a small thank you gift from the box (these included chocolates and basic stationary) after completing the survey. This worked well and increased interest in the survey. The researcher was also able to clarify some of the survey questions with a few of the students who had learning difficulties. In all other schools and colleges, the researcher left copies of the survey with each member of staff at each respective institution. In all cases but one (the

Independent College) the surveys were returned via post to the researcher. The sampling framework is summarised in Appendix A.

#### 6.6.1.4 Sampling limitations

One limit of the sampling framework is the fact that it relied partially on *convenience sampling*. This involved participants volunteering to take part whom may have held a range of different motivations. Because of this, and the fact the sample was not huge, the researcher was aware that she would need to be cautious when making claims that pertained to validity, and external validity in particular. As Cohen et al (2011, p.160) warn ‘volunteers may be well-intentioned, but they do not necessarily represent the wider population’ (Cohen et al, 2011). An example of this is the interviewee volunteers who construed themselves as highly politically active individuals (e.g., Jason at Sixth-form College C).

The motivations of the teachers and members of staff also need to be taken into account. Because of the nature of the research some of the teachers that responded to the invitation for their students to take part in the study were politics and sociology teachers. This resulted in a number of the focus groups consisting of A Level Governance and Politics students of Sociology students Almost half of the survey respondents were likewise either politics, humanities, social science, or International Baccalaureate students (see table 6-2 below). It is therefore not appropriate for the findings to be claimed as generalizable to the entire post-16 population in England. In fitting with pragmatist understanding of knowledge, then, the claims of this study can only be taken as ‘warrented assertions’(Biesta, 2010,p.113).

Table 6-2: Percentage of sample who study specific post-16 qualifications

Does this person study politics as part of their course?	Number of sample	Percentage of sample (%)
No	112	48.3%
Other social science or humanities	74	31.9%
Government and Politics A Level	40	17.2%
International Baccalaureate	6	2.6%
Total	232	100.0

Another difficulty related to the practicalities of sampling was the fact that the researcher had to rely on ‘gatekeepers’ (teachers and tutors) for permission and access to the young people. One difficulty with gatekeepers as Devers and Frankel (2000, p.266) comment is that they often have

common concerns, for example, 'the time, resources, and disruption involved in their organization's participation in the study...[and]...confidentiality for their organisation, its employers, or people it serves'. Another is that gatekeepers may unintentionally choose particular participants for the study which in turn may bias the sample. In order to deal with both of these difficulties the researcher ensured that all gatekeepers were given ethics-committee-approved information sheets which attempted to incorporate any concerns a teacher or tutor might have (Appendix B). The researcher also made it clear through email correspondence that she would prefer not to work with only those students who studies politics. Despite this, there were a few cases where the gatekeeper at particular colleges were only able to provide access to certain students. As mentioned, this was either, for example, their class of politics students or in another example a group of 'Gifted and Talented' students.

## **6.7 Qualitative inquiry**

According to Preissle (2006, p.686) qualitative research inquiry can be regarded as a 'loosely defined category of conceptually informed research designs or models, all of which elicit verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory and gustatory information in the form of descriptive narratives like field notes, recordings or other transcriptions from audio- and videotapes, and other written records and pictures or films'. Likewise, Yoshikawa et al (2008, pp.344–345) define 'qualitative data as information that has been collected not in numerical form but in texts, narratives, or observation'. Its main benefits, according to Cohen et al (2011) are that it provides detailed, intricate and in-depth understandings of actions and meanings of phenomenon, behaviours, intentions and attitudes. It is likewise probes issues that lie below the surface of observable actions and behaviours and gives voice to research participants that may not be captured, for example, through quantitative inquiry. Indeed, Vromen (2010, p.256) notes that the trade-off between quantitative and qualitative inquiry is 'between generalization and particularity' whereby qualitative researchers prefer to 'focus on the in-depth distinctiveness of particular cases' in context.

## **6.8 Why qualitative inquiry in this study?**

Qualitative inquiry is given fair weight in this mixed-methods study. As noted, the reason for this is that much of the research in the field of youth engagement and political socialisation – including that which examines political practice across the post-16 sector – is dominated by quantitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is therefore important not only to aid the contextualisation of the findings of quantitative surveys 'within young people's own discursive

frameworks' (Sloam 2007, p.554), but also to gain a fuller understanding of current youth civic and political engagement (Torney-Purta et al, 2010).

Likewise drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'communities of practice', Torney-Purta et al (2010) suggest that qualitative inquiry 'allows the evaluation of participants as individuals and how their thoughts and feelings are shaped by membership in different CoP in their schools and neighbourhoods' (Torney-Purta et al, 2010, p.508). It therefore focuses on the 'understanding of a particular *process*, for example, how individuals interpret the meaning of political messages' (Torney-Purta et al. 2010, p.517, emphasis in original). These processes cannot always be easily translated into closed-ended survey items, however when they are examined through qualitative inquiry, aspects of different processes are illuminated that may be lost in more constrained survey methods. Qualitative inquiry may therefore reveal theories not conceived of by the researcher and may uncover different, more nuanced, ways of thinking about the topic of political engagement and learning (Torney-Purta et al. 2010).

Qualitative inquiry may also aid the understanding of macro theories of social or political change (Mason 2006), for example those outlined in chapter 2 on post-modernity, de-traditionalisation and risk (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2003). As Mason (2006, p.14) notes, qualitative research often 'speaks to (and sometimes refutes) these 'big' theories' and as Gillies and Edwards (cited in Mason 2006, p.14) similarly suggest, 'qualitative, empirical research tends to expose the contradictory, tangled complexity of real-life experience, which often stands in stark contrast to neatly packaged theoretical accounts of social change'. Thus, a role of qualitative research is to unpack how macro theories of social change manifest in the everyday lives of people (Mason 2006) and is therefore useful for responding to question 2A of this study - to what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity?

In this study, two qualitative methods of data collection are employed, along with a third supplementary method: focus groups and interviews with a 'political selfie'. As mentioned, the participants for the interviews were sampled from the focus groups. Starting out with a group discussion and providing the activity of creating a 'political selfie' established a relaxed atmosphere and worked well to increase the young people's confidence to take part in one-to-one interviews following the focus group (Punch 2002).

### **6.8.1 Focus groups**

The researcher was keen to use focus groups as a means to collect data as she had experience working for the public outreach department at the University of Southampton. Having organised a

‘Youth Debate’ at the university and a number politics workshops with local school students, she felt well-positioned to develop an engaging set of focus groups. Not only were the focus groups a means for data collection, but in a similar way to the purpose of public outreach, their use was a modest attempt to engage young people and raise awareness of this particular piece of university research and to ‘topicalize’ the research questions (Speer 2005).

Morgan (1996, p.130) defines focus groups as ‘a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher’. There are three central parts to this definition. First, focus groups are for the purpose of data collection; second, discussion and interaction between participants is the source of data; and third, the researcher is active in shaping that given discussion (Morgan 1996; Morgan 1997). Usually, focus groups are employed as way to explore participants ‘perception of, attitudes towards, and experiences of particular areas of life’ (Hydén & Bülow 2003, p.306).

In practical terms, participants are often seated around a table in a room with a group facilitator. The facilitator introduces topics and usually uses some kind of prop to prompt discussion, for example a newspaper or pictures. In a structured focus group, the facilitator is more active and determines not only the topic but also group dynamics. In a less structured kind the facilitator takes distance and the participants are encouraged to pursue their own discussion on a topic of interests (Hydén & Bülow 2003).

Focus groups, then, have the downside that they are a somewhat unnatural and contrived setting but have the advantage of being focused on a specific topic and can yield individual and *collective* views on a topic (Kvale 2007). They are distinct in that they generate ‘understanding of group reactions to particular problems, processes and patterns...[and therefore]...represent a collectivistic rather than individualistic research method (Bagnoli & Clark 2010, p.103). They likewise give space to participants to discuss their own ideas, define their own labels and concepts and expose ideas and opinions through dialogue with each other (Bagnoli & Clark 2010). Essentially, they are seen as a means to empower participants to ‘speak out [about an issue], and in their own words’ (Cohen et al. 2011, p.436).

### **Why use focus groups for examining youth politics and political learning?**

Focus groups hold an advantage for research on political learning and are used in this study to provide a more nuanced understanding of the topic. They enable young people discuss politics in their vernacular (Henn & Foard 2014a) and have proved to be valuable for stimulating discussion on the topic of politics (Sloam 2007). They can potentially reveal different types of political expression and role models who influence behaviour that might not be familiar to a researcher.

They are likewise useful for illuminating different youth cultures to the researcher and different 'communities of practice' for political learning that a researcher may be unaware of. Focus groups allow young people to expand on their political identities in relation to the influence of a variety of contexts and talk about their sense (or not) of political efficacy (Torney-Purta et al, 2010, p.517).

Moreover, focus groups are employed here as a way to explore definitions of politics and political practice. This relates directly to question 2A of this study – to what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity? As Torney-Purta et al (2010, p.516) note, rather than examining trends in voting and labelling young people as apathetic, focus groups provide 'a more nuanced understanding of their reasons for abstaining [from politics]'. In addition they can potentially reveal some of the different and 'new' ways young people engage in political life, aside from voting (Torney-Purta et al. 2010). Indeed, Zukin et al (2006) used focus groups in their study of American youth to determine if young people were involved in political practice in ways that might not be caught through traditional measures of political activism (e.g., voting).

#### **Focus groups – dealing with some difficulties**

While some find that young people often enjoy group discussions more than individual ones as they feel more comfortable with their peers (Punch 2002), openly discussing sensitive topics like politics and political learning can potentially be contentious and make people feel uncomfortable (Hopkins 2007). Some individuals may likewise dominate the discussion (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007) and discuss politics related strongly to their own normative position. Some may likewise not feel comfortable discussing their political opinions, or may not provide an accurate account of these opinions (Smithson 2000). Related to this it is possible that focus groups induce peer pressure when discussing politics (Sloam 2007).

In order to deal with these potential issues, the researcher took a number of actions. Firstly, she set out the rules of the focus group at the outset. These were that the participants respected each other's opinions and values and were patient with each other. Secondly, the researcher intervened on occasion to redirect the discussion if one person was dominating by saying for example, 'what does this side think...' or 'is that an opinion you all hold?'. Thirdly, individual self-portraits were included as an additional method to supplement the data yielded from each focus group.

#### **Self-portraits (political 'selfies')**



Self-portraits are considered a 'visual' and 'arts-based' projective technique<sup>57</sup> (Bagnoli 2009, p. 584) and are a way to elicit different layers of people's everyday experience that cannot easily be verbalised (Bagnoli 2009). Bagnoli (2009) used this method in her study on young people's lives in England and Italy and it 'successfully allowed [her] to gain an insight on [young people's] visualizations about the moment in their lives they were currently living, with sensitivity for their own associations and meanings' (Bagnoli 2009, p.550). They can include pictures and also words. In this study, given the age of the participants, an emphasis was put on using words.

In these focus groups self-portraits were referred to as 'political selfies'. A 'selfie' is a term that has become popular over the last decade, especially with younger people. It is essentially a picture that a person takes of him or herself, usually with a smart phone or webcam. The researcher used the term 'selfie' as she felt that young people might relate to the term better than the term *self-portrait*. Whereas the latter might evoke depictions of the work of a capable 'artist' and put young people off the task, the former is something that most everyday people are capable of doing and is potentially a more engaging concept.

Self-portraits, from now on 'political selfies', were used to gather additional data on the participant's political learning (in different contexts or communities of practice) and their political beliefs and practices for three main reasons. Firstly, they were used as a way for young people to express any information that they did not feel comfortable talking about openly in front of their peers in order to contribute to a more holistic picture of topic (Bagnoli 2009). Secondly, they were a means to elicit individuals political values and practice without imposing adult defined conceptions or categories (Punch 2002). Thirdly, 'political selfies' were a way to gain a broader overview on an issue because they encourage participants to think and speak in abstract terms (Rose 2012). They were therefore used as a catalyst to get young people thinking before the focus group discussion began and also as a way to reflect on the discussion at the end of the focus group. They essentially served to encourage 'reflexivity' among each participant (Bagnoli 2009, p.549) about their views and understanding of the topic.

An advantage of this method is also one of its weaknesses. Participants are free to create and structure their 'selfie' in any way they wish, however for some working with too much freedom may be difficult (Bagnoli 2009, p.566). Additionally, while Bagnoli (2009) found that self-portraits were particularly 'evocative' and 'insightful' when used with older young people, there was

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<sup>57</sup> Projective techniques are used to help respondents express thoughts and feelings that are difficult to elicit through structured questioning. They were first developed for use in clinical psychology but more recently are used in educational research. They have also been used in market research (Catterall & Ibbotson 2000).

‘some degree of resistance’ in terms of participants perceptions of drawing abilities (Bagnoli 2009, p.566). For these reasons, on implementation in this study, the participants were given a simple example of the facilitator’s ‘political selfie’ as it would have looked when she was eighteen (see Figure 6.2). They were likewise reassured that being a skilled drawer did not matter and that the emphasis was on the text they would write.

### **Focus group questions and format**

The key questions asked in the focus groups were formulated so as to respond to the main research questions and categorised under the areas of *definition, values and practice, learning*, and the *post-16 divide*. The intention was that different questions provoked the participants to either reach some form of joint conclusion together (Smithson 2000) or to compare and contrast their individual thoughts and experiences. In the table in Appendix D key questions are marked by a capital letter (e.g. A, B, C). Transition Questions were also formulated. These were not always employed but if they were served to link up introductory and key questions and to make connections between the participants and the issue being discussed (Krueger 1998). Prompting and probing questions were also used only when needed as the researcher was cautious to give the young people potential question answers or close their thinking (Krueger 1998). For example, when the participants were asked about any political values they held, if they struggled the researcher gave some examples (e.g., eco-friendly, anti/pro European Union, left-wing, feminist). Similarly, the researcher also had backup questions on cue cards in case any group presented as apathetic or apolitical. The most sensitive questions were also placed towards the end of the focus group.

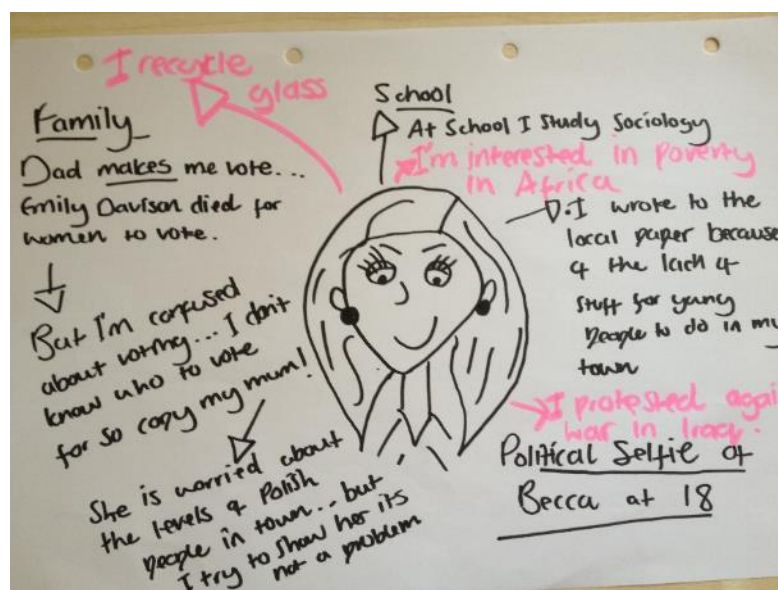


Figure 6-2: Example of political 'selfie'.

### Implementation of focus groups (with individual 'political selfies')

In this study, the focus groups were conducted with young people from different schools and colleges in the south of England. The participants in each focus group were considered to be on the same or similar post-16 pathway (e.g., all taking A Levels or all on an apprenticeship). Each focus group followed a similar format. They lasted between sixty and ninety minutes and between five and ten young people participated in each. This was considered a good number to enable a fruitful discussion. Less than five was thought to run the risk of a stagnated discussion and more than ten was thought to throw up difficulties in terms of data analysis. As Hopkins (2007) found in his study of young Muslim men, larger groups were difficult to analyse because many of the participants spoke at one time due to their frustration with the inequalities they faced.

The participants were invited to sit on chairs fairly close together in a circle with a small table in the centre and put name badges on. Before beginning the researcher gave an overview of the research and clarified that the main rules of the focus group.

Table 6-3: Overview of focus group schedule

Overview of focus group schedule	
Opening	Establish rapport, Introduction and purpose, timeline, ethics.
Focus group questions	
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Political selfies'/icebreaker question</li> </ul>
Transition	
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does it mean to be political?</li> <li>Is politics just about voting and political parties?</li> </ul>

<b>Transition</b>	
<b>Values and practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe your political values?</li> <li>• How do you express these values?</li> </ul>
<b>Transition</b>	
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you learn your politics?</li> <li>• How do you learn about politics at this college/school?</li> </ul>
<b>Transition</b>	
<b>Post-16 divide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some researchers find that those on vocational courses/apprenticeship are not very likely to get involved in politics. What do you think about that? Discuss.</li> <li>• Some researchers find that those who do A Levels are quite likely to get involved in politics. What do you think about that? Discuss.</li> </ul>
<b>Close</b>	Review 'political selfies', maintain rapport, invite for further interviews.

The facilitator then showed an example of her own 'political selfie' as it would have looked when she was eighteen. The participants were then handed a clip board each with a blank piece of paper and a blue pen and invited to construct their own 'political selfie' in whatever way they felt suited them best (e.g., timeline or spider diagram). Within this they needed: first, to note any political values or beliefs they held or what they thought about politics; second, anything they had done that could be considered political; third, where and whom from they learnt about their beliefs, values and politics; fourth, any concerns they had about politics or social issues. The participants were told that their 'political selfie' would only be seen by themselves and the researcher and were encouraged not to share what they had created with each other. They were given no more than ten minutes to complete this task and the facilitator helped a participant if they needed assistance.

Following this, the participants were asked to place their clipboards facedown under their chairs and were told that they would look at them again later. The Dictaphone was placed on the table as well as cue cards on which were written, in clear black ink, the main questions put to the focus group (Appendix D). The group was set up like this, as opposed to a horseshoe shape, because the researcher wanted to encourage the participants to talk with each other rather than with herself. The researcher (also facilitator) sat outside the circle but close by. Her purpose was to guide the discussion, follow up any points of interest, and to intervene with a follow up question if the discussion stagnated. She also replaced the cue card to change the question when enough time had passed or to bring the discussion back on track. Because of this, these focus groups were

‘structured’ in that the researcher was active in facilitating the discussion and guiding the topic of discussion (Hydén & Bülow 2003).

At the end of the discussion, the participants were handed a red pen and asked to pick up the clip boards again. They were then invited to add to their ‘political selfie’ based on the discussion. The purpose of this was to help them to reflect on the discussion and to note anything they had not felt comfortable talking openly about. It was also a way to capture any ideas that had transpired during the discussion. This was important in order to identify and capture a wider repertoire of political acts young people might have carried out that they may not have considered to be political at the outset of the discussion. It also enabled the researcher to evaluate each focus group in terms of the extent to which it helped the young people reflect upon politics in relation to their lives. The participants were also asked to tick yes or no on a piece of paper attached to their clipboards to indicate if they were happy to take part in an interview. This was so as to avoid anyone feeling embarrassed if they wanted to take part.

### **6.8.2 Semi-structured interviews**

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p.2) a research interview is ‘professional conversation’, an ‘inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee’. The interview is therefore not an everyday conversation but has a specific purpose. It is based on questions asked by the interviewer, which are set according to the research objectives of, for example, prediction, explanation, or systematic description and the interviewee responses should be (ideally) detailed and explicit (Cohen et al, 2011).

In this study, in most cases, a one-to-one interview followed each focus group. As mentioned, the interviewees were sampled from each focus group in each institution. The purpose for using interviews was threefold. Firstly, interviews were seen as a way to gain more nuanced descriptive data of the everyday lives of some of the participants (Kvale 1996) through the lens of the different CoPs they participated in (Wenger 1998) and the social and economic context in which the interviewee lived (Hodkinson & Macleod 2010). Not only could interviews serve to better understand each interviewee’s political learning at school or college for those who considered themselves uninterested in politics or apolitical, but also those who defined themselves as ‘active’ or interested in politics. As Sloam (2007, p.554), comments from his own research with ‘activists’ and ‘non-activist’ youth, ‘semi-structured interviews were a highly productive format for exploring their [activist’s] views’ given their developed opinions and experience of politics and political engagement.

Secondly, the interviews offered some of the young people involved in this study the opportunity to talk further about their political learning in a more private setting (Punch 2002). In this sense, the interviews were used as an attempt to counter the central issue with the focus groups – that young people may not feel comfortable discussing their personal life and political values in great detail in front of each other. Thirdly, and as with the focus groups, the interviews were used as a way to find out how different young people defined and practiced politics and in turn explore the extent to which young people understood and participated in politics in different or ‘new’ ways to formal politics (Torney-Purta et al, 2010).

The interviews were therefore primarily descriptive in that they sought to ‘chart key aspects of the subject’s lived world’ (Kvale 2007, p.38) through the conceptual lens of the CoP ‘constellation’ – a ‘thinking tool’, according to Wenger (1998, p.7). However, they also included elements of ‘hypothesis-testing’ (Kvale 2007) in that they were used to examine the extent to which the responses of the participants reflected the ‘new’ politics of late modernity (research question 1A).

Consequently, the interviews were designed as *semi*-structured. The focus in these types of interview is on the researcher specifying the topic and themes to be covered in advance and sequencing and working questions over the course of the interview. Cohen et al (2011, p413) refer to this as the ‘interviewer guide approach’ and Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p.327) as ‘planned and flexible’. By design, semi-structured interviews allow for better comparability across participants (Kvale 2007) and are freer than, for example, fully structured or closed quantitative interviews as they enable the interviewee more space to respond to the topic of conversation (Hopf 2004). Essentially, the semi-structured interview is a balancing act. The researcher needs to maximise the discussion on a preselected topic but at the same time needs to give interviewees the opportunity to raise points of view that the researcher may not have anticipated (Hopf 2004).

### **Interview questions and format**

The questions formulated to guide the interviews were based thematically on the research questions (Kvale 2007). Specifically, in terms of learning, the questions were grouped to accord with the CoP conceptual lens. One reason for this was to enable ease of analysis later in the study, as Kvale (2007, p.57) writes, ‘the more structured the interview situation is, the easier the later conceptual structuring of the interview by analysis will be’.

As noted, what was different about the interviews was that an individual’s political learning could be explored in more detail. The conceptual framework therefore featured more strongly at the interview stage of the research than in the focus group or the survey. To reiterate, this is partly because it would be a struggle to explore in-depth each individual’s political learning in a focus

group and also (as is shown below) due to the difficulty of operationalising a complex learning theory into quantitative survey constructs (Hoskins et al, 2011).

What is important to note, however, is that the associated (CoP) learning concepts (e.g., practice and meaning-making) were integrated across *all* sections of the interview schedule and not just into the section on *learning*. This is because they are concepts which are difficult to isolate in a real-life discussion. See Appendix E for the full interview schedule and Appendix G for a breakdown of all questions asked in this study in relation to the research questions, theory and the conceptual lens, and the methods used.

Each interview had an ‘opening’ and a ‘close’ and the questions were divided into four thematic sections which followed a similar pattern to the focus group. There were sub-themes in a number of main themes. An overview is presented in the table below.

*Table 6-4: Overview of interview schedule*

<b>Overview of interview schedule</b>		
<b>Opening</b>		Established rapport, introduction and purpose, motivation, timeline, ethics, transition.
<b>Theme 1</b>	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General icebreaker questions and background questions</li> <li>• Politics learning at your previous secondary school(s)</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2</b>	Defining politics	<i>No sub-themes</i>
<b>Theme 3</b>	Your politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values and practice</li> <li>• Involvement in political group and identity</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 4</b>	Your political learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General thoughts</li> <li>• Political learning at current school/college</li> <li>• Friends and classmates</li> <li>• Family and spare time</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 5</b>	Background questions	<i>No sub-themes</i>
<b>‘Political selfies’ as summary</b>		
<b>Close</b>		Maintain rapport, action to be taken, further questions.

The purpose of Theme 1 was to generate a general picture of the interviewee and any political learning they had received between the aged of eleven and sixteen. For Theme 2 the purpose was to get young people talking about politics and for Theme 3 the purpose was to generate data so as to respond to research questions 2 and 2A (How do young people practice politics? And to what extent to their responses reflect the ‘new’ politics late modernity?). For theme 4, the purpose was to respond to research question 1 (What and how do young people learn about politics?). Theme 5 served to gather additional background information. Both Theme 4 and 5

were purposely positioned at the end as the questions in each theme were construed to be a little more personal than the previous questions (Aldridge & Levine 2001). It could, however, be argued that the questions in Themes 2 and 3 likewise pertained to the personal. In this sense, it was vital that at the outset the interviewer reiterated to each participant that they would discuss some personal information and that they could choose to not respond if they felt uncomfortable in doing so.

Within each theme, a mixture of questions were formulated. Drawing on Kvale (2007) these questions can be categorised as: 1) *structuring questions* or statements in order to guide the interview (e.g., we will now talk about similar topics to those discussed in the focus group...); 2) *introductory questions* (e.g., can you tell me about any political values you have?) in order to yield 'spontaneous rich descriptions (Kvale 2007, p.60); 3) *direct questions* where the interviewer 'directly introduced a topic' (e.g., what lessons do you attend that you have discussed politics or social issues in?) (Kvale 2007, p.61); 4) *specifying questions* to follow up other questions (e.g., what did you do in this group?); 5) *probing questions* in order to find an answer to a question by 'probing their content but without stating what dimensions are to be taken into account' (Kvale 2007, p.61); and 6) *interpreting questions* – such as 'you feel that because....? you mean that....? – were used.

### **Implementation of interviews**

The interviews took place in the respective school or college either in a classroom or similar quiet area so as to avoid interruption. Each interviewee was given an overview of the study (Appendix E) and matters related to ethics and invited to sign a consent form if they were happy to take part (Appendix C). Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. This was considered by the researcher as a sufficient length of time to collect the data required and to not encroach too much on an individual's study time. The researcher followed the interview schedule but enabled the interviewee to diverge from a topic if it was thought to yield data related to the study. Photos relating to different forms of political participation were also used to prompt the interview if they struggled to respond to the questions pertaining to definitions of politics and their political practice 'Political selfies' created in the focus group were used as a reference point if needed for the interviewee. At the end of the interview the researcher and the interviewee used the 'political selfie' to help summarise what had been discussed. Using a different coloured pen, the interviewee was encouraged to add anything new to their 'selfie' that had come to their mind in the interview. This also served as a way to enhance the validity of the findings and is discussed below.



### **Interviews – dealing with some difficulties**

The interview is a social encounter and not merely a data collection exercise (Cohen et al, 2011). Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p.33) likewise caution that an interview is not ‘an open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners’ and is in fact subject to issues of power, or ‘asymmetrical power’. The interviews in the study were vulnerable in this sense. Each involved a student and a researcher from a university with an age difference of more than a decade. They were carried out in a setting where there is a traditional power hierarchy of teacher-student. Particularly where the interviewee was doing a *diploma or apprenticeship* there was potential for the academic-vocational divide to exacerbate the power asymmetry, and potentially result in the interviewee feeling inferior in terms of education and/or social status.

Although the researcher was aware that these issues related to power were not unique to the interview and could also be problematic on implementation of the focus groups, she felt that they were more pronounced in the interview. The interviews were more personal and were used to discuss the everyday lives of the interviewee in more depth. They were likewise carried out on a one-to-one basis and therefore the interviewee could not lean on the support of his or her peers.

The researcher was aware that the power asymmetry was an ethical issue and could affect the knowledge yielded through the interview. In particular, it could bias the responses given by the interviewee. The interviewee might provide misinformation, tell lies, put on a front (Cohen et al, 2011) or provide socially desirable information, and consequently inaccurate data. They could also feel nervous or annoyed by particular questions. To deal with the issues as best as possible the researcher took a number of steps.

Firstly, she attempted to develop a decent rapport. She introduced herself and was honest and transparent about the aims of the research. She thanked each interviewee and told them that their contribution was important. She also informed each interviewee that the discussion might touch on sensitive or personal topics and that the interview was not a test and that they could ask questions at any point for clarification. She also attempted to be personable and friendly so as to put the interviewee at ease (Cohen et al, 2011). Secondly, throughout the interview she did her best to maintain an ‘ethic of care’ (Kvale & Brinkman 2009) by empathising with the position of the interviewee and giving them time to think and give their response.

## 6.9 Quantitative inquiry

Quantitative inquiry can be defined as that which seeks to explain ‘the phenomena [in question] by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematical based approaches, in particular statistics’ (Aliaga & Gunderson 2000, p.34). Muijs (2011, pp.6-7) identifies four types of research questions that are well-suited to quantitative inquiry. These include questions that ask ‘how many’ (used in this study for the purpose of obtaining descriptive statistics); questions that seek to uncover ‘numerical changes’, for example are the numbers of young people voting in the national elections going up or down; questions which seek to ‘explain phenomena’ such as what factors predict a young person’s propensity to vote; and questions which seek to test a hypothesis, such as is there a relationship between a young person’s post-16 pathway and levels of political engagement and the type of political engagement they are involved in.

### A note of caution

In this study, quantitative inquiry is neither underpinned by positivism or post-positivism (as is generally the case in quantitative research) but rather pragmatism. From this stance, reality is *temporal* ‘dynamic and self-evolving’ and continuously in the making, and not objective (Dewey 1903, cited in Biesta & Burbules 2003, p.52) and ‘knowing’ is simply about how a researcher interacts with the world. Quantitative inquiry here, through the use of a survey, is understood as one way of knowing about this temporal reality. The aim here is not to establish any causal statements about an objective reality, as is the case for those who follow positivism or post-positivism (Muijs 2011). Rather it is to develop more generalizable knowledge claims, or broader ‘warrented assertions’ of the nature of young people’s political practice, beliefs and political learning on different post-16 education pathways at the different schools visited, not in the post-16 sector at large.

### 6.9.1 Self-completed questionnaire

The self-completed questionnaire is a method which has the potential to generate a large amount of standardised numerical data in an economical and efficient manner (Cohen et al, 2011). Most often, respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire themselves without the presence of a researcher. Commonly, the respondent will responded to closed-ended questions by ticking a box, order information in terms of importance or answer an open-ended question (Munn & Drever 2004). Oppenheim (2000, p.73) explains that this type of questionnaire is often one ‘which is distributed to the respondents by an interviewer or someone in an official position such as a teacher or hospital receptionist’.

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This data collected is then often used for descriptive and summative purposes, to determine correlations between different variables, develop generalised statements about a given population or test particular hypotheses (Cohen et al, 2011). A self-completed questionnaire has the advantages of, firstly, being relatively quick to administer; secondly offering anonymity to the respondent; thirdly, minimising interviewer bias as the respondents complete it alone; and fourthly, providing standardised questions to all the respondents of which is beneficial for controlling 'the stimulus presented to all respondents' (Munn & Drever 2004).

### **Why the use a self-completed questionnaire in this study**

In this study a self-completed questionnaire was employed as it is a good way to cover a wide range of topics, and consequently gain a fair amount of data in a short space of time from a large number of young people (Munn & Drever 2004; Torney-Purta et al, 2010). The data yielded would likewise be useful for generating both descriptive and inferential statistics (John 2010). More generalizable claims to knowledge, than those yielded from qualitative methods, could then be made on how young people's political practice, values and political learning varied or accorded depending on their personal characteristics (Cohen et al, 2011), namely post-16 pathway, but also class, gender and ethnic background.

### **Self-completed questionnaire design**

Designing a questionnaire involves a number of stages and can be time consuming (Cohen et al, 2011). Because the researcher was pressed for time, the questionnaire in this study was largely based on the format of the questionnaire used for year thirteen in the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS). This was helpful because it meant that many of the items used in the survey had been successfully used before and were largely tailored to a young audience. However, some of these were adapted and a number of question items were added for the purpose of responding to the research questions of this study. These additions mainly included questions on 'new' ways of engaging in political practice and questions on learning which were based on the CoP framework.

The questions used in the questionnaire were mainly closed questions and were either created to obtain nominal data (e.g., ethnicity) or were scaled response questions (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree/disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know) (Munn & Drever 2004). An obvious disadvantage of the latter, of course, is that it is not possible to determine the distance between each point of the scale. Moreover, a respondent may have difficulty in responding to scaled response question if they do not fully understand the questions. For this reason a 'don't know' option was included on certain questions (Muijs 2011) which were construed as potentially

more difficult to respond to (e.g., In the last 6 months, have you learned about any of the following topics at your current school/college, in your everyday life, or at work?). A few open-ended questions were additionally included to enable each respondent to detail the course they were on and the jobs of their parents or carers.

The questionnaire was split into three sections but also borrowed questions from *The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Survey* (questionnaire for year 13), *The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (2009) and a *Demos* commissioned survey by *Populus Data Solutions* (Birdwell & Bani 2014). Originally, the questionnaire included five sections but the researcher narrowed this down to three to ensure that it was a 'short' questionnaire so as to increase its appeal for young people and their teachers. The start of the questionnaire included a written brief and instructions and students were not required to provide their personal details since the questionnaire was anonymous.

**Part one: your interests and activities** included items that tapped any political practice and extracurricular activities. What was important was that items pertaining to political practice were not solely based on formal politics. This was crucial in order to respond to research question 1A – to what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity. Many mainstream surveys have tended to be predominately underpinned by a narrow formal (often party political) model of politics (Fox 2013; Manning 2013). This is true for many British surveys on adult political participation,<sup>58</sup> as well as for those on youth (see for example the work of Henn & Foard, 2012; Henn & Foard, 2013; and Henn, Weinstein, & Hodgkinson, 2007). As it is often found that young people are not engaged in formal political activity (see chapter 2) this has led to rhetoric that young people are disinterested in politics or apathetic. It is only recently, that scholars have begun to take seriously that young people may well be political and interested in politics but in other 'different ways'.

The items that pertain to 'new' forms of politics were derived from the literature (Norris 2003; Haste & Hogan 2006; Sloam 2007; Micheletti et al. 2012) and the researcher's interpretation of the types of political activity that such literatures imply. For example, green politics pertained to items such as participation in '*environmental clubs*' and '*follow issues in the media related to the environment*' and identity politics pertained to items such as '*follow issues in the media related to gender equality*' or participation in a '*feminist group*'.

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<sup>58</sup> For example Almond and Verba (1963); Parry et al (1992), Pattie et al (2004); and Whiteley et al (2012).

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Part one also comprised of items on learning, including those which served as proxies for ‘meaning-making’ activities (e.g. *reading a national newspaper*). What is complex about this is that some items that can be considered ‘meaning-making’ activities are also items which seek to tap *type* of political activity. For example, the item ‘follow issues in the media related gender equality’ is used as a proxy for ‘identity’ politics but can also be considered an informal learning activity.

**Part two: your current school or college** included items which sought to tap what young people were learning about politics through the formal curriculum of their school or college and in their everyday lives, or broadly defined CoP (e.g., at college, work). For example, the topics included ‘*how to be a responsible citizen*’, ‘*citizens rights*’, ‘*Fairtrade shopping*’ and ‘*gender and sexuality*’. The school or college as a central CoP likewise framed a number of items that pertained to participatory learning opportunities and open classroom climate. For example, ‘*are students encouraged to make up their own minds*’, ‘*do students feel free to express their opinions?*’ and ‘*do students have a say in how the school/college is organised and run*’ and ‘*do you participate in a student council or student parliament*’.

In some cases, it was necessary to ask the respondent to think about their learning in the last sixth-months. This was to avoid respondents, who had continued into the sixth-form of the school they attended from age eleven to sixteen, commenting on their learning at this stage rather than in the post-16 stage.

**Part three: about you** included somewhat more personal questions (e.g., favoured political party, parent or carer’s employment and politics in the family) and was therefore positioned last (Munn & Drever 2004) in the survey to avoid putting the respondent off completing the questionnaire at the outset. This section, then, was largely geared towards obtaining background demographic information and essential information such as what course the respondent was taking and socioeconomic status (SES). The latter (SES) was gauged by using questions from the CELS study. These included number of books at home – which is specifically common measure of cultural capital –, the length of time a parent stated in education and the occupation of each parent or carer.

Although not central to this study, this section also included items which pertained to political learning in two different CoPs– the peer group and the family. For example, items included ‘*I have tried to change my parents mind about a political or social issue*’ and ‘meaning-making’ items included ‘*we talk about politics at home*’ and ‘*me and my friend talk about politics*’. Items on the ‘diversity’ of a community of practice in terms of politics included ‘*I have the same political views*

*as my parents'* and *'I have the same political views as my friends'*. To gauge how salient politics was in a respondents different CoP items such as *'politics is an important topic for me and my friends'* were included.

Questions relating to political efficacy (Han et al, 2013) were included, such as *'people like me can have a real influence on politics if they get involved'* and also questions which sought to tap self-actualisation, for instance, *'I want to be involved in a career that changes the world for the better'*. Lastly, a few items were included in the questionnaire that related to political interest, perceptions of equality, and voting at sixteen. These were not central to the study's research questions, however, were included because the researcher was additionally interested in the responses to these questions. A full questionnaire can be found in Appendix F.

### **The limits of operationalising learning theory into quantitative measures**

One important limitation of this questionnaire is the difficulty of the operationalisation of the CoP concept and quantification of learning (Hodkinson & Macleod 2010). As Hoskins et al (2011, p.429) note, 'it is always difficult to translate theoretical constructs into quantitative categories, especially if these constructs have been developed within qualitative research, as is the case with the CoP concept'. Learning in general, as is the case for internal political efficacy, is difficult to measure directly and for this reason 'indirect measures of learning' (Muijs 2011, p.57) are often used to gauge learning in quantitative survey research.

As such the items in this questionnaire that pertain to learning (i.e., the CoP framework) can only be claimed to be 'proxies'. Although learning in this way cannot be wholly reified into questionnaire items, there are (arguably) some characteristics that can be directly observed and quantified (Hodkinson & Macleod 2010) (e.g., *In the last year, have you taken part in any of the following clubs and groups, in your free time and/or at schools, college, training or work?*). An example of a learning concept that is difficult to reify is meaning-making. Of course, by way of one questionnaire item, the whole process of a political discussion between a parent and a child cannot be fully understood or represented – hence the use of this item as a proxy.

The same can be said for measuring the CoPs a respondent is engaged in. Indeed, it is not possible to capture in-depth one person's participation in different CoPs. Hence, again the CoPs considered in this survey – the school, the peer group, the family, and different organisations or groups a respondent may attend – can only be claimed as proxies. As such this reinforces the importance of employing qualitative interviews alongside quantitative inquiry when using the CoP framework.

Fortunately, many of the items in this questionnaire are more straightforward in that the focus is on 'identifying the types and frequency of engagement with specific and explicit learning situations' (Hodkinson & Macleod 2010, p.180), for example, '*do students have a say in how the school/college is organised and run?*' or '*In what lessons (if any) are you taught about citizenship or politics?*'. These types of questions, according to Hodkinson and Macleod (2010, p.180), 'are 'factual' material, which may safely be collected by direct questioning'.

### **Dissemination and difficulties**

For the most part, the self-completed questionnaire was administered in paper form by permission of a teacher or tutor at each institution that was visited. In order to gain the best possible response rate, the researcher personally gave an overview of the study to any respondents who wished to complete the survey – usually a class of students – and handed it out (Cohen et al, 2011). An advantage of introducing the questionnaire in a personal capacity was that it enabled the respondents to ask for any questions of clarification about the study if they so wished. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity was kept for respondents who wished so, the researcher made clear that it was not necessary for the respondent to leave their name on the survey, although they were invited to if they were happy to do so.

In some cases, the researcher entrusted a teacher or tutor to administer the survey on her behalf at a more convenient time and then fetched the completed copies at a later date. Although this might have the disadvantage of inhibiting the honest completion of an interview due to the teacher's presence, an advantage of this was that it increased the anonymity of the respondents to the researcher who did not wish to provide their names. However, the drawback of this was that the researcher was not present to clarify any questions asked, although it was hoped that the information sheet provided with each questionnaire was sufficient to clear up any points of misunderstanding.

## **6.10 Data analysis**

The data from the study was analysed according to whether it was qualitative or quantitative data. The different types of data were first analysed separately and then combined (i.e., 'mixed'), interpreted together, and presented in themes to respond to the research questions.

## 6.11 Qualitative data analysis

The audio data from the focus groups and interviews was firstly transcribed (see Appendix N for some examples). This process was necessary to keep an audit trail and for the researcher to familiarise herself with the data. The data was then transported into NVivo – a computer software package used for analysing qualitative data.

The focus group and interview data and the political ‘selfies’ were analysed using a thematic coding approach. In short, the data was coded (i.e., into chunks that are considered to represent different points of interest) and then all the codes were organised, based on the label given, into themes (Creswell & Clark 2011). In this study a theme was understood as ‘something of interest or importance’ that related to the research questions or conceptual framework of the study (Robson 2011, p.474).

What was central to the data analysis process in this study was that the data collected through the focus groups, interviews and the political ‘selfies’ at each college or school visited were analysed together. This was important as it enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the focus group data with the interview data and the political ‘selfies’. It also was important so as to build a comprehensive picture of the possibilities for political and citizenship learning at the respective school or college.

The thematic analysis included elements of *deductive* and *inductive* analysis. The former is best understood as ‘theory driven’ (Robson 2011). When data is analysed deductively it is often done so according to an existing theoretical framework (Patton 2002). This means that a researcher either starts out with a set of prepositions and/or hypothesis often derived from previous theory, and then verifies these against their data; or that they start to examine their data by applying conceptual frameworks previously developed by other researchers. Cohen et al (2011) note that this type of data analysis can serve the purpose of theory testing, or, for example, to demonstrate or prove a given concept or theory. The latter, in contrast, can be understood as ‘data driven’ (Robson 2011) where essentially themes, patterns, and categories in the data are ‘discovered’. As Patton (2002, p.453) notes ‘[f]indings emerge out of the data, through the analyst’s interactions with the data’. Inductive analysis is therefore often influenced by a grounded theory approach whereby the data at hand is used to develop a theory rather than test a predefined hypothesis or theory (Strauss & Corbin 1994).

Denzin (2000) points out that often qualitative analysis can be a combination of deductive and inductive thinking. Patton (2002, p.67) likewise suggests that ‘actually conducting holistic-



inductive analysis and implementing naturalistic inquiry are always a matter of degree'. Often researchers move between different degrees of 'discovery mode' and 'verification mode' in attempting to understand their data. Essentially, they draw attention to the fact that often the process of data analysis is complex and is not always solely rooted in an inductive or a deductive approach.

In this study, both deductive and inductive analytical approaches were employed and the researcher moved back and forth between these whilst analysing the data. The analysis was loosely deductive or 'theory driven' because the data were approached with certain questions and concepts in mind. Examples of these questions were derived from the research questions and the literature and included whether or not the data reflected 'new' forms of politics and whether young people on different post-16 tracks experienced different types of political learning. Examples of the concepts included those which pertained to the conceptual framework. Although the data collection instruments had been previously designed with the conceptual framework in mind, the researcher again actively used the framework as a 'thinking tool' (Wenger 1998, p.7) to see how well the data corresponded with the framework of learning.

The analysis of the data was also inductive in that it was expected that other themes not accounted for in the literature review might arise from the data (Robson 2011). Since there is a lack of research in this area, allowing themes to emerge from the data was seen as essential to help explain the potential division in political practice and learning across different post-16 pathways. It was likewise important in order to capture the complex worlds of the research participants (Glaser & Stauss 1967).

#### **6.11.1 Analysis of the political 'selfies' for evaluative purposes**

As for the rest of the qualitative data, the political 'selfies' were firstly analysed deductively and inductively using thematic coding. They were secondly analysed in order to evaluate their usefulness as a supplementary method to focus groups and interviews for eliciting the different ways that young people might engage in, and learn, politics. As different coloured pens were used at different points in the process (at the start of the focus group, at the end of the focus group, and at the end of the interviews) this enabled the researcher visually see and to evaluate the extent to which discussing politics in a focus group or interview format could elicit information on political practice and learning that might not have been captured otherwise.

## 6.12 Quantitative data analysis

The analysis of the quantitative data was carried out using SPSS. Prior to this the data from the 235 surveys were imputed into an SPSS spreadsheet. The data were then cleaned. For example where a question only had the possibility of a 'yes' response the unselected items were coded as 'no'<sup>59</sup>. Likewise, some items which had previously been coded as 'no response' were recoded as '9' to indicate missing values.

### 6.12.1 Bivariate analysis: Cross-tabulating political learning and practice for different post-16 pathways

The purpose of bivariate analysis is to better understand the relationship between two variables. In short, and as Muijs (2011, p. 99, emphasis in original) explains, 'a *cross-tabulation* is a table that shows the number of cases falling into each combination of the categories of two or more variables'. Because of the nature of the variables in this data set (i.e., nominal and ordinal) cross-tabulations were used to look at the relationship between post-16 pathways and a range of variables pertaining to young people's political learning and participation and background factors (e.g., social class).

### 6.12.2 Weighting the data

Before processing the cross-tabulations in SPSS the data were weighted. It was important to do this because in England the number of young people in different post-16 institutions differs greatly depending on a particular institution type. The data used to weight that data was taken from the *National Pupil Database (NPD)*<sup>60</sup> in England. The specific data used was the *Percentage of 2010/2011 KS4 cohort going to or remaining in, an education or employment destination in 2011/12* (GOV.UK 2012). The data from this database is used as it is the most recent and comprehensive data available on post-16 destinations to different types of institutions. Because of this the data are weighted according to *institution type* and not, for example, the percentage of young people undertaking different qualification types (the full table for the 2011/12 cohort can be found in Appendix H). Each weight was computed for each institute type by dividing the

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<sup>59</sup> This was the case for example for the survey item number 3 - 'Have you ever done any of these things?' (e.g., attended a public meeting or discussed political issues online).

<sup>60</sup> *The National Pupil Database (NPD)* is a longitudinal data set that provides data on children and young people's education at different phases. This data includes pupil data on exam results, prior attainment and progression at each Key Stage of education at state schools in England. It also includes information on other aspects such as gender, ethnicity, first language and eligibility for free schools meals (Department for Education 2013)

proportion of the real population in a given type of institute by the proportion of the data set for this same type of institute. See table below:

*Table 6-5: Data weighting – weight by institution*

<b>Weight by institution</b>			
	Real population from National Pupil data base	Study Sample number	New weights
Weight Sixth-form College	12%	41%	0.29
Weight school sixth form	35%	21%	1.67
Weight FE college	32%	25%	1.27
Weight Other FE provider/other higher education institution	3%	10%	0.29
Weight independent college	5%	3%	1.92

#### **Examining the relationship: expected counts, significance tests, and effect size**

In order to decide whether or not there was a relationship between two variables expected counts were calculated in SPSS. As Muijs (2011, p. 99, emphasis in original) explains this means calculating ‘the number of cases expected to fall in each cell if there...[is]...no relationship between the two variables’. This was necessary to assess the preconditions for the subsequent significance test and also to gauge where any of these significant differences lay in the data by observing expected and actual counts for each cell (Field 2009; Muijs 2011).

The test of significance used for the cross-tabulations was the *Monte Carlo* method. This test is a repeated sampling test which is suitable for smaller sample sizes as and/or which may be poorly distributed, as was the case in this study (Mehta & Nitin 2012). There were several cases, for example, where more than 20% of the cross-tabulation cells had expected values of less than 5, therefore invalidating the use of other significance test such as the Pearson Chi-Square. The cut-off point adhered to for the Monte Carlo was 0.05 which corresponds with a confidence level of 95%.

In order to gauge the strength of association between two ordinal variables the effect size, in this case *phi*, was calculated. With 1 indicating a strong relationship and 0 no relationship, the cut-off

points used in this study were based on Muijs's (2011) interpretation of  $<0.1$  = a weak effect;  $<0.3$  = a modest effect;  $<0.5$  = a moderate effect;  $<0.8$  = a strong effect; and  $>0.8$  a very strong effect.

Following this, each cross-tabulation that was found to be significant and with a modest effect size was transposed into Microsoft Excel. The purpose of this was to calculate each sample of the cross-tab relative to the total population in each category. This was done by dividing each sample of a dependent variable (e.g., the number of young people that answered "no" to the question "in the last year have you taken part in an environmental club?") by the total population in each category (e.g., sixth form college, school sixth form...). The results are expressed in percentage relative to the population in each category and were plotted as bar charts so as to better visualise and compare the proportions for different survey responses relative to the respective institute type.

### **6.12.3 Multivariate analysis: logistic and ordinal regression to examine the relationship between education, social background, and political engagement**

In order to examine the relationship between education, social background and political engagement logistic and ordinal regression were employed in SPSS. In general, regression analysis methods enable the examination of the relationship between an independent and dependent variable (or an outcome variable). For binary logistic regression the dependent variable includes two categories (e.g., yes or no). In this case the aim is to examine the probability of obtaining a certain outcome based on the different values of the independent variables (Muijs 2011). In this data set, it is mainly the non-conventional forms of political participation that are examined using this method since the responses for these items in the survey were either 'yes' or 'no'.

For ordinal regression, the dependent variable is ordinal and therefore ranked (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree). In contrast to binary regression where the probability of an *individual* event occurring is calculated, Muijs (2011, pp.165–166) explains that for ordinal regression the probability of an event 'and all the events that are ordered before it' are calculated. It is 'therefore based on probabilities of reaching certain thresholds of the dependent [variable] depending on the response to the independent variable'. The items included from the survey for the ordinal regression pertained to conventional participation (voting) and general political interest.

For both the logistic and ordinal regression the data were un-weighted. The variables were computed to be in the same directions (0 was equal to the lowest possible or response for each item, for example 0 = strongly disagree, or the lowest level of vocational curricula). For both the

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logistic and ordinal regression analysis the independent variables can be found in table 6-6 below. It is important to note that in terms of the social background variables parental occupation was *not* included since this had too many categories which were difficult to grade so as to be useful for regression analysis.

*Table 6-6: Independent variables for logistic and ordinal regression*

Independent variables	
<b>Education variables</b>	School or college activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in a debate at school or college (yes/no)</li> <li>• Attended a lesson in which you discussed social issues or politics (yes/no)</li> </ul>
	Qualification (curriculum) type
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum type (vocational Level 1 or 2, vocational Level 5, A Level, International Baccalaureate.</li> </ul>
<b>Social background variables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education level of main parent (left school at 15/16, left college, went to university/got a degree)</li> <li>• Number of books at home (no books, very few, enough to fill one shelf, enough to fill one book case, enough to fill two book cases, enough to fill three or more book cases.</li> </ul>

*Table 6-7: dependent variables for logistic and ordinal regression*

Dependent variables (political participation and political efficacy)	
Binary logistic	Ordinal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever bought Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products?</li> <li>• Have you ever stopped buying a product for ethical reasons?</li> <li>• Have you ever followed or liked a political issue on Facebook/ Twitter?</li> <li>• Have you ever used online sites such as Facebook to raise awareness of a social issue?</li> <li>• Have you ever shared a video link to support a cause?</li> <li>• Have you ever done voluntary work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are 18 will you vote in the general election in May?</li> <li>• If you are not 18 would you vote in the general election in May</li> <li>• I am interested in politics</li> <li>• I am able to understand political issues easily</li> <li>• I am confident about telling other people my political beliefs and opinions</li> <li>• I know more about politics than most people my own age</li> </ul>

**Binary logistic regression**

For the logistic regression the interpretation of the results included comparing the model coefficients with the baseline model to examine if the model inputted provides an improved prediction from the baseline model. In this case, the model is interpreted to be a significant fit if the significance is less than 0.05. The Pseudo R Square statistics – Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke – are likewise examined to gauge the improvement of model fit. In this case Muijs's (2011, p.165) criteria is adhered to with 0-0.1 indicating a poor improvement in model fit, 0.1 – 0.3 a modest improvement, 0.3 – 0.5 a moderate improvement and above 0.5 and strong improvement in fit. In order to observe which independent variables related to the outcome variable the regression coefficients were examined along with their level of significance. Again 0.05 was the cut-off point (Muijs 2011).

### **Ordinal regression**

As with logistic regression a significance test (chi square) was conducted to examine any improvements in the fit of the model from the baseline model (with no predictors). The cut off point for this was 0.05. In terms of goodness-of-fit additional tests are conducted in SPSS (Pearson and Deviance). In this case, it is necessary that these are not significant since, as Muijs (2011, p.168) explains, if a model fits well 'the observed and expected cell counts should be similar'. Likewise to logistic regression the Pseudo R square statistics are observed. Finally, and in contrast in logistic regression, each category for each independent variable is observed to examine its individual impact on the outcome variable. This involves looking at the coefficients to see if each category is positively or negatively related to the outcome variable (Muijs 2011).

## **6.13 Reliability and validity**

Reliability can be defined as '[t]he extent to which a measuring device, or a whole research project, would produce the same results on different occasions with the same object of study' (Robson 2011, p.532). Validity can be defined as '[t]he degree to which what is observed or measured is the same as that was purported to be observed or measured' (Robson 2011, p.534). The former is often seen as a precondition for the latter and both are relevant in quantitative and qualitative inquiry. Although there are historic events (Cohen et al, 2011, p.183) that can affect the validity of an entire study – in this case the study took place in the lead up to the 2015 general election and may have increased the saliency of 'formal' politics' for the young people involved – in mixed-methods research reliability and validity need to be considered separately (Cohen et al, 2011).

## **6.14 Qualitative inquiry: reliability and validity**

### **Reliability**

In qualitative inquiry reliability is less of a focus than validity. Reliability is suggested to play a minor role in the data analysis stage when researchers make decisions about how they code their data (Creswell & Clark 2011) and some argue that the term 'reliability' is better understood as 'credibility', 'dependability' or 'trustworthiness' and 'consistency' in qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkman 2009; Cohen et al, 2011). From this perspective reliability is not so much an attempt to produce the strict replication of findings as the nature of qualitative inquiry is to gain an in depth understanding of actions and meaning of phenomenon and to appreciate the idiosyncrasies and unique aspects of different situations (Cohen et al, 2011).

In the design stage of the study, reliability was only partly controlled for by way of semi-structured research instruments (Silverman 1993) due to the open-ended nature of the questions; some structure was required to enable more reliable comparisons to be made across different post-16 pathways.

A journal was also kept (Cohen et al, 2011) in the main stage of data collection so as to keep record of each focus group and interview. This was completed after each trip to a given school and at the stage of analysis enabled the results to be compared with the record of each focus group and interview. This is not included in the appendix for ethical reasons since it includes the real names of research participants.

Reliability at the data analysis stage was further dealt with by way of 'inter-rater reliability'. This refers to the process whereby another researcher, with a similar theoretical framework, comments on the findings to see if they are interpreted in the same way (Denzina and Lincoln, 1994, cited in Cohen et al, 2011, p.202). In this study, the researcher shared her findings with a colleague in the same research area where she was hesitant of her interpretation of specific excerpts of the transcripts.

### **Validity**

Creswell and Clark (2011, p.211) note that 'qualitative validity comes from the analysis procedures of the researcher, based on information gleaned while visiting with participants' and that '[o]verall, checking for qualitative validity means assessing whether the information obtained through the qualitative data collection is accurate'. However, in keeping with the pragmatic approach of this study, the aim of collecting qualitative data (and also quantitative) was not so

much to produce strictly valid, verified and unequivocal knowledge, but rather to contribute to public and academic discussion about the extent to which education serves as a force for democratic and political equality. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p.257) note '[i]n the pragmatic validation of a knowledge claim, justification is replaced by application'. Therefore, although steps were taken to ensure validity, the aim was not to establish unfalsifiable claims but rather to demonstrate the integrity of the researcher and the research process (Kvale & Brinkman 2009).

As such, a number of actions were taken. First, the nature of the mixed-methods research enabled the researcher to triangulate the data drawn from each source. This enabled *convergent* and *discriminate validity* to be considered. The former is when results from two methods yield similar results, the latter when the results between the two methods are discordant (Cohen et al, 2011). The researcher likewise played 'devil's advocate' towards her findings (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, p.249) and considered discordant data and cases which did not conform to the conjectures of the research (e.g., that young people on vocational courses would be much more disinterested in politics than their contemporaries on more academic courses). Considering alternative explanations was seen as important so as to develop more elaborate and honest research findings (Robson 2011).

Second, although it was impractical to invite all the participants to check the main findings ('member checking') from the study to gain 'an accurate reflection of their experiences' (Creswell & Clark 2011), at the end of each *interview* the political 'selfie' served to help the researcher and the interviewee summarise the findings and to check that the researcher had captured the responses of the interviewee in an accurate way.

Third, to demonstrate honesty and to give others the opportunity to interpret the data, the researcher kept an audit trail of all the data collected in the form of focus group and interview transcriptions (Appendix M).

Fourth, the construction of the interview schedule was underpinned by the conceptual framework. This framework also came into play during the data analysis stage and was used as a 'thinking tool' (Wenger 1998, p.7) for analysing young people's political learning (see the data analysis section). Questions asked both in the focus group and the interview schedule were likewise underpinned by theories of late modernity and sought to examine the extent to which young people were indeed engaging in 'new' forms of politics. The researcher therefore considered it important that her interpretation of the conceptual framework and theories employed in the study were as sound as possible to ensure integrity of the interpretation of the



findings. As such, the findings in relation to the conceptual framework and relevant theories were summarised in verbal or written form and discussed informally with other researchers.

## 6.15 Quantitative inquiry: reliability and validity

In this study, quantitative inquiry included the use of a standardised questionnaire, thus it was necessary to consider the validity and reliability of this specific method in order for the best possible knowledge claims to be established from it. What was most important in the design of the questionnaire was that the scores from each respondent were ‘meaningful indicators’ of the constructs being measured (Creswell & Clark 2011, p.210).

### Reliability

In quantitative research reliability refers to the extent to which ‘the scores received from participants are consistent and stable over time’ (Creswell & Clark 2011, p.211). It was not possible in this study to demonstrate the stability of questionnaire measures or reliability equivalence (using alternative tests to check questionnaire results) for all the measures as the researcher did not have the time or resources to carry out a test and re-test method whereby correlation coefficients could be calculated.

However, reliability could be claimed for certain measures of the questionnaire that had been borrowed from other surveys. This is the case for questions that were borrowed from the International ICCS 2009 study. For items pertaining to internal political efficacy<sup>61</sup> the Chronbach’s Alpha – a reliability measure of internal consistency – was calculated for the data set used in this study. The results showed for political efficacy items the score was .877; items on student’s influence<sup>62</sup> on the school this was .835 and for questions on classroom climate<sup>63</sup> 0.882. Similar to the scores for the ICCS, these scores, then, all indicated strong reliability for these groups of questions (Schulz et al. 2010; Schulz et al. 2011) (Appendix I).

### Validity

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<sup>61</sup> ‘I know more about politics than most people my age’; ‘When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say’; ‘I am able to understand most political issues easily’; ‘I am interested in politics’.

<sup>62</sup> In this school/college, how much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the following issues? (‘The way classes are taught’; ‘what is taught in class’; teaching and learning materials; the timetable’; ‘school/college rules’.

<sup>63</sup> When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, how often to the following things happen? (‘Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds’; ‘teachers encourage students to express their opinions’; ‘students bring up current political events for discussion in class’; ‘teachers encourage students to discuss issues with people having differing opinions’; ‘teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class’.

*Content validity* – referring to ‘whether or not the content of the manifest variables...is right to measure the latent concept’ (Muijs 2011, p.57) – was firstly taken into account. Although many of the items in the questionnaire sought to tap phenomena that were straightforward to measure (e.g., ‘How frequently do you read a national newspaper’ or ‘In the last year, have you taken part in any of the following clubs and groups’) (Hodkinson & Macleod 2010) there were a few items that raised the issue of content validity. An example of this was items that pertained to ‘internal political efficacy’ (Han et al, 2013). As mentioned, the set of items pertaining to this construct were borrowed from the IEA 1991 CIVED and 2009 ICCS studies and therefore content validity could be ensured as these variables had been previously tried and tested (Schulz et al. 2010).

*Face validity* – ‘whether the instrument or test looks valid’ to a respondent (Muijs 2011, p.58) – was likewise established through the pilot study discussed below. The pilot study participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and were then asked mark with a pen and comment on any aspects that did not seem valid to them.

The researcher also sought to demonstrate *construct validity*. This is more abstract than content validity and ‘concerns the extent to which a particular measure or instrument for data collection conforms to the theoretical context in which it is located’ (Cohen et al. 2011, p.188). It was not possible to deal with this type of validity through a pilot study as the young respondents were unlikely to have been familiar with the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the study, as Muijs (2011, p.58) notes ‘lay users may not be fully cognisant of the theoretical background or the subtlety of the concept’.

In terms of the conceptual framework, construct validity is demonstrated by reiterating how other researchers in the field have broadly understood and employed the CoP framework in a similar way. To repeat from the previous chapter, for instance, Hoskins et al (2011, p.422) likewise understand CoP to be ‘social groupings of family, school and neighbourhood to be multiple and interlinked communities’ through which individuals develop their citizen identities. They also construe meaning-making to be ‘[t]he process of learning... [that]...occurs through dialogue, reflection and co-construction of knowledge and attitudes’ (Hoskins et al. 2011, p.429) and use the proxies of classroom climate and talking with parent and friends about politics.

As well, construct validity was considered for question items that pertained to political practice. Because one of the aims of this research was to expand the definition of ‘political’ in youth survey research (Fox 2013) both items that pertained to formal political practice (e.g., ‘Participation in a youth wing of a political party’) and ‘new’ forms were included (e.g., ‘Shared a video or a link to

*support a cause', 'Bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products', or 'I want a job that involves helping people less fortunate than me').*

While it is more straightforward to demonstrate construct validity for measures that pertain to formal politics because they have been used recurrently in survey research, it is more complicated to do so for 'new' forms of politics which are rooted in complex sociological theories of late modernity. As such what constitutes 'new' forms of politics is open to much interpretation and raises the issue of whether measures do indeed conform to relevant theories and the interpretation of other experts in the field.

Again, to improve the validity of the construct 'new' forms of politics, the questionnaire was reviewed by two colleagues of the researcher who had an extensive research background in youth political participation. The researcher then compared her interpretation with her colleague's to establish the best possible questionnaire items to gauge whether or not young people were engaging in 'new' forms of political practice. Of course, it is also possible to determine the construct validity with the statistical method of factor analysis; however, since the sample size was relatively small in this study this method was not employed. Factor analysis would be a valuable means to provide evidence for the validity of constructs relating to youth political engagement in the case that this study was to be repeated on a larger scale.

### **Pilot study**

Pilot studies are important for identifying potential problems with research instruments and techniques prior to 'converting...[a] design into reality' (Robson 2011) and, particularly in terms of the self-completed questionnaires, can strengthen the reliability and validity of an instrument (Oppenheim 2000).

In this study, the pilot took place in two phases. The first phase included the piloting of qualitative questions with young people at secondary schools in England and in Hungary in the autumn of 2012. This included twenty young people from Hungary and five from England. In this phase, the researcher was interested in how the CoP conceptual framework could serve as a tool for framing political and citizenship learning and also the kinds of issues that arose when discussing politics with young people. It is important to note, however, that at the time this research was not focused on post-16 education and training and included young people between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Likewise, as it involved young people from Hungary (Ridley & Fülöp 2015), some of the issues thrown up by the pilot (e.g., discussing politics at school as contentious in Hungary) cannot be said to be as problematic in England.

It must also be added that the piloting of qualitative questions only involved semi-structured interviews as at this stage of the study focus groups were not considered as a method. It was only following the researcher's employment with the university's outreach team that she decided that focus groups would serve as a useful means to collect data. However, as this was added to the data collection method at a late stage of the study there was insufficient time to pilot it. A lack of piloting of this method, however, is somewhat counterbalanced by the researcher's previous experience of public outreach (e.g., conducting politics workshops, debates, and games) and her previous teaching experience with young learners.

The second phase of the pilot was aimed at evaluating the self-completed questionnaire (see Appendix L). This involved a visit to one school sixth-form in the South of England in June 2014. Three young students aged seventeen and eighteen completed the questionnaire and marked with a coloured pen where there were any perceived problems, questions, wording, or any aspects they did not understand or thought could be improved or changed. These were then discussed with the researcher. Although this phase was mainly aimed at piloting the quantitative data instrument, the researcher had some time left over so took the chance to ask the students some questions related to conducting future focus groups and interviews. Below the findings from both phases of the pilot are discussed.

## 6.16 Qualitative pilot findings

### The use of the CoP framework

In this pilot research a broad delineation of Wenger's (1998) CoP theory was adopted. The learning of politics in differing, multiple and overlapping CoP was perceived from an *individual* learner's perspective. Young people's citizenship learning, in this sense can be understood as taking place in a fairly broad '*constellations*' of interconnected practices' that took place within both formal and non-formal learning contexts (Wenger 1998, p.127).

The CoP 'constellation' worked well as a 'thinking tool' in that it helped to systemise through each interview the different contexts, but mainly the school or college that young people learnt about citizenship or politics. It was also useful for highlighting some of the 'shared understandings' of politics in different CoP. For example, in one Hungarian school, many of the young people interviewed construed politics as a taboo topic that should be avoided at school due to the polarisation of opinions between students. The CoP 'constellation' was also a way to highlight the apparent contradictions between learning contexts. One young person in England reported that at the youth group he attended he had his voice heard in decision making processes, but in the

## Chapter 6: A mixed-methods design for examining youth politics and political learning across different post-16 pathways

school context this was not the case. The focus in school was much more on learning to behave appropriately rather than having an opinion.

Where the CoP framework became problematic, however, was in terms of attempting to understand political learning as a process of 'becoming' or as a change in the identity of an individual over time (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). It was difficult to use this concept as the methods chosen were not suitable to capture such a process in the detail it deserves. Therefore, this concept was not included in the conceptual framework. In order to explore political learning as a process of 'becoming' or a change in 'identity' over time it would be more adequate to employ biographical methods as noted in chapter 5 of this thesis. A researcher could examine, for example, how becoming a more integral member of a political party (a CoP) impacts on the political identity of a person.

### **Terminology**

Another issue that emerged from the pilot was the use of some of the terminology. One young person in England, for example, construed 'demonstration' to mean a practical exhibition rather than a political protest. The researcher therefore noted that in the main data collection stage she might need to provide pictures and an example (e.g., Occupy, or student fee protests) and also use the term 'protest' as well.

### **Politics as sensitive**

For the young people interviewed in Hungary it was clear that talking about politics was difficult. This is not surprising given the country's history and the fact that politics in Hungary is publically a contentious topic (Lendvai 2010; Tarkakoff 2012). However, in England this was not the case as the young people that were interviewed were happy to talk about politics openly and comfortably and likewise reported this in their opinions about their school environment. This follows other comparative focus group research on student's voices about citizenship education in England, Sweden, and Finland. The self-estimated participation rates in focus group dialogue were 100 % for the English participants, suggesting a 'high motivation for this type of discussion' (Sandström Kjellin et al. 2010, p.212).

Although this gave the researcher confidence to conduct further interviews and focus groups on this topic, it was still acknowledged that politics and related topics can at times be contentious and sensitive topics. This was particularly important in the lead up to the general election as political debates tend to get more heated around this time. This was a point highlighted by an 18-

year-old female at the school sixth-form in the second phase of the pilot. When asked to generally comment on the questionnaire she had just completed said that...

‘At the moment its really controversial the whole UKIP and everything...and... like...I don’t talk about it a lot but when it does come up...I really...cos I think the views are so different between each person because each party’s so like distinct isn’t it?’

(Gemma)

### **Feeling ‘ignorant’ in a potential focus group setting**

In the second phase of the pilot the students who had completed the questionnaire were also invited to offer their opinions about how they would (hypothetically) feel about participating in a focus group discussion and one-to-one interview. Their initial remarks were that they would not have a problem with either of these, however after a short moment one male student remarked that he would feel quite hesitant to say something in case it came across as wrong or ignorant. This idea was agreed on by the other male student, however he quickly pointed out that in politics there is not right or wrong answer. Taking this into consideration, the researcher ensured that at the start of each focus group for the main study she assured the participants that it was not a test and that there were no wrong or right answers.

## **6.17 Quantitative pilot findings**

In phase 2 at the school sixth-form, the students commented on relatively little with regards to the self-completed questionnaire. One student raised the issue about the confusion of how many boxes to tick, however she realised that she would need to read the question fully. This highlighted to the researcher that if she could be present to distribute the survey in the main study phase she could give clear instructions about how to complete the questionnaire to each participant. The only other issue pertained to the wording of question seven. The student’s preferred the wording ‘lessons have you studied’ rather than ‘what lessons (if any) are you taught about citizenship and politics’. See Figure 6-2 below.

Ethics number: 9342

*Lessons 1st hour*

7 In what lessons (if any) are you taught about citizenship or politics? (Please tick all the boxes that apply)

PSHE (Personal, Social, Health Education)	<input type="checkbox"/>	RE/RS (Religious Education or Religious Studies)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geography	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Business studies or economics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tutor/form groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
History	<input type="checkbox"/>	'Citizenship' classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
English	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sociology/social studies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	Life Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assemblies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

8 When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, how often do the following things happen? (Please tick one box in each line)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teachers encourage students to express their opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Students bring up current political events for discussion in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 6-2: Pilot self-completed questionnaire from young male at school sixth-form

## 6.18 Ethical considerations

'Ethics' is understood here to encompass the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to the participants of a study and a likewise related 'ethic of care' on the part of the researcher. Thus, in this study the researcher was not only concerned with practically following the University of Southampton's ethical guidelines but also ensuring that she had reflected well on how she could *be* an ethical researcher by taking into account matters such as the honesty and concern for the well-being of the participants involved (Williams 2010).

The study included two phases of ethics considerations that related to the pilot study and the main data collection phase. These are taken together in this section as the concerns related to each largely overlap.

In both phases the researcher conformed to the University of Southampton's ethics clearance process. The names of each participant were kept confidential and protected on password protected computers and devices. In any write-up or presentation of the study all the participant's names and the name of the respective school or college were anonymised and replaced with pseudo names (e.g., college 2). The location of the schools and college was kept very general (e.g., at one school on the Isle of Wight).

Consent was obtained from a teacher at each school or college (Appendix C). Since direct parental consent was not seen as necessary for this age group (sixteen-nineteen) by the ethics panel involved in the ethics review prior to the study, this was not sought. Instead, the teacher was

taken as sufficient to provide consent as someone with a strong position of responsibility and able to act in *loco parentis*, particularly for those under the age of eighteen. Consent was also obtained from each participant regardless of what part of the part of research they took part in – focus group, interview, or questionnaire (Appendix C). All participants were informed both in verbal and in written form that they could withdraw their consent and data from the research at any point.

The researcher also considered more subtle issues related to the research process which, as mentioned, were related more to matters of ‘being’ an ethical researcher (Williams 2010).

### **‘Politics’ as sensitive or controversial**

The first was that ‘politics’, or asking direct questions on politics (especially in the questionnaire), may be construed as a sensitive or controversial topic to be discussed, not only in a focus group format but also in a one-to-one interview. As Clark and Sharf (2007, p. 399) note, qualitative research in particular, ‘probes the very personal, subjective truths of people’s lives’ which can expose ‘our own frailties, concerns, and questions as interpretive researchers’. It was anticipated that some young people would not feel comfortable discussing political preferences, practice, and their learning contexts (particularly in the home or in peer groups).

To deal with this it was made clear to the participants in written and verbal form (Appendix B) that sometimes politics and social issues can be sensitive topics and that they should only take part if they are happy to talk about these topics with others and with the researcher.

In the focus group, the researcher likewise laid out some basic rules. These were to respect each other’s opinions and to be patient with each other. At the outset of the focus groups and the interviews, the researcher also made it clear that the intent was not to judge the participant’s views and values but to listen and understand. To ensure an ‘ethic of care’ the researcher endeavoured at all times to treat each participant fairly and democratically.

### **A power divide**

As above-mentioned Kvale and Brinkman (2009) draw attention to the ‘asymmetrical power’ in interviews. The interviews, and to an extent the focus groups, were vulnerable in this sense. The researcher was older and the research was carried out in a context of traditional teacher-student power hierarchies. Although, the researcher saw herself as just a researcher, she was aware that her role may also be determined by the participants of the research – her role might have been construed by young people as ‘teacher’, ‘researcher as auxiliary help’ or ‘university student’(Brockmann 2011). In terms of the latter role, there was also a chance that the academic-vocational divide pervaded the research process as the researcher was from a strong academic



background, and some of the young people interviewed, a vocational path. This may have indeed exacerbated the power asymmetry and may have resulted in a participant feeling inferior or limited in terms of their education or status, particularly if they were from a deprived or disadvantage background.

In order to reduce the potential power asymmetry, the researcher asked that the teachers in the school and the students called her as 'Becca' rather than 'Miss' so as to limit herself being construed as a teacher or someone with a high level of authority. The researcher also ensured that she was personable and attempted to maintain an appropriate level of rapport in both the focus groups and interviews by thanking the participant and being open and honest about the aims of the research. Again, an 'ethic of care' was crucial and as such the researcher endeavoured to treat all participants fairly and equally.

#### **Time inconvenience**

Lastly, the researcher considered the inconvenience of the research in terms of the time it took out the school day of the participants. This was considered a more minor issue but was dealt with by being flexible about timings. The researcher likewise tried to be flexible and responsive to the needs of each school in terms of timings and dates.

### **6.19 Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of how this study was conducted. The choice of a mixed-methods approach is warranted given that the research on youth politics and the post-16 academic-vocational divide has mainly been quantitative in nature (van de Werfhorst 2007; Janmaat et al. 2014). Also, pragmatism as a 'philosophical' tool for underpinning this approach is of merit since it focuses attention away from the alleged epistemological hierarchy between different knowledge types (namely objective and subjective) towards a focus on a focus on knowledge claims – as a result of how a researcher interacts with the empirical world (Biesta, 2010) – and also the utility of the research. In this case, it is argued that that this study is valuable as it intends to contribute to an ongoing debate about education and social and democratic equality.

This chapter also outlined a convergent parallel mixed-methods design in which data is collected in the same phase of research and then 'mixed' at the stage of interpretation (Creswell & Clark 2011). An overview was also provided of the sample, sample size, and sampling framework. In terms of the latter, a sampling strategy was drawn out which combines both purposive and

convenience sampling. The purposive element here was essential since access was required to different types of post-16 institutions in order to make sufficient comparisons from the data collected. A limitation, however, was that the reliance on convenience sampling, in tandem with the topic of the research, resulted in interest from teachers whose students were studying towards politics or social science-related subjects.

The qualitative methods employed in this study were focus groups, interviews, and political 'selfies'. In short, the advantages of these methods is that they allow young people to expand on their own thoughts and feelings of their political practice and learning (Torney-Purta et al. 2010). As well, such methods may enable data to be produced that aid the understanding of macros theories of social change as outlined in chapter 2 (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2003; Mason 2006). For the quantitative survey, the central advantage is that it enables the research to capture a broader sweep of data from young people studying towards different post-16 qualifications at several different schools and colleges (Munn & Drever 2004; Torney-Purta et al, 2010).

In terms of data analysis, the data collected from the qualitative methods was analysed using a thematic coding approach. This involved deductive elements in that the researcher approached the data with certain questions and concepts in mind which were based on the literature examined in this thesis from chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. It also involved inductive elements as that other themes not accounted for in the literature review might arise from the data (Robson 2011). For the data collected from the survey bivariate descriptive statistics were employed (cross-tabulations) to examine the responses to different survey items based on school or college type. For this the data were weighted since the number of young people in different post-16 institutions differs greatly depending on a particular institution type. The multivariate analysis methods of binary logistic and ordinal regression were also employed in order to examine the relationship between education, social background and political engagement.

Lastly, reliability, validity and ethics were considered. In terms of qualitative analysis, reliability or 'credibility' was dealt with, for example, by keeping a personal journal of the research process. At the stage of analysis the researcher also shared some of her findings with a colleague in the field to ensure that her interpretation was as reliable as it could be. To deal with validity the researcher took a number of steps. For example, she used the political 'selfies' at the end of the interviews to check the researcher had captured of the interviewee in an accurate way and also kept an audit trail of all the data collected in the form of focus group and interview transcriptions (see Appendix N).

## Chapter 6: A mixed-methods design for examining youth politics and political learning across different post-16 pathways

For the quantitative data collection, reliability could be checked for some of the survey measures that had previously been used in other survey work. In this case the Chronbach's alpha were calculated to provide a measure of internal consistency. For this data, in terms of validity, the survey was piloted with a number of young people to check that they understood the questions (face validity). The construct validity of the survey items that pertained to 'new' politics and the learning concepts as they were used in the survey were checked through examining the how others in the field have operationalised such concepts and also through dialogue with colleagues in the field.

In terms of ethics, this chapter showed how certain measures were employed to ensure that the experience of the young people involved in this study was as comfortable as possible. This included ensuring that the participants were aware politics can be a sensitive topic and giving them the right to withdraw at any point from the study, laying down basic rules of respect and patience at the outset of each focus group, and the confirmation of the research at the start of each interview and discussion that the aim was not to judge but to understand the views of the participants. As well, in order to limit the 'power divide' between researcher and participant the researcher allowed the students to call her 'Becca' instead of 'Miss'. She also strove to treat all participants fairly and equally. In terms of timing, the researcher was aware that she would need to take time out the participants' schools days so endeavoured to ensure that the study was well-planned and that schools were contacted well in advance to the study taking place.

In the next chapter the findings from the data collected from three sixth-form colleges (A Levels and BTEC), two school sixth-forms (A Levels), a Further education college (mainly vocational Levels 1 and 2), a specialist training centre (vocational Level 5), and an independent college (International Baccalaureate) are presented and discussed.

## Chapter 7: Findings and discussion

The aim of this doctoral study was to examine young people's political learning and participation across post-16 education and training pathways (upper-secondary school) in England. This study was prompted by recent research from across Europe and in the UK which finds that young people who have pursued vocational tracks tend to engage less in politics (mainly voting) than their contemporaries who have taken academic courses (van de Werfhorst 2007; Quintelier 2010; Henn & Foard 2014a; Janmaat et al. 2014). Whereas the literature on the relationship between education and political participation has largely focused on the level of education, my study focused on the *type* of education pursued at post-16 (e.g., vocational or academic).

As noted at the outset, England is an interesting context to conduct this study since the historic divide between academic and vocational education is particularly stark (Lumby & Foskett 2005; Bailey & Unwin 2008) – indeed, the discussions with the young people in this study indicate that the academic-vocational divide continues to exist. As well, the curriculum for both the popular A Level academic route and vocational routes at post-16 in England have been criticised for being particularly narrow in scope and therefore unfit as preparation of future employment and study and also political engagement (Anderson 2014; LLAKES 2015a).

In the context of post-16 education in England there is no 'core' or 'general' education that might include aspects of citizenship or political learning as there is in other countries (Green 1998; Hopkins 2014). A young person is therefore only likely to come into contact with the discussion of politics if they take an A Level in politics or a related humanities subject or are fortunate enough to attend a school which provides extra-curricular learning opportunities that may foster a young person's political engagement. For this reason, the conceptual framework for political learning in this study encompassed two main parts. The first part pertained to the acquisition of political knowledge through the study of specific subjects at school. The second part, based on the idea of learning as situated social participation, focused on meaning-making (mainly discussion) activities and participatory activities at a given school or college (e.g., student councils).

This study has contributed to the literature on youth political learning in two main ways. Firstly, it has examined how the taught curriculum in general (i.e., qualification type) and particular classroom and school practices (e.g., open classroom climate or participation in student councils) might vary depending on the type of education taken at post-16. These aspects have been previously found to have a positive effect on young people's political participation (Hooghe & Quintelier 2011; Hoskins et al. 2011) but to date these have not been examined in relation to post-16 education and training in England. Secondly, since previous studies on youth political

participation and the post-16 sector deal only with conventional politics (Hoskins et al. 2014; Janmaat et al. 2014; Henn & Foard 2014a) this study has sought to broaden what is meant by political participation. Therefore, not only did this study seek to examine youth engagement in conventional forms of political participation (e.g., voting) but also examined 'new' social-movement oriented forms (e.g., environmental, gender, or consumer politics, online engagement) and how engagement in these types of activities might also differ across post-16 education and training pathways.

To this purpose, the following research (and sub) research question(s) were developed:

**RQ1:** How do young people learn politics?

**RQ2:** How do young people practice politics?

**A)** To what extent do the responses of young people reflect the 'new' politics of late modernity?

**RQ3:** Are there differences across different post-16 pathways? If so, what can these differences be attributed to?

To examine this topic in the context of England a mixed-methods approach was employed (survey, focus groups, interviews, and political 'selfies' – a visual method). Since much of the research on political engagement has been dominated by quantitative survey methods (Marsh et al. 2007; Habashi & Worley 2009), the researcher was keen to also include a strong qualitative element which involved young people discussing their political learning for themselves in focus groups and interviews.

A *convergent parallel mixed-methods design* was employed (Creswell & Clark 2011). As such, both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the same phase of the research. The design is 'mixed-methods' in nature in that the 'mixing' took place at the interpretation stage of research rather than at the data collect stage (i.e., the focus groups did not inform the design of the survey in this study). The data were collected in the autumn of 2014 from young people aged between 16 and 19 in eight different types of post-16 education and training institutions in the South of England. These included three sixth-form colleges, two school sixth-forms, an independent college (academic-oriented), a further education (FE) college and a specialist training college (vocational-oriented).

This findings and discussion chapter is organised around research questions 1 and 2 of this study. The first part deals with how young people learn about politics. The second part deals with how

the young people in this study practice (or intend to practice) political engagement. Research question 3 (i.e., Are there differences across different post-16 pathways? If so, what can these differences be attributed to?) does not have its own part but is responded to through parts 1 and 2. Following this the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this study are drawn out (See appendices Appendix J and Appendix K for a summary of all obtained significant statistical results).

## 7.1 Part 1: How do young people learn politics

### 7.1.1 Political learning and qualification type (curriculum):

***Main finding: academic-oriented qualifications tend to be more conducive to socio-political discussion than vocational qualifications***

It is noted in chapter 3 that post-16 qualifications in England are unlikely to be conducive to the learning of politics. The extreme specialisation of the popular A Levels into specific subject areas and the emphasis on job-specific skills within many vocational programmes of learning leave little room for the discussion of socio-political issues or civic education (Brockmann et al. 2008; Hopkins 2014; LLAKES 2015a). Therefore, unless a young person is specifically studying towards an A Level in politics, a social science related subject, or is one of the few studying towards the International Baccalaureate, they are likely to learn very little about politics through the taught curriculum at post-16.

The data from the survey indicates that academic-oriented qualifications tend to be more conducive to the ‘meaning-making’ activity of socio-political discussion than vocational types (although here academic subjects are not distinguished by social science and pure science types). Bivariate analysis by school or college type and the percentage of young people who report that they have attended a lesson in which they have discussed politics and social issues differs significantly between type of post-16 school or college ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.525$ ).

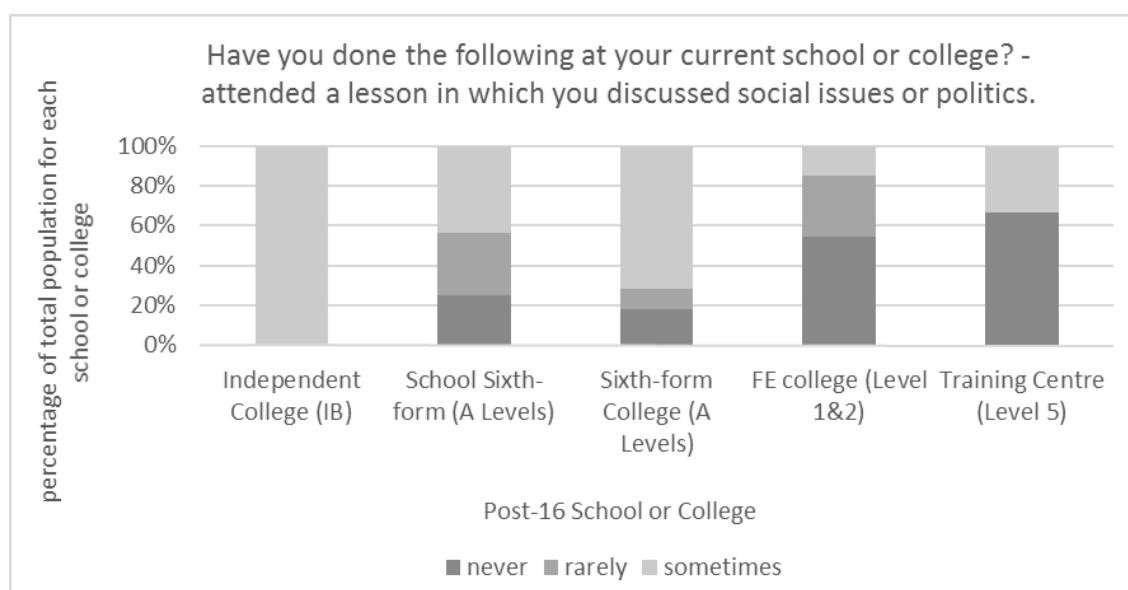
The bar graph (Figure 7-1) shows that proportionally all the young people who study for an IB<sup>64</sup> in the sample report having ‘sometimes’<sup>65</sup> attended a lesson in which they discussed politics or social issues. The proportion of young people studying for A Levels at a sixth-form college is also high for the response ‘sometimes’ (71%). For the school sixth-form where the respondents also

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<sup>64</sup> It must be noted that although this data is weighted there were only 6 young people studying towards the International Baccalaureate (IB) who completed the survey. Therefore, although the survey findings for the IB are included in the analysis and write-up they need to be taken with caution.

<sup>65</sup> ‘sometimes’ was the highest possible response on the survey.

studied towards A Levels 44% report that they ‘sometimes’ attended a lesson in which they discussed social or politics issues. The highest proportions of young people in the sample who report to have ‘never’ engaged in this type of activity at their current school or college are those studying towards higher-level vocational qualifications at the training centre (67%) and those studying towards lower-level vocational qualifications (54%). This latter group also has 31% of respondents that have ‘rarely’ done this. Although just 44% of those on A Levels report having done this ‘sometimes’, this finding offers some support to the idea that academic curricula such as A Levels and the IB are more likely to be conducive to the discussion of politics than vocational curricula.



*Figure 7-1: Percentage of population at each school or college who have attended a lesson in which they discussed politics*

### 7.1.2 The International Baccalaureate: the justification and expression of political opinions

The focus group data corroborate the survey findings. The International Baccalaureate is an obvious example in this respect. Abby, for example, explained how the challenging nature of the lessons within the IB at Independent College F, had pushed her to negotiate her own political opinions. As Wenger (1998, p.53) has noted in terms of learning, the negotiation of meaning (i.e., meaning-making) is often most stark ‘when we are involved in activities that we care about or that present us with challenges’. In the words of Abby...

It’s just the questions that people ask you are more demanding, so before someone could ask you a question about politics and you’re like ‘yeah I believe this’ and then there’d be no follow-up...(laughing)...but now like especially I’ve noticed in history when...when someone asks my opinion I actually really have to think about what I say

because I, I feel the sort of I dunno it's made me sort of have a sense of responsibility about...about what...what...what I...what I'm saying and I believe in...and it's not necessarily like you're believing the wrong thing but it's just us need to sort of justify it and I think...that's really important cos I think that you can sort of say that you're...you're...you believe in one political party just cos it's convenient...but it's been really challenging but it's been really good cos it's made me realise why I believe certain things that I do.

(Abby, Independent College F)

In terms of the conceptual framework of this study, Abby's experience of studying towards the IB includes a strong emphasis on meaning-making activities where learning occurs through interaction and negotiation between different CoP members – in this case it is the history lesson that sets the CoP in which meaning-making takes places for Abby. This is not a surprising finding. The IB is well-known for its pedagogical emphasis on debate and discussion (IBO 2014b) and on the 'seeking, considering, weighing and synthesizing [of] different perspectives' (Saavedra 2014).

For Tess at the same school the choice to study the IB had given her the opportunity to reflect upon her own and her classmates' political opinions:

...even in the history lessons at my old school, also I was doing GCSE so it's different but...urm...we didn't really talk about our political affiliations or erm or how the history...or how history generally reflects nowadays but we've reflected a lot on it. Last year we were doing the Russian Revolution so that's much further back and maybe not so relevant but I remember lots of questions were raised about what's a good government, what is the left...does democracy work, can communism work? Why is communism kind of like...

However, the emphasis on justification for Abby and for Tess the questioning of different political systems and was not the case for the young people who studied politics at A Level at the schools sixth-form or school sixth-form college.

### **7.1.3 Politics A Level: knowledge of political processes**

The participants who studied politics at A Level also (and expectedly) reported that this had bolstered their understanding of politics, but in comparison to the IB little emphasis is put on the responsibility of justifying political beliefs. Instead, for the young people who were studying for the A Level in politics more emphasis is put on the acquisition of knowledge about political processes. Fran, an A Level politics student, felt that:



...it's [A Level Politics] not necessarily helped to shape my views but its informed me more about how things happen and whether they're good and whether they're bad...strengths and weaknesses of like first-past-the-post erm when people can win but not on a majority so more people so more people are actually voting against that person that for them...which I think is completely weird but I mean I wouldn't have known that from my parents cos my parent don't know that...

(Fran, A Level politics student, Sixth-form college B)

For Fran, then, the study of A Level politics had helped her to develop her political knowledge and evaluate particular political processes. Although it might be argued that those who chose to pursue an A Level in politics are already interested in politics, Fran's point lends some support to past research that political education – in the form of specific civics lessons – increases young people's political literacy and in particular their knowledge of political processes and institutions (Niemi & Junn 1998; Galston 2001). It also supports Denver and Hands (1999) finding that taking A Level politics directly results in increased political knowledge and awareness, as discussed in chapter 5.

As well, Fran's view that taking politics A Level had *not* shaped her political views reflects that assessment aims of AQA's Government and Politics which although puts emphasis on young people developing 'an interest and engagement with contemporary politics', (in contrast to the IB) does not place any stress on the students developing or justifying their own political stance (AQA 2013).<sup>66</sup>

Fran's point also draws attention to the 'impartiality' question for politics and citizenship teaching in schools. While participants from Sixth-form college A likewise felt that their schools were 'impartial' (Lydia) or 'neutral' (Mick) in terms of influencing student political opinion, others felt that their politics teachers were more bias. At School Sixth-form D, for example, Gabi and Nat agreed that everything they learnt in their politics A Level class had 'a Labour spin on it'. It is not the purpose to discuss issues of teaching and impartiality in full but it is important to note that this has been a point of contention as to whether teachers should share their political views or shape their students political standpoints, especially in the run up to the 2015 general election (Crick 2000; The Guardian 2015).

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<sup>66</sup> The AQA Government and Politics specification aims to encourage students to: 'develop a critical awareness of the nature of politics and the relationship between political ideas, institutions and processes; acquire knowledge and understanding of the structures of authority and power within the political system of the United Kingdom, and how these may differ from those of other political systems; acquire knowledge and informed understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the individual; develop an interest in and engagement with contemporary politics' (AQA 2013).

#### **7.1.4 Other social science subjects: some socio-political discussion...but it's just about the subject you take**

In terms of learning politics through other social science-related A Level the qualitative data provided some interesting insights. For some of the participants who were pursuing A Levels other than politics, it was felt that the discussion of political or social issues *were* more likely to arise in some lessons than others, however there was no certainty of this for the students at School Sixth-form E:

Becca: so what do you do on that [A Level Health and Social Care]... are you learning anything about...

Jemma: well yeah... the public approval that's about how people perceive people...so like I'm looking at different job roles in our coursework and like basically we have to look...we've given out surveys and we've used different job roles to see how people perceive....like.... each job role... so like some person would think of doctors rather than a taxi driver but I wouldn't say anything really political...sometimes...there's a bit about human rights and things but not too much...

Sylvia: There's pension rights and like pay ... I think that's sort of political... how pension comes about...

Jemma: Yeah your pay...

Sylvia: yeah...like how that's worked out...your retirement... I think that's all down to politics because...

(A Level students, School sixth-form E)

Emma, an A Level student at Sixth-form College C, likewise perceived that discussions on socio-political topics did take place in some of her social science lessons:

...and like class discussions, say if you're in psychology or sociology and something happened in the news when you're having like a talk it's like got nothing to do with the lesson but we all do then it will be more likely you'll have a like a talk about the news or something...

(Emma, A Level student, sixth-form college C)

This was the view also adopted by Emma's peer:

...but say you know, you know with some subjects like English literature or you know some other subjects like psychology or you know things like that philosophy, you're more likely to come in contact with politics and get involved but you're unlikely to if it has nothing to do with politics...

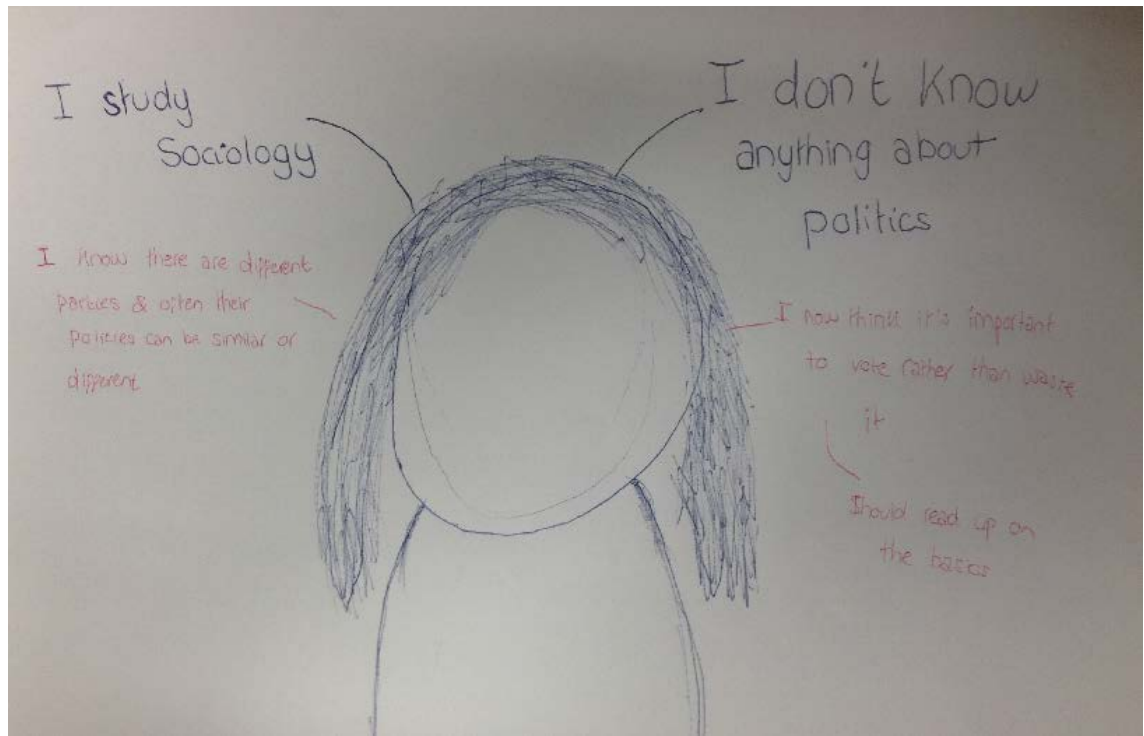
(Jason, A Level Student, Sixth-form college C)

This therefore lends some support to the idea that young people are likely to discuss or learn about socio-political topics in social-science A Level lessons other than politics (LLAKES 2015a). However, for other A Level students it was not evident that subjects other than politics would be conducive to learning about politics. Ava, an A Level sociology student at sixth-form college C felt that she had not learned anything about politics and suggested that 'unless you study politics you don't...[learn]...it's just about the subjects that you take'. Her peer Charlie likewise agreed: 'if you study it you learn it [politics]...if you don't study it you don't'. As well, a small number of students seemed to not think that sociology had much to do with politics. Molly at the same sixth-form college C commented that 'sociology's just about society...it's nothing about really...'. Similarly, in one political 'selfie' drawn by a young female at School Sixth-form E, it is written 'I study sociology' yet also 'I don't know anything about politics' (see Figure 7-2).

The idea, then, that a young person will not learn about politics at their school or college unless they specifically study it, potentially reflects the nature of the subject-driven model of education and post-16 academic education in England. As Young and Leney (1997, p.53) note, 'A Levels represent a highly insulated form of subject specialisation which directs learners' attention entirely to individual subjects treated separately'. While this is a traditional model of the curriculum, favoured by the current Conservative government and places emphasis on foundational knowledge, it is an approach that is argued to be problematic since extreme subject specialisation does not allow for links between similar (e.g., geography and sociology) and indeed different subjects to be easily forged (Preistley 2015). Indeed, in recent years there has been a shift from traditional subject-based curricula to a more integrated and interdisciplinary model. As Fenwick et al (2013, p.455) note, teachers of specific subjects are 'increasingly expected to illustrate how their subject both interconnects with other subjects, and equips pupils with key life skills'.

While the latter type of curriculum is beneficial because they enable conceptual connections to be made across disciplines, they are also of concern since interdisciplinary activities require resources and time for teachers to link their subject coherently with another subject. In the case of A Levels, developing an interdisciplinary approach between similar subjects (e.g., A Level sociology and A Level politics) may be further problematic given the emphasis on subject-specific

examinations and results that are necessary to progress to higher education (Priestley & Biesta 2013). Since the model of the A Level curriculum – as discrete subject areas – is unlikely to be reversed anytime soon, then the solution can only realistically be pedagogic. As Young (2014, p.104) notes, ‘the capability to connect or ‘cross boundaries’ [between subjects] can be encouraged by teachers and arises out of a student’s subject identity and the problems that she or he finds that the subject-based concepts cannot adequately deal with’.



*Figure 7-3: Political ‘selfie’ from female at School Sixth-form E*

Moreover, the extreme specialisation of A Levels in England means it is unlikely that socio-political discussion will arise in subject classrooms that are not focused on politics or the social sciences (e.g., maths, photography, or sport and physical education) (LLAKES 2015a). Although there is not sufficient data here to validate this point further in this study, the narrow subject-based A Level curriculum is potentially problematic, particularly in term of socio-political learning. This is not only an issue for those who advocate for the inclusion of citizenship learning at post-16 (LLAKES 2015b).

There are wider concerns that the English academic A Level curriculum as it stands is really quite narrow (Nutbeam 2009) and fails to prepare young people sufficiently for university and employment. As such Anderson et al (2014b, p.55) in their recent report *Making Education Work* recommend that the ‘A-level system should be slowly changed to a baccalaureate-type system in which a broader curriculum (including core English, mathematics and the Extended Project Qualification)...is provided for all post-16 learners’. This they argue should be based on a

framework of key competences that include aspects such as communication in English and in foreign languages, creativity and cultural awareness, digital competences and social and civic competence'. Thus, although the emphasis in this report is on the introduction of a baccalaureate-type qualification to develop the skills students require for higher education and study, equally an additional reason to do so is to provide all post-16 students with some form of citizenship education (discussed below) that would give students the opportunity to develop their political literacy and debate political topics that matter to them particularly at a time which is fraught with immense global challenges such as global warming, conflict (particularly in the middle-east with Daesh), and immigration. Under the current government however, and as is shown in chapter 3, a baccalaureate-type system at post-16 is unlikely to materialise anytime soon given the preference for a traditional subject-based curriculum (Young 2011).

### 7.1.5 Vocational classes: limited in terms of socio-political learning

It is possible to report with more certainty that those who take vocational courses in this sample are less likely to have attended a lesson in which they discussed socio-political issues (see figure 7-1). To reiterate, 67% of students on a Level 5 vocational programme report having 'never' done this and 85% on Level 1 and 2 vocational programmes report that they have 'rarely' or 'never' done this. A major explanation for this is likely to lie in the nature of the curriculum of vocationally-oriented courses. For one participant at Sixth-form College B the seemingly hands-off teaching style in his Business BTEC class meant that there was little time for socio-political discussion in the classroom. He compared this to his A Level course which he was simultaneously taking:

yeah I'd say A levels are more...*theory* in a way so you have, you have more talks about, like sort of beliefs...cos you talk about stuff more whereas in a BTEC its sort of we have a quick chat about the work and then you sort of just get handed what to do and you do it...whereas in an A level you're, you're be like you only do exams near the end, a lot of the time you're just doing a bit of work and you're talking a lot about stuff so...that might be why cos opinions get thrown around a bit more maybe...

(Neil, BTEC student, Sixth-form College B)

The discussion with two focus group members at Further Education College G likewise point to the fact that vocational programmes tend to be less conducive to the discussion of politics. Here Sylvia and Karl report that although they discuss political issues in tutorials (discussed below), they do not discuss socio-political issues specifically in their course lessons. Moreover, what they

did discuss that they felt related to politics were the specific laws that they would need to consider when working in catering and hospitality:

Becca: ...in college and on your courses, do you learn about politics? What comes up?  
Are you discussing politics?

Sylvia: mainly in tutorials...

Karl: ermmmm...we don't exactly discuss politics but I...we tend to try and have like, like have a discussion and things...if you agree or disagree...so...pretty much do politics...but not discuss it...

Becca: so you don't discuss it on your course really?

Karl: no because it's very hard on our course cos what only do...

Sylvia: we do mentioned laws...cos of a lot of laws are correlated to the hospitality industry...

Karl: (in agreement) yeah... a hell of a lot...

Sylvia: but apart from that...none...

Karl: no, cos we don't focus on, sometimes we might like in a tutorial talk about different things and what like, and what like goes on ermm...

Why such a lack of socio-political discussion on vocational courses such as Sylvia and Karl's? While it is recognised that it is not possible to talk about FE curricular and learning as if it were homogenous (the FE sector is very diverse) (Huddleston & Unwin 2013), as shown in chapter 3 this finding might be attributable to the (general) instrumental nature of vocational programmes in England (Hopkins 2014). In this sense, this finding perhaps reflects much wider concerns in the academic field of study of FE that the curricula of vocational qualifications tend to focus on job-specific outcomes and the instrumental demonstration of skills over the holistic development of student's competence (Brockmann et al. 2008). The 'achievement-based' and 'target-driven' atmosphere of further education (Hopkins 2014, p.55) is likely only to exacerbate this issue since qualifications frame much of what goes on in FE Colleges (Huddleston & Unwin 2013). The pressure that FE teachers are faced with to 'get students through' given vocational qualifications and framework levels which as Hopkins (2014, p.55) notes 'frequently leads to pressurised transitions between theory and practice in the race for students to demonstrate competencies necessary to pass the programme and progress further'. Indeed, a study by Towler et al (2011)

shows that FE teachers often feel inhibited by the demands of qualifications and the students' attitudes that learning amounted to passing tests. They write that:

Instrumentalisation of the curriculum...is in danger of disenfranchising teaching professionals from the deeper aspects of learning processes (e.g. creativity, critical thinking) that are essential if students are to acquire a genuine 'learner voice'.

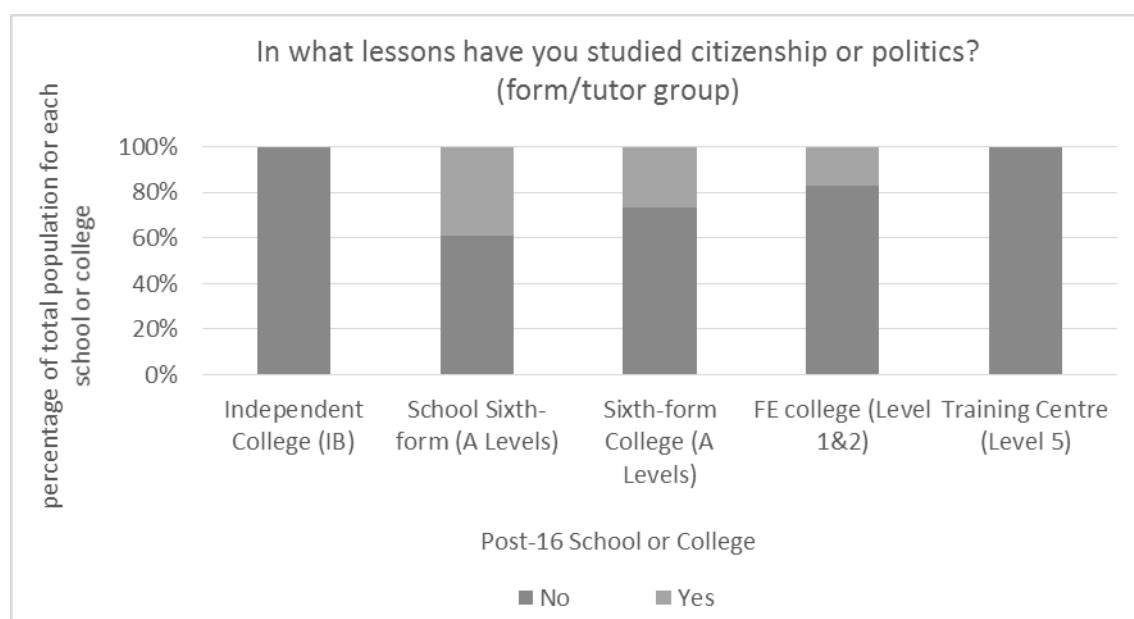
(Towler et al. 2011, p.504)

It may be the case that teachers see topics such as citizenship and political discussion as important, but since they often lack time for the consolidation of their courses (Hopkins 2014) they are likewise extremely unlikely to have the time to discuss these topics with their students. However, it is not the case that teachers and staff of vocational are not engaging their students in any political or citizenship learning. Tutorials and life skills lessons appear to also be important.

#### **7.1.6 Tutorials and life skills as potential domains for socio-political discussion?**

***Main finding: a small number of respondents in sixth-form colleges, school sixth-forms and the FE College report tutorial as domains for the study of citizenship and politics.***

The survey data indicates that tutorials may be an important part for political and citizenship learning, particularly for those doing A Levels and for those studying at the Further Education College ( $p < .016$ ,  $\phi = 0.243$ ). For the sixth-form college 39% of respondents report that they have studied citizenship or politics in their tutor or form groups. This is 27% for the school sixth-form and a lower 17% for the FE College.



*Figure 7-4: Percentage of population at each school or college that have studied citizenship or politics in a tutor or form group*

Despite this, during the focus group and interview discussions very few participants referred to tutorials as a place for political discussion. Apart from the discussion with Sylvia and Karl at the FE College, it was only in the focus groups at Sixth-form College C that this was discussed and the participants tended to agree that tutorials were not important and wasted time:

Ava: do we learn anything in tutorial about politics?

(Utterances of 'no')...

Ava: I don't think we do, do we?

Pete: no

Eva: we did a bit about democracy at the start...last year I think...

Gill: see I think that's where we should learn things like that...because it's a bit of a waste of time otherwise, like I don't know about you guys but I think it's a bit of a waste of time tutorial...

(Utterances of agreement and laughing)

Hopkins (2014, p.33) suggests that tutorial programmes offer considerable scope for students in Further Education (and this can also be applied to those doing A Levels) to gain the confidence they require to 'explore the wider political, social and community issues that affect their lives'. Although in this study there are small proportions of young people who report that they have



studied citizenship or politics in tutorials, this does not necessarily indicate quality, as Gill has reported. Similarly, in an evaluation of citizenship learning at post-16, Craig et al (2004) conclude that citizenship taught through tutorials is generally a *less effective* approach to implementing citizenship learning at post-16. A central reason for this relates to the fact that some teachers do not feel comfortable adapting to a teaching style which they are not familiar with. As Craig et al (2004, p.25) note, 'there were many references [in their study] to the difficulties of handling discussions, especially if staff were not used to such methods or the subject was controversial'.<sup>67</sup> Although they suggest that the best teaching approaches for citizenship learning are the participative learning approaches such as debate and discussion, they recommend that it is essential that tutors have access to training and support in citizenship. This might explain why larger proportions of students in this study who report having studied citizenship or politics in their tutor groups are in the sixth-form college and to some extent the school sixth-form (see Figure 7-3). It may well be the case that the focus on more academic subjects (e.g., history, politics, sociology) in the sixth-form means there are more members of staff who are better trained to facilitate political discussions in tutor groups.

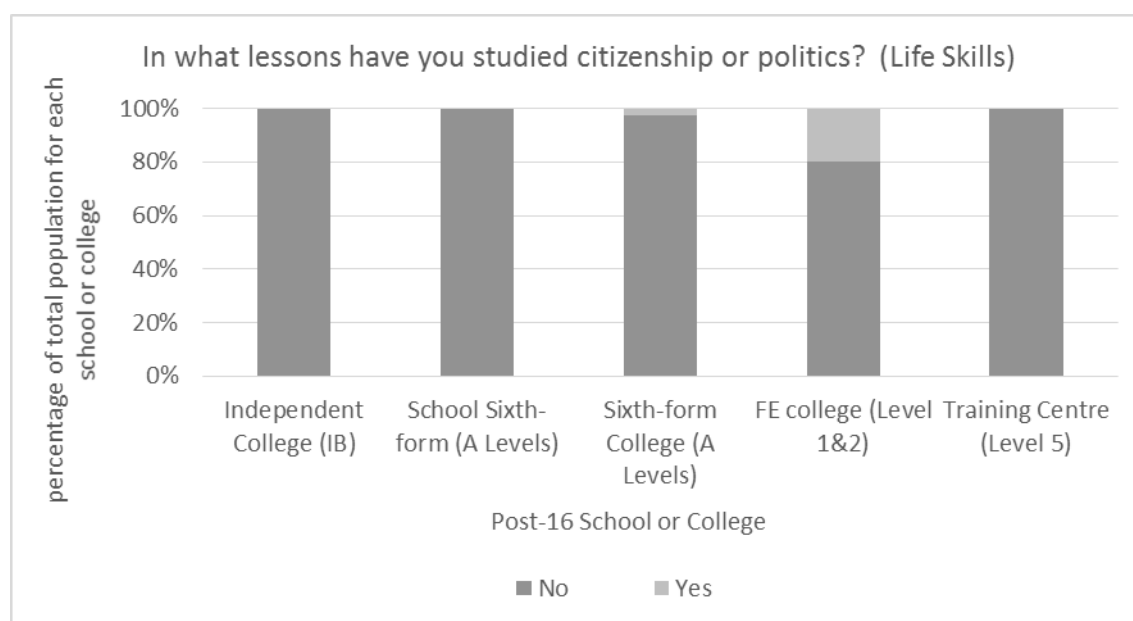
Interestingly, 20% of the young people at the FE College report that they have studied citizenship or politics in their Life Skills<sup>68</sup> class ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $\phi = 0.324$ ). The fact that there are larger proportions that report having studied Life Skills is potentially indicative of a student body with larger number of students with learning difficulties. To the authors knowledge there are no studies on political learning through Life Skills. In the evaluation of citizenship learning at post-16 this was not considered by Craig et al (2004). Therefore, an important topic for future research could be to examine Life Skills as an avenue for political learning and engagement, particularly for those young people with learning difficulties. This is important since self-advocacy<sup>69</sup> – based on the terms of 'social justice' and 'citizenship' – is often represented as part of policy agendas which stress 'empowerment' within service settings, including educational institutions (Armstrong 2002, p.334).

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<sup>67</sup> An example of a current controversial topics is terrorism. See Citizenship Foundation (2015b).

<sup>68</sup> Life Skills (the name can vary) is a course that is usually offered to young people with learning difficulties. The general aim is to help young people develop personal and life skills so that they can take better responsibility for their own lives.

<sup>69</sup> Williams and Shoultz (1982, p.16) define self-advocacy as 'self-respect, respect by others, a new independence, assertiveness, and courage. It involves seriousness, political purpose and understanding of rights, responsibilities and the democratic process'.



*Figure 7-5: Percentage of population at each school or college who have studied citizenship or politics in Life Skills lessons*

## 7.2 Political learning and open classroom climate

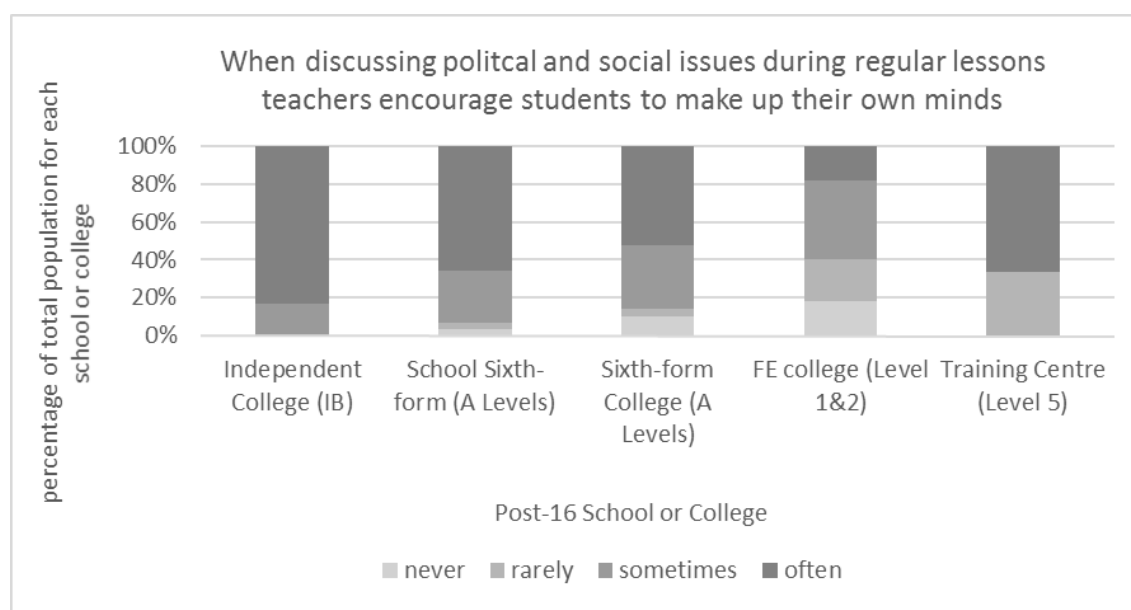
An open classroom climate is understood in the literature to be an important enabler of political discussion and is also found to increase the likelihood of young people's future political participation (Torney-Purta et al. 2007; Hoskins et al. 2011; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011). To reiterate, this is the idea that classrooms are places where young people are free to explore their own and their peer's opinions (Torney-Purta et al. 2001) and where the teaching style is less authoritarian and more interactive and participative (Hooghe & Quintelier 2011). In this sense, by examining classroom climate it is possible to gain an insight into what is termed the 'hidden curriculum' – the more unstated norms and values that are transmitted to students and the social relations of the school or classroom life. To date, classroom climate has not been examined in relation to post-16 education and training pathway (Persson & Oscarsson 2010; Janmaat et al. 2014), hence why it was included as a measure in this study. In terms of the five items included in the survey for classroom climate three demonstrated significant differences across post-16 pathways.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The two items which showed no significant differences across post-16 pathway were: 'When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons students bring up current political events for discussion in class' and 'When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people having differing opinions'.

***Main finding: Young people at the FE College tend to experience a reduced level of open classroom climate***

In terms of classroom climate, it is the FE College and the specialist training centre that seem to do the least well and for a number of survey items. For example, for the survey item 'when discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, teachers encourage students to make up their own minds' higher proportions of respondents in the FE college (22%) and the Training Centre (33%) report that this 'rarely' happens. Likewise, the FE college has the highest proportion of responses that this 'never happens' (18%) and the lowest (by far) proportion of those who report that this 'often' happens (18%). The sixth-form college (66%), the school sixth-form (53%), the Independent School (83%) and the Training Centre (67%) have much larger proportions of those who report that this 'often' happens than the FE college ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.481$ ).

The data demonstrates a similar finding for the item 'when discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, teachers encourage students to express their opinions'. While the sixth-form colleges (82%), schools sixth-forms (59%), independent school (67%) and the Training Centre (67%) have high proportions of students reporting that this is 'often' the case, it is the FE college that has the lowest proportion of those who respond that this is 'often' the case (36%) and the largest proportion of responses that this is 'never' (23%) or 'rarely' (10%) the case ( $p < 0.009$ ,  $\phi = 0.380$ ). For the item 'when discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, teachers present several sides of the issue when explaining them in class' it is again the FE college that has the largest proportion of respondents who report that this is 'never' (30%) the case compared to for example the sixth-form college (4%) and the school sixth-form (9%). The institute with the largest proportions for this is 'often' (61%) or 'sometimes' (29%). The independent school also has a large proportion of those who report that this is 'often' the case (67%). Interestingly, on this particular item the school sixth-form has a relatively large proportion of respondents who report that this is 'never' (9%) or 'rarely' (21%) the case ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $\phi = 0.424$ ).



*Figure 7-6: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that when discussing political and social issues during regular lesson, teachers encourage them to make up their own minds.*

The survey data, then, indicate that it is largely students at the FE College that report a less open classroom climate. The latter classroom climate item – when discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, teachers present several sides of the issue when explaining them in class – also suggests that students in school sixth-form education also experience potentially lower levels of open classroom climate. Indeed, Ben, an A Level student at School sixth form E, did not feel it was the case that his teachers provided him with a variety of perspectives for debate. Drawing on his experience of studying PRE (Philosophy of Religion, and Ethics) he reported:

I think the big thing is we're taught not to argue against teachers which...I understand why because it...it instils this...this sense of people who are teaching you things are bettered....but it's like if a teacher is saying something that you don't believe in like... I did two years of PRE...I didn't believe a single word of it...but I did it cos I knew I had to...[...].it's all well and good saying how do we learn our politics, but if we try and learn about politics and we're told we're wrong...

(Ben, A Level student, Sixth-form college E)

It is difficult to explain why there might be lower levels of open classroom climate at the FE College and in some respects in school sixth-form education. As well, this particular finding cannot be related back to the literature since this phenomenon has not previously been examined in relation to post-16 education and training. However, there are a number of possibilities which might explain these findings. Firstly, it may be the case that young people at the FE College are

simply not discussing socio-political issues in class much (as is shown above), therefore it is likely to follow that they report lower levels of open-classroom climate since such topics do not arise in the first place. Secondly, as mentioned above, it may be that teachers of vocational courses in FE are more focused on their students reaching their assessment targets (Hopkins 2014), than 'encouraging students to make up their own minds' or 'express their opinions' with regards to social or political topics. Broadly speaking, this is simply not the purpose of most vocational courses in England. As well, given the emphasis on the performance of discrete skill, FE learners are also found to construe their learning at college in terms the surface-level conceptions of 'listening' and 'practice' (Towler et al. 2011). It is therefore unlikely that FE students feel that they are encouraged to make up their own minds or express their opinions more generally, and likewise in terms of socio-political issues. Thirdly, since many students who attend FE Colleges have lower levels of educational achievement (Meschi et al. 2010) and lower expectation of their selves as learners (Towler et al. 2011) it might be that teachers place more importance on generally telling students 'what to do' rather than encouraging them to express their opinions as learners (Towler et al. 2011).

For those taking academic courses (namely the A Level) and the Level 5 vocational course, the data suggests that students report more positively with regard to open-classroom climate in terms of feeling enabled to express their opinions and make-up their own minds about socio-political topics. That the Level 5 vocational students report more positively in terms of classroom climate is interesting since these students are also undertaking vocational qualifications that focus on the demonstration of skills for a specific occupation. It is important to reiterate however that in contrast to those respondents at the FE College the Training Centre respondents were studying for higher level qualification (Level 5 as opposed to levels 1 & 2 at in FE) and informed the researcher that it was a prestigious course and competitive to gain a place. In contrast, the FE College, then, it may be that teachers at the Training centre hold higher expectations of their students as learners and therefore are more likely to encourage students to express their opinions and make up their own minds more generally. This, then, suggests a potential divide between the political learning experiences of those on different types of vocational courses which would require further investigation.

In terms of those studying A Levels and the IB it is likely that the curriculum (i.e., specific A Levels) is more conducive to an open classroom climate since - particularly in the social sciences - students may be encouraged to develop their ideas and opinions and debate topics. However, this was not the case for a small proportion of those in school sixth-form education, who felt that their teachers did not present several sides of social and political issues when being discussed in class. It is likewise difficult to explain why Ben felt like this about his PRE lesson but a likely explanation

might be that in some schools there is a strong focus on compliance in order to get students through examinations and therefore ‘teach for the test’ (Hadar, 2009, cited in Towler et al. 2011, Huddleston and Unwin, 2013) rather than exploring several sides of a topic in depth in class. In this sense, that Ben felt that he ‘had to’ complete his PRE course points to an instrumentalism in A Level education in that the focus is often on getting students through exams in order to progress to higher education (Priestley & Biesta 2013).

Examining classroom climate in relation to post-16 education and training pathways clearly requires further research attention, since in this study it is clear that those at the FE College that report the least positively about their experiences in terms of these survey items. Since the size of the sample of this study is fairly small future research survey research would gauge measures of classroom climate across a broader sample of schools and colleges to see if this finding holds.

### **7.3 Political learning ‘practice’ activities in the wider school or college**

Practice activities are understood as learning opportunities that give young people structure and meaning to what they do (Wenger 1998; Hoskins et al. 2011). In this sense political learning is ‘doing’ politics in the context of the school or college. Such activities might include for example participation in different clubs, learner voice, or voting for class representatives (Hoskins et al. 2011; Hooghe & Quintelier 2011) and likewise may set the context for meaning-making activities to occur (i.e., discussion with peers). By examining different practice activities across different types of schools and colleges it is possible to gain an insight into a school’s wider culture and the extent to which this is participatory and therefore potentially conducive to youth political engagement.

The survey was used to collect data on engagement in wider school or college practice learning activities (e.g., debating clubs, charity events, or school councils).<sup>71</sup> Bivariate analysis between school or college type and a number of various items for wider school or college activities indicate some differences in young people’s engagement in practice activities across post-16 education and training types, although for many of these items<sup>72</sup> response rates were low and there were therefore no significant differences between different post-16 schools and colleges.<sup>73</sup> The

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<sup>71</sup> In the survey questions 1 and 9 sought to capture the young people’s engagement in wider school or college activities. The data from question 9 is mainly used since this was only focused on the school or college context.

<sup>72</sup> Question 1 on the survey sought to capture participation in clubs and groups in a respondent’s free time, at school or college, training or work.

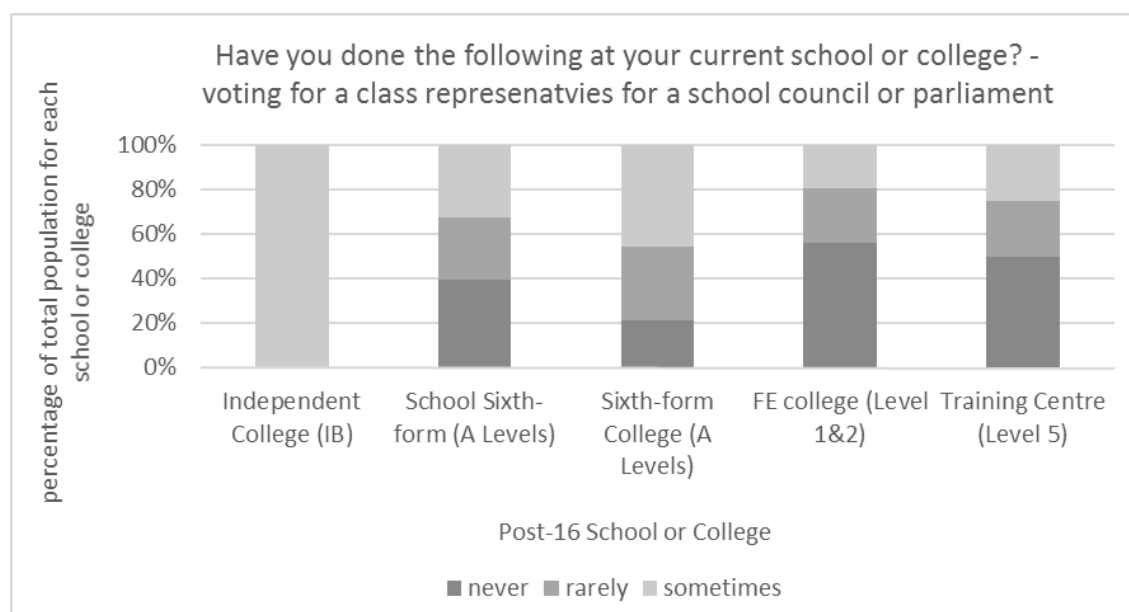
<sup>73</sup> For example, participation in a feminist club, school or student council, a charitable organisation or event, an LGBT group, a religious organisation, a youth club, National Citizenship Service, a trade union meeting, and a youth wing of a political party.

following practice activities are therefore discussed below: student councils, debating and debate clubs, and volunteering.

### 7.3.1 Student Councils and student voice

**Main finding: smaller proportions of those at the FE College and the Training Centre vote for student council members but a larger proportion of students at the FE College report a more positive experience in terms of student voice**

There were no differences across school and college types in terms of young people's participation in a school or student council. This is contrary to other studies in the literature such as Quintelier (2010) who shows differences across academic and vocational pathways in terms of participation in a school council – those on academic pathways participated in schools councils more than the latter – albeit in the context of Belgium. However, in terms of taking part in the activity of *voting* for a class representative for a school council or parliament, it is the FE college and the Training Centre that have the largest proportions of respondents who report that this is 'never' or 'rarely' the case ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.470$ ).



*Figure 7-7: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they have voted for a class representatives for school council or parliament*

The focus group data provides a better understanding of why young people at the FE College do not vote for council representatives. The following dialogue is taken from three student council members who had recently been out campaigning in their college and were frustrated that they found it difficult to engage their peers in voting for them. This reflects research by Katsifli and Green (2010, p.29) on Student Voice in Further Education who find that 'Student Presidents, or

those in similar posts, report frustration from time to time in involving their fellow students'. In this current doctoral study, while Mike places emphasis on his college peers 'not knowing' about voting or the student council, John and Karl felt that their peers were more apathetic and were not 'bothered' about voting at college and likewise 'politics' more generally.

Mike: it's...it's...from what I've noticed when doing campaigning myself...people just don't know...

John: are they bothered?

Mike: are they bothered? Like you go up to someone and say 'would you like to vote this is my views' and they're like 'nah'...

John:.... 'nah I can't be bothered' sort of thing

Mike: cos I can't be bothered, it's...it's taking time out of my day

Karl: for instance: yesterday, we were doing, we were doing it for the campaign to get people voting...a lot of people like 'no, don't want to'...because they are not bothered about politics, they're not bothered about it...they don't wanna...

Becca: what are they bothered about?

John: themselves...

Sylvia: their hair...

John: my lunchtime, my 20 minutes I have for lunch instead of spending another two minutes....(can't catch the words)...

Mike: which could change the college...slightly it's like...if they don't vote for a good person to go in then the bad person's gonna get in and then what they actually like could be wrecked and they realise 'oh...actually that's had a knock on effect' but they don't see it....

At the FE College, it is important to note that the researcher gained access through the student council centre that was run by a dedicated member of staff. Those from the FE College who took part in the focus group were therefore minority of highly active in the student council members and this was central when they spoke about politics and their political learning at college. For example, Mike, responded to the word 'politics' by saying that:



...well what it means to us is we're part of a council and we all run cos we want to try and help...politics for us is just generally just want you know...we're trying talk amongst each other and try and get things fixed...try to debate it...

(Mike, Level 3 in engineering, FE college G)

As well, the importance of the student council was evident in the political 'selfies' that were created at the outset of the focus group.

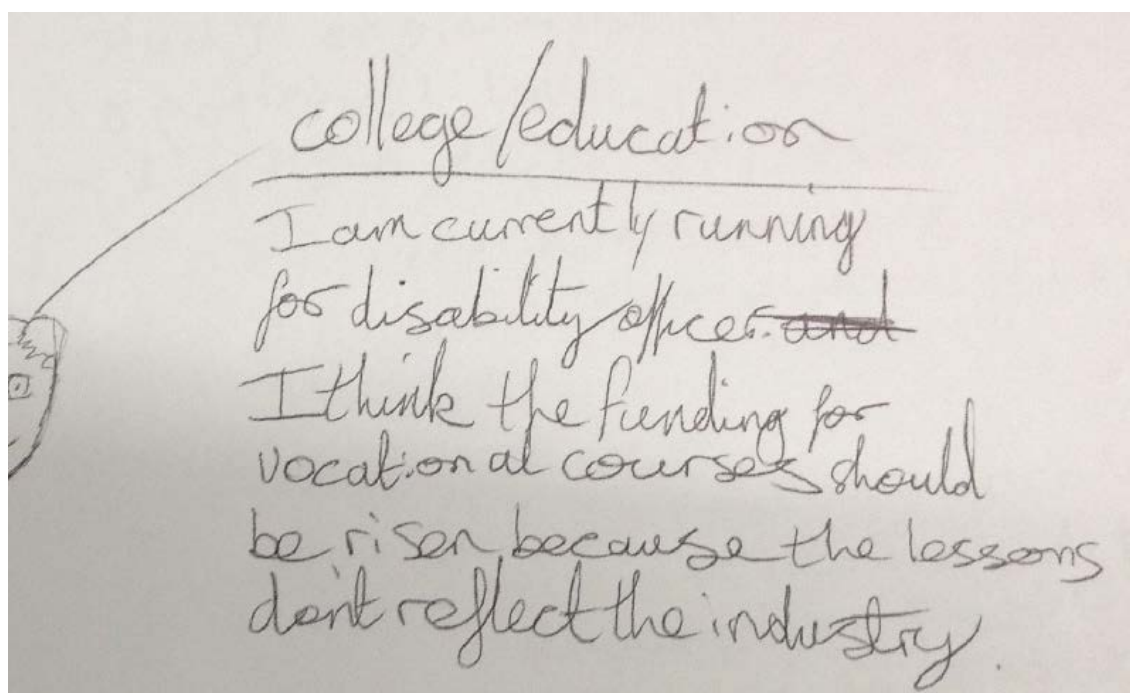


Figure 7-8: Political 'selfie' from male at FE College G

However, despite this minority of engaged students at the FE College and the recent student council and democracy initiatives in the FE College (personal communication, September, 2014) the data indicates that many young people at the FE College (and also the Training Centre) do not vote in the student council elections. A question to ask then is whether many young people at these institutes are apathetic to or 'don't know' about the council initiatives in their colleges – as was the perception of those in the focus group at the FE College – or whether this finding reflects a wider disengagement from conventional politics. Previous research by Han et al (2013) on the relationship between civic attitudes and voting intention in FE Colleges may corroborate the finding that young people in FE are disinterested in student council initiatives. In their study, for example, their qualitative data demonstrates that their respondents doubted the effectiveness of student representation initiatives in their colleges. However, given that previous research that shows that young people who hold vocational qualifications are less likely to vote (Janmaat et al. 2014) and that the data from this doctoral study on political *practice* shows that the FE College has the highest proportions of those who are dissatisfied with the political system and

disinterested in politics then it seems that a lack of participation in voting at school reflects a wider disengagement from conventional politics. This is discussed in Part 2 below which compares young people's political practice across post-16 pathways.

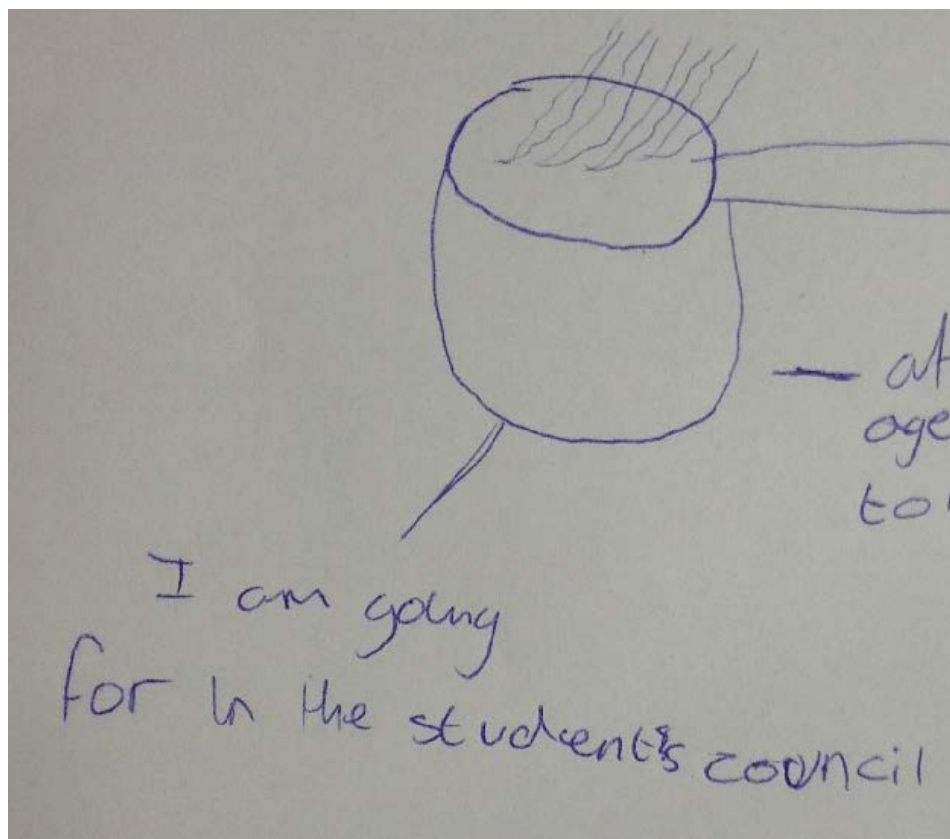


Figure 7-9: Political 'selfie' from male at FE College G

### Student Voice

Interestingly, and in contrast to the findings for voting for a student council member and to some extent the findings on open-classroom climate (shown above), it is the FE College that that had the largest proportions of students reporting positively about their Student Voice experience. For the item 'how much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about what is taught in classes' while 20% of those in the FE College respond to this question with 'a large extent' and 34% 'a moderate extent' compared to, for example, 4% for 'a large extent' and 19% for 'moderate extent' at the school-sixth form (see Figure 7-9) ( $p < 0.005$ ,  $\phi = 0.390$ ). Likewise, for the item 'how much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the timetable', A similar pattern can be seen. At the FE College 18% respond with 'a large extent' and 32% with 'a moderate extent'. This in contrast to the school sixth-form where 0% respond 'a large extent' and only 13% respond 'a moderate extent' ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $\phi = 0.463$ ). The same pattern can be found for the item 'how much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are being made about school/college rules'  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\phi = 0.428$ ). For all three of these items it is the sixth-

form college and the school sixth-form that have the largest proportion of respondents who respond with 'not at all' and 'a small extent'.

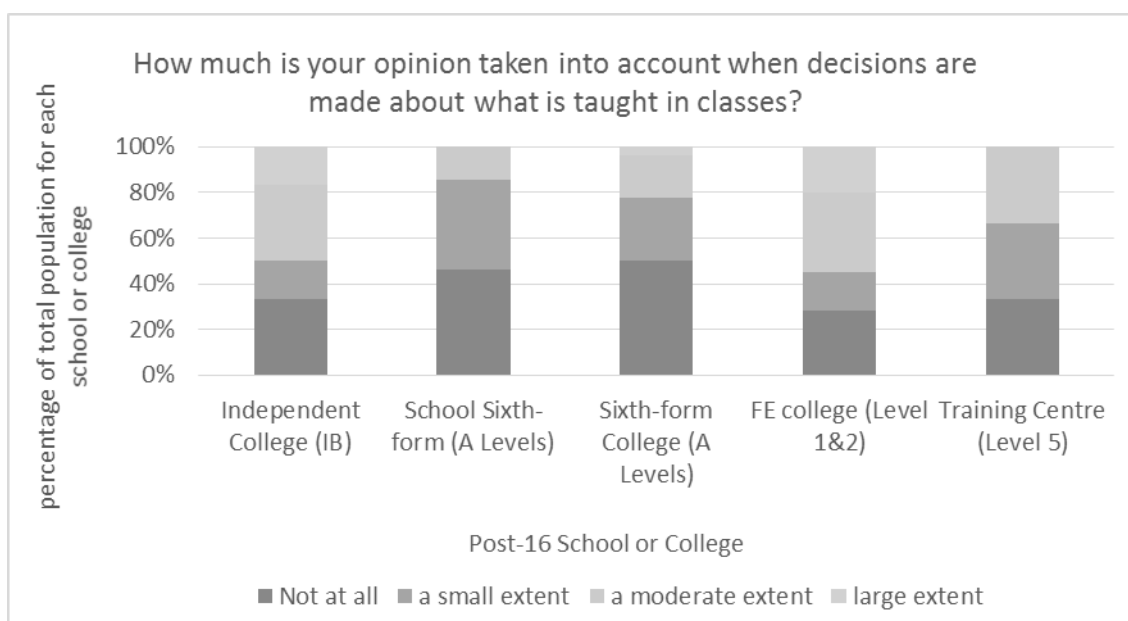


Figure 7-10: Percentage of population at each school or college on the extent to which their opinions are taken into account when decisions are made about what is taught in classes

Why do students at the FE College appear to be the most positive about their involvement in Student Voice? One reason for this could be that since 2005, and following the Foster Report (2005), progress has been made across many FE Colleges in terms of increasing and improving Student (or 'Learner') Voice initiatives (Katsifli & Green 2010). Katsifli and Green (2010) report that such consultation and involvement initiatives have become more formalised. Colleges are reported to use face-to-face discussion, surveys (namely online), and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and e-portfolios (Katsifli & Green 2010). While these kinds of activities may be construed as less political than for example voting for a student council representative, they are certainly important for involving students in FE planning and performance and for better understanding local needs (DfES 2005).

Furthermore, why might this finding that the FE College does well in terms of student voice contradict the above finding that it does less well in terms of open-classroom climate (e.g., encouraged to express opinions)? One explanation for this might lay in how the questions on the survey were constructed. For example, the *classroom climate* items were written on the survey in terms of the discussion of '*political and social* issues in regular lessons'. Therefore, even if young people were discussing their learning and participating in student voice activities in their lessons they are unlikely to have construed this as a social or political discussion and therefore have indicated lower scale response on the survey.

Additionally, the survey data for Student Voice practices also show that it is the sixth-form colleges and the school sixth-forms that have the highest proportions of those who report having not been consulted about their learning at school or college. However, some of the qualitative data tend to paint a different picture. For example, for Tim, did feel that his current school sixth-form really cared about student's work and that students would be able to approach the teachers easily if they wanted their voice heard about a particular issue...

...the college is small enough that you could actually just go and see the teachers about it or go and see and they would probably be fine with changing stuff...yeah so you have a much bigger voice than you would...there's no sort of real... there's not like they have to change it for a hundred people or... you know...

(Tim, Sixth-form college D)

In this case, the school Tim attended was small and friendly and therefore Tim felt that he could easily have his voice heard. This school may therefore have had a participatory culture (which was not examined in greater detail in this study) however this may be less formalised in comparison to the FE college, for example, where students are more explicitly encouraged to engage in Student Voice initiatives.

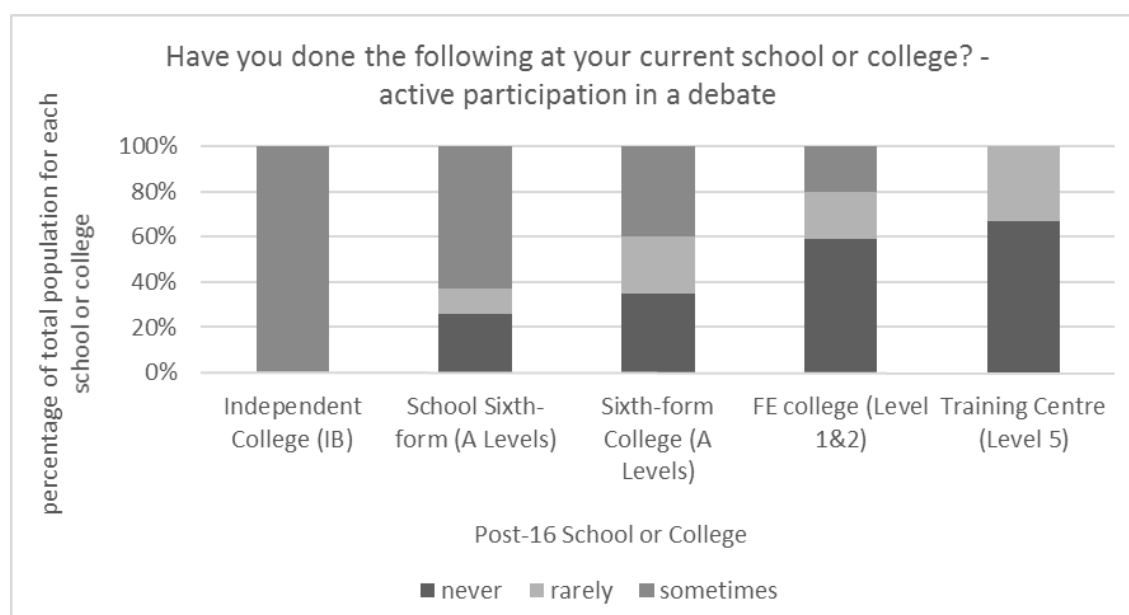


Figure 7-11: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they have actively taken part in a debate at their school or college

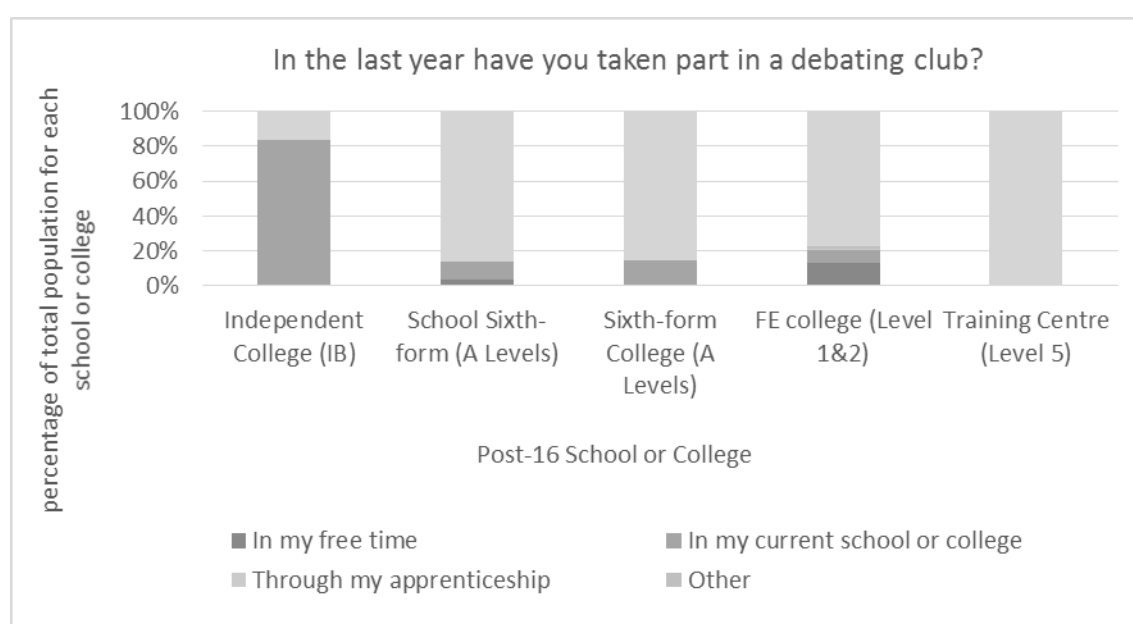
### 7.3.2 Debating ‘practice’ and debating groups

**Main finding:** Larger proportions for students on academic pathways report that they have taken part in a debate at their current school compared to smaller proportions of those on vocational pathways.

The second practice activity considered here is ‘active participation in a debate’. The data shows that there are larger proportions of young people who report having ‘sometimes’ done this on academic pathways (100% in the Independent college, 63% in the sixth-form college and 40% in the school sixth-form). There are also larger proportions of young people on both vocational pathways who report having ‘never’ been involved in this type of activity at their colleges (59% for the FE College and 76% for the Training Centre). ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.461$ ). Although here this item is taken as a proxy for debating in the wider school or college setting, it is recognised that it could also relate to debates that take place in lessons since the data follow a similar pattern to the item ‘attended a lesson in which you discussed social or political issues’ as discussed above. An explanation as to why young people who study for vocational qualifications tend to debate less, then, could likewise relate to the fact that much of teaching and learning is guided by qualification specifications and the demonstrations of job-specific skills where ‘listening’ ‘remembering’ and ‘practicing’ a skills are at the forefront (Towler et al. 2011; Huddleston & Unwin 2013). As well, it is likely that those studying for academic qualifications will have taken part in a debate in their lessons. Although classroom debates were not discussed in the focus groups and interviews, it is

almost certainly the case for those studying the IB and those taking an A Level in humanities or social science-related subject will have taken part in this type of practice in their lessons.

It is therefore important to consider the number of respondents who report that they 'have taken part in a debating club in the last year' at their school or college and how this differs across post-16 pathways. Although the majority of respondents across the sample have not carried out this activity at school or college, higher proportions of those who have done this can be found on the academic pathways ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.578$ ). 83% of those studying for the IB report that they have taken part in a debating club or group at their school. For those studying at the sixth-form college this is 11% and for those at the school sixth-form this is 15%. For those studying at the FE College this is 7% and 0% for those at the Training Centre.



*Figure 7-12: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they have taken part in a debating club/group in the last year*

A small number of the participants who took part in the focus group discussions reported that they were involved in a debating group at their school. In this case these students were studying for an A Level in politics. For Ben at sixth-form college A taking part the college debate society had provided him with a space to negotiate the meaning of his political view because sometimes he would take the position of an argument that he would not often support. For Jason too, a politics student at sixth-form college C, the politics society was an arena for meaning-making and the consolidation of his political values. The main reason for this was the fact that it was 'strange' for him to be left-wing in the area of the college. He explained that this was reflected the politics society that he participated in as there were only two students (including himself) that were left-wing. The others, he reported, were more right wing and guided by 'conservative-based

ideologies'. This highlights how the importance of the school locality had pushed Jason to negotiate and reaffirm his own political beliefs:

...it makes me more solid on my own views...[...]...I'll never say that someone is wrong for their views...you know being conservative...I never see it as wrong and I find very often that people get on my nerves because...because my views a minority, they take that as 'oh your views are wrong' but no my views are different...and I feel that people's views like that, make my view stronger...because I feel that I am the only person protecting it...

(Jason)

Reflecting the survey data, Jason's peers in the focus group, however, reported that they were not involved in the politics society. Gill reported that it was 'only something you get involved with if you do politics'. At school sixth-form E, some of the participants recognised that their school had a debating society, however this was likewise construed by one participant as a 'secluded group'.

### 7.3.3 Volunteering

***Main finding: larger proportions of those who study for academic qualifications report having taken part in voluntary activity compared to smaller proportions studying for vocational qualifications.***

Volunteering is not often construed as political practice per se but since engaging in voluntary activities is linked to the development of political participatory attitudes (Player & Coleman 1999; Lay 2007; Hoskins et al. 2011) then it is considered here as an important practice. Likewise to taking part in a debate, there are larger proportions of young people studying towards academic qualifications that report having taken part in a voluntary activity. 100% of those studying for the IB report that this is 'sometimes' the case. This is not surprising since a core element of the programme is community service (IBO 2014b). At the sixth-form college 56% of the respondents report that this is 'sometimes' the case. This is 60% for the school sixth-form. In contrast, the two vocational colleges had the highest proportions of young people reporting never to have done this: 64% for the FE college and 67% for the Training Centre ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.567$ ).

These findings corroborate the previous research of Quintelier (2010) who finds in her study on Belgium youth that active learning strategies such as participation in service learning (a form of community service) are more common on general academic tracks than technical vocational tracks. In this study, it is not explained why this is the case but a few potential general

explanations can be pointed out as to why this is the case here. Firstly, it could be argued that young people on academic A Level pathways are encouraged more by their schools to take part in voluntary activities since such types of activities are argued to foster academic achievement and improve young peoples' curriculum vitae when applying for university (Lay 2007). Therefore, because there is often less of an academic focus at schools which predominately offer vocational courses then it may be the case that volunteering is encouraged less at these colleges. However, that is not to say that these colleges do not offer any form of extracurricular activities. The FE College visited in this study did offer a number of enrichment activities, however these were not focused specifically on volunteering activities, unless, for example, a young person wished to volunteer in the student council or learner voice initiatives.

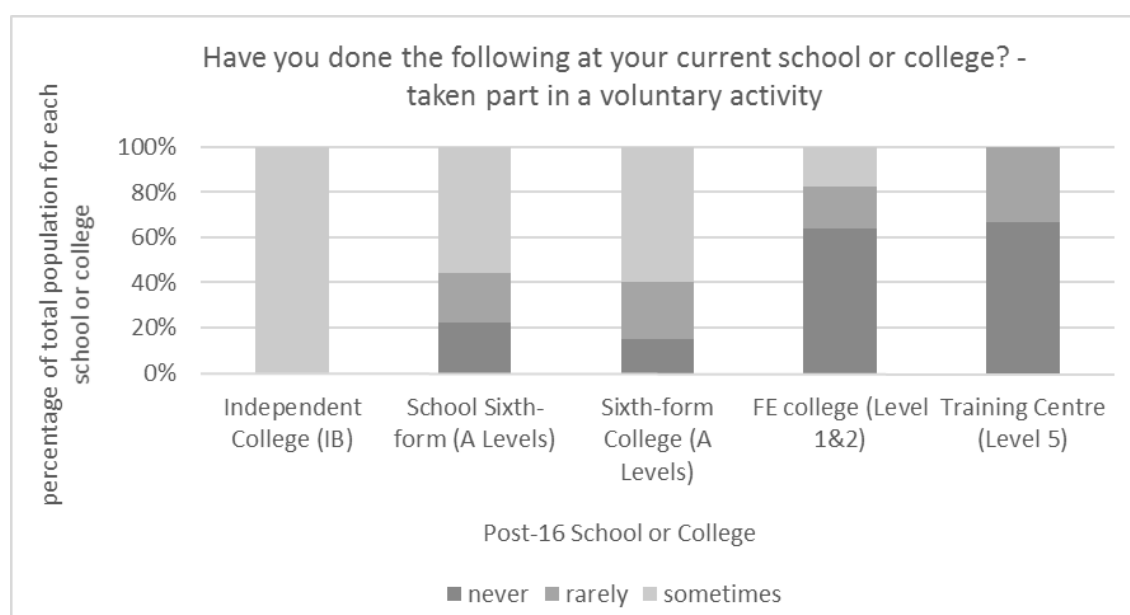


Figure 7-13: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they have taken part in a voluntary activity at their current school or college

Secondly, it could be that young people on academic pathways are from social backgrounds where they are encouraged to participate in voluntary activities at school. If this were the case it would provide evidence for the 'education-as-a-proxy' thesis (Persson 2012) – the theory that social position dictates political or social activity *vis-à-vis* educational route.

Researchers such as Bennett and Parameshwaren (2013) have found, through analysis of the Understanding Society survey of youth aged between 10 and 15 in the UK, that it is young people with high levels of cultural capital<sup>74</sup> that tend to volunteer more. However, in *this* study, there

<sup>74</sup> Cultural capital measure that were significant in this study were youth extra-curricular religious class attendance, parental volunteer activity, and cultural activity which was based on the following measures: frequency of adults taking youth to the theatre, dance performances, or classical music



were no definitive links established between levels of cultural capital and voluntary activities. Nevertheless, it is found that lower levels of cultural capital – gauged by the number of books at a young person's home – does have an influence on the likelihood of voting in a general election. This forms part of the discussion in the following section.

## **7.4 How do young people practice politics?**

### **7.4.1 Conventional political engagement**

Youth engagement in conventional politics, particularly through voting, is important. Voting in elections remains the main form of political participation that is legally protected and socially sanctioned and, as Phelps states, serves as 'a legitimising tool for democratic governments' (Phelps 2005, p.482). However, the general picture to emerge from current studies is that young people are on the political retreat and engaging less in conventional politics for a variety of reasons (e.g., lack of trust or engagement in 'alternative value' politics) (Park 2004; Henn & Weinstein 2006; Hansard Society 2013).

Of the few studies that examine conventional political engagement patterns in relation to post-16 education and training pathways, the current literature suggests that young people who take academic routes at post-16 (or upper-secondary education as is the case in other European countries) demonstrate higher levels of conventional activity than those who have taken vocational routes (van de Werfhorst 2007; Persson & Oscarsson 2010). In England, Hoskins et al (2014) find that students in general or 'academic' education are more likely to vote than those doing vocational training. Henn and Foard (2014a) show that British young people with higher post-16 educational qualifications are more confident in their knowledge and understanding of politics than their less qualified contemporaries (i.e., young people who have not achieved a qualification that will enable access to higher education). Janmaat et al (2014) likewise find that a higher percentage of young people in doing AS Levels (academic) in 'prestigious schools' were more likely to have voted in the 2010 general election than those doing vocational qualifications in 'less prestigious schools'. The purpose of this doctoral study, then, is to contribute to the nascent literature on this topic by not only using survey methods but also focus groups and interviews.

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concerts; frequency of adults taking youth to live sports events; frequency of adults taking youth to museums or art galleries; and frequency of discussing books at home.

#### 7.4.1.1 Voting

***Main finding: there are no significant differences between post-16 educational and training tracks in terms of intention to vote in the 2015 general election.***

In terms of *intention to vote* in the 2015 general election, there were no significant differences between schools and colleges at post-16. This was both for the item that gauged voting intention for those who were eighteen and for those who were yet to turn eighteen. This particular finding is therefore contrary to previous recent mainstream research which has shown that young people who study vocational qualifications in less ‘prestigious’ schools are significantly less likely to vote than their contemporaries in more ‘prestigious’ schools (Janmaat et al. 2014).

##### 7.4.1.1.1 Voting: Social background and education factors:

In the introduction of this thesis it was noted that it is not education track *per se* that impacts on young people’s propensity towards political engagement but rather their social background *vis-à-vis* different educational pathways (academic or vocational) that is more likely to determine political engagement (Persson 2012; Janmaat et al. 2014). To this purpose an ordinal regression was conducted to examine which social background and educational factors might impact on young people’s intention to vote in the 2015 May election, their political interest, and political efficacy.<sup>75</sup>

##### 7.4.1.1.2 If you are 18 will you vote in the general election in May?

***Main findings:***

***1) Young people studying towards academic qualifications are more likely to vote than those studying towards higher level vocational qualifications. Participation in debate at school also may increase a young person’s intention to vote***

***2) Those with parents with lower levels of education and no books at home are less likely to report that they will vote.***

The model inputted is found to be significant ( $p < .004$ ).<sup>76</sup> This indicates that the model with included predictor variables is an improvement compared to the baseline model with no predictors. For the measures of model fit the Pseudo R square statistics show a moderate

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<sup>75</sup> Other inputted outcome variables could not be explained by the model and were not significant. These were ‘if you are not 18 would you vote in the general election in May?’ (this is likely to be because of a smaller sample size for this category), ‘I am interested in politics’ and ‘I am able to understand political issues easily’.

improvement of fit is found (Cox and Snell = .415, Nagelkerk = .448. For the 'Pearson' and 'Deviance' goodness of fit measures the results are insignificant (Pearson = .971 and Deviance = 1.000). To reiterate from the methodology chapter, this is desired since the difference between the expected and actual results should not be significant.

For the categories pertaining to each independent variable there are a number which are found to be significant. The reference category to which all significant results are compared is the highest possible outcome for each item. As such, it is found that young people who report that they have never taken part in a debate at school are less likely to vote than their peers who have taken part in this type of activity ( $p < 0.011$ ). The coefficient here is -1.838. Young people who are pursuing a *higher level* vocational qualification are less likely to report that they intend to vote than their contemporaries perusing academic qualifications (A Levels) ( $p < 0.038$ ). The coefficient is -2.082.

In terms of educational factors then this firstly suggests that taking part in meaning-making activities such as a debate increases the likelihood of voting (although the causal direction of this cannot be proved). It secondly suggests, likewise to Janmaat (2014), that those who pursue academic qualifications at post-16 are more likely to vote than those studying for vocational qualifications, although in this case this was only significant for those studying at the Training Centre. This therefore suggests that it is not only the post-16 route alone that impacts on political engagement but the kinds of activities (such as debates) available to young people in their different schools and colleges. This supports the recent research of Eichhorn (2015) who finds that political discussion at school is the most effective way to bolster political engagement.

Certain categorise of the social background variables also seem to explain young people's intention to vote. It is found that young people with parents with a low level of education are less likely to vote compared to those with parents who have a high level of education. For the category of parent 'left school at 15/16' the coefficient is -1.705 ( $p < 0.022$ ). For the category of 'parent left school or college' the coefficient is -1.761 ( $p < 0.048$ ). It is also found that young people with no books at home are significantly less likely to vote than those who have many books at home ( $p < 0.026$ ). The coefficient here is -3.655. Both of these suggest that social background in terms of lower levels of cultural capital and parental educational achievement had a significant impact on whether a young people in this study were likely to vote in the 2015 general election. This therefore lends support to the idea that it is not only educational factors but also social background factors that impact on young people's political engagement (Persson 2012). It likewise supports other research which by Hoskins et al (2014) that shows that across a small sample of students aged between sixteen and eighteen in England, Denmark, and Germany, it is those from families with mothers with less education and less cultural capital that are less likely to vote.

### 7.4.1.2 Political parties and the political system

**Main finding:** *The survey data suggests that young people on vocational courses have the largest proportions who are disinterested and do not identify with conventional politics parties. However, the focus groups data suggests that the majority of young people in this study are dissatisfied with the current political system.*

#### 7.4.1.2.1 Political interest

In terms of *political interest*, it is the FE college which has the largest proportion of respondents who 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I am interested in politics' (41%). The independent college (100%), the sixth-form college (52%) and school-sixth form (35%) have the largest proportions of those who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with this statement.

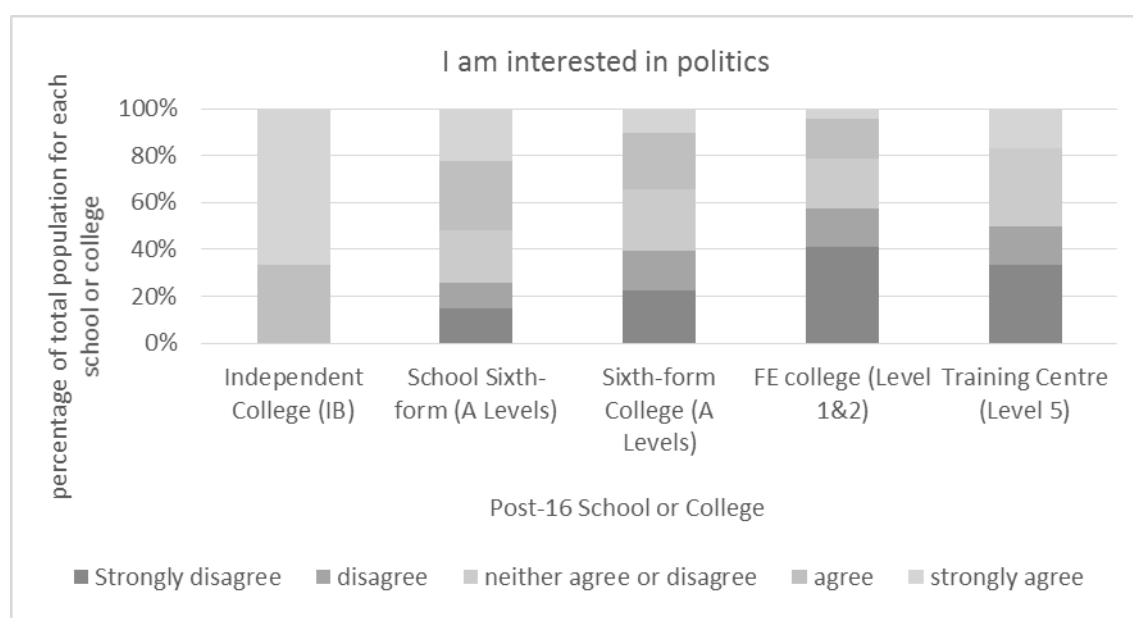


Figure 7-14: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they are interested in politics

#### 7.4.1.2.2 Political parties

A significant difference can be found for different political party support ( $p < .037$ ,  $\phi = 0.516$ ). The largest proportion of support for the Liberal Democrats can be found in the Independent College (33%), the largest proportions of support for the Conservative party can be found in the sixth-form college (18%), the school sixth-form (22%) and the specialist training centre (20%). The Green party has the largest proportions of support in the school sixth-form (11%) and the sixth-form College (8%) and Labour have the largest proportions of support in the FE College (15%), the independent college (17%), and the sixth-form college (14%). The largest proportions which

demonstrate support for UKIP can also be found in the FE College (13%) and the training centre (20%).

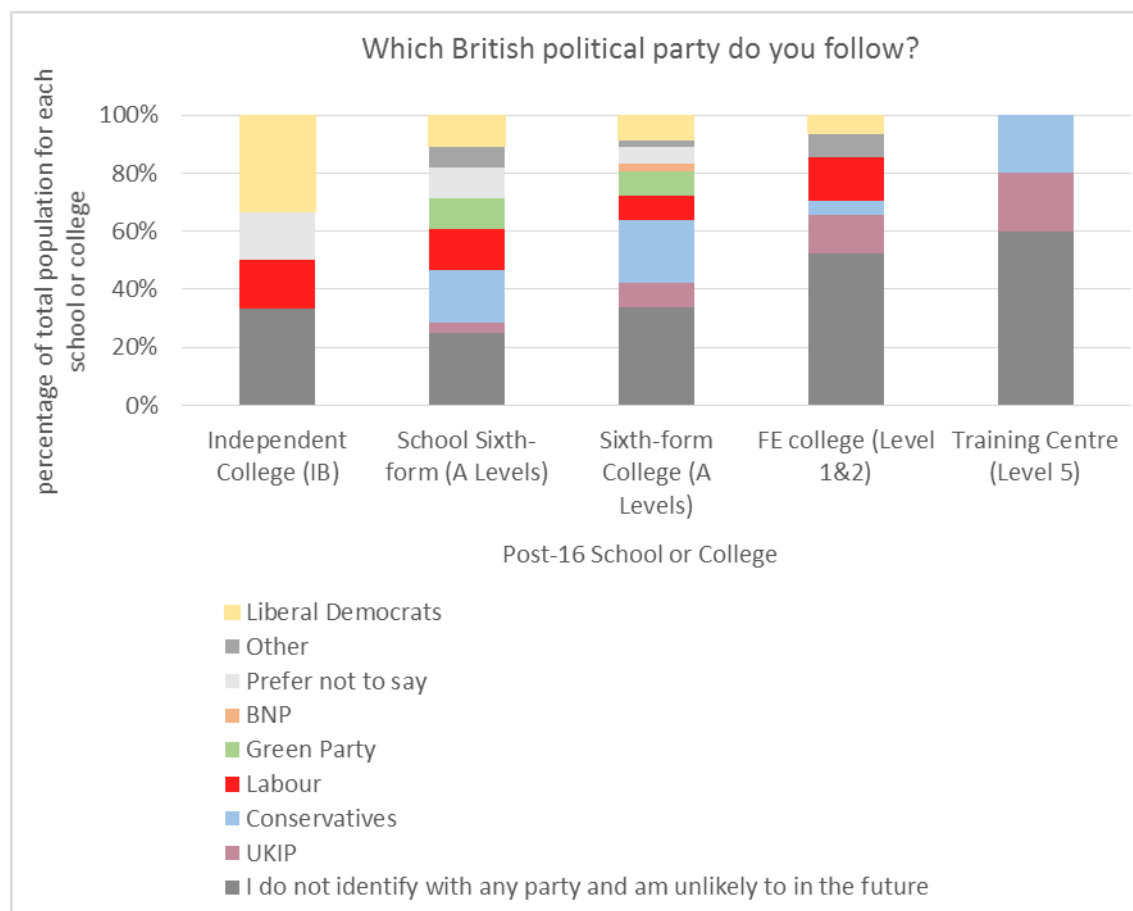


Figure 7-15: Percentage of population at each school or college on British political party support

#### 7.4.1.2.3 Largest proportions of UKIP support from males on vocational courses

Although there is not scope to discuss different political party support amongst these young people in depth, it must be acknowledged that it is likely that the local neighbourhood in which each school was situated had some effect on political party support (Johnston et al. 2004). However, it is important to acknowledge that the largest proportions of support for UKIP were found at the vocational Training Centre. Interestingly, this was the only institute visited where the majority of the young people came from different parts of the UK and were mainly male. As well, in the focus groups discussion with five males at the Training Centre, UKIP were discussed in a positive manner given the party's emphasis on controlling immigration. Laud at the training centre reported that he was a UKIP voter based on his experience of living in a community in the north of England that high levels of immigration and that UKIP were the only party he felt were 'balls enough' to say that immigration needed to stop. In this sense his reasons for voting UKIP were very much based on the 'threat theory' whereby the more ethnically diverse and area

becomes the more locals feel threatened by immigrants in terms of economic and social security (Valentova & Alieva 2010).

Rob at the same school likewise felt that Europe was very unequal in terms of where migrants resided and felt that migrants did not sufficiently integrate. For these reasons Rob voted for UKIP at the previous European elections. This was likewise a similar theme for two males at Further Education College G. Mike was undecided between voting Conservative or UKIP and although Karl reported that he usually supports Labour he seemed to have some leanings towards UKIP:

Karl:...I mean I like some of the ideas of what UKIP have done because the things that I know it's, but I'm gonna say it, might be not offensive, but people that come here from different countries take the jobs that we need and then getting the money that...and then going back to their own country...doing what they want, they come straight back again...

Becca: that's what you like UKIP?

Karl: yes, if they should actually like... I don't know if this is what America does, but it's like actually have a law, if you got say a crime...like don't let them in! cos how do you know that person could be committing so many crimes here, but we allow them in...

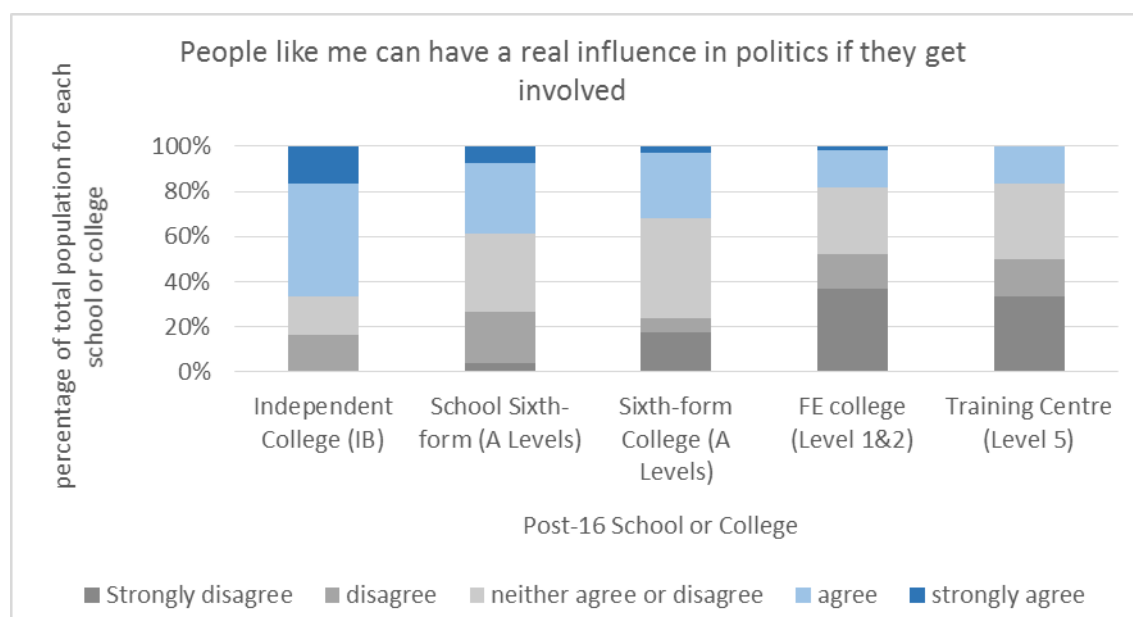
It might be argued that given the context in which this research was conducted – a time when UKIP and their party leader Nigel Farage were frequently discussed in the media in the six months before the 2015 general election – very much influenced an increased support for the party. As Phelps (2011) has argued young people today may be more influenced by short term political influences since strong traditional partisan attachments to political parties are weaker than they were for older generations. However, the fact that *young males* in this study, who mainly attended the training centre, showed support for UKIP very much in relation to the theme of immigration echoes previous research. Haste and Hogan (2006) find for example that it is the young males in their study of British youth were more likely to be concerned with 'threats' to sovereignty issues that related to immigration and the influence of the European parliament on British politics.

#### **7.4.1.2.4 Young people on vocational courses have the largest proportions who are disinterested and do not identify with conventional politics parties**

The starkest finding, the response 'I do not identify with a political party and am unlikely to in the future' has the largest proportions for each school or college. This suggests that there across the schools and colleges visited there are many young people who do not currently identify with the

mainstream political parties in the UK. However, and following a similar pattern to political interest, these proportions are largest for the vocational institutes the Training Centre (60%) and the FE College (52%). Taken together with the lower proportions of *political interest* at these colleges, this suggests that it is the young people in these two institutes that are the most disengaged from conventional politics.

One explanation for this finding could relate to the above-mentioned lack of political learning that is reported by young people on vocational courses in this sample. To reiterate, it is found in this study that those on vocational courses are less likely to have attended a lesson in which they discussed socio-political issues than young people studying towards academic qualifications. A related second explanation may be that young people on vocational courses feel less efficacious in terms of politics, particularly if they are learning less their colleges. Indeed, for the survey item ‘people like me can have a real influence in politics if they get involved’ the largest proportions of respondents who reported that they ‘strongly disagreed’ can be seen for the FE College and the training centre. Moreover, while both these institutes have a fair-sized proportion who indicate that they ‘agree’ with this item, the proportions of young people who ‘agree’ with this statement are noticeably larger for the sixth-form college and the school-sixth form ( $p < 0.005$ ,  $\phi = 0.441$ ).



*Figure 7-16: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they can have a real influence in politics if they get involved*

This finding therefore corroborates other research in the field; both Snelling (2015) and Hoskins (2014) find that political self-efficacy is lower for those on vocational pathways compared to academic pathways. Thus, since political efficacy is found to be a strong driver of political engagement (Haste 2004; Veugelers 2007) this may be a plausible explanation as to why young

people on vocational pathways are less likely to identify with a political party. With a lack of socio-political discussion on vocational courses this problem is likely to only be exacerbated.

A third explanation may be that young people, particularly in the FE College, feel highly disengaged and distant from conventional political parties and politicians because they come from more socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In chapter 3 it was pointed out that previous research finds higher numbers of students with parents employed in routine low status employment (e.g., cleaners, bus drivers) in FE Colleges (Meschi et al. 2010) and that vocational courses tend to be the habitus of those with less cultural capital (Lumby & Foskett 2005). Given this, it may be the case that young people from the FE College are less likely to identify with conventional political parties because they do not feel the political and social system is working for them and their families, particularly in the current context of austerity (Hoskins, Kerr, et al. 2012). This is further evidenced by the responses for the survey item 'the British political system works well as it is'. Although it is clear that many young people across the sample are not content with the political system, it is the FE College that has the largest proportions of strong disagreement with this statement (35%) ( $p < 0.027$ ,  $\phi = 0.391$ ).

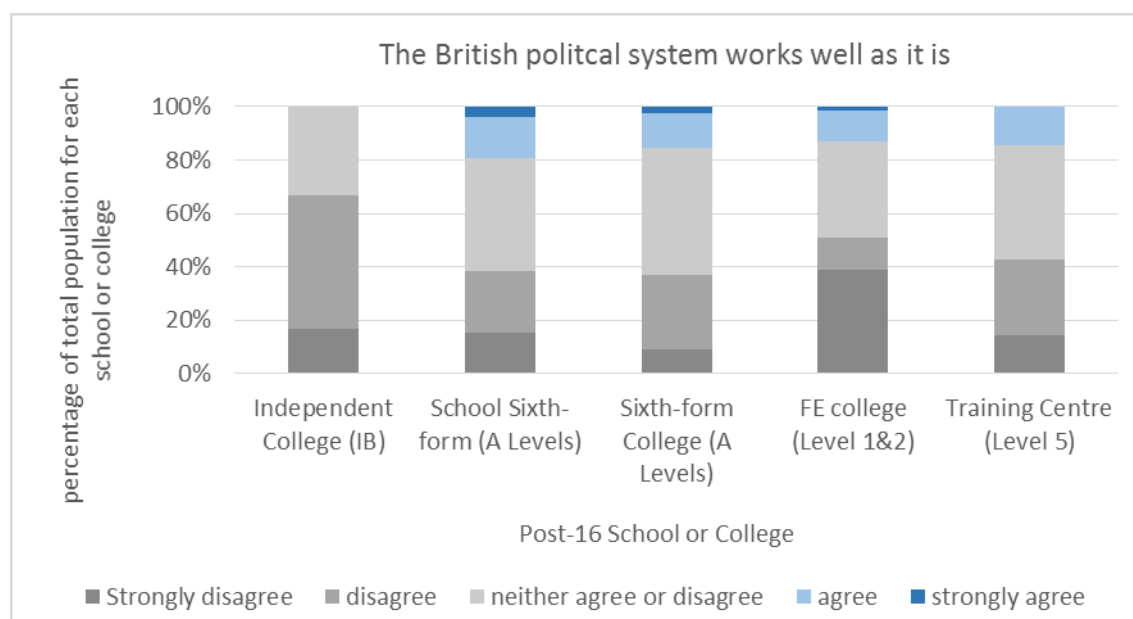


Figure 7-17: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that the British political system works well as it is

#### 7.4.1.2.5 Dissatisfaction with conventional politics: a common theme for all

From the above bar chart, it can be seen that few young people 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that 'the British political system works well as it is'. In the sixth-form college 38% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with this statement. This is 37% for the school sixth-form, 51% for the FE college, 43% for the Training Centre and 67% for the Independent College ( $p < 0.027$ ,  $\phi = 0.391$ ). This finding



along with the focus groups data strongly supports the current academic literature on the topic (Kimberlee 2002; Henn & Foard 2012; Henn & Foard 2014a). For the majority of the young people who took part in the focus groups there was an evident dissatisfaction with politics and politicians in the conventional sense.

Across all the focus groups the young people expressed their dissatisfaction with the political system. This became apparent from the outset of most of the focus groups where young people were asked to discuss what politics meant for them. Many young people felt that political parties were 'merging' in terms of ideas. This was a concern for Abby at the International School (Independent college F) who felt that 'the margin between the political parties' was 'so slim' and that they 'often just say the same things'. For Kai at the training centre H there was 'overlap' in policy from the mainstream parties. For Tom at School sixth-form E (a school sixth-form) all the major parties were 'slowly merging'. There was also a concern from Matt that there was no adequate left-wing option in Britain:

Matt: Before all of this New Labour nonsense would have considered myself Labour man but ever since they've just become the left-wing of the Conservative Party...which I completely disagree with...

Tom: Yeah you're right... there's just several degrees of being on the right-hand side isn't there?

Matt: Hmm... (in agreement) ...

Tom: You just go UKIP, Conservatives, Lib Dems, Labour...

Matt: Yeah...it's just how right-wing ya feeling

Tom: Yeah (laughing)

Matt: There's no left vote...there's no left vote

As well, at school sixth-form E the word 'politics' evoked feelings of disaffection with politicians and the political system. This was especially in terms of the 'upper' classes and broken promises, particularly of the Liberal Democrats:

Becca...I put the word politics here what it means for you...erm what do you think...what comes to your mind?

All participants: bureaucracy, upper-middle class, upper-class, well its ruled by Cambridge boys, cronyism, inaccessible, confusing, liars, old men, Margaret Thatcher,

men, voting, dominated by people who say promised and then never keep them, it's all propaganda...

Becca: Do you agree with this comment?

Ben: It's just dominated by people who lie, especially without singling out a single political party, the lib dems...they're like flip-flops. They say they will do one thing and then never do anything...

That politics was largely construed in conventional terms and Feelings of disaffection with this was also evident in some of the political 'selfies' from this group:

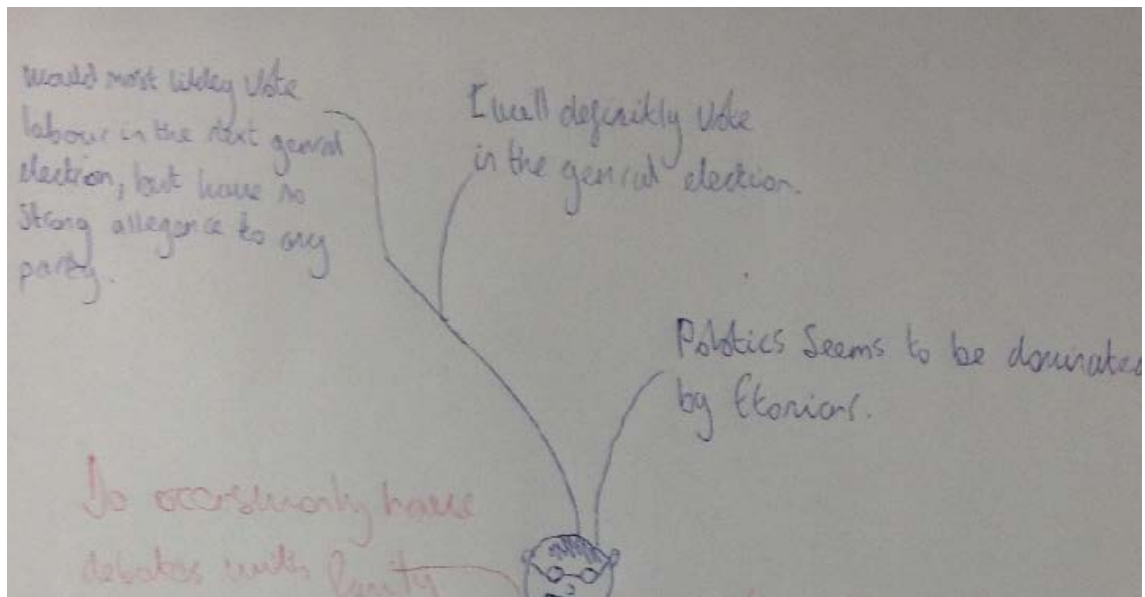


Figure 7-18: Political 'selfie' from male at School Sixth-form E

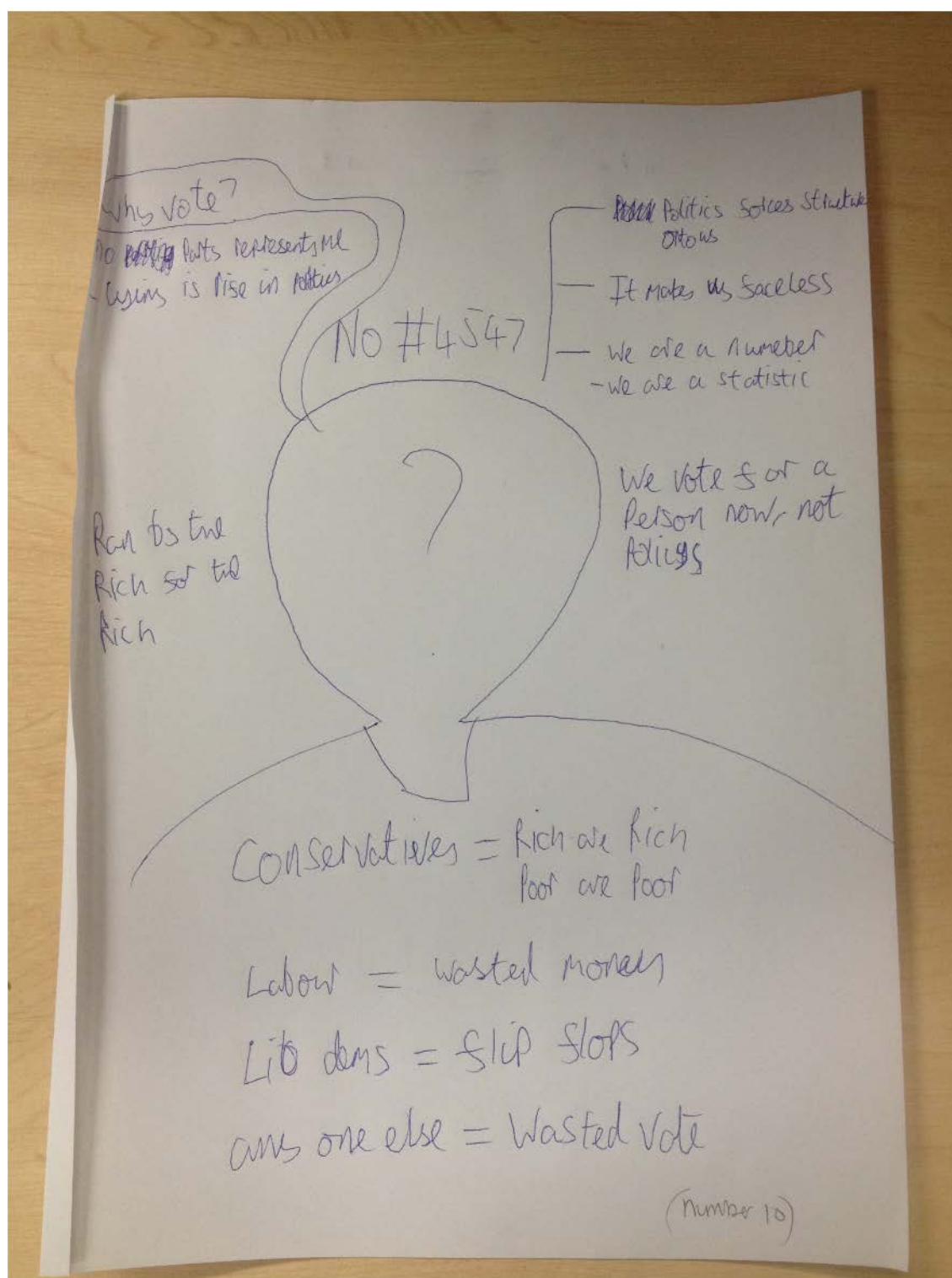


Figure 7-19: Political 'selfie' from male at School Sixth-form E

For the focus group participants studying towards a BTEC at sixth-form college B politics meant 'government' and 'coalition' or 'not really that much'. For Tom it was about 'power' and 'posh people' getting 'paid too much to do a simple job'. Although Tilly thought that being a politician was not a 'simple job' Tom argued...

... well it's like they get paid quite a lot of money to like and they're like all corrupt aren't they? You like hear of MPs and they like take money...

(Tom sixth-form college B)

#### **7.4.2 Explanations for disengagement with conventional politics from this study**

Apart from the general lack of trust in and discontentedness with the political system, two additional central explanations emerged as to why these young people felt disengaged from conventional politics. Interestingly, 'apathy' explanations, that suggest that today's generation of young people do not care about politics and therefore do not engage (Putnam 2000; Stoker 2006), did not emerge from the data in this study. The young people that participated in the focus groups in particular demonstrated a seemingly high level of interest in politics. However, there were two common explanations that emerged as to why these young people were disengaged. These cut across the post-16 educational divide. In line with the review of the literature in chapter 2, these explanations can be summarised as 1) *the failure of political parties to represent young people* and 2) those which lay emphasis on education and *lack of political knowledge*.

##### **7.4.2.1 Failure of political parties to represent young people**

Some of the young people felt that the mainstream political parties did not represent younger voters or did not represent their views at all:

I don't think like the differences they talk about they aren't really aimed at us as young people, I think they're aimed at like a certain group of people and they're trying to please certain group of people and so kind of errr...think that means that it's harder for younger people to vote because they don't, they aren't as connected to the politicians really...

(Pete, sixth-form College C)

a lot of people, like you say, a lot of people don't vote but I think it's because, for me at least, no party represents what I want...I don't want the conservatives, and I don't want the lib dems and I don't want...labour...

(Matt, School sixth-form E)

I don't feel that anything represents me. The Conservatives want to keep people in a certain pay grade at that pay grade, they want to keep richer people rich and poorer

people poor... I know you disagree with me...just listen alright? The only party actually represents what I want even on a little bit of a level is the Green Party...and I don't believe in half of their policies, I just believe in some of them and isn't it wrong in today's society when we can't even have a vote about who we want because only half of them offer the actually things we want... we can't go... " I want this bit from the Conservatives but this bit from Labour" ...

(Ben School sixth-form E,)

The fact that many of the young people in this study felt that political parties failed to adequately represent them is consistent with the 'alienation' explanations for youth political disengagement as discussed in chapter 2. This finding is in line with Henn and Weinstein (2006) who have argued that young people do not engage in conventional politics since politicians offer 'very little by way of policies and priorities that are different from their rivals, or which have relevance for young people'. Since the findings from this study continue to be in line with this observation, it seems that this situation may not have improved much over the last decade.

It is therefore essential that political parties reorganise in terms of engaging with young people. As Mycock and Tonge (2012, p.157) suggest political parties 'must...modernise their own internal structures to give a real voice to younger members' and 'develop effective consultative forums to aggregate the views of young people and then be prepared to develop policies which are reflective [of] their aspirations'. Sloam (2007) recommends that political institutions 'return to the grass-roots and involve young people in state-sponsored activities from youth clubs to school councils to youth parliaments to increase social capital and political literacy' (Sloam 2007, p.563). Rainsford (2014, p.50) likewise argues that political parties accommodate by providing young people with 'opportunities to work on issues that motivate them' and by backing participation in their own communities. 'By giving young people the opportunity to work on issues that concern them, political parties can become relevant again and would emphasise the importance of active membership within a party' (Rainsford 2014, p.50).

In addition, young people's engagement in British conventional politics might be bolstered by giving sixteen and seventeen-year-olds the right to vote (Liberal Democrats 2010; Flynn 2013; Mycock & Tonge 2014). In the words of Benton et al (2008) not being able to vote can be seen as the 'ultimate barrier for young people'. For Quintelier (2007, p.166), Young people, from this stance, are 'ineligible voters' who are seen as 'non-citizens' or 'apprentice-citizens' (Quintelier 2007, p.166) and who 'without the rights to vote...miss out on the biggest stepping stone to increased political action' (Quintelier 2007, p.166). The think tank *dpart*, in its analysis of the sixteen and seventeen-year-olds in the Scottish referendum, has recently reported that lowering

the voting age could increase young people's engagement in politics (Eichhorn et al. 2014). However, whether or not political enfranchisement will be extended to sixteen-year-olds in UK parliamentary elections remains to be seen.

#### 7.4.2.2 Lack of political knowledge

A second explanation as to why the young people in this study feel disengaged with the conventional political system has to do with the lack of political knowledge they feel they have. This theme was prevalent not only for those studying towards vocational courses but also academic. Thus although, as shown above, young people studying towards A Levels are shown to discuss politics in class more than their contemporaries studying towards vocational qualifications (Figure 7-1), many feel that they did not know enough about conventional politics to take part and some suggested that they would need more time at school to learn about politics.

There was wide agreement from many of the young people in the focus groups across the different school and college types that they did not know enough about politics and that they lacked sufficient knowledge, particularly about political parties, in order for them to participate, particularly in voting. This was expressed in some of the political 'selfies' created.

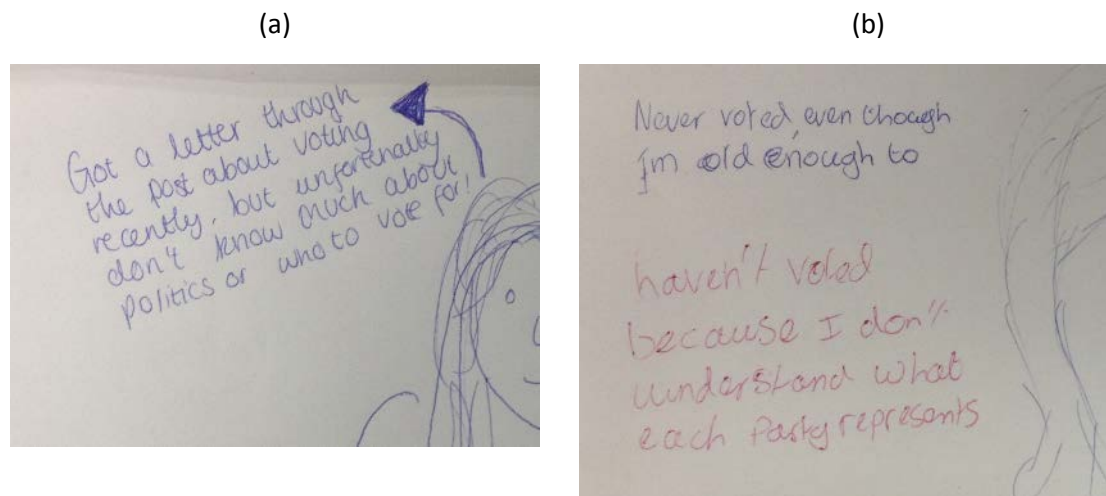


Figure 7-20: Political 'selfies'(a & b) from two females at school sixth-form E

Many of the other young people spoke about their lack of political knowledge in conversations about voting. This was given as a central reason for not voting in elections and in particular the upcoming 2015 general election. This was the case for the young people studying towards a business BTEC at Sixth-form college B:

Becca: would you vote in the next election?

Jed: no

## Chapter 7: Findings and discussion

Neil: no

Bill: probably not no

Becca: why?

Bill: because I don't know enough about it really

Neil: yeah I don't really read into it that much...

Bill: you only really hear what's on the new which influences you or like stuff that your parents say so...

[...]

Neil: Yeah to be honest with you I don't, I don't know enough about each one...I don't know what separates them apart that much either...

This was likewise the case for some of the A Level students at Sixth-form college C. Jenny claimed that she 'wouldn't even know how to vote' and Molly reported that she would want to 'know more about it' before she voted and said that 'there's no point voting if you don't know and I'd rather know about it'. Sylvia at Jemma School E (a school sixth-form) felt that this was also in issue for them:

Jemma: We have the chance to vote like...errr...and that's why I think I would vote but then again...I don't understand that much about it which is the only reason that would put me off voting...

Sylvia: Yeah I've been able to vote for over a year and I have nothing to tell me what to do where to go who to vote for.... like nothing at all.... I think I got one leaflet through and that was it...

These comments clarify much of what has already been reported in the current academic literature on the topic: that civic and political knowledge is a strong predictor of youth voting intention and political engagement (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Sloam 2007; Henn & Foard 2014a). Thus those with a lack of political knowledge will feel powerless that they can make a difference by voting and therefore may well abstain from voting or engaging with political parties (Bynner et al. 2003).

These concerns led to many young people suggesting that more should be done to aid their political learning. Indeed, the fact that some people felt that they were not learning anything through their formal education seemed to be a concern for them:

[Becca goes off to find next question card. There is lots of chatting amongst focus group participants]

Jake: But if you think how literate we all are...this is a literate country... what if we were taught politics like we were taught English...not necessarily like you know....

Ben: Like PRE (philosophy, religion, and ethics) once every two weeks...

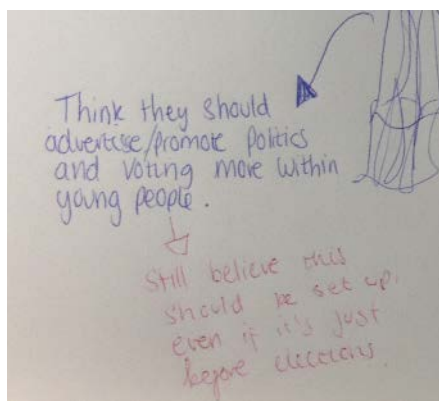
Jake: Yeahhh...exactly...why aren't we informed as well about politics as we are about religion ...like they preach and preach religion but half of us doesn't affect us...politics directly affects us...so why aren't we taught...you know...

[Becca comes back]

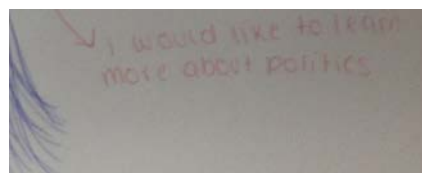
That the young people wanted to know more about politics was evident from some of the political 'selfies'. However, it is important to note that on some of the 'selfies' the young people added that they needed education or to 'know more' *after* the focus group discussion. This potentially suggests a researcher effect whereby the participants wanted to please the focus group facilitator but may equally show that the focus group helped the young people to think about politics by highlighting an issue that they may not have thought about in a structured way prior to the focus group. As noted in chapter 6, one benefit of the political 'selfie' was to encourage 'reflexivity' among each participant about the views of the topic (Bagnoli 2009).



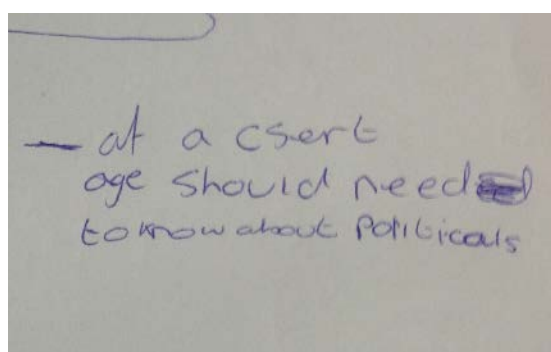
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

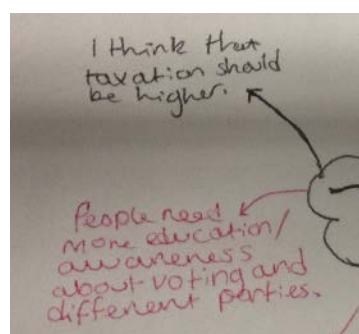


Figure 7-21: Four political 'selfies'. (a) Female from school sixth-form E. (b) Female from school sixth-form E. (c) Male from FE College G. (d) Male from sixth-form college A.

### 7.4.2.3 Political learning: what do young people suggest?

To reiterate from chapter 4, although citizenship education - the main vehicle for learning about conventional political systems – is statutory at Key Stages 3 and 4 in England this is not the case at post-16. There has been very little attention given to youth political learning at this level of education despite the fact that it is at this level when young people reach the age of enfranchisement. Since the young people in this study felt that they needed to know more about conventional politics, what do they suggest would help them achieve this?

Firstly, some felt that they would require some form of political learning *before* the age of sixteen at school. Emma, an A Level student at sixth-form college C, for example thought that it should be 'put on the National Curriculum'. As well, Sylvia from Further Education College G said:

when you're in school you learn about the Tudors, you learn about the Egyptians, you learn about the Romans....de de de...when you err...when you talk about that I think they should ingrain as part of the curriculum they should mention...maybe half of all of the

lessons...talk about political systems...in those...erm...and how it's transformed...to this day...

(Sylvia)

While it is positive that these young people believe that they should be learning about politics at school, this is also a concern since these young people should have already participated in some form of statutory citizenship learning (either in terms of a citizenship lesson or through other related subject areas) at their previous schools. This finding therefore bolsters recent concerns by the Citizenship Foundation (2014) that citizenship education is not up to scratch in English schools pre post-16 education. Prompted by an online survey conducted in July 2014 to which 94 teachers responded it was found that 49% felt that citizenship education provision had got weaker at their schools. Likewise, 13% reported that over the last three years citizenship education has been 'falling apart' at their given institutions (CitizenshipFoundation 2014). This is unfortunate but also unsurprising given a loss of momentum for the subject caused by the uncertainty of previous education secretary Michael Gove as to whether citizenship education should remain part of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 (Citizenship Foundation 2013). Thus while the focus of this study is on political learning at post-16, it is clear that there likewise needs to be a continued strong focus on a quality citizenship education and learning for young people prior to their post-16 education.

A second suggestion from some of the young people in this study in terms of their political learning at post-16 was geared towards more face-to-face interaction with politicians themselves or at least some form of workshop within their schools. At School sixth-form E Jenny thought that there could be a 'little workshop' and Sylvia, Jemma and Jake agreed that at least 'someone' or MPs should be coming into schools and it was important to Jemma that these visits would be targeted at them rather than adults in general:

Jake: yeh! We needs MPs coming and talking in schools ideally don't we?

Jemma: and make it not just about adults cos like...we're not adults yet...we not...we're not kids...we're not kids but we're not adults...

Again, this particular point is consistent with 'alienation' explanations of youth disengagement mentioned above which suggest that political parties have tended not to focus much on policies aimed at young people (Henn & Weinstein 2006). Nevertheless, the suggestion in this thesis is that it is important that MPs take seriously the needs and opinions of young people and visit post-16 schools and colleges since these are educational spaces with a large population of young people who are enfranchised or nearing that age (Hopkins 2010). This supports the recent

recommendation of Henn and Foard (2014b, p.22) in the recent PSA report *Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission: Young People and Politics*, that particularly in the run up to general elections, it should be compulsory for political parties to advertise and hold annual ‘constituency surgeries and political party policy forums’ for young people in local schools and colleges. Moreover, although initiatives such as ‘Rock Enrol’ – a voluntary scheme for promoting voter registration in schools and colleges – have recently gained some momentum, uptake by schools has been patchy. Mycock and Tonge (2014) therefore suggest that voter registration should be made compulsory in all schools and colleges and the responsibility of these institutions, however the feasibility of rolling this out across all schools across the UK is yet to be fully explored.

### 7.5 ‘New’ political engagement

An important part of this study was to expand in the survey what constitutes political participation. Since previous studies on youth political participation and the post-16 sector deal only with conventional politics (i.e., voting) (Hoskins et al. 2014; Janmaat et al. 2014; Henn & Foard 2014a), this study was developed to capture a wider range of political activities that young people might engage in and examine whether differences emerged for young people in different post-16 education settings. These included for example ‘new’ or ‘alternative value’ forms (e.g., environmental, gender, or consumer politics, and online engagement). To reiterate from chapter 2, the rise of such political movements are now considered ‘cornerstones of democracy’ (Haste 2010, p.172) and, discussed by well-known sociological theorists, are taken to indicate broader societal changes in how politics is practiced. Indeed, for some, the apparent decline of conventional political engagement and identification with political parties, can be explained by such broader changes (Giddens 1991; Beck et al. 1995; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2003). Giddens (1991) for example, discusses how ‘high’ modern society is characterised by the weakening of tradition and the emergence of day-to-day uncertainties that individuals are exposed to (e.g., climate change). This, he argues, propels the self to become a ‘reflexive project’ where individuals ask ‘[w]hat to do? How to act? Who to be?’ and answer these questions ‘though day-to-day social behaviour’ (Giddens 1991, p.70).

#### 7.5.1.1 Practicing ‘new’ politics

***Main finding: a small number of young people report engagement in ‘new’ non-conventional political activity. Those who do are either studying politics or are highly interested in politics.***

There were a very small number of young people in the study that reported either in the survey or in the focus group and interview discussions that they were involved in political activities that can be construed to relate to the ‘new’ political practice of late modernity. These findings, then, echo

findings from the IEA Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 which found that for specific items that young people in England had a low participation rate in non-conventional political activity (e.g., participation in an environmental group or human rights activity) (Nelson et al. 2010). Likewise, it is interesting to note that all the young people that spoke of defining politics in this way or practicing politics in this way were either highly interested in politics and/or studying politics A Level. For ease of interpretation the following findings are categorised into the three (somewhat overlapping) common themes that emerged – *environmentalism and consumer-related values*, *LGBT and gender-related values*, *global issue-related values* – and are supplemented with some of the survey data where significant differences are found across school and college type.

#### 7.5.1.1.1 Environmentalism and consumer-related values

##### ***Main findings:***

##### ***1) A small number of young people report that they practice politics in line with the values of environmentalism and consumer-related values.***

From the focus group data there were no notable differences across post-16 schools and colleges visited in terms of those who practiced environmentalism and consumer-related politics. For the most part the young people in this study did not report this type of activity. There was only a small selection of participants who spoke of this as a political activity that they had thought about and had responded to in their day-to-day actions. It is important to reiterate that these were young people who also reported that they were highly interested in politics.

For Lydia, an A Level politics Student at School A (a Sixth-form College), her political values were central to her as a person and from the discussion it was apparent that she was consciously attempting to live her life according to her ideology (Farthing 2010). In this case her political values were heavily focused on the environment involved support for the Green Party. In this case, her everyday politics of ‘choice’ and ‘reflexivity’ (Giddens 1991) crossed over into her conventional political orientations:

Becca: would you say your political values make up who you are they central to your identity? Or not really? At this point your lives?

Lydia: I would...a lot of people wouldn't, but I would...

[...]

Lydia: I would say it is because like I care a lot about how the people are being affected by things and you know politics hasn't harmed too much I'm relatively...nicely placed and everything... but like yeahh...I support like the Green Party and stuff so like I won't eat meat and I like try and get things that are like carbon neutral or not to try and just to do a little bit so it...it is always...whenever I make decisions...I do consciously check like the political impact that is could have and if it matters n... yeah...

Tim, also an A Level politics student at school sixth-form D, was one of the few and spoke about politics in terms of 'everyday actions' and related this mainly to how a person acts and their consumer activities:

Becca: ...how do you think about politics?

Tim: erm it's everyday actions like your politics is kind of your ethics erm like how you act like how you act like you know how you act towards people and how like you might talk to people and, what you buy depending on like your politics of what you're ethics...you know you might see a product that's made in like a sweatshop or something and you might not want to buy it and that's kind of politics there...you might not have a problem with it you buy sort of everyday things that you do...politics comes into...

Likewise, in line with the discussion on the 'new' politics of late modernity discussed in chapter 2, Tim's response lends support to Giddens's 'life politics' thesis, particularly in terms of 'lifestyle' and 'choice'. In terms of Tim's example of sweatshops, this reflects the ethical choices individual's make in a post-traditional globally interdependent world (Giddens 1991). Similarly, thinking along these lines was Hesam, a student at sixth-form college B, studying towards a BTEC and who wanted to study International Relations at University. He demonstrated that he practiced 'new' politics in terms of his boycotting Coca-Cola:

Hesam: I prefer to boycott...some products...

Becca: do you do that? What have you boycotted?

Hesam: Coca-Cola...

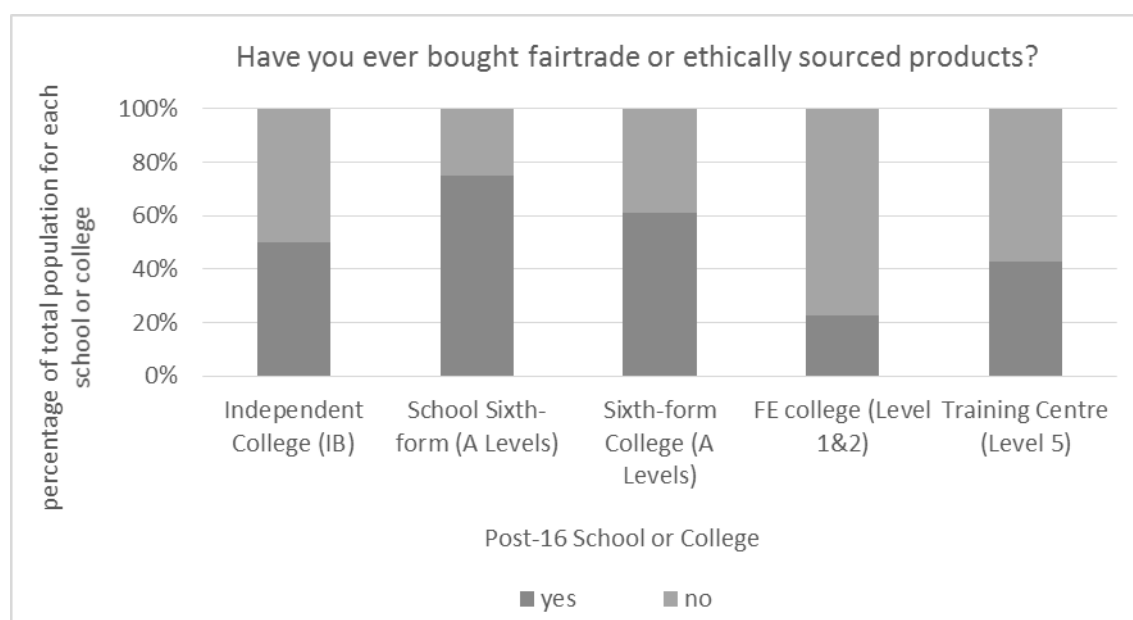
Neil: yeah bit does...boycotting doesn't really work does it...

Hesam: it does because I know this from my own country...Turkey's a country that has been boycotted the most like since this situation after Palestine and Israel cos... we...everyone knows that Coca-Cola, you know the big brands do actually pay some money, give some money to the Israeli army and what they do they get the money put guns...and they kill people... you know it's...

Again, Hesam tied his political practice to his life style choices of not buying particular products because he felt it was morally wrong that Coca-Cola contributes profits to Israel. This act of boycotting could also be construed along the lines of ‘think globally act locally’ and resonates with the conceptualisation of the ‘Everyday Maker’ by Bang (2004). Here the emphasis is on doing politics ‘yourself’ and doing it ‘where you are’ (2004, p.24) rather than engaging with mainstream political parties.

**2) There is a smaller proportion of young people at the FE College who report having bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products**

More broadly, the survey was used to capture the wider picture in terms of young people’s environmentalism and consumer political practice. Since there were few survey respondents who reported that they had taken part in these kinds of activities there were not sufficient numbers to make any comparisons across the different post-16 school and college types. The one item where a significant difference was found was for the item that gauged the number of young people who had ever ‘bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products’. In this case the FE college that has the by far the smallest proportion of those who report that they have done this (23%) while the proportions are slightly larger for the Training Centre (43%) and the Independent College (50%), they are substantially larger for the sixth-form college (75%) and the school sixth-form (61%) ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.403$ ).



*Figure 7-22: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they have bought Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products.*

One explanation as to why respondents at the FE College and the Training Centre demonstrate smaller proportions of young people who report having bought Fairtrade may relate to the

apparent lower economic status of young people on vocational course (Lumby & Foskett 2005; Meschi et al. 2010). Rob at the Training Centre reported that 'it does always come back to the price as well...erm unfortunately a lot of people can't afford to buy Fairtrade...'. Likewise, his peers also felt that they would not spend the extra money on Fairtrade due to the price of such products:

Becca: is there other things you're doing in your mind when you're shopping? Or...doing general things, like I shouldn't drive my car cos it's bad the environment or...?

Kai: mines very focused on money...

Hadley: yeah....

Kai: ... to be honest I think that's the...unfortunately that's the way of the world these days it...money, money makes the world go round. If I'm out shopping, if I've got, if I'm shopping on a budget if Fairtrade is even 20 pence a pack more for something, I'm gonna buy the cheaper option...

....

Kai: I shop in Aldi a lot...I'm not ashamed to say that..erm you never see a Fairtrade sticker in Aldi...cos it's all cheap soo yeah...

That these young people report not participating in political consumer activities such as Fairtrade because of the increased money involved in purchasing such products lends some support to Inglehart's (1997; Inglehart 1990) thesis: that it is only when citizens have their material needs met that they come increasingly focused on the post-materialist values of self-expression and life choice and may therefore carryout accordant political acts. However, this is not so straightforward for Sylvia at the FE College who remarked 'I am actually worried about this planet...and erm...Fairtrade...if I could *afford* Fairtrade, I will buy it...'. Here (and elsewhere in her discussion – see below), she is evidently interested in post-materialist values and living out her ideology but is constrained in this case by her economically disadvantage position in terms of expressing her politics through what she buys. Therefore, this reflects one of the difficulties with theories of late modernity as discussed in Chapter 2: that such theories tend to obscure social differences such as class or economic status (Furlong & Cartmel 2007; McDowell et al. 2013). Likewise, some of the young people in this study were unable to engage in this type of political activity because they lacked the economical capital to do so. This suggests that there is an economic inequality in terms of young people's engagement in environmental and consumer political activities and it is young people in this study who were studying study vocational courses that seemed to experience this the most.

#### 7.5.1.1.1.1 Have you ever bought a Fairtrade or ethically-sourced product? Social background and education factors

Therefore, in order to examine further what factors might influence a young person to participate in consumer-related political activities a binary logistic regression was conducted. Likewise, to conventional political practice, it is interesting to see if this type of political engagement is influenced by given social and background education factors

In this instance the model inputted is found to be significant. This indicates that the model fits the data better with the included independent variables than without ( $p < .001$ ). In terms of model fit the Cox and Snell test is .158 and the Nagelkerke R Square is .216. This indicates a modest improvement in model fit compared to the baseline model. An improvement from the baseline model can also be seen in that 71.2 of the predications are accurate compared to 64.1 % in the baseline model.

In terms of the predictors there are two variables that are significant in explaining whether a young person is likely to buy Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products. These are 'attended a lesson in which you discussed social issues or politics' ( $p < 0.002$ ). In this case, the regression coefficient shows that an increase of one on the scale for this item increases the likelihood of buying Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products by .770. Curricula type at post-16 is also a significant explanatory factor ( $p < 0.050$ ). An increase of one on this scale increases the likelihood of the outcome variable by 0.573. Since education was ranked here from more to less academic (i.e., level 1&2 vocational courses are ranked the least academic), this suggests that it is young people who study a more academic curriculum at post-16 who are more likely to engage in this less-conventional type of political activity as well as those who attend lessons in which political and social issues are discussed. Since the social and background factors in this model (i.e., parental education level and books at home) are not significant, the findings suggest that education type plays a strong role for these young people in encouraging or discouraging shopping for Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products. That vocational courses in this study are found not to be domains of political learning (as shown above) suggests that those on such course have less opportunities for the discussion of topical political issues such as ethical consumerism and therefore may be less likely to engage in this type of political practice. This, in tandem, with the focus group findings therefore suggest that it is a combination of educational and economic factors that hinder young people on vocational courses from participating in this type of political activity.



Independent variables	B regression coefficients	Significance
Active participation in a debate	-.326	.182
Attended a lesson in which you discussed social or political issues	.770	.002
Curriculum type	.573	.050
Education level of parent 1	-.157	.470
Number of books at home	.205	.154
Constant	-1.562	.005

*Table 7-1: Binary logistic regression coefficients for explaining the likelihood of buying Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products*

#### 7.5.1.1.2 LGBT and gender equality-related values

##### ***Main findings:***

***A small number of young people report that they practice politics in line LGBT and gender equality-related values.***

There were a few young people in the focus groups of this study that practiced politics related to LGBT or gender issues. Tom, an A Level student at school sixth-form E described how he was using the internet for political self-expression in terms of his support for LGBT community (Bennett et al. 2010):

Tom: Personally, myself, I very much enjoy talking, talking about politics and debating it. I have an account on an online forum...which discusses politics and on that my icon, like you get a profile picture on Facebook. My icon is the straight ally flag for the LGBT...that one...you get the point...rights group and I advertise my political opinions through that...

(Tom, A Level student, school sixth-form E)

At FE College G the focus group members were likewise active in terms of LGBT rights and openly spoke about their support for gay marriage:

Sylvia: When I found out that erm that gay marriage would be erm...would be legalised here and in the US I tweeted both times, erm...and then I couldn't stop grinning for the rest of the day ...[...]

Mike: well the good thing is that it was held...just down the road...the marriages, the first and second marriage were held...at the council offices, I actually went to it...

[...]

Becca: so why did you go to the marriage ceremony?

Mike: well because I've just seen that it's actually making the world a bit more open really isn't it...it's just like because look at...look at how we were in the 20s and how we are now...we've actually advanced you know...women have now got high paid jobs and...

Karl: it's not...

Mike: we're more accepting...

Karl: it's not wrong for, for a man, for two man and two women to actually be together...if they love each other then why not? It's just one of them things that...

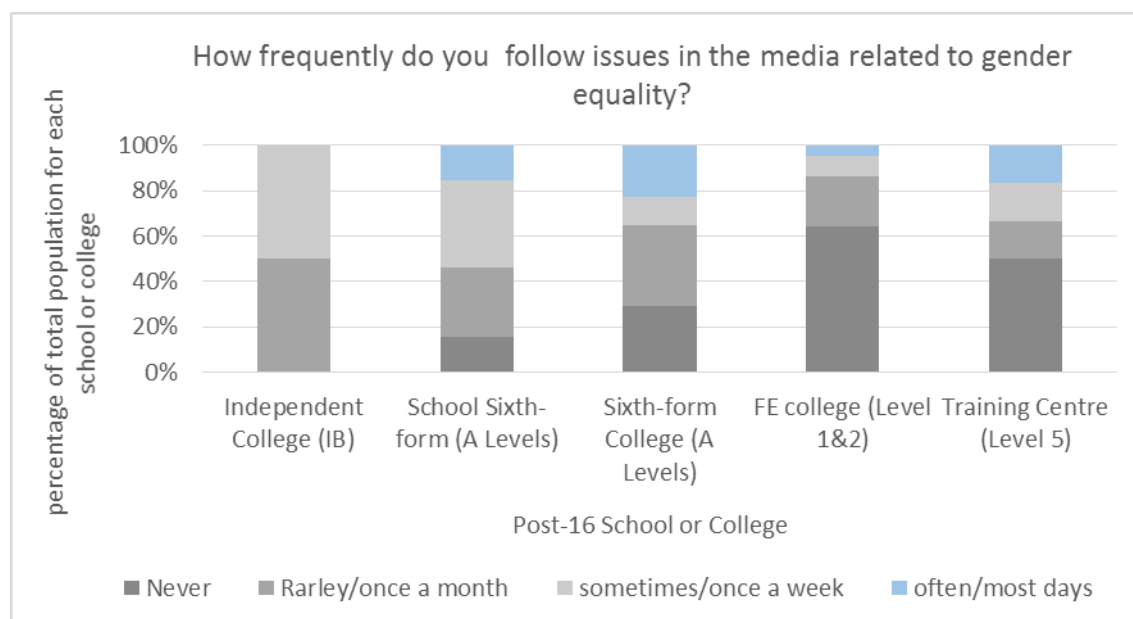
These young people demonstrate that they were interested in issues of LGBT identity that to them were explicitly under the banner of what it means to be political. In terms of theory, while Giddens (1991) has suggested that politics in high-modernity is more about 'self-actualisation', 'lifestyle' and 'choice' the young people at the FE college seemed to also be concerned with the idea that gay marriage (in particular) was about emancipation and elimination of differences between different societal groups. This example draws attention to issue of Giddens (1991) 'life politics'/ 'emancipatory politics' binary discussed in chapter 2. In this sense, politics in high modernity is not solely a matter of 'life choice' but continues to be about emancipation. As Rheingans and Hollands (2013) argue, the politics of life style and choice of high modern societies discussed by Giddens is not simply divorced from the emancipatory politics that characterised earlier modern societies.

In terms of methodology, it is important to note that the students at the FE College were a select group who were working with the local student council and associated support staff on equality and diversity issues at their college. The views of these young people are therefore not representative of all the young people at the FE College. Indeed, in the survey responses to the question that sought to gauge the extent to which young people followed issues in the media related to gender equality painted a different picture.

***2) There is a smaller proportion of young people at the FE College who report having followed issues in the media related to sexuality and gender equality***

Looking at differences across the different schools and colleges in terms of the item 'how

frequently do you follow issues in the media related to sexuality' it is the FE College and the training centre that has the biggest proportions of those who report that they 'never' did this (58% and 50% respectively). This is compared to 19% for the school sixth-form college and 27% for the school sixth-form ( $p < .002$ ,  $\phi = 0.408$ ). A similar finding can be found for the item 'how frequently do you follow issues in the media related to gender equality' ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = 0.531$ ). Again, it is the FE College which has the biggest proportion of young people who likewise report that they have 'never' done this with 64% and the Training centre with 50%. This is compared to 0% for the Independent college, 15% for the sixth-form college, and 29% for the school sixth-form.



*Figure 7-23: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that follow issues in the media related to gender equality*

It is difficult to explain why those on vocational courses seem less likely to follow issues in the media related to sexuality and gender equality. As already noted, in terms of education, it could be that since young people on such courses tend to discuss socio-political less, then then they are less exposed to such issues through their education and therefore less inclined to follow such issues in the media. Indeed, as shown in the introduction it is also the case that in Belgium that young people on academic tracks are more likely to discuss more socio-political topics in schools than those on technical and vocational tracks (Quintelier 2010). As well, as highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, it may be that different post-16 pathways implicitly inculcate different competences in the young people on those respective courses. It may be that young people on academic courses are encouraged to be competent critical citizens and therefore engage with the media and a diverse array of topics, while the emphasis – particularly at the FE college where there are more young people from socially and economically deprived homes – is on developing

the social competencies of self-confidence and social communication that they have not fully acquired at home (Dam & Volman 2003).

#### **7.5.1.1.3 Global issue-related values**

***Main finding: Very few young people in the focus groups report that they practice politics based on global issue-related values***

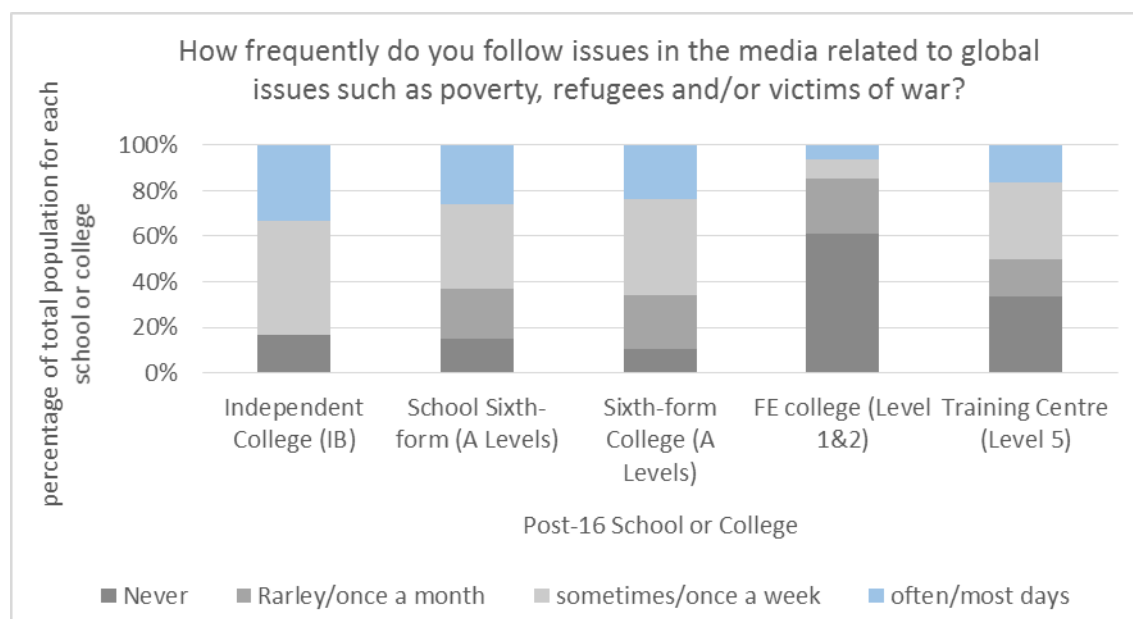
There were very few young people who reported in the focus groups that they explicitly practiced politics in line with global issue-related values.<sup>77</sup> Jason, who was a sociology and politics A Level student at Sixth-form College C and likewise involved in conventional political activity with his local Labour party, reported that he has been on protests for nuclear disarmament and for Green Peace, in particular against the culling of whales by Japan. In particular Jason's politics reflects what Giddens (1994) thesis of the emergence of manufactured risks that people are now faced with as citizens (e.g., climate change or the use of nuclear energy). However, it is debatable whether Jason's political activity in this context is largely a response to his individual reflexivity of 'what to do' and 'how to act' in a world with increasing risks (Giddens 1991, p.70), or more a response to a collective endeavour. To reiterate from chapter 2, as Söbrom (2010) argues such political acts are better understood in collective rather than individual actions since such individual actions are always undertaken in relation to something greater than the individual.

***Main finding: The FE College has the smallest proportion of young people who report that they have followed issues in the media related to global issues***

In terms of examining the extent to which young people are engaged in global issue-related political values across the post-16 schools and colleges, a similar picture in terms of disparities between post-16 institution types emerges: again it is the FE College has the smallest proportion of young people who report having followed issues in the media related to global issues such as poverty, refugees, and/or victims of war – just 6% report that they 'often' do this and 8% that they 'sometimes' do this. This is a much smaller proportion compared to the other schools and colleges. For example, at the sixth-form college 26% report that they 'often' do this and 37% that they 'sometimes' do this. This is 24% and 42% for the school sixth-form, 17% and 33% for the Training Centre, and 33% and 50% for the Independent College respectively.

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<sup>77</sup>It is acknowledged that Hesam – in the section on environmental and consumer-related value – also reports interest in global issues through his boycotting of Coca-Cola. Likewise Tim, in the same section, reported his concern of overseas Sweatshops.



*Figure 7-24: Percentage of population at each school or college who report that they follow issues in the media related to global issues such as poverty, refugees and/or victims of war*

The same explanations described above in the section on LGBT and gender equality (a lack of socio-political discussion in vocational colleges and the implicit inculcation of particular competences) may also apply to this finding. It is therefore possible to argue that young people on vocational courses in England are not sufficiently encouraged through their education to explore global issues in the news. In this sense, this aspect of the post-16 curriculum in England is perhaps lagging behind its Neighbour, Wales, where all young people at post-16 (vocational or academic) study a 'Core' Programme. This includes the topic of 'Wales, Europe and the World' and the study of political, social, cultural and economic issues' (Hodgson & Spours 2009). However, the extent to which this encourages young Welsh students to be engaged in global issues has not been studied to date and would therefore be a valuable piece of future research.

## Chapter 8: Post-16 education and training in England as force for division in youth political learning and practice? Conclusions and recommendations

### 8.1 Introduction

This doctoral study examines the extent to which post-16 education and training in England is a force for division in ‘youth political learning and practice’ and is specifically focused on the experiences of young people on different post-16 pathways. In short, and as will be restated in this final chapter, **this study largely demonstrates that there are differences between different post-16 pathways in terms of political learning and practice.** It is therefore argued here that post-16 education and training experiences in England may well generate or exacerbate political inequalities in terms of youth political learning and engagement.

This doctoral study makes an important contribution to the current academic literature and research on the topic for two central reasons. Firstly, the question focuses on the *type* of education (e.g., academic or vocational) in relation to political learning and participation rather than the level of education. It is well-documented that those with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in politics (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980; Nie et al. 1996; Sunshine Hillygus 2005; Verba et al. 1995; Li & Marsh 2008; Bovens & Wille 2009; Emler & Frazer 1999; Lauglo & Oia 2008; LLAKES 2015b). However, few studies have focused on how the type of education – particularly in terms of experiences of educational processes such as classroom and school practices – might differ with regard to facilitating youth political learning and engagement at post-16 (Janmaat et al. 2014; Persson & Oscarsson 2010). This is therefore a pertinent study since the post-16 sector in England is characterised by an obvious academic-vocational divide that has its roots in the social class divisions that have historically characterised the English education system (Green 1990; Lumby & Foskett 2005; Huddleston & Unwin 2013). Typically, academic courses (e.g., A Levels) are favoured as the quality option that enable access to higher education, while vocational paths are construed as a second chance option for those who are unable to achieve through academic study (Thompson 2009; Bathmaker, 2005)

Secondly, recent research studies do indicate a disparity in political engagement that maps onto the post-16 academic-vocational educational divide. In short, while those who study towards academic qualifications are shown to be more confident in terms of their knowledge and have a better understanding of politics, and are more likely vote, those who pursue vocational

qualifications are less confident in their political abilities and likewise are less likely to vote (Janmaat et al. 2014; Hoskins et al. 2014; Henn & Foard 2014a). It is therefore necessary to further examine this disparity since these studies point towards an inequality in political engagement that appears, as found in this study, to be influenced by the type of education a young person takes at post-16 level. While the above studies are of merit, they are lacking in sophistication in how they assess political engagement, concentrating on the simple, easily assessed variable of voting behaviour as an indicator of political engagement. An additional purpose of this doctoral study, then, is to examine other, wider, forms and indicators of political engagement that young people embrace within today's society (e.g., consumer and environmental politics) and whether or not disparities occur across different post-16 pathways.

## 8.2 Main findings

The remainder of this chapter summarises the main findings of this study. This is followed by three recommendations that pertain to practice, policy, and research and a final statement. After, the limitations of the study are drawn out. These relate to theories about the influence of social class, the conceptual framework, and methodology:

### 8.2.1 Academic pathways

#### 8.2.1.1 Political learning

In terms of political learning a key finding of this study is that **academic-oriented qualifications, particularly social science subjects, at post-16 (i.e., either A Levels or the IB) are more conducive to 'meaning-making' activities such as socio-political discussion than vocational qualifications.**

To reiterate from chapter 5, meaning-making in this study is a concept which is used to explain how meaning and understanding arise when members of a community of practice (e.g., a school class) interact with each other. Socio-political discussion in class is therefore important because it helps young people express their political opinions and encourages them to develop more thoughtful viewpoints (Eveland & William 2004).

Some participants in this study pursued qualifications such as A Level politics and/or sociology and engaged in socio-political discussion in their lessons. Others, those not studying A Level politics and related subjects did not have such planned discussions within their lessons. Views were likewise expressed that if a young person did not explicitly study A Level politics then they would not learn anything about politics through their post-16 study. This, to some extent reflects the subject-driven model of English education (particularly post-16 A Level study) that is preferred by

the current Conservative government. Young and Leney (1997) argue that this is problematic since highly insulated subject specialisation directs students' attention to individual subjects that are treated as stand-alone entities. For example, it has been found that some of the young people in this study pursuing A Level sociology had difficulty forging links between their subject (e.g., sociology) and the political world.

There is a further dimension however. Despite the finding that the study of A Levels in social science does not necessarily lead to political learning, young people on all academic pathways report quite positively in terms of 'open classroom climate' and 'practice activities' of the wider school or college environment. The **largest proportions of young people who report an 'open classroom climate' are on academic pathways (i.e., A Levels and the IB)**. Such a culture or climate is an important enabler to socio-political discussion since it creates a classroom where young people are free to explore their own and their peer's opinions (Torney-Purta et al. 2001) and where the teaching style is less authoritarian and more interactive and participative (Hooghe & Quintelier 2011). As one would expect, individual qualitative data shows anomalies: Ben, an A Level student at Sixth form College E, for instance felt that it was difficult to express his views in his Philosophy of Religion and Ethics class. As such, the issue of classroom climate in relation to post-16 pathway could benefit from further empirical research to better understand the more implicit roles schools and colleges play at post-16 in encouraging (or not) political engagement (Apple 2004; Ho 2014). Suitable methods in this respect would include more ethnographic and case study research. Likewise, the inclusion of the measure 'open classroom climate' in any larger future surveys aimed at examining political or citizenship learning at post-16 would be advantageous to gauge a broader and more reliable measure of how this might differ according to different pathways and indeed subjects.

'Practice' activities of the wider school or college were also examined in this study. In this sense political learning is conceptually also 'doing' politics in the context of the school or college (Hoskins et al. 2011). The findings show that the **largest proportions of young people who report that they have voted for class representatives for the school council or parliament and have actively taken part in a debate at their school or college also study for academic qualifications. Debate clubs and groups, although not popular through the entirety of the survey sample, are also most popular for those on academic pathways** (i.e., those studying at the Independent college, a school sixth-form, or a sixth-form college). However, debating activities were not popular throughout the entirety of survey and some of the young people studying A Levels felt that debating and politics societies were 'secluded' and only something to be involved if a young person was studying towards politics A Level.



A larger proportion of **those who report having participated in school supported voluntary activity, an activity which is empirically linked to the development of political engagement** (Player & Coleman 1999; Lay 2007; Hoskins et al. 2011), **are likewise found on academic pathways**. This is not surprising for those studying towards the IB where community service forms a core element of the programme of learning (IBO 2014a). Since voluntary activities are argued to foster academic achievement then it is likely those who take A Levels are also encouraged to participate in this type of activity. Moreover, since young people on academic pathways are argued to have higher levels of cultural capital (Lumby & Foskett 2005), it may be the case that these young people are more encouraged by their families to get involved in voluntary activities (Bennett & Parameshwaren 2013). The link, however, between family cultural capital and political learning at school or college would require further examination with more empirical emphasis on political learning outside of mainstream education. Hence, one way this doctoral research will be furthered as a post-doctoral study will be to utilise the data collected here on political learning in the family.

### 8.2.1.2 Political practice

**In terms of conventional political practice, it is the academic pathways that demonstrate the largest proportions of engaged young people. The largest proportions of young people who report that they are interested in politics and feel efficacious in terms of having an influence on politics if they were involved are at the school sixth-form, sixth-form College and the independent school.** Moreover, while a cross-tabulation of proportions does not show any differences across post-16 pathway type in terms of voting intention in the 2015 election, ordinal regression demonstrates the increased likelihood of voting if a young person is studying for an academic course (mainly A Levels) rather than a higher level vocational qualification. Although causality cannot be proved, it may be that political learning (both in terms of socio-political discussion in class and practice activities) is more common on academic pathways and therefore leads to increased political interest and efficacy, as previously theorised and found in the literature (Eichhorn 2015). Other contemporary research on this topic is beginning to examine the nature of peer networks of those at different levels of education. Snelling (2015) for example theorises that young people at a particular educational institution may not be politically active *per se* but studying in an environment where others are discussing politics may have ‘spill-over’ effects and encourage political interest in others (Snelling 2015). Theoretically then, it may be useful in future research to examine the extent to which peer networks on different post-16 education and training pathways influence political engagement.

**In terms of the practice of ‘new’ politics of late modernity there are very few people who report that they participate in politics in this way. However, there are larger proportions of young people on academic pathways that report interest or engagement in such activities than vocational.** For example, for environmental and consumer-related values the largest proportions of young people who report that they have bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products are at the school sixth-form and sixth-form College. Likewise, binary logistic regression demonstrates that more academic curricula types at post-16 increase the likelihood of a young person buying Fairtrade or ethically-sourced products. In terms of global issues, the largest proportions of young people who report that they ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ follow issues in the media related to issues such as ‘poverty, refugees, or victims of war’ are those studying for academic pathways.

It is difficult to explain why those on academic courses seem to have larger proportions of young people engaged in such activities and topics. It has been found in previous research that those on academic courses in Sweden have increased levels of cultural capital which explains increased political engagement both in terms of parliamentary forms and non-parliamentary forms (Persson 2012). However, in this study increased engagement in ‘new’ political forms could not be explained by the same factor. Indeed, binary logistic regression showed that education level of the main parent and the number of books at home (a measure of cultural capital) did not explain the likelihood of a young person purchasing Fairtrade or ethically sourced products. Instead it was curriculum type and attending a lesson in which socio-political issues had been discussed which mattered. An ‘education-as-a-cause’ explanation, then, might be that young people on academic courses engage in ‘new’ value forms of politics since they are more likely to engage in socio-political discussion which includes topics that relate to environmental, consumer, and global political issues. Due to the inconclusiveness of the little research available on this topic, further theoretical discussion and empirical research is needed to examine more specifically what it is about those young people on academic courses which means they may be more likely to engage in the ‘new’ politics of late modernity.

## **8.2.2 Vocational pathways**

### **8.2.2.1 Political learning**

In terms of political learning vocational pathways in this study fair less well. **Vocational classes are found to be limited domains for political learning.** Very large proportions of young people on these courses report that they have rarely or never attended a lesson in which they discussed socio-political issues. This is not a surprising finding given that, as is discussed in the academic literature, vocational programmes in England are known for their instrumental nature and focus

on job-specific outcomes (Brockmann et al. 2008; Hopkins 2014). Moreover, given that teachers of FE often have to focus on reaching targets and getting students through their courses (Hopkins 2014), it is unlikely that they have the time to discuss socio-political topics with their students.

In this study, **some young people at the FE College report tutorials and Life Skills classes as a domain for citizenship or political learning.** However, the extent to which this might be effective (particularly in terms of practice) for helping young people understand and engage in conventional political activity has not yet been investigated. It has been found in other studies (e.g., Craig et al. 2004), that FE tutors require further training in terms of engaging young people in political topics and debate. Therefore, future discussions and research with such teachers in terms of the implementation of political discussions in class would be valuable. Therefore, further research would also examine Life Skills classes in FE Colleges as avenues for political learning, particularly in terms of self-advocacy<sup>78</sup> for those with social and learning difficulties.

In terms of 'open classroom climate' it is **those on vocational courses at the FE College who report with the largest proportions that they tend to experience reduced levels of this mediating factor.** It is difficult to explain why this is since to the authors knowledge this is the only study on the topic of classroom climate at post-16. However, it may be the case that classroom climate is reduced in terms of the discussion of socio-politics topics since, as mentioned, this is simply not the focus of vocational courses in England where the emphasis is more often on the practice of demonstration of specific skill competences (Towler et al. 2011; Hopkins 2014). Moreover, since students at FE Colleges tend to have lower levels of educational achievement (Meschi et al. 2010) and lower expectations of themselves as learners, it may be the case that teachers place more emphasis on telling students what to do rather than encouraging them to express their opinions in class (Towler et al. 2011).

**Interestingly, those on vocational courses at the Training Centre report more positively in terms of classroom climate.** This is perhaps explicable by the fact that these students were pursuing higher level and more prestigious qualifications than those at the FE College. Therefore, it is possible that their teachers hold higher expectations of them as learners and therefore are more likely to encourage their students to make up their own minds and express their opinions. This, then, is suggestive of a divide between the learning experiences of those on different types and levels of *vocational* courses which would require further empirical investigation.

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<sup>78</sup> Williams and Shoultz (1982, p.16) define self-advocacy as 'self-respect, respect by others, a new independence, assertiveness, and courage. It involves seriousness, political purpose and understanding of rights, responsibilities and the democratic process'.

**In terms of the political learning ‘practice activities’ of the wider college environment the smallest proportions of those who report that they have voted for class representative for a school or college council or parliament are those studying for vocational qualifications at the FE College and Training Centre.** Indeed, the four young student council members at the FE College were frustrated with the difficulty of engaging their peers in voting for the student council candidates. Other research in the field shows that young people pursuing vocational qualifications in ‘less prestigious’ institutions such as the FE College are less likely to vote (Janmaat et al. 2014). It is therefore questionable whether many young people at these institutes are apathetic to or ‘don’t know’ about the council initiatives in their colleges – as was the perception of those in the focus group at the FE College – or whether this finding reflects a wider disengagement from conventional politics, as other research has shown. Since, this study finds that the FE College has the highest proportions of those who are both dissatisfied with the political system and disinterested in politics then it seems that a lack of participation in voting at school may indeed reflect a wider disengagement from conventional politics.

Interesting, then, is the fact that the FE College that has the largest proportions of students reporting positively about **their Student Voice experience**. This is likely to be attributable to recent progress, following the Foster Report (2005) in terms of increasing and improving Student (or ‘Learner’) Voice initiatives (Katsifli & Green 2010). While these kinds of activities may be construed as less political than for example directly voting for a student council representative, they are certainly important for involving students in FE planning and performance and for better understanding local needs (DfES 2005).

**In terms of the practice activities of ‘debate’ it is the FE College that has the smallest proportion of those who take part in debate activities.** Whilst the difference is not huge from those on academic course, it could be the case that less emphasis is placed on debate in vocational settings since, as noted above, much of the teaching and learning at FE is guided dominantly by qualification specifications and the demonstrations of job-specific skills (Towler et al. 2011; Huddleston & Unwin 2013). As well **the lowest proportions of those who report having taken part in school or college supported voluntary activity are those on vocational courses – both at the FE College and the Training Centre.** A first possible explanation for this is that young people on vocational courses have less cultural capital and are therefore less likely to get involved in volunteering since high levels of cultural capital are associated with volunteering among young British people (Bennett & Parameshwaren 2013). A second possible explanation for this is that less emphasis is put on voluntary activities as a means to bolster academic achievement on vocational courses as is noted to be the case on academic pathways (Lay 2007). Thus, although for

example the FE College visited in this study did offer enrichment activities, these were not focused specifically on volunteering but more recreational activities.

### 8.2.2.2 Political practice

In terms of conventional political engagement simple cross-tabulation appears to show that young people on vocational courses are not less likely to vote than their contemporaries on academic courses. However, as stated, **ordinal regression shows that it is more academic curricula types at post-16 that seem to contribute to the likelihood of a young person voting in the general election as opposed to vocational curricula types.** This finding is perhaps not surprising given that political learning on vocational pathways in this study is found to be limited, both in terms of meaning-making and practice activities. What is particularly stark is that it is the **vocational courses in this study which have the largest proportions of young people who report that they are not interested in politics and by far the largest proportions that report they do not identify with conventional political parties.** This suggests that those on vocational courses in this study are more disengaged from conventional politics than their contemporaries on academic courses and potentially explains why mainstream studies find that young people who pursue vocational education vote less (Janmaat et al. 2014). Since young people on vocational courses tend to come from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Meschi et al. 2010) it may be the case that these students feel that the political system is not working for them and their families, particularly in a context of austerity. It is therefore not surprising that FE Colleges have the largest proportion of those who strongly disagree that the political system functions well as it is.

Interestingly, in terms of political party support, the survey and focus groups discussion suggest that it is (particularly male) vocational students who favour UKIP and who do so for the party's emphasis on issues related to immigration and the European Union. This echoes previous research by Haste and Hogan (2006) who show that it is the young males in who are more likely to be concerned with 'threats' to sovereignty issues that relate to immigration and the influence of the European parliament on British politics. However, it must be noted that support for UKIP in this study might be attributable to the context in which this data was collected – a time when UKIP were frequently discussed in the media.

**For the 'new' politics of late modernity it is found that young people on vocational courses are engaged the least in this study.** In terms of political activity related to environmental and consumer-related values it is **the FE College that has the smallest proportion of (vocational) students who report that they have bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products.** Binary logistic regression analysis suggests an educational reason: socio-political discussion (of which is found to be lacking on vocational courses in this study) increases the likelihood of this kind of

activity along with pursuing academic-oriented study at post-16. However, an equally plausible reason is revealed through **discussions with young people on vocational courses who suggest that the problem is primarily low economic status** (these young people simply cannot afford such products). Therefore, in terms of expressing politics through consumerism it is clear here that there is a disparity in terms of social economic status. This reflects a difficulty with theories of late modernity which have been criticised for obscuring social differences (Furlong & Cartmel 2007) and suggest that engagement in 'new' politics may not be an equal playing field.

For LGBT and gender-related issues the young people in the focus group at the FE College, who were part of the student council, were strongly pro-gay rights. However, although theories of late modernity (e.g. Giddens) suggest that the way politics is practiced is a matter of life choice rather emancipation, it seemed that the young people at the FE college were more concerned with the latter. In terms of theory then this suggests that politics today is not only about life 'choice' (Giddens 1991) but continues to be an issue of emancipation (Rheingans & Hollands 2013).

That these student council members were active in terms of LGBT values, this was not reflected more generally. In terms of young people having followed issues in the media related to sexuality and gender. It is **the FE College which shows the smallest proportion of young people who have done this**. It is difficult to explain why this is but it is argued here that since young people on vocational courses tend to discuss socio-political issues less than they are less exposed to such topics through their education and therefore unlikely to follow related issues in the media. **Likewise, this might explain why the FE College has the smallest proportion of young people who report that they have followed issues in the media related to global issues such as poverty, refugees or victims of war.** As well, it is argued here that the encouragement of different competences on different post-16 pathway may explain why young people at the FE College seem less inclined to use the media to investigate topical issues. As Dam and Volman (2003) show in a Dutch study, academic and vocational pathways tend to encourage different competences in young people. While the former encourage critical and independent thinking, the latter encourage self-confidence and social skills not acquired at home. It is difficult to say if this divide is true in the context of England and would therefore be a suitable topic for a valuable piece of future research.

### 8.2.3 Similarities across post-16 education and training

Focus groups were used in this study in order for young people to discuss politics in their own vernacular (Henn & Foard 2014a) and to provide a contemporary and more nuanced understanding of why young people may abstain from political practice (Torney-Purta et al. 2010). The discussions in this study demonstrate differences in political learning and practice, but they

revealed some common themes that cut across the post-16 sector, despite the issues raised in some of the quantitative data. The discussions demonstrate that **many of the young people in this study are dissatisfied with conventional politics**. One of the main issues for some of the young people was that they felt that there were **little differences in the mainstream political parties and that they were 'merging' in terms of ideas**. There were concerns that the **political world was not equal and inhabited by the 'upper classes'**. As well, there was a lack of trust in **conventional politics** due to the broken promises, particularly of the Liberal Democrats joining forces with the Conservatives and raising tuition fees.

Likewise, there are two other main concerns that some of the young people in this study spoke of and which explains why they do not participate in conventional political practice. The first was that **there was a perceived failure of the mainstream political parties to represent the views of young voters**. This is consistent with 'alienation' explanations for political disengagement in the academic literature whereby political parties offer very few policies that are of relevance for young people (Henn & Weinstein 2006). Following the thought of Mycock and Tonge (2012) this doctoral study recommends that political parties should pay more attention to younger party members in terms of giving them a real voice in policy making that are reflective of their needs and aspirations. Likewise, it is important that political parties also give young people in local communities opportunities to work on issues that are of concern them. This is not only important in terms of emphasising active membership for a given party (Rainsford 2014) but also in terms of the more general of involvement of young people in their local communities.

The second major concern for many of the young people in the focus groups was that they felt they had **a lack of political knowledge which hindered their political engagement**. This was both in terms of knowledge about political parties and voting procedures. As such, some of the young people felt that more could be done to aid their political learning. **One suggestion was that more could be done prior to post-16 study**. This is a concern since the young people in this study should have already participated in some form of political learning through their citizenship education at their previous schools. This therefore highlights that there still needs to be a continued, practice, policy, and research focus on citizenship education and learning for young people in schools at Key Stages 3 and 4. A second suggestion was that **political learning at post-16 was more geared towards face-to-face interaction with MPs at school**. It is therefore argued here that it should be obligatory or even compulsory for local MPs to visit schools and colleges not only in the run up to general elections (Henn & Foard 2014) but also for policy consultations that affect young people both at the local and national level. This is particularly important for those at post-16 since many are able to vote or nearing the age of enfranchisement (Hopkins 2010). It is further recommended here that, following Mycock and Tonge (2014), that voter

registration should be made compulsory in all schools and colleges and the responsibility of these institutions. Since, voluntary schemes such as 'Rock Enrol' cannot reach out to all young people across the country, the feasibility of rolling out compulsory voter registration at post-16 institutions would need further consideration.

### **8.3 What next? Recommendations for political learning and practice at post-16**

In England it is historically academic pathways (namely the sixth-form) that have propagated the political leaders and vocational pathways that have had a strong focus on on-the-job training and have exposed learners to limited theoretical study (Reid & Filby 1982; Green & Lucas 1999). Although it is strongly recognised here that today post-16 education and training in England is an incredibly diverse sector (Huddleston & Unwin 2013), in terms of political learning and engagement this doctoral study as shown that in some ways a divide still holds. While this study shows a more nuanced understanding of learning on academic courses (e.g., that A Level students who do not specifically pursue A Level politics do not necessarily learn about politics), it is clear that those on academic pathways are more likely to participate socio-political discussion in an environment that fosters this and also practice activities such as than their contemporaries on vocational courses. Indeed, the experiences of the young people on vocational courses point to a limited educational curriculum and environment in terms of political learning. In this sense it is argued here that post-16 education and training experiences in England may indeed generate or exacerbate political inequalities in terms of youth political learning and engagement. This therefore supports the theory outlined at the outset of this thesis that there is indeed an academic-vocational divide in political learning at post-16. Therefore, in order to conclude this doctoral study **three central recommendations are suggested. These pertain to practice, policy, and research:**

#### **Practice: Expand practical political learning opportunities, particularly at FE Colleges**

This study shows that young people at the FE College report positively in terms of student voice initiatives. While this is positive and suggests that college democracy is taken seriously, more needs to be done to engage young people in political practice activities such as debates and forum discussions, voting for student councils, and other activities such as volunteering that may in turn inspire conventional political engagement. In this sense, MPs visiting post-16 schools and colleges, by obligation, to run consultative discussions on issues that affect young people locally and nationally could form a valuable practical political learning activity. In addition, where political societies and groups exist, it is recommended that schools and colleges have a



responsibility to ensure these are not only aimed at students studying for politics A Level but all young people at a given post-16 institution.

**Policy: The policy debate for a baccalaureate-type post-16 education is reinvigorated**

In England in the 1990s and 2000s there were debates, particularly supported by the political left-wing, to unify academic and vocational learning at post-16. This was based not only on the idea that the academic-vocational divide preserved and low skills equilibrium but also the fact that the divide more generally perpetuated social and educational inequalities. Some felt that there should be some form of mandatory education that would include English, maths, and civic education; the latter of which would aim to cultivate in young people political literacy, environmental awareness, international understanding and social responsibility. Some likewise argued for a broader post-16 curriculum based on a connective specialisation<sup>79</sup> (Young 2007). Indeed, this was what was argued for in the Tomlinson Working Group report in 2004 (Tomlinson 2004). Unfortunately, due to political pressures at the time, a more unified post-16 education for all did not materialise and since this time there has been little academic and policy focus on this topic.

As such, in line with the recent recommendation by Sir Roy Anderson and his advisory group<sup>80</sup> to introduce a baccalaureate-type system in England with a broader curriculum, (Anderson 2014) it is recommended here that academic and policy debate for a baccalaureate-type post-16 education is reinvigorated and discussed as a potential means to limit not only educational and social inequalities, but also political ones.

A baccalaureate-type qualification would include political literacy – pertaining to both conventional and ‘new’ forms of political expression and also some form of core programme of learning for all young people that would encourage reflective socio-political discussions on contemporary topics that matter for young people such as global warming, the European refugee and immigration crisis in light of the Syrian civil war, and the economic crisis. While the current Conservative government has stated that educational institutions should assist in curbing religious radicalisation through the teaching of the ‘fundamental’ British values and through (namely at the FE College) Prevent Duty Guidance (GOV.UK 2014c; HM Government 2015), this has *not* been put forward as a way to broaden the post-16 curriculum in terms of youth political learning at post-16 and should not be construed as such.

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<sup>79</sup> To reiterate from chapter 3, this is the idea that there should be elements of the post-16 curriculum that are common across different specialisations.

<sup>80</sup> One of the recommendations from this report is that the A Level system is changed to a baccalaureate-type system with a broader curriculum for all post-16 learners (Anderson 2014)

Moreover, it is not enough to have a common framework for citizenship learning for the post-16 sector that can be voluntarily implemented by a given institution as was the recommendation spelt out in the 2000 report *Citizenship for 16-19 Year Olds in Education and Training* (FEFC 2000). Political learning – even under the guise of the term citizenship – needs to be more explicit. Young people, particularly on vocational pathways should not only have good understanding of the technical aspects of their trade or profession but also, as Brockmann et al's (2010, p.121) argue, 'the role of their chosen occupation in the social, political and economic life of society'. In this sense, it is plausible that within the relatively recently developed Welsh Baccalaureate qualification there is a core programme of learning that includes the topic of 'Wales, Europe and the World...[and the]...study of political, social, cultural and economic issues' (Hodgson & Spours 2009). The extent, however, as to how well this programme has supported the political learning of young Welsh students needs further examination. This therefore leads to the third recommendation of this doctoral study.

**Research: Future studies would examine the extent to which unified post-16 education (or upper-secondary education, as is the case namely in continental Europe) foster the political learning and engagement of young people pursuing academic and vocational pathways.**

As noted near the outset of this study, other countries differ to England in terms of how post-16 education is delivered (Eurydice 2002; Hopkins 2014; Persson & Oscarsson 2010; Lauglo & Oia 2008). This has potential implications for political learning and would therefore merit further empirical examination both in terms of individual country studies and also comparative country studies. In Wales, as is noted, there is a core programme of learning which involves the study of politics. In France, young people on both academic and technical professional tracks study civic education (*education civique*). Likewise, young people on both academic and vocational tracks at upper-secondary in Sweden study the same number of hours of civic education. As such, there are two reasons for further research on this topic: firstly, it would be of interest to see how the results from this study (and related studies) compare to the experiences of young people in other countries. Secondly, it would be useful to examine the extent to which a more unified curriculum at this level of education help to equalise political learning experiences across different educational pathways. This would enable the evaluation of different types of curricula in terms of how and they foster political learning and engagement, and in turn the development of good practice in this area.

## 8.4 Final statement

It is concluded here that post-16 education and training experiences in England may indeed generate or exacerbate political inequalities in terms of youth political learning and engagement. The type of education a young person takes at post-16 is likely to impact on their chances for political learning and engagement. While it is quite clear that young people should have access to a sound political education (via for example citizenship education or related activities) prior to post-16, it is argued here that more needs to also happen at the post-16 stage of learning. The fact that post-16 education and training is now compulsory for all until the age of 18 may serve as a good opportunity to address these issues. Since the late teenage years are found to be a prominent formative period for political dispositions (Hooghe & Wilkenfeld 2007) it is crucial that political learning – both in the form of classroom learning and more practical activities of the wider school or college environment – are included into programmes of learning at this stage of education, particularly on vocational courses. Young people who are reaching the age of enfranchisement or who are indeed enfranchised should have the right to political learning and engagement activities at their schools and colleges.

## 8.5 Limitations

There are three main limitations of this study that are recognised. These pertain to theories about the influence of social class, the conceptual framework, and methodology:

- 1) The first limitation is that it has not been possible in this study to determine with more certainty whether it is social class background vis-à-vis educational pathways has any effect on political engagement (i.e., Persson's (2012) theoretical discussion of 'education-as-a-cause' or 'education-as-a-proxy'). One reason for this is that there were very low rates of response to the survey item that sought to capture parental status; this was particularly the case for young people at the FE College. Therefore, although some young people suggested in the focus groups that they felt social class played a role in youth political engagement, there was not sufficient data to make sufficient broader comments in this study about social class status. Future studies in this area would seek to better gauge measures of social class in order to contribute empirical data to theoretical discussions on the relationship, between social class, education type at post-16, and political engagement.
- 2) The second limitation may be construed as a limited focus on other learning contexts. The purpose of this study was to focus on political learning at school or college. While this has proved to be beneficial in terms of revealing some interesting differences between

different post-16 pathways, it is realised that learning does not only take place in the school (Ridley 2012). Indeed, since learning is conceptually construed as 'social participation' in this study then it is the case that learning occurs in a number of different 'communities of practices' (Wenger 1998). In the survey, focus groups and interviews of this study the researcher initially sought to better understand the influence of other communities of practice on political learning (e.g., the family, the peer group and employment settings). However, due to the scope of this doctorate, it was not possible to analyse all the data (particularly survey data) on these learning contexts. This data will therefore be used in the researcher's post-doctoral stage of research.

- 3) The third limitation of this study relates to the sample size. Through purposive sampling the researcher was able to gain access to a sufficient variety of different post-16 institutions in the same region of England. However, the number of survey respondents attained in the schools and colleges was not huge. This was particularly the case for the Independent school with the students studying for the IB – only 6 young people responded to the survey. Although the data are weighted since the numbers in each institution varies, it is important that these findings are not generalised to the general population of young people in post-16 education and training. The sector is diverse (Huddleston & Unwin 2013) and as such these findings and conclusions can be understood (along the lines of pragmatism) as 'warranted assertions' and demonstrate what 'has been possible [in this study], not about what is or will be the case' (Biesta, 2010, p.113).



## Appendices

## Appendix A Sampling framework & obtained sample

Table A 1: Sampling framework

Sampling stage		Dominant sampling strategy		Sample selection criteria
Stage one		(Overall) Purposive (with convenience)		Sample based on institute type and those which agreed to take part (e.g., school sixth form, sixth form college, vocational college).
			<b>Method</b>	
Stage two		Purposive (with convenience)	<i>Focus group (with political 'selfies')</i>	Participants who volunteered selected for focus groups based on specific post-16 pathway (e.g., A Level or BTEC) from respective institute.
Stage three		Convenience	<i>Interviews</i>	Participants who volunteered selected for interviews from focus groups
Stage four		Convenience	<i>Survey</i>	Participants who volunteered complete survey

Table A 2: Obtained sample.

School	School/college type	Educational qualifications at post-16	No. of focus group participants	Level of study by qualification type	No. of interview participants	No. of political “selfies” obtained	Location of focus groups, political “selfies”, and interviews	No. of survey respondents
Sixth-form college A	Sixth-form college	A Levels, BTEC, vocational (Levels 1 -4)	A Level in Politics (5)	A levels (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	1	5	School classroom	<u>35</u>
Sixth-form college B	Sixth-form college	A Levels, BTEC vocational (Levels 2 and 3), apprenticeships, GCSEs, foundation learning	A Levels Gifted and Talented (5)  BTEC Business (7)	A Levels (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	0	0	School classroom	<u>21</u>
Sixth-form college C	Sixth-form college	A Levels, BTEC at Level 2.	A Level in Sociology (11)	A Levels (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	1	11	School classroom	<u>41</u>



## Appendix A: Sampling framework &amp; obtained sample

School sixth-form D	School sixth-form	A Levels	A Level in Politics (9)	A Levels (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	1	9	School classroom	21
School sixth-form E	School sixth-form	A Levels, BTEC in art and design.	A Level Sociology (10)	A Levels (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	0	10	School classroom	28
Independent college F	International college	International Baccalaureate, University Foundation Course	International Baccalaureate (6)	International Baccalaureate (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	1	6	Staff office (interview) Careers library (focus group)	6
Further Education college G	Further Education College	Vocational (wide variety), apprenticeship GCSE English and maths, A Levels (limited)	Level 1 or 2 diploma (4)	Level 1 or 2 Diploma	1	3	Student's Union	59
Specialist Academy H	Specialist academy	Foundation degrees, Higher National Diploma (HND), Masters.	HND (5)	A Levels (already acquired by	0	5	Classroom	24

Appendix A: Sampling framework & obtained sample

				2 participant s) Level 3 Diploma, Higher National Diploma (HND)				
<b>Total</b>	8		62		5	49	n/a	235

*Table A 3: Number of students in different year of college for survey respondents only*

	Number of students	Percentage of students
First year	99	45.0
Second year	112	50.9
Third year	9	4.1
Total	220	100.0

## **Appendix B      Information sheets**

### **B.1    Pilot study**

Figure B.1 Pilot study information sheets for the participants.

<p><b>E·S·R·C</b> ECONOMIC &amp; SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL</p> <p>Information sheet: version B.1 30/04/2014</p> <p><b>Southampton</b> UNIVERSITY OF</p> <p><b>Participant Information Sheet: young person</b></p> <p>Study Title: Political learning in post-16 education and training</p> <p>Researcher: Rebecca Ridley      Ethics number: 9342</p> <p><b>Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.</b></p> <p>Who is the researcher?</p> <p>My name is Rebecca. I am a student at the University of Southampton Education School, UK.</p> <p>If you have any questions or problems about the research before, during or after taking part, or want to withdraw from the research please contact me on <a href="mailto:rmr1e11@soton.ac.uk">rmr1e11@soton.ac.uk</a></p> <p>What is the research about?</p> <p>This research is about young people's political learning and will contribute to my university PhD project. I am doing this research because I am interested in your attitudes, understandings, and learning politics and how this relates to your education.</p> <p>I am interested in finding out about what you learn about politics at school or college, at home, with your friends, and within any other hobby or interest groups.</p> <p>To find out what you think about this I would like to ask you questions such as: 'what does politics mean to you?', 'what do you think a good citizen is?', 'is politics important to you?' 'what do you learn at school and at home about politics?', or 'do you have the same political views as your friends'.</p> <p>I am funded to do this research by the Economic and Social Research Council which is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues.</p> <p>Why have I been chosen?</p> <p>You have been chosen for two main reasons: 1) you are a young person aged between 16 and 19 and 2) You are in full-time education or training.</p> <p>What will happen to me if I take part?</p> <p>If you agree to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form. Then you will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete a questionnaire which should take no longer than 30 minutes.</li> <li>2) Take part in an interview alone or with up to two other people. This will last no longer than one hour.</li> <li>3) Take part in a short interview of 20 minutes to evaluate and give your opinion of the previous questionnaire and interview.</li> </ol> <p>The interviewer will be myself and the interviews will be voice recorded. I will ask you for your contact details just in case I need to double-check any of their information at a later date</p>	<p>Information sheet: version B.1 30/04/2014</p> <p>with you.</p> <p>Are there any benefits in my taking part?</p> <p>This will be a good opportunity for you to gain a better understanding of what social science university research involves</p> <p>Are there any risks involved?</p> <p>There are no risks involved in taking part in this research. However, politics and social issues can be sensitive topics, therefore, if you think you will not be comfortable discussing your political views and home life with other classmates, then please let me know so you can have a one-to-one interview.</p> <p>Will my participation be confidential?</p> <p>The only people who will have direct access to your name and your information will be myself. In line with the University of Southampton's ethics policy all the information you give me and your name will remain confidential to all other people. The information will be stored on password protected computers and in any written or verbal presentation of the research your name and school/group name will remain anonymous.</p> <p>What happens if I change my mind?</p> <p>If you change your mind about participating in the research you have the right to stop and withdraw from the research at any point.</p> <p>What happens if something goes wrong?</p> <p>If something goes wrong or you have a concern or a complaint please contact the Head of Research Governance, Dr Martina Prude at Southampton University, UK, on 02380595058 or email her on <a href="mailto:M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk">M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk</a>.</p>
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Information sheet Version A.1 30/4/2014

UNIVERSITY OF  
Southampton

## Participant Information Sheet: teacher

Study Title: Political learning in post-16 education and training

Researcher: Rebecca Ridley

Ethics number: 9342

Please read this information carefully before the young people at this school/organisation take part in this research.

### Who is the researcher?

My name is Rebecca. I am a student at the University of Southampton Education School, UK. I also work as a public outreach assistant for the university. Before this I studied for a Masters degree at the Institute of Education, London, and taught English to young people in Budapest and in London.

If you have any questions about the research before, during or after taking part please contact me on [r.ridley@soton.ac.uk](mailto:r.ridley@soton.ac.uk)

### What is the research about?

This pilot research is about young people's political education and learning across different post-16 education paths. I am doing this pilot research because I am interested in young people's attitudes, understandings, and learning of politics. I am particularly interested in finding out about what young people learn at school or college, at home, with their friends, and within any other hobby or interest groups and how this differs across education paths.

The purpose of this pilot research is to aid the development of future youth-friendly research methods and to find out from young people at your school or college how they can be improved.

The questionnaire and interview schedules can be made available to you prior to the research at your request.

I am funded to do this research by the Economic and Social Research Council which is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues

### Why have young people at your school or college been chosen?

They have been chosen for two main reasons: 1) they are a young person aged between 16 and 19 and 2) they are in post-16 education or training.

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### What will happen if they take part?

If it is ok for the young people at this school or college to take part I will then ask them all individually for consent to take part in the research and also consent from you. If the young people agree to participate they will:

- 1) Complete a questionnaire survey which should take no longer than 30 minutes.
- 2) Take part in an interview with myself by themselves or with 2-3 other peers. This will which will last no more than one hour and will be carried out at your school/college
- 3) Take part in a short interview to discuss the previous interview and questionnaire and how these can be improved in terms of terminology, structure and content. This will last no longer than 20 minutes.

The interviewer will be myself and the interviews will be voice recorded. I will ask the participants for their contact details just in case I need to double-check any of their information at a later date.

### Are there any benefits in the young people taking part?

This will be a good opportunity for young people at your school or college to gain a better understanding of what social science university research involves. At a later date, I am also happy to provide a complementary public outreach session on politics.

### Are there any risks involved?

There are no major risks involved in taking part in this research. However politics and social issues can be sensitive topics, therefore if a young person does not feel comfortable talking about their home life or political values in front of other peers then they need to make it clear to myself that they would prefer a one-to-one interview.

### Will their participation be confidential?

The only people who will have direct access to the young people's name and their information will be myself. In line with the University of Southampton's ethics policies all the information the young people at this school/organisation give me and their name will remain confidential to all other people. The information will be stored on password protected computers and devices and in any written or verbal presentation of the research their name and school/group name will remain anonymous.

### What happens if you or any young person changes their mind about being involved in this research?

If you change your mind about any of the young people participating in this research at any point, and/or if a young person changes their mind at any point, you and they have the right to stop and withdraw from the research at any point. All young people will be aware that they can stop participating at any point.

### What happens if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong or you have a concern or a complaint please contact the Head of Research Governance, Dr Martina Prude at Southampton University, UK, on 02380595058 or email her on [M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk](mailto:M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk)

## **B.2 Main study**

<p><b>E·S·R·C</b> ECONOMIC &amp; SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL</p> <p>Information sheet: version 8.2 02/07/2014</p> <p><b>Southampton</b> UNIVERSITY OF</p> <p><b>Participant Information Sheet: young person (focus group)</b></p> <p>Study Title: Political learning in post-16 education and training</p> <p>Researcher: Rebecca Ridley Ethics number: 10774</p> <p><b>Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.</b></p> <p><b>Who is the researcher?</b></p> <p>My name is Rebecca. I am a student at the University of Southampton Education School, UK.</p> <p>If you have any questions or problems about the research before, during or after taking part, or want to withdraw from the research please contact me on <a href="mailto:rmr1e11@soton.ac.uk">rmr1e11@soton.ac.uk</a></p> <p><b>What is the research about?</b></p> <p>This research is about young people's political learning and will contribute to my university PhD project. I am doing this research because I am interested in your attitudes, understandings, and learning politics and how this relates to your education.</p> <p>I am interested in finding out about what you learn about politics at school or college, at home, with your friends, and within any other hobby or interest groups.</p> <p>I am funded to do this research by the Economic and Social Research Council which is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues.</p> <p><b>Why have I been chosen?</b></p> <p>You have been chosen for two main reasons: 1) you are a young person aged between 16 and 19 and 2) You are in full-time education or training.</p> <p><b>What will happen to me if I take part?</b></p> <p>If you agree to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form. I then you will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Take part in a focus group discussion with up to 11 of your peers. This will last between 60 and 90 minutes and will be recorded on a Dictaphone. This will involve some writing and drawing but not to too much and you do not need to be gifted at art to do this!</li> <li>2) Be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview. It must be noted, that only one or two people from the focus group will be able to do this due to limited time.</li> </ol> <p>The focus group guide will be myself and the focus groups will be voice recorded.</p> <p><b>Are there any benefits in my taking part?</b></p> <p>This will be a good opportunity for you to gain a better understanding of what social science university research involves and discuss your views on politics.</p> <p><b>Are there any risks involved?</b></p>	<p>Information sheet: version 8.2 02/07/2014</p> <p>There are no risks involved in taking part in this research. However, politics and social issues can be sensitive topics, therefore, if you think you will not be comfortable discussing your political views and home life with other classmates, then it is advisable that you do not take part in this focus group.</p> <p><b>Will my participation be confidential?</b></p> <p>The only people who will have direct access to your name and your information will be myself. In line with the University of Southampton' ethics policy all the information you give me and your name will remain confidential to all other people. The information will be stored on password protected computers and in any written or verbal presentation of the research your name and school/group name will remain anonymous.</p> <p>It must however be noted that whilst I will do my best to keep the information you provide in the discussion confidential and anonymous, there is a risk that the other people in the focus group will share what is discussed. If you feel uncomfortable about this it is recommended that you do not take part in this discussion.</p> <p><b>What happens if I change my mind?</b></p> <p>If you change your mind about participating in the research you have the right to stop and withdraw from the research at any point. You can also withdraw your data at a later stage if you email me on the address at the top of this sheet.</p> <p><b>What happens if something goes wrong?</b></p> <p>If something goes wrong or you have a concern or a complaint please contact the Head of Research Governance, Dr Martina Prude at Southampton University, UK, on 02380595058 or email her on <a href="mailto:M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk">M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk</a>.</p>
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Figure B 3: main study information sheets for the young persons (focus group).



 <p>Information sheet: version C.2 02/07/2014</p> <p style="text-align: right;">UNIVERSITY OF <b>Southampton</b></p> <p><b>Participant Information Sheet: young person (Interview)</b></p> <p>Study Title: Political learning in post-16 education and training</p> <p>Researcher: Rebecca Ridley      Ethics number: 10774</p> <p><b>Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.</b></p> <p><i>Who is the researcher?</i></p> <p>My name is Rebecca. I am a student at the University of Southampton education School, UK.</p> <p>If you have any questions or problems about the research before, during or after taking part, or want to withdraw from the research please contact me on <a href="mailto:rmr1e11@soton.ac.uk">rmr1e11@soton.ac.uk</a></p> <p><i>What is the research about?</i></p> <p>This research is about young people's political learning and will contribute to my university PhD project. I am doing this research because I am interested in your attitudes, understandings, and learning politics and how this relates to your education.</p> <p>I am interested in finding out about what you learn about politics at school or college, at home, with your friends, and within any other hobby or interest groups.</p> <p>I am funded to do this research by the Economic and Social Research Council which is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues.</p> <p><i>Why have I been chosen?</i></p> <p>You have been chosen for two main reasons: 1) you are a young person aged between 16 and 19 and 2) You are in full-time education or training.</p> <p><i>What will happen to me if I take part?</i></p> <p>If you agree to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form. I then you will:</p> <p>1) Take part in an interview on a similar topic to what we discussed in the focus group.</p> <p>The interviewer will be myself and will be voice recorded. This should last no longer than 45 minutes.</p> <p><i>Are there any benefits in my taking part?</i></p> <p>This will be a good opportunity for you to gain a better understanding of what social science university research involves and discuss your views on politics.</p> <p><i>Are there any risks involved?</i></p> <p>There are no risks involved in taking part in this research. However, politics and social issues can be sensitive topics, therefore, if you think you will not be comfortable discussing your political views and home life in an interview setting, then it is advisable that you do not take part in this interview.</p> <p><i>Will my participation be confidential?</i></p>	<p>Information sheet: version C.2 02/07/2014</p> <p>The only people who will have direct access to your name and your information will be myself. In line with the University of Southampton's ethics policy all the information you give me and your name will remain confidential to all other people. The information will be stored on password protected computers and in any written or verbal presentation of the research your name and school/group name will remain anonymous.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that in the unlikely case that we discuss something in the interview (e.g. a personal issue) that I understand to be worrying for your social or physical well-being I will need to inform your teacher or tutor of that issue.</p> <p><i>What happens if I change my mind?</i></p> <p>If you change your mind about participating in the research you have the right to stop and withdraw from the research at any point. You can also withdraw your data at a later stage if you email me on the address at the top of this sheet.</p> <p><i>What happens if something goes wrong?</i></p> <p>If something goes wrong or you have a concern or a complaint please contact the Head of Research Governance, Dr Martina Prude at Southampton University, UK, on 02380595058 or email her on <a href="mailto:M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk">M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk</a>.</p>
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Figure B 4: main study information sheets for the young persons (interview).

<div> </div> <div>Information sheet Version A.1 18/06/2014</div> <div> </div> <h2>Participant Information Sheet: teacher</h2> <p>Study Title: Political learning in post-16 education and training</p> <p>Researcher: Rebecca Ridley</p> <p>Ethics number: 10774</p> <p><b>Please read this information carefully before the young people at this school/organisation take part in this research.</b></p> <p><i>Who is the researcher?</i></p> <p>My name is Rebecca. I am a student at the University of Southampton Education School, UK. I also work as a public outreach assistant for the university. Before this I studied for a Masters degree at the Institute of Education, London, and taught English to young people in Budapest and in London.</p> <p>If you have any questions about the research before, during or after taking part please contact me on <a href="mailto:r.ridley@soton.ac.uk">r.ridley@soton.ac.uk</a></p> <p><i>What is the research about?</i></p> <p>This research is about young people's political education and learning across different post-16 education paths. I am doing this pilot research because I am interested in young people's attitudes, understandings, and learning of politics. I am particularly interested in finding out about what young people learn at school or college, at home, with their friends, and within any other hobby or interest groups and how this differs across education paths.</p> <p>I am funded to do this research by the Economic and Social Research Council which is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues</p> <p><i>Why have young people at your school or college been chosen?</i></p> <p>They have been chosen for two main reasons: 1) they are a young person aged between 16 and 20 and 2) they are in post-16 education or training.</p> <p><i>What will happen if they take part?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 4 and 12 young people on the same or similar educational pathways (e.g., A Levels, apprenticeship, or BTEC) will take part in a focus group discussion that will last between 60 and 90 minutes. This will involve some drawing and writing but not too much.</li> <li>1 or 2 participants of this focus group will then take part in a one-to-one interview on their political learning with myself.</li> <li>In the case that you are happy to distribute, up to 100 young people between the ages of 16 and 20 at your school/college will complete an anonymous questionnaire. This should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete and it should be made clear to all young people that this is optional and not mandatory.</li> </ol>	<div>Information sheet Version A.1 18/06/2014</div> <p>The interviewer will be myself and the interviews will be voice recorded.</p> <p>If it is ok for the young people at this school or college to take part I will then ask you to sign a consent form.</p> <p>I will also ask for those young people involved in the focus group and the interview to read an information sheet for each task and then sign separate consent forms for each task.</p> <p>As the questionnaire is anonymous, consent is based upon whether a young person would like to complete it or not.</p> <p><i>Are there any benefits in the young people taking part?</i></p> <p>This will be a good opportunity for young people at your school or college to gain a better understanding of what social science university research involves.</p> <p><i>Are there any risks involved?</i></p> <p>There are no major risks involved in taking part in this research. However politics and social issues can be sensitive topics, therefore if a young person does not feel comfortable talking about their home life or political values in front of other peers then it is advisable that they do not take part.</p> <p><i>Will their participation be confidential?</i></p> <p>The only people who will have direct access to the young people's name and their information will be myself. In line with the University of Southampton's ethics policies all the information the young people at this school/organisation give me and their name will remain confidential to all other people. The information will be stored on password protected computers and devices and in any written or verbal presentation of the research their name and school/group name will remain anonymous.</p> <p><i>What happens if you or any young person changes their mind about being involved in this research?</i></p> <p>If you change your mind about any of the young people participating in this research at any point, and/or if a young person changes their mind at any point, you and they have the right to stop and withdraw from the research at any point. All young people will be aware that they can stop participating at any point.</p> <p><i>What happens if something goes wrong?</i></p> <p>If something goes wrong or you have a concern or a complaint please contact the Head of Research Governance, Dr Martina Prude at Southampton University, UK, on 02380595058 or email her on <a href="mailto:M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk">M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk</a></p>
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Figure B 5: main study information sheets for the teacher.



## Appendix C Consent forms

### C.1 Pilot study

Table C 1: Pilot study consent form for the teachers.




	<div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">UNIVERSITY OF Southampton</div>
<b>CONSENT FORM – Teacher</b>	
<p> <b>Researcher name:</b> Rebecca Ridley  <b>Study reference:</b> Information sheet Version A.1 30/4/2014  <b>Ethics reference:</b> 9342         </p>	
<p><i>Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):</i></p>	
<p>I have read and understood the information sheet (ethics reference 9342) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I agree that the young people at _____ can take part in this research project and agree for their data to be used for the purpose of this study</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that the young people's participation in this research is voluntary and that I (or they) may withdraw them from the research at any time without my (or their) legal rights being affected.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I agree for the researcher to keep the young people's details and contact them or myself for further research in the future.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that the young people and myself have the right to remove their details from the researcher's contact list at any point in the research.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that the young people will be voice recorded but can request to destroy their audio data if they so wish</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that the young people's names will be anonymised in any written or verbal report of this research.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><i><b>Data Protection and anonymity</b></i>  <i>I understand that information collected about the students during their participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made</i></p> </div>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Name of Teacher</b> (print name).....</p>	
<p><b>Signature of Teacher</b>.....</p>	
<p><b>Date</b>.....</p>	

Table C 2: Pilot study consent form for the young persons.

	
<p><b>CONSENT FORM – Young person</b></p>	
<p><b>Researcher name:</b> Rebecca Ridley</p>	
<p><b>Study reference:</b> Information sheet: version B.1 30/04/2014</p>	
<p><b>Ethics reference:</b> 9342</p>	
<p><i>Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):</i></p>	
<p>I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I agree for the researcher to keep my details and contact me for further research in the future</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that my details can be removed from the researcher's contact list at any point if I ask</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that I will be voice recorded but can have the audio data destroyed if I want after I have taken part in the</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p>I understand that my name will be anonymised in any written or verbal report of this research.</p>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Data Protection</b></p>	
<p><i>I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.</i></p>	
<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>Name of participant (print name)</b>.....</p>	
<p><b>Signature of participant</b>.....</p>	
<p><b>Date</b>.....</p>	

## C.2 Main study

Table C 3: main study consent form for the teachers.



	
<p><b>CONSENT FORM - Teacher</b></p> <p><b>Researcher name:</b> Rebecca Ridley  <b>Study reference:</b> Information sheet Version A.1 18/06/2014  <b>Ethics reference:</b> 9342</p> <p><i>Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):</i></p>	
I have read and understood the information sheet (ethics reference 10774) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that the young people at _____ can take part in this research project and agree for their data to be used for the purpose of this study	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the young people's participation in this research is voluntary and that I (or they) may withdraw them from the research at any time without my (or their) legal rights being affected.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the researcher to keep the young people's details and contact them or myself for further research in the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the young people and myself have the right to remove their details from the researcher's contact list at any point in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the young people will be voice recorded in the focus groups and interviews but can request to destroy their audio data if they so wish	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the young people's names will be anonymised in any written or verbal report of this research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Data Protection and anonymity</b></p> <p><i>I understand that information collected about the students during their participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.</i></p> </div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Name of Teacher (print name).....</p> <p>Signature of Teacher.....</p> <p>Date.....</p>	

Table C 4: Pilot study consent form for the young persons during focus groups.



CONSENT FORM – Young person (focus group)

**Researcher name:** Rebecca Ridley

**Study reference:** Information sheet: version B.1 18/06/2014

**Ethics reference:** 10774

*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study

☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time

☐

I agree for the researcher to keep my details and contact me for further research in the future

☐

I understand that my details can be removed from the researcher's contact list at any point if I ask

☐

I understand that I will be voice recorded but can have the audio data destroyed if I want after I have taken part in the research

☐

I understand that my name will be anonymised in any written or verbal report of this research.

☐

**Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.*

☐

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Table C 5: main study consent form for the young persons during interviews.





**CONSENT FORM – Young person (interview)**

**Researcher name:** Rebecca Ridley  
**Study reference:** Information sheet: version C .1 18/06/2014  
**Ethics reference:** 10774

*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the researcher to keep my details and contact me for further research in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my details can be removed from the researcher's contact list at any point if I ask	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I will be voice recorded but can have the audio data destroyed if I want after I have taken part in the research	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my name will be anonymised in any written or verbal report of this research.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.*

☐

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....





## Appendix D      Focus group schedule

Table D 1: main study focus group schedule, opening.

Opening
<p>1) <b>(Establish Rapport)</b> <i>How are you all? Thank you again for taking part and coming along today. I just need to run over some information with you.</i></p> <p>2) <b>(Introduction and purpose)</b> <i>My name is Rebecca Ridley and I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton Education School. I am carrying out research on what young people on different post-16 education paths think and learn about politics. You are one of 500 students to help me with this research and I am very grateful for this.</i></p> <p><i>I am inviting you to discuss some questions on politics, what your political values are and what you do that might be political and your political learning and education. I am doing this because some researchers have found that education background strongly affects whether or not a person participates in politics.</i></p> <p><i>This is not a test and I encourage you to be honest in your opinions and enjoy the discussion! On my part, I would like to make it clear that my intent is not judge you but to listen to you and understand. There is no right or wrong answer.</i></p> <p><i>We will also be a bit creative and create a ‘political selfie’ to help us think about the questions. I will explain more about this in a minute.</i></p> <p>3) <b>(Time Line)</b> <i>The discussion should take about 45-60 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions within this time? We can stop at any point.</i></p> <p>4) <b>(Ethics)</b> <i>We can stop at any point; you are not obliged to answer any question you do not want to, if you want to stop participating in the study that is also fine. Sometimes politics, people’s home lives and social issues can be sensitive topics. Does everyone here still feel ok about taking part?</i></p> <p><i>Everything you tell me will be in confidence. All the information you give me, including your email address, will be treated as strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified in any write-up or presentation of the research project. Your contact details will only be used to contact you in relation to this research and will not be passed on to a third party. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.</i></p> <p><i>As mentioned in the information sheet I gave you I will record the discussion. Is everyone ok with this? Remember it will only be myself that listens to this.</i></p> <p><i>Please see the consent form [hand out forms]. Please take a few minutes to read the consent form and sign it if you are happy to take part [collect forms].</i></p> <p><i>Before we begin I would like to lay out some rules that we should all follow. Firstly, please respect each other’s opinions and values, and secondly, please be patient with each other.</i></p>



Table D 2: main study focus group schedule, focus group.

Focus group questions (written on question cue cards unless transition questions)
<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Hand out clip boards with paper and pen]. Before we introduce ourselves and begin the main discussion I would like you to make a 'political selfie', map of your political learning and what you think about politics [show example]. On this paper you need to write your name and show/write/draw: 1) Any political values or beliefs you hold and what you think about politics. 2) Anything you have done that could be considered political. 3) Where and whom from you learn about their beliefs, values and politics. 4) Any concerns you have about politics or social issues at the moment. [After, clip boards back under chair]. You can be as creative or non-creative as you like. You can draw pictures but I would prefer it if you mainly used words.</li> </ul> <p>Please say your name and what you study and the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word 'politics'.</p>
<p><b>Possible transition question:</b></p> <p><i>So am I right in thinking that politics seems like something you (either individual or group) are critical of/not interested in/interested in/find a bit boring?</i></p>
<p><b>Definition</b> (emphasis on joint conclusion)</p> <p><b>A)</b> What does it mean to be political?</p> <p>Is politics just about voting and political parties? (<i>Probe: can you expand/ how did you arrive at that response?/what does that side think?/ is that an opinion you all hold?</i>).</p>
<p><b>Possible transition question:</b></p> <p>(address one or two participants) Can you tell us more about why you think that/say that.....</p>
<p><b>Values and practice</b> (emphasis on compare and contrast)</p> <p><b>B)</b> How would you describe your political values? (<i>Probe: What are your values e.g, green, left-wing, pro-European</i>).</p> <p>How do you express these values (<i>Probe: What do you do that is political?/What would you do in the future that is political?</i>)</p>
<p><b>Possible transition questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>So is _____ something you learnt at school?</li> <li>Is _____ something that your parents/friends think?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning</b> (emphasis on compare and contrast and joint conclusion)</p> <p><b>C)</b> How do you learn your politics? (<i>Probe: Where, from whom?/ Can you expand on that?</i>)</p> <p><b>D)</b> [<i>Backup questions if group or majority of group present as apathetic/apolitical/angry</i>] Why are you not interested in politics?/ Why are you angry/How did you come to feel this way about politics? (<i>Probe: Where, from whom?/ Can you expand on that?</i>)</p> <p>How do you learn about politics at this college/school? (<i>Probe: Where, from whom?/ Can you expand on that?</i>)</p>

**Possible transition questions:**

- *So do you think your school/college affects what you think about politics?  
What are the benefits of coming to this school/college?*

**Post-16 divide** (emphasis on joint conclusion/compare and contrast) [warn young people that this might be challenging and provocative statements/give relevant question to respective group]

- E)** Some researchers find that those on vocational courses/apprenticeship are not very likely to get involved in politics. What do you think about that? Discuss. (*Probe: for example in comparison to young people who take A levels/ why do you think that?/ How did you arrive at that answer?*)

Some researchers find that those who do A Levels are quite likely to get involved in politics. What do you think about that? Discuss. (*Probe: for example in comparison to young people on vocational courses/why do you think that? How did you arrive at that answer?*)

*Table D 3: main study focus group schedule, closing.*

**Close**

- **[Participants pick up clipboards from under chair and handed different coloured pen].**

Please now look at your 'selfie'. Please add anything to it that has come to your mind throughout the discussion or that you have remembered.

Thank you very much for taking part in this discussion [hand out chocolate bars to say thanks]. I am looking to interview a number of people one-to-one (this afternoon, tomorrow, next week) on this topic. Would anyone like to take part? If so please indicate by ticking yes or no on the paper attached to your clip board. Please add your name and email address clearly underneath.

## Appendix E Interview schedules

### E.1 Pilot study

Table E 1: Pilot study follow- up interview schedule, opening

<b><i>This schedule will only be read by the interviewer. It will serve as a guide for the interviewer and all interviews will be recorded not written down.</i></b>	
<b>Opening</b>	
1)	<b>(Establish Rapport)</b> How are you? Thank you again for taking part and completing the survey and the previous interview.
2)	<b>(Purpose)</b> I would like to ask you some questions about what you thought about the survey and the last interview we did. This is to ensure that in the future the research is as good as it can be.
3)	<b>(Motivation)</b> As I mentioned, I hope to use this information for part of my PhD/university research on young people's political learning. I hope this is still ok with you?
4)	<b>(Time Line)</b> The interview should take about 15 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions within this time? We can stop at any point.
5)	<b>(Ethics)</b> We can stop at any point; you are not obliged to answer any question you do not want to, if you want to stop participating in the study that is also fine.

*Table E 2: Pilot study follow- up interview schedule, guiding questions*

Basic guiding questions for individual or small group interview
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overall, what do you think about the questions I have asked you in the questionnaire? What do you think about the topic?</li> <li>2) What did you think of the questionnaire? I asked you at the end of it mark in red where there were any issues. Can you show me where you marked and why? How can this be improved? Was there anything you didn't understand in terms of words? What did you think of the structure? Are there any words that were difficult for you or other young people of your age to understand?</li> <li>3) Do you think I have missed anything important regarding the above questions? Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I could change or add?</li> <li>4) What do you think about discussing politics in a group/in a one-to-one interview?</li> </ol>

## E.2 Main study

Table E 3: Main study interview schedule, opening.

<b><i>This interview schedule will only be read by the interviewer. It will serve as a guide for the interviewer and all interviews will be recorded not written down.</i></b>	
<b>Opening</b>	
1)	<b><i>(Establish Rapport)</i></b> How are you? Thank you again for taking part. I just need to go over some important information with you before we begin the interview. This is similar to what is written on the information sheet you were given. On that sheet is my email address. Please email me at any point if you would like to withdraw from the study or have the information you provide me with destroyed.
2)	<p><b><i>(Introduction and purpose)</i></b> My name is Rebecca and I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton Education School. I am carrying out research on what young people on different post-16 education paths think and learn about politics. I am doing this because researchers have found that your education strongly affects the likelihood of people participating in politics. You are one of 500 students to help me with this research and I am very grateful for this.</p> <p><i>I would like to ask you some questions about your background, your education, some experiences you have had, some of your hobbies and interests, your home life, your friends, your opinions about politics and citizenship and what activities you might do that relate to this. This is not a test and I encourage you to say what you really think and ask me any questions if you do not understand. We will also use and discuss the self-portrait that you created in the focus group at points in the interview. Is that ok for you?</i></p> <p><i>I would like to make clear that my intent is to listen and understand your views, not to make any judgments.</i></p>
3)	<b><i>(Motivation)</i></b> I hope to use this information for part of my PhD/university research on young people's political citizenship
4)	<b><i>(Time Line)</i></b> The interview should take about 45-60 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions within this time? We can stop at any point.
5)	<p><b><i>(Ethics)</i></b>. Like in the focus group everything you tell me will be in confidence. All the information you give me, including your email address, will be treated as strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified in any write-up or presentation of the research project. Your contact details will only be used to contact you in relation to this research and will not be passed on to a third party. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.</p> <p><i>We can also stop at any point; you are not obliged to answer any question you do not want to, if you want to stop participating in the study that is also fine. Sometimes politics, people's home lives and social issues can be sensitive topics? If you do not feel comfortable talking about something please feel free to not answer.</i></p> <p><i>I would also like to record the interview. Is this ok for you? Please remember it will be only me that listens to the interview and your name and information will be kept confidential and anonymised.</i></p> <p><i>Do you have any questions before we begin?</i></p>



6) (**Transition:** *Let me begin by asking you some basic questions about where you live, your hobbies and your neighbourhood*).

Table E 4: Main study interview schedule, questions for interview.

Guiding questions for interview	
Theme 1: Introduction	
<b>General icebreaker questions and background questions</b>	<p>A) Please can you tell me a bit about yourself/yourself? Your hobbies, interests, favourite school subject.</p> <p>B) Why did you choose to study this? How is this going for you?</p> <p>C) What town do you (all) live in? Can you tell me about your town or neighbourhood?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your previous school? - The one you attended between the ages of 11 and 16.</p>
	<p>A) Did you study citizenship or politics at your secondary school? How did this happen? What did you learn about? (<i>probe: what activities did you do? What did students think of this? Did you enjoy it?</i>)</p> <p>B) Did your old school have a student parliament or council? Did students have a say in how the school was run? Do you think this worked well?</p> <p>C) Were young people free to express themselves politically at school? Did you ever discuss controversial issues?</p> <p>What about school trips related to politics or citizenship? Did you ever go to parliament for example?</p>
Theme 2: Defining politics	
<p>D) [We will now talk about similar topics to those discussed in the focus group, but the aim of this interview is just for you to speak so I can find out more about your views]. How would you define politics? (<i>Probe: did you agree with others in the focus group?</i>)</p> <p>E) Some researchers say that people today do politics in a different way to older generations. What do you think about that?</p> <p>(<i>Probe: for example, some say that young people today do not do politics in the traditional way (e.g., voting in the national elections or joining a political party) but rather like to do politics online (e.g. Facebook/twitter campaigns) and/or are more concerned with single moral political "issues" and such as the environment, shopping ethically or fair trade, poverty in other countries or identity</i> [Show prop photos to aid thinking if participants get stuck].</p>	
Theme 3: Your politics	
<p>A) Can you tell me about any political values you have? (<i>Probe: What are they?/ How did you come to think this?</i>)</p> <p>B) Can you tell me anything you have done that is 'political' or related to politics? (<i>Probe: Who did you do it with?/ Do you have any more examples?</i>)</p> <p>C) Why did you do this? Did you have a good result?</p> <p>D) How much confidence did you have to do this? (<i>probe: Can you expand on that? -Why? Why not? Did you need to have a certain level of political knowledge?</i>)</p> <p>How much confidence do you have in your ability to participate in politics in the future?</p>	







Theme 4: Your political learning	
<b>General thoughts</b>	<p>A) [Now we will talk more about how you learn your politics/views, not just at school but in in different settings like the home]. Just thinking generally, how do you learn your politics/your beliefs on politics? <i>(Probe: what influenced you to feel this way/adopt these opinions?)</i></p> <p>Who do you discuss politics with? What do you discuss?</p>
<b>Political learning at your current school/college or training provider</b>	<p>A) Tell me a bit about this school/college. Do you like it? Why did you choose to come here? What courses do you do?</p> <p>B) What lessons do you attend that you have discussed politics or social issues in? <i>(Probe: Can you expand on this a bit?)</i>.</p> <p>C) Can you think of anything other activities you did related to politics or the community through school/college? <i>(Probe: can you tell me more about this? What did you do/discuss?/who with?)</i>.</p> <p>D) Is there a way for young people to have their voice heard here? E.g., a student parliament or council? <i>(How do you feel about this? Tell your/experience of this?)</i></p> <p>E) How do you feel about the teaching here (for example, do you have any lessons where you just learn of a power point, or do you do activities which involve students in different way? <i>(Probe: can you tell me more about why you think this)</i>.</p> <p>F) Do all young people here seem to have similar political and social values? <i>(Probe: Can you expand on that?)</i></p> <p>[Returning to what we discussed at the end of the focus group] Some researchers have found that if you are on a vocational course/academic you are less likely to be interested in politics or be confident in your political knowledge. What do you think about that? Why do you think that is?</p>
<b>Your friends and classmates:</b>	<p>A) Do you share the same political values as your classmates? <i>(probe: what is similar and different?)</i></p> <p>B) How about your close friends? <i>(probe: what is similar what is different?)</i></p> <p>C) Are you friends political? How does this affect you?</p> <p>D) Do you discuss politics with your friends? What do you talk about and why? <i>(Probe: Do you always agree with each other?/ Can you think of any examples?)</i></p> <p>E) Has anyone ever tried to change your mind about a political or social issue? <i>(Probe: What happened? Can you give me an example)</i></p> <p>Have you ever tried to change a friends mind on a political or social issue? <i>(Probe: What happened? Can you give me an example)</i></p>
<b>Your family(ies) and spare time:</b>	<p>A) Do discuss politics at home? What do you discuss?</p> <p>B) Are your family members interested in politics? <i>(Probe: Can you tell me more about this?/Has this influenced you?/ In what ways?)</i></p> <p>C) Have you ever tried to change your parents mind about political or</p>

	<p>social issues? (<i>Probe: what happened and why did this happen?</i>)</p> <p>D) Have you parents ever given you direct political information (e.g., a leaflet about a political party).</p> <p>E) Do you parents encourage you to think freely? Do you have open discussion at home? (<i>Probe: Can you tell me more about this?</i>)</p> <p>F) Can you think of any situation or activity that you have done in your spare time that is political? (<i>Probe: can you tell me more about this?</i>)</p> <p>G) Do you participate in any groups or clubs? How are you treated? Are you encouraged to give your voice and opinions and/or participate equally with adults? (<i>Probe: How do you feel about this?</i>).</p>
<b>Employment:</b>	<p>A) Do you have a job? (<i>Probe: Can you tell me more about this, for example why you have a job and what your job involves?</i>).</p> <p>B) Have you done thing political at or through work (e.g., <i>joined a union/protested</i>) (<i>Probe: can you tell me more about this?</i>).</p>
<b>Theme 5: Background questions</b>	
<p>[I would like to ask you a few background information questions, please remember that all this information will be kept confidential].</p> <p>A) What jobs do your parents/carers do?</p> <p>B) Can you tell me about your parents/carers education?</p> <p>C) Do you know who your parents vote for?</p> <p>How many books do you have at home?</p>	
<b>Self-portrait (as summary)</b>	<p>[Together look over the self-portrait to see if anything is missing and to make a summary of participant's political learning 'constellation'].</p>

Table E 5: Main study interview schedule, closing.

<b>Closing</b>
<p>A. (<b>Maintain Rapport</b>) <i>I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?</i></p> <p>B. (<b>Action to be taken</b>) <i>I should have all the information I need. Would it be all right to email you or contact your school again if I have any more questions? Thanks again.</i></p> <p>C. (<b>Further questions</b>) <i>Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?</i></p>

Table E 6: Photos props and used for interviews and focus groups

## Appendix F Self-completed questionnaire



UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**

### Political learning in post-16 education and training survey

My name is Rebecca Ridley and I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton Education School. I am carrying out research on what young people on different post-16 education paths think and learn about politics. **You are one of 500 students to help me with this research and I am very grateful for this.**

Everything you tell me will be **in confidence**. All the information you give me, including your email address, will be treated as strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified in any write-up or presentation of the research project. Your contact details will only be used to contact you in relation to this research and will not be passed on to a third party. **You have the right to withdraw from the**

#### **Part one: your interests and activities**

I would be very grateful if you could tell me about your interests and activities in your free time and at school, college, training or work. **Please remember it is only myself that will see your answers.**

**1 In the last year, have you taken part in any of the following clubs and groups, in your free time and/or at schools, college, training or work? (Please tick all boxes that apply)**

Appendix F: Self-completed questionnaire

	In my free time	In my current school/ college	Through my apprenticeship	At work	Other
Environmental clubs/groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports clubs/teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Debating clubs/groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A feminist club/group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School/student councils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer club/groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art, drama, dance, or music clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human rights groups or organisations e.g. Amnesty International	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charitable organisations or events e.g. Macmillan, Oxfam or RSPCA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBT organisation or group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth clubs/groups (e.g. Scouts or Guides)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Citizenship Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Union meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth wing of a political party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2 From the above clubs and groups please write here the one you attend most often: _____</b> <b>Thinking about the club or group you attended most did anyone ask you to take part or go? (Please tick all the boxes that apply)</b>					
Brothers or sisters	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fellow student/trainee	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work colleague	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A group of friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher or tutor	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Someone else	<input type="checkbox"/>		

<b>3 Have you ever done any of these things? (Please tick all the boxes that apply)</b>			
Attended a public meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Followed or 'liked' a social or political issue online (e.g. on Facebook or Twitter)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken part in a demonstration or protest	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stopped buying a product for ethical reasons (e.g., Nestlé, Starbucks, Primark).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed a paper petition	<input type="checkbox"/>	Used online sites such as Facebook to raise awareness of a social issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contacted a local councillor or	<input type="checkbox"/>	Started your own campaign online	<input type="checkbox"/>

Member of Parliament (MP)			
Contacted a local councillor about something affecting your neighbourhood	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products (e.g., food or clothes).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Got together with other people to campaign about an issue at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Signed an online petition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recycled rubbish to do your bit for the environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shared a video or a link to support a cause	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussed political issues online	<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteered to help a political party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussed politics offline	<input type="checkbox"/>	Got together with other people to campaign about an issue in your local community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helped out in your local community to deal with a local issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raised money for charity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken part in a protest against financial cuts to higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Helped out at an event to support a social or political cause <b>not</b> related to a political party	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4 Please write in the box anything you have done related to a political or social cause that may not be included in question 3</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>			

<b>5 How frequently do you do any of the following activities? (Please tick one box in each line)</b>				
	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely/once a month</b>	<b>Sometimes/once a week</b>	<b>Often/most days</b>
Read a national newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read a local newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read stories in the newspaper or online about what is happening in Britain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read stories in the newspaper or online about what is happening in other countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the news on television	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow the news on the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow the news on the radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow issues in the media related to ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Appendix F: Self-completed questionnaire

Follow issues in the media related to gender equality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow issues in the media related to sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Following issues in the media related to eating habits such as vegetarianism or veganism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow issues in the media related to the environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow issues in the media related to global issues such as poverty, refugees, and/or victims of war	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Part two: your current school or college

I would be very grateful if you could tell me a bit about the school or college you currently attend.

**Remember no-one expect myself will see your answers.**

**6 In the last 6 months, have you learned about any of the following topics at your current school/college, in your everyday life, or at work?** You might have learnt about these formally in school, or perhaps indirectly in your everyday life (e.g., on the internet, on the TV, in a magazine). (Please tick **all** boxes that apply).

	Yes - at school/college	Yes - at work/my job	Yes - in everyday life	No	Don't know
Citizens' rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crime and punishment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to be a responsible citizen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Different cultures and ethnic groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parliament, government, and/or political parties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voting in elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The economy and business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict and war	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The European Union	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The global community and international organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairtrade shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender and Sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The different identities people can have (sexual, ethic, religious)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Animal rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>7 In what lessons have you studied citizenship or politics? (Please tick <b>all the boxes</b> that apply)</b>	
PSHE (Personal, Social, Health Education) <input type="checkbox"/>	RE/RS (Religious Education or Religious Studies) <input type="checkbox"/>
Geography <input type="checkbox"/>	Business studies or economics <input type="checkbox"/>
Politics <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutor/form groups <input type="checkbox"/>
History <input type="checkbox"/>	'Citizenship' classes <input type="checkbox"/>
English <input type="checkbox"/>	Sociology/social studies <input type="checkbox"/>
Science <input type="checkbox"/>	Life Skills <input type="checkbox"/>
General Studies <input type="checkbox"/>	Assemblies <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>8 When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, how often do the following things happen? (Please tick <b>one</b> box in each line)</b>				
	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>
Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers encourage students to express their opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students bring up current political events for discussion in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people having differing opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>9 Have you ever done any of the following activities at your current school/college? (Please tick <b>one</b> box in each line)</b>			
	<b>Within the last twelve months</b>	<b>More than a year ago</b>	<b>Never</b>
Active participation in a debate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voting for class representatives for school council or parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken part in decision-making about how the school is run	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken part in discussions at a student assembly or meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Become a candidate for class representative or school parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attended a lesson in which you discussed social issues or politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken part in a voluntary activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been on a school/college trip that relates to politics or social issues (e.g., a trip to parliament)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Been on a school/college trip that relating to citizenship or people (e.g., a visit to a museum or environmental centre)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been involved in a social or political campaign	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been involved in a community project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10 In this school/college, how much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the following issues? (Please tick <b>one</b> box in each line)				
	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
The way classes are taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is taught in classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching and learning materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom rules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School/college rules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11 Please can you tell me the name of your school or college and the town or city it is in.	
Name of current school, college or training provider	
Town/city	

### Part three: about you

Please tell me a bit about yourself. This will help me to see whether you have anything in common with other students who give similar answers to you. **Remember that it is only myself that will see your answers.**

12 Are you male or female (Please tick only <b>one</b> box)	
Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
13 How would you describe yourself? (Please tick only <b>one</b> box)	
Asian or British Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) <input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Black British (e.g., Caribbean, African) <input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed ethnic origin <input type="checkbox"/>
White British <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
White European <input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>
White Central or Eastern European <input type="checkbox"/>	

14 What British political party do you follow now, or are you likely to follow in the future?	
I do not identify with any party and I am unlikely to in the future <input type="checkbox"/>	UK Independence Party <input type="checkbox"/>
Conservatives <input type="checkbox"/>	Labour <input type="checkbox"/>

Liberal democrats	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
British National Party	<input type="checkbox"/>		

<b>15 Please respond to <u>only</u> A or B</b>					
<b>A.</b> If you <b>are 18</b> will you vote in the general election in May	<input type="checkbox"/> Definitely will	<input type="checkbox"/> probably will	<input type="checkbox"/> probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> definitely won't	<input type="checkbox"/> don't know
<b>B.</b> If you are <b>not 18 yet</b> would you vote in the general election in May	<input type="checkbox"/> Definitely will	<input type="checkbox"/> probably will	<input type="checkbox"/> probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> definitely won't	<input type="checkbox"/> don't know

<b>16 I would like to find out about what you are up to now. (Tick only one box that applies to you)</b>	
On a course in a school sixth form (e.g., As or A levels)	<input type="checkbox"/> On an apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/>
On a course at a college	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>
On a course at a training provider	<input type="checkbox"/> On a course at a sixth form college <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>17 Please write down the name of your course/courses/qualification/apprenticeship you are currently doing below</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

<b>18 About how many books are there in your home? Do <u>not</u> count newspapers, magazines or school books. (Please tick only one box)</b>	
None (0 books) <input type="checkbox"/>	Enough to fill one book case (51-100 books) <input type="checkbox"/>
Very few (1-10 books) <input type="checkbox"/>	Enough to fill two bookcases (101-200 books) <input type="checkbox"/>
Enough to fill one shelf (11-50 books) <input type="checkbox"/>	Enough to fill three or more bookcases (more than 200 books) <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>19 How long did your parent(s) or carer(s) stay in education? (Please tick only one box for each)</b>		
	<b>Parent/carers 1</b>	<b>Parent/carers 2</b>
Left fulltime education at 15 or 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Left college or sixth form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Studied at university/got a degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20 Please tell me the job of your parent(s) or carer(s)	
	Job
Parent/carer 1	
Parent/carer 2	

21 I would like to know a bit about you, your family and friends (Please tick one box in each line)					
	Never	Sometimes	often		
I have tried to change my parent's/carer's mind about a political or social issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have tried to change my friend's mind about a political or social issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree/agree	Agree	Strongly agree
People like me can have a real influence in politics if they get involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am confident about telling others about my political beliefs or opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People like me don't get a fair deal in life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a good chance as anyone else at doing well in life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends are interested in politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know more about politics than most people my age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something interesting to say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am able to understand political issues easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know who to contact if I have a political or social issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what action to take to resolve a political or social issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Not much</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Quite a bit</b>	<b>A lot</b>
We talk about politics at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attend political events with my family member(s) (e.g. public meetings or protest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Me and my friends talk about politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Me and my friends attend political events (e.g. public meetings or protests)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree/disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Politics is an important topic at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have the same political views as my parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People at my school/college/training have the same political views as me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politics is an important topic for me and my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have the same political views as my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young people should be allowed to vote at 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The British political system works well as it is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politicians in Britain cannot be trusted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>22 To finish, I would like to find out how important the following are for you... (Please tick one box in each line)</b>					
	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not very important</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
I want to be involved in a career that changes the world for the better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want a job that involves helping people less fortunate than me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have to feel happy with the ethical record of an employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making a lot of money is the main priority when it comes to my career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Appendix G      Question items from all instruments as they relate to theory and conceptual framework

Some of the questions for the questionnaire are either borrowed or adapted from other surveys. These include:

- The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Survey (questionnaire for year 13) referred to below as CELS 2009
- The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (2009) referred to below as ICCS 2009
- The Demos commissioned survey by Populus Data Solutions (Birdwell & Bani 2014) referred to below as Demos 2014
- **Note: some boxes in the table are empty. This is because a particular method was construed as insufficient to respond to a given concept or question. Some of the questions can be found in more than one section e.g, the meaning-making item of 'We talk about politics at home' is also in the family CoP section.**



Table G 1: Practicing politics (Research questions 2 &amp; 2A):

Questions aspect	Question items		
	Qualitative instruments		Quantitative instrument
	Focus group (with political selfie)	Interview (with political selfie)	Survey
Political practice (formal & 'new' forms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does it mean to be political?</li> <li>Is politics just about voting and political parties?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some researchers say that young people practice politics in a different way to older generations. For example, some say that young people today do not do politics in the traditional way (e.g., voting in the national elections or joining a political party) but rather like to do politics online (e.g. Facebook/twitter campaigns) and/or are more concerned with single moral political "issues" and such as the environment, shopping ethically or fair trade, poverty in other countries or sexual identity. What do you think about this?</li> <li>What does politics mean for you?</li> <li>How do you think other young people at your school/college think about politics? How does this differ between different groups of young people?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do that is political?</li> <li>What would you do in the future that is political?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do that is political? Why did you do this?</li> <li>What would you do in the future that is political? Why?</li> <li>Did you feel confident in your ability to do these things (political participation)? Why? Why not?</li> <li>Do you feel confident in your ability to participate in politics in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the last year, have you taken part in any of the following clubs and groups, in your free time and/or at schools, college, training or work? (e.g, <i>Environmental clubs/groups</i> , <i>A feminist club/group</i> , <i>Debating clubs/groups</i> , <i>A feminist club/group</i> , <i>School/student councils</i> , <i>Human rights groups or organisations e.g. Amnesty International</i>) (CELS, 2009)</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the last year, have you taken part in any of the following activities in your free time and at school/college or work? (<i>Electing staff council members or trade union representatives, raising money for charity or a good cause</i>). (CLES 2009)</li> <li>• Have you ever done any of these things? (Tick those that apply) (<i>e.g., bought Fairtrade product, taken part in a protest, started your own campaign online</i>).</li> <li>• Please write in the box anything you have done related to a political or social cause that may not be included in question 3</li> <li>• How frequently do you do any of the following activities? (<i>e.g. follow issues in the media on gender and equality, follow issues in the media related to sexuality</i>)</li> <li>• If you are 18 will you vote in the general election in May?</li> <li>• If you are not 18 would you vote in the general election in May?</li> <li>• I want to be involved in a career that changes the world for the better (Demos, 2014)</li> <li>• I want a job that involves helping people less fortunate than me (Demos 2014)</li> <li>• I have to feel happy with the ethical record of an employer (Demos 2014)</li> <li>• Making a lot of money is the main priority</li> </ul>
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			<p>when it comes to my career (Demos 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People like me can have a real influence in politics if they get involved (ICCS 2009)</li> <li>• I am confident about telling others about my political beliefs or opinions</li> <li>• I know more about politics than most people my age (ICCS 2009)</li> <li>• When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something interesting to say</li> <li>• I am able to understand political issues easily (ICCS 2009)</li> <li>• I know who to contact if I have a political or social issue</li> <li>• I know what action to take to resolve a political or social issue</li> <li>• I am interested in politics (ICCS 2009)</li> </ul>
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Table G 2: Communities of practice learning questions (Research Question 2).

Concept/question aspect	Question items		
	Qualitative instruments		Quantitative instrument
	Focus group (with	Interview (with political selfie)	Survey (with political selfie)

	<b>political selfie)</b>		
Constellation of communities of practice (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where and how do you learn your politics?</li> </ul>		
<b>Generic communities of practice (CoP)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School/college CoP (formal curriculum &amp; learning context)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What and how do you learn about politics at this college/school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me a bit about this school/college you (all) attend. Do you like it? Why did you choose to come here? What courses do you do?</li> <li>Do you feel there is a culture where students can easily bring up issues with their learning or the school? Is there a way for young people to have their voice heard here? E.g., a student parliament or council? What do you think about this?</li> <li>How do teachers teach here? For example, do you have any lessons where you just learn of a power point, or do you do more student-led and interactive activities? Do you think teachers are mainly just concerned with exams? Is this something you agree with?</li> <li>Have you ever done anything political or in the local community through your school/college?</li> <li>Can you think of anytime at school you have learnt or talked about politics or relate subjects? What happened, what were you talking about and who with?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the last 6 months, have you learned about any of the following topics at your current school/college, in your everyday life, or at work? (e.g., voluntary groups, citizens' rights, the environment). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>In what lessons have you studied citizenship or politics? (<i>e.g. politics, science, general studies, assemblies</i>). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, how often do the following things happen? (<i>e.g., do students bring up current political events for discussion, teachers encourage students to express their opinions</i>). (ICCS 2009)</li> <li>Have you ever done any of the following activities at your current school/college (<i>e.g. active participation in a debate, become a candidate for class representative or school parliament</i>)</li> <li>In this school/college, how much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the following issues (<i>e.g. school college rules, teaching and learning materials</i>). (ICCS 2009)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peers CoP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you think your friends or other young people think about politics? How do your views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My friends are interested in politics</li> <li>Me and my friends talk about politics</li> </ul>

		<p>differ from theirs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you share the same political values as your classmates? What is similar and different?</li> <li>• How about your close friends? What is similar what is different?</li> <li>• Are you friends political? How does this affect you?</li> <li>• Do all young people here (school/college) seem to have similar political and social values? What do you think about this?</li> <li>• Do you discuss politics with your friends? What do you talk about and why? Do you always agree with each other?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Me and my friends attend political events (e.g. public meetings or protests)</li> <li>• Politics is an important topic for me and my friends</li> <li>• People at my school/college/training have the same political views as me</li> <li>• I have the same political views as my friends</li> <li>• I have tried to change my friend's mind about a political or social issue</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family CoP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do discuss politics at home? What do you discuss and why?</li> <li>• Are your family members interested in politics? Has this influenced you? How?</li> <li>• Have you ever tried to change your parents mind about political or social issues? What happened and why did this happen? Do you think young people still just vote for who their parents vote for?</li> <li>• Have you parents ever given you direct political information (e.g., a leaflet about a political party).</li> <li>• Do you parents encourage you to think freely? Do you have open discussion at home? Can you tell me more about this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We talk about politics at home</li> <li>• Politics is an important topic at home</li> <li>• I have tried to change my parent's/carer's mind about a political or social issue</li> <li>• I have the same political views as my parents</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you share the same political opinions with your parents and siblings?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extra-curricular CoP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you think of any situation or activity that you have done in your spare time that is political?</li> <li>Do you participate in any groups or clubs? How are you treated? Are you encouraged to give your voice and opinions and/or participate equally with adults?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the last year, have you taken part in any of the following clubs and groups, in your free time and/or at schools, college, training or work? (<i>e.g. Environmental clubs/groups Debating clubs/groups , A feminist club/group School/student councils , Human rights groups or organisations e.g. Amnesty International</i>) (CEL, 2009)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment CoP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you have a job?</li> <li>Why do you have a job?</li> <li>Have you done thing political at or through work (e.g., joined a union/protested).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the last <u>6 months</u>, have you learned about any of the following topics at your current school/college, in your everyday life, or at work? (CLES 2009)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associated learning concepts</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participatory activities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a way for young people to have their voice heard here? e.g., a student parliament or council? What do you think about this?</li> <li>Have any of your teachers encouraged you to be involved in a political activity or stand as a school representative, for example?</li> <li>Has anyone ever helped you when you tried to do something political, for example, a friend, parent, or youth worker?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the above clubs and groups please write here the one you attend most often: _____ Thinking about the club or group you attended most did anyone ask you to take part or go? (<i>E.g. friend, parents, teacher</i>). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>I attend political events with my family member(s) (e.g. public meetings or protest)</li> <li>My views and opinions are taken seriously by my family</li> <li>Have you ever done any of the following activities at your current school/college (<i>e.g. active participation in a debate, become a candidate for</i></li> </ul>

			<i>class representative or school parliament)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaning-making</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who do you discuss politics with? What do you discuss?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How frequently do you do any of the following activities? (read a newspaper, listen to the news, follow the news on the internet)</li> <li>We talk about politics at home</li> <li>Me and my friends talk about politics</li> <li>Attended a lesson in which you discussed social issues or politics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic questions</li> </ul>			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please can you tell me the name of your school or college and the town or city it is in</li> <li>Are you male/female?</li> <li>How would you describe yourself (<i>e.g., white British, mixed ethnic origin</i>). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>Which British political party do you follow, or are you likely to follow in the future (<i>e.g. Green Party, Labour, UK Independence Party</i>)</li> <li>I would like to find out about what you are up to now (<i>e.g. A Levels, apprenticeship</i>). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>Please write down the name of your course/courses/qualification/apprenticeship you are currently doing below</li> <li>About how many books are there in your home? Do <u>not</u> count newspapers, magazines or school books (<i>e.g. 0 books, 11-50 books</i>). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>How long did your parent(s) or carer(s) stay in education? (<i>e.g, left college of sixth form, studied at university</i>). (CELS 2009)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please tell me the job of your parent(s) or carer(s)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extra questions</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have a good chance as anyone else at doing well in life</li> <li>People like me don't get a fair deal in life</li> <li>Young people should be allowed to vote at 16</li> <li>The British political system works well as it is</li> <li>Politicians in Britain cannot be trusted</li> </ul>		

Table G 3: Post-16 as a force for political division (Research Questions 1B &amp; 2A).

Concept/question aspect	Question items		
	Qualitative instruments		Quantitative instrument
	Focus group (with political selfie)	Interview (with political selfie)	Survey
Post-16 as a force for political division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Vocational/apprenticeship sample). Some researchers have found that young people who take vocational courses are less likely to be involved in politics. What do you think about that? Why might this be the case?</li> <li>(Academic pathway sample). Some researchers have found that young</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think there are things that affect how a person defines or thinks politics? (e.g., how much money they have, social class, education, gender?).</li> <li>Some researchers have found that if you are on a vocational course you are less likely to be interested in politics or be confident in your political knowledge. What do you think about that? Why do you think that is?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would like to find out about what you are up to now (e.g., on a course at college, on an apprenticeship, doing A levels). (CELS 2009)</li> <li>Please write down the name of your course/courses/qualification/apprenticeship you are currently doing below</li> </ul>



	people who take A levels and go to university are more likely to be involved in politics. What do you think about that? Why might this be the case?		
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## Appendix H      National pupil database data used for weighting data for cross tabulation

*Table H 1: data weighting*

	Real population from National Pupil data base	Sample number	New weights for SPSS variable weight _institute
Weight Sixth- form College (1)	12%	41%	0.29
Weight school sixth form (2)	35%	21%	1.67
Weight FE college (3)	32%	25%	1.28
Weight Other FE provider/other higher education instiution (5)	3%	10%	0.30
Weight independent or private school (6)	5%	3%	1.67

Table H 2: KS4 National: Percentage of 2010/11 KS4 cohort going to, or remaining in, an education or employment destination in 2011/12

	Mainstream schools		Special schools		Alternative provision		Total mainstream	Total special	Total state-funded mainstream and special schools (does not include independent)	Total AP and PRU
	State-funded	Independent <sup>1</sup>	Maintained special	Non-maintained special	Alternative provision	Pupil referral unit				
Number of students <sup>2</sup>	557,360	40,770	9,550	570	2,890	7,300	598,140	10,110	567,480	10,180
<b>Overall percentage going to a sustained<sup>3</sup> education or employment/training destination<sup>4</sup></b>	89%	92%	85%	93%	54%	49%	89%	86%	89%	50%
<b>Sustained<sup>3</sup> education destination<sup>5</sup></b>	86%	92%	83%	92%	47%	39%	87%	83%	86%	41%
Mainstream										
Further education college	33%	8%	32%	16%	27%	28%	32%	32%	33%	28%
Independent school	-	67%	-	x	1%	-	5%	-	-	1%
Other further education provider <sup>6</sup>	4%	1%	3%	2%	5%	7%	3%	3%	4%	6%
School sixth form - state funded	37%	9%	2%	1%	2%	1%	35%	2%	36%	1%
Sixth form college	12%	8%	2%	x	1%	2%	12%	2%	12%	2%
Specialist provision										
Specialist post-16 institution <sup>7</sup>	-	0%	1%	1%	x	x	-	1%	-	-
Alternative provision or pupil referral unit <sup>8</sup>	-	-	-	1%	8%	1%	-	-	-	3%
Special school <sup>9</sup>	-	-	42%	70%	2%	-	-	44%	1%	1%
Apprenticeships <sup>10</sup>	5%	1%	1%	1%	3%	4%	5%	1%	5%	4%
UK higher education institution	-	-	0%	0%	0%	x	-	0%	-	x
Sustained <sup>3</sup> education combination destination <sup>11</sup>	-	-	-	0%	x	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sustained<sup>3</sup> employment and/or training destination<sup>12</sup></b>	2%	-	1%	x	3%	5%	2%	1%	2%	5%
Employment with training <sup>13</sup>	1%	-	-	x	1%	2%	1%	-	1%	2%
Other employment <sup>14</sup>	1%	-	1%	x	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Other training <sup>15</sup>	-	x	-	0%	1%	1%	-	-	-	1%
<b>Sustained<sup>3</sup> education/employment/training combination destination<sup>16</sup></b>	1%	-	1%	x	4%	4%	1%	1%	1%	4%
Percentage not recorded in the measure										
Destination not sustained <sup>17</sup>	6%	1%	7%	3%	18%	23%	6%	7%	6%	21%
Destination not sustained/ recorded NEET <sup>18</sup>	3%	-	6%	2%	17%	22%	3%	6%	3%	21%
Activity not captured in data <sup>19</sup>	2%	6%	2%	2%	11%	7%	2%	2%	2%	8%

1-19. See separate ks4 footnotes sheet

Source: National Pupil Database

## Appendix I Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency

### I.1 Political efficacy

*Table I 1: reliability statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.877	4

*Table I 2: Item statistics*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I know more about politics than most people my own age	2.82	1.282	206
When political issues or problems are being discussed, i usually have something interesting to say	3.04	1.221	206
I am able to understand political issues easily	3.15	1.189	206
I am interested in politics	2.94	1.389	206

*Table I 3: Item total statistics.*

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I know more about politics than most people my own age	9.13	11.272	.696	.857

Appendix H: National pupil database data used for weighting data for cross tabulation

When political issues or problems are being discussed, i usually have something interesting to say	8.90	11.249	.752	.835
I am able to understand political issues easily	8.80	11.412	.757	.834
I am interested in politics	9.00	10.351	.741	.841

*Table I 4: Scale statistics.*

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
11.94	18.904	4.348	4

## 1.2 Student's influence on the school

*Table I 5: Reliability statistics.*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.835	5

*Table I 6: Item statistics.*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the way classes are taught	2.25	.865	208

Appendix I: Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency

How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about what is taught in classes	1.95	.959	208
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about teaching and learning materials	2.22	.922	208
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the timetable	1.85	.954	208
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about school/college rules	1.97	.970	208

Table I 7: Item total statistics.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the way classes are taught	7.99	9.570	.528	.829
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about what is taught in classes	8.29	8.486	.669	.791
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about teaching and learning materials	8.01	8.633	.677	.790

Appendix H: National pupil database data used for weighting data for cross tabulation

How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the timetable	8.38	8.634	.643	.799
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about school/college rules	8.27	8.488	.658	.795

*Table I 8: Scale statistics.*

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
10.24	13.147	3.626	5

### I.3 Classroom climate

*Table I 9: Reliability statistics.*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.882	5

*Table I 10: Item statistics.*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers encourage students to make up own minds	3.33	.905	202

When discussing political and social issues during regular lesson teachers encourage students to express their opinions	3.47	.888	202
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons students bring up current political events for discussion in class	2.78	1.018	202
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people having different opinions	2.98	1.027	202
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class	3.09	.998	202

Table I 11: Item total statistics.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers encourage students to make up own minds	12.32	10.727	.739	.852
When discussing political and social issues during regular lesson teachers encourage students to express their opinions	12.18	10.877	.729	.854



Appendix H: National pupil database data used for weighting data for cross tabulation

When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons students bring up current political events for discussion in class	12.87	10.421	.680	.865
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people having different opinions	12.67	10.052	.741	.850
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class	12.56	10.406	.703	.859

*Table I 12: Scale statistics.*

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
15.65	15.929	3.991	5

## Appendix J findings chapter, significance and phi

*Table J 1: Summary table of significance and Phi for statistical results in Chapter 7.*

Item's name	Corresponding figure	Sig (MC)	Phi
Have you done following at your current school college - attended a lesson in which you discussed social issues or politics	Figure 7-1	0	0.525
In what lessons have you studied citizenship or politics? (form lesson)	Figure 7-3	0.016	0.243
In what lessons have you studied citizenship or politics? (life skills)	Figure 7-4	0.002	0.324
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers encourage students to make up own minds	Figure 7-5	0	0.481
When discussing political and social issues during regular lesson teachers encourage students to express their opinions		0.016	0.38
When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class		0.001	0.424
Have you done following at your current school college - voting for a class representative for school council or parliament	Figure 7-6	0	0.47
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about what is taught in classes	Figure 7-9	0.005	0.39
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about the timetable		0.002	0.463
How much is your opinion taken into account when decisions are made about school/college rules		0.001	0.428
Have you done the following at your current school or college - active participation in a debate	Figure 7-10	0	0.461
In the last year have you taken part in a debating club?	Figure 7-11	0	0.578
Have you done following at your current school college - taken part in voluntary activity	Figure 7-12	0	0.567
I am interested in politics	Figure 7-13	0	0.518
What British political party do you follow?	Figure 7-14	0.037	0.516
People like me can have a real influence in politics if they get involved	Figure 7-15	0.005	0.441
The British political system works well as it is	Figure 7-16	0.027	0.391
Have you ever bought Fairtrade or ethically sourced products?	Figure 7-21	0	0.403
How frequently do you follow issues in the media related to gender equality?	Figure 7-22	0	0.531

How frequently do you follow issues in the media related to global issues such as poverty, refugees. and/or victims of war?	Figure 7-23	0	0.573
How frequently do you follow issues in the media related to sexuality?		0.002	0.408

## Appendix K      binary and ordinal regression analysis

*Table K 1: Summary table of Cox & Snell test, Nagelkerke R square and Phi for binary and ordinal regression analysis.*

Item's name	Cox & Snell test	Nagelkerke R square	Phi
If you are 18 will you vote in the general election in May	0.415	0.448	0.004
Have you ever bought a Fairtrade or ethically-sourced product? Social background and education factors	0.158	0.216	0.001

## **Appendix L Pilot study overview**

School or college type	Aim(s)	Procedure	Outcomes and actions
<b>Phase 1 (England and Hungary) (Autumn 2012)</b>			
Secondary comprehensive (x 2) (England); prestigious vocational secondary school, monolingual gymnasium (x 2); bilingual gymnasium (x 2) (Hungary).	1) To better understand how young people practice and learn 'active' citizenship in different country contexts.  2) To use Lave and Wenger's (1991;1998) 'communities of practice' theory of learning as a conceptual framework	As part of the initial PhD pilot (the research was initially a comparative piece on young people's political learning in Western and Eastern European countries) the researcher visited 2 schools in England and 5 in Hungary and carried out one-to-one and small-group interviews with young people aged between 13 and 17. This took place over a 2 week 2 month period in autumn.  Each interview schedule was semi-structured and lasted no more than one hour.	1) 'Communities of practice' a useful framework but difficulties with certain concepts as applied to political learning (e.g. 'legitimate peripheral participation'(LLP)) – <i>framework used for main study but only use LLP in terms of a community of practice that has an explicit political aim.</i>  2) Politics is sometimes sensitive for young people to talk about, particularly in Hungary – <i>this was taken into account in the main study, especially in terms of ethics. It was made clear that discussing politics can be a sensitive topic on information sheet and in verbal invite to the research.</i>  3) Terminology of some concepts (e.g., demonstration was understood by one participant as something which happened in science lessons and not in political terms – <i>ensured that in interviews photos of different types of political participation were used as props.</i>
<b>Phase 2 (England) (June 2014)</b>			
School sixth-	1) Evaluation of	The researcher visited a school-sixth form in the south of	1) Politics can be sensitive in terms of the recent rise of the

form	self-completed questionnaire	<p>England. The participants were aged 17 and 18 and were studying towards A levels.</p> <p>The 3 participants completed the questionnaire and indicated with a coloured pen any issues relating to for example wording and understanding.</p> <p>The participants and the researcher then had a short (voice-recorded) discussion about the pros and cons of the survey. However this also developed into a conversation on doing research with young people on politics in general.</p>	<p>UK Independence Party (UKIP) - <i>this was taken into account in the main study, especially in terms of ethics. It was made clear that discussing politics can be a sensitive topic on information sheet and in verbal invite to the research.</i></p> <p>2) For one participant wording needed to be changed from 'taught' to 'studies' – <i>changes were made accordingly, see below.</i></p>
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## **Appendix M    Data analysis phases**

### **M.1    Step 1**

Firstly, and before reading any of the data, a coding framework was developed which was in line with the literature view and conceptual framework.



POST-16 EDUCATION POLITICAL LEARNING.mvp - NVivo

File Home Create External Data Analyze Query Explore Layout View

Go Refresh Open Properties Edit Paste Merge Cut Copy Format Paragraph Styles Editing Proofing

Look for: Search In: Nodes Find Now Clear Advanced Find

**Nodes**

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
1. Academic vocational divide	0	0	03/11/2014 15:11	RMR	06/11/2014 10:24	RMR
Political divide	0	0	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR
Educational divide	0	0	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR
Explanation	0	0	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR
class	0	0	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR
curriculum	0	0	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR
peers	0	0	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR
2. Definition of politics	0	0	03/11/2014 14:48	RMR	06/11/2014 10:24	RMR
Conventional definitions	0	0	03/11/2014 14:49	RMR	03/11/2014 14:49	RMR
Alternative definitions	0	0	03/11/2014 14:53	RMR	03/11/2014 14:53	RMR
3. Demographics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR	06/11/2014 10:24	RMR
Class	0	0	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR
Level of study	0	0	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR
Level 1 vocational	0	0	03/11/2014 15:10	RMR	03/11/2014 15:10	RMR
Level 2 vocational	0	0	03/11/2014 15:10	RMR	03/11/2014 15:10	RMR
Level 3 vocational	0	0	03/11/2014 15:10	RMR	03/11/2014 15:10	RMR
Year 1 A Level	0	0	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR
Year 1 IB	0	0	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR
Year 2 A Level	0	0	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR
Year 2 IB	0	0	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR	03/11/2014 15:09	RMR
Ethnicity or cultural values	0	0	03/11/2014 15:11	RMR	03/11/2014 15:11	RMR
4. Political learning	0	0	03/11/2014 14:57	RMR	06/11/2014 10:24	RMR
Active learning strategy	0	0	06/11/2014 10:29	RMR	06/11/2014 10:29	RMR
Brokering	0	0	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR
Class CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 14:58	RMR	03/11/2014 14:58	RMR
Diversity	0	0	03/11/2014 15:05	RMR	03/11/2014 15:05	RMR
Employment CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 15:03	RMR	03/11/2014 15:03	RMR
Extra curricular CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 15:03	RMR	03/11/2014 15:03	RMR
Family CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR
Identity	0	0	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR
Efficacy	0	0	03/11/2014 15:07	RMR	03/11/2014 15:07	RMR
Implicit citizenship learning	0	0	06/11/2014 10:31	RMR	06/11/2014 10:31	RMR
Internet CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 15:04	RMR	03/11/2014 15:04	RMR
Meaning making	0	0	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR
Peer socialisation	0	0	06/11/2014 10:32	RMR	06/11/2014 10:32	RMR
Peers CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR

Figure M 1: coding frame/conceptual lens before analysis (1)

POST-16 EDUCATION POLITICAL LEARNING.nvp - NVivo

Look for: Search In: Nodes Find Now Clear Advanced Find

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Meaning making	0	0	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR
Peer socialisation	0	0	06/11/2014 10:32	RMR	06/11/2014 10:32	RMR
Peers CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR
Politically-orientated CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 15:04	RMR	03/11/2014 15:04	RMR
Legitimate peripheral participation	0	0	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR
Scaffolding	0	0	03/11/2014 15:07	RMR	03/11/2014 15:07	RMR
School or college CoP	0	0	03/11/2014 14:58	RMR	03/11/2014 14:58	RMR
Studying towards qualification associated with politics	0	0	06/11/2014 10:28	RMR	06/11/2014 10:28	RMR
5. Political practice	0	0	03/11/2014 14:53	RMR	06/11/2014 10:25	RMR
Alternative	0	0	03/11/2014 14:54	RMR	03/11/2014 14:54	RMR
Alternative types	0	0	03/11/2014 15:40	RMR	03/11/2014 15:40	RMR
Autonomous or individualist indication	0	0	03/11/2014 15:45	RMR	03/11/2014 15:45	RMR
Challenge elite or hierarchical politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:41	RMR	03/11/2014 15:41	RMR
Issue or theme politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR
Life politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:46	RMR	03/11/2014 15:46	RMR
Emancipatory politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:46	RMR	03/11/2014 15:46	RMR
Online	0	0	03/11/2014 15:49	RMR	03/11/2014 15:49	RMR
Identity management on internet	0	0	03/11/2014 15:50	RMR	03/11/2014 15:50	RMR
politics online	0	0	03/11/2014 15:50	RMR	03/11/2014 15:50	RMR
Reflexive	0	0	03/11/2014 15:45	RMR	03/11/2014 15:45	RMR
Sub politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:47	RMR	03/11/2014 15:47	RMR
local politics (inside conventional boundaries)	0	0	03/11/2014 15:48	RMR	03/11/2014 15:48	RMR
local politics outside conventional politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:48	RMR	03/11/2014 15:48	RMR
Think global act local	0	0	03/11/2014 15:49	RMR	03/11/2014 15:49	RMR
Conventional	0	0	03/11/2014 14:54	RMR	03/11/2014 14:54	RMR
Explanations	0	0	03/11/2014 15:36	RMR	03/11/2014 15:36	RMR
Alienation	0	0	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR
Apathy	0	0	03/11/2014 15:37	RMR	03/11/2014 15:37	RMR
Lack of knowledge and or efficacy	0	0	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR
Lack of trust	0	0	03/11/2014 15:39	RMR	03/11/2014 15:39	RMR
Lifecycle	0	0	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR
social capital	0	0	03/11/2014 15:39	RMR	03/11/2014 15:39	RMR
Political party involvement	0	0	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR
Voting	0	0	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR

Figure M 2: coding frame/conceptual lens before analysis (2)

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface with the following components:

- Menu Bar:** File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, View.
- Toolbar:** Go, Refresh, Open, Properties, Edit, Paste, Copy, Cut, Merge, Format, Paragraph, Styles, Select, Text, PDF Selection, Find, Replace, Delete, Spelling, Proofing.
- Left Panel:** Nodes, Relationships, Node Matrices, Sources, Nodes (selected), Classifications, Collections, Queries, Reports, Models, Folders.
- Main Workspace:**
  - Nodes:** A hierarchical tree structure showing the coding frame.
    - Life cycle
      - social capital
      - Political party involvement
      - Voting
    - 6. Qualification type
      - A Levels
        - Studying government and politics
        - Studying humanities more broadly
      - BTEC
      - IB
      - Vocational high level (level 3 or HND)
      - Vocational low level (1&2)
    - 7. School and college types
      - Further education college
        - School G
      - International college
        - School F
      - School sixth form
        - School D
        - School E
      - Sixth form college
        - School A
        - School B
        - School C
      - Specialist academy
        - School H
    - Emergent themes
  - Sources Table:**

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Life cycle	0	0	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR
social capital	0	0	03/11/2014 15:39	RMR	03/11/2014 15:39	RMR
Political party involvement	0	0	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR
Voting	0	0	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR
6. Qualification type	0	0	03/11/2014 15:30	RMR	06/11/2014 10:25	RMR
A Levels	0	0	03/11/2014 15:31	RMR	03/11/2014 15:31	RMR
Studying government and politics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:33	RMR	03/11/2014 15:33	RMR
Studying humanities more broadly	0	0	03/11/2014 15:34	RMR	03/11/2014 15:34	RMR
BTEC	0	0	03/11/2014 15:31	RMR	03/11/2014 15:32	RMR
IB	0	0	03/11/2014 15:31	RMR	03/11/2014 15:31	RMR
Vocational high level (level 3 or HND)	0	0	03/11/2014 15:32	RMR	03/11/2014 15:32	RMR
Vocational low level (1&2)	0	0	03/11/2014 15:31	RMR	03/11/2014 15:32	RMR
7. School and college types	0	0	03/11/2014 15:26	RMR	06/11/2014 10:25	RMR
Further education college	0	0	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR
School G	0	0	03/11/2014 15:28	RMR	03/11/2014 15:28	RMR
International college	0	0	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR
School F	0	0	03/11/2014 15:28	RMR	03/11/2014 15:28	RMR
School sixth form	0	0	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR
School D	0	0	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR
School E	0	0	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR
Sixth form college	0	0	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR	03/11/2014 15:27	RMR
School A	0	0	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR
School B	0	0	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR	03/11/2014 15:29	RMR
School C	0	0	03/11/2014 15:30	RMR	03/11/2014 15:30	RMR
Specialist academy	0	0	03/11/2014 15:28	RMR	03/11/2014 15:28	RMR
School H	0	0	03/11/2014 15:30	RMR	03/11/2014 15:30	RMR
Emergent themes	0	0	06/11/2014 10:25	RMR	06/11/2014 10:25	RMR

Figure M 3: coding frame/conceptual lens before analysis (3)

## M.2 Step 2

The researcher then read a paper copy of the data to familiarise herself with it. Some preliminary annotations were made on the possible different themes that emerged from the data and also how the data might relate to the theoretical framework. These served to inform the next stage of coding.

## M.3 Step 3

The data was then read again through the computer software NVivo. The data (at this step this included the political 'selfies') were coded using the coding framework that had been previously developed and also for emergent codes and themes. At this stage the researcher drew on her annotations from the paper copy of the data. It is important to note that a small section of the data was purposely not coded. This included data from students who were not British Citizens at the International School where they spoke of their political learning outside the school or in their home countries. Additionally, the political 'selfies' were only coded in terms of textual information they contained. The aim was not to code them for their pictorial elements as they were not intended as a visual method. The researcher firstly read each 'selfie' to determine if it reflected conventional or any more alternative (post-modern) values. Each 'selfie' was then coded using the conceptual framework, for any other emergent themes, and also in terms of any added information that were written in different coloured pens at the end of each focus group (see picture 15; the red circle represents that the participant referred only to conventional politics in their 'selfie' and the blue circles the other codes. In this case 'voting', 'UKIP' and 'disconnected with politics')

## M.4 Step 4

Following this, the researcher went through the data and removed the codes that were not used in the analysis (e.g. social capital – this could not be measured in this research, and qualification type which are accounted for in this audit trail). Codes were then organised into emergent codes and themes and overlapping codes were cleared up. Some of the emergent codes were also merged into the existing framework (e.g., support for different political parties). All themes that 'emerged' from the data were labelled accordingly (e.g., see red circle on screen shot below as one example).

13TH NOVEMBER PROJECT.nvp COPY.nvp - NVivo

File Home Create External Data Analyze Query Explore Layout View

Go Refresh Open Properties Edit Paste Copy Cut Merge Clipboard Format Paragraph Styles Editing Proofing

Workspace Item

Look for: Search In: Nodes Find Now Clear Advanced Find

**Nodes**

Nodes Relationships Node Matrices

Sources Nodes Classifications Collections Queries Reports Models Folders

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
0. Political selves before and after	18	21	13/11/2014 11:39	RMR	13/11/2014 18:47	RMR
1. Academic vocational divide	10	22	03/11/2014 15:11	RMR	12/11/2014 11:05	RMR
Challenge divide (emergent theme)	4	8	12/11/2014 11:01	RMR	12/11/2014 11:16	RMR
Educational divide	2	4	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Explanation	2	3	03/11/2014 15:17	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
class	4	5	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
curriculum	10	11	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR	12/11/2014 18:47	RMR
Academic and vocational learning (emergent theme)	4	6	12/11/2014 11:07	RMR	12/11/2014 11:15	RMR
peers	4	4	03/11/2014 15:18	RMR	12/11/2014 18:42	RMR
Vocational students stigmatised (emergent theme)	4	7	12/11/2014 11:00	RMR	12/11/2014 11:15	RMR
2. Definition of politics	4	9	03/11/2014 14:48	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Alternative definitions	7	12	03/11/2014 14:53	RMR	13/11/2014 18:40	RMR
Conventional definitions	20	26	03/11/2014 14:49	RMR	13/11/2014 13:40	RMR
Theoretical definition of politics (emergent)	8	14	11/11/2014 11:08	RMR	13/11/2014 18:46	RMR
3. Demographics	0	0	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR	12/11/2014 11:20	RMR
Class	9	15	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Ethnicity or cultural values	3	4	03/11/2014 15:11	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
4. Political learning	0	0	03/11/2014 14:57	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Active learning strategy	6	7	06/11/2014 10:29	RMR	13/11/2014 13:10	RMR
Brokering	3	5	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	13/11/2014 12:34	RMR
Trickle up	5	9	06/11/2014 13:23	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Class CoP	9	19	03/11/2014 14:58	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Diversity	7	11	03/11/2014 15:05	RMR	13/11/2014 18:36	RMR
Diverse politics at home	9	13	12/11/2014 09:55	RMR	13/11/2014 13:20	RMR
Employment CoP	4	6	03/11/2014 15:03	RMR	13/11/2014 11:35	RMR
Extra curricular CoP	11	22	03/11/2014 15:03	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Family CoP	27	54	03/11/2014 14:59	RMR	13/11/2014 18:45	RMR
Family influence (strong)	10	14	12/11/2014 09:55	RMR	13/11/2014 13:11	RMR
Family influence (weak)	3	6	12/11/2014 09:55	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Identity	6	8	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Efficacy	7	10	03/11/2014 15:07	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Implicit citizenship learning	3	6	06/11/2014 10:31	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Internet CoP	8	19	03/11/2014 15:04	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Meaning making	11	20	03/11/2014 15:06	RMR	13/11/2014 18:35	RMR
Peer socialisation	10	12	06/11/2014 10:32	RMR	13/11/2014 12:33	RMR

RMR 130 items

Figure M 4: coding frame/conceptual lens after analysis (1)

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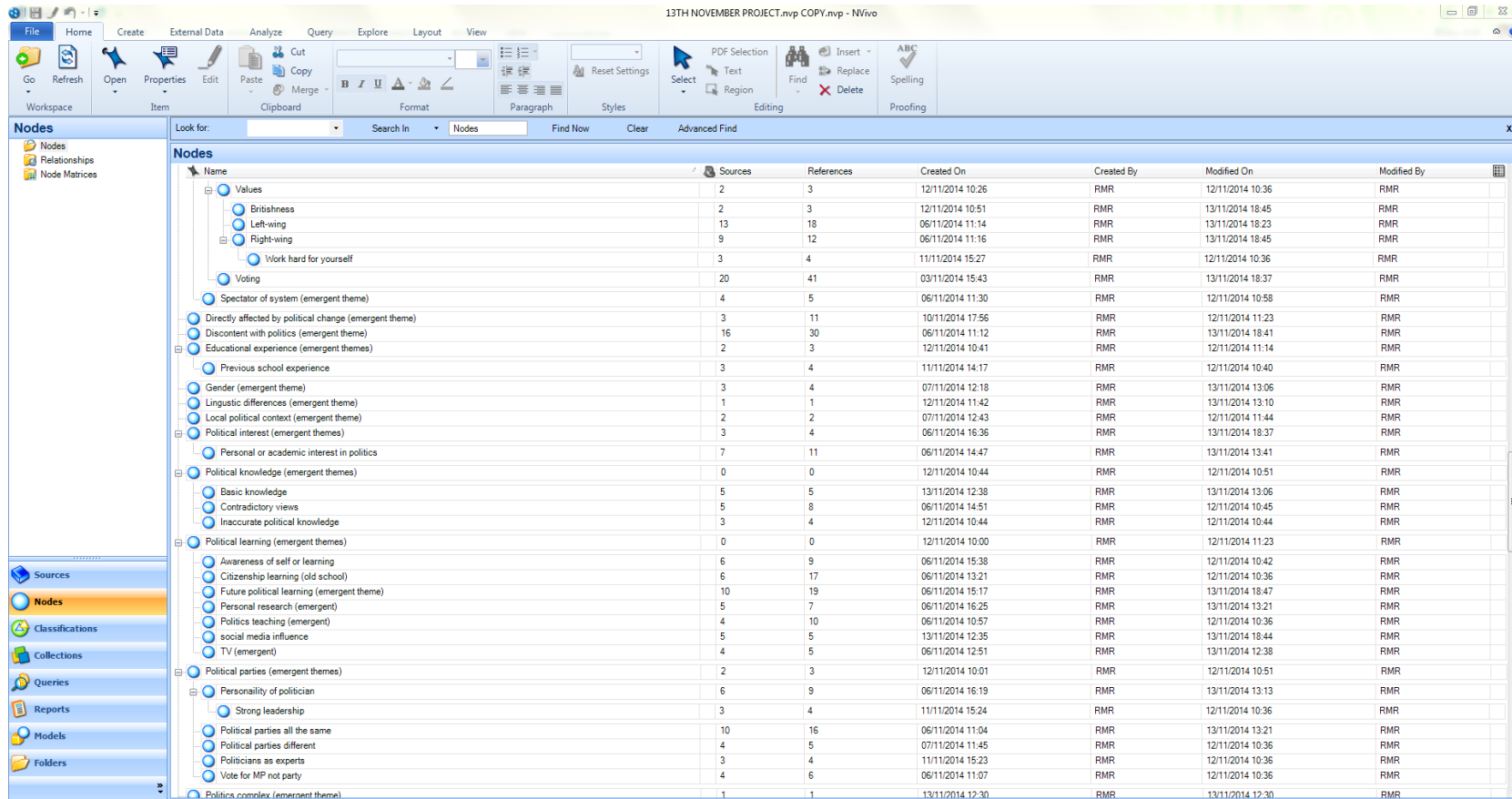
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**Nodes**

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Politically-orientated CoP	3	4	03/11/2014 15:04	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Legitimate peripheral participation	3	5	03/11/2014 15:08	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Scaffolding	7	10	03/11/2014 15:07	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
School or college CoP	12	25	03/11/2014 14:58	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Studying towards qualification associated with politics	7	11	06/11/2014 10:28	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
5. Political practice	2	4	03/11/2014 14:53	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Alternative	4	7	03/11/2014 14:54	RMR	13/11/2014 13:05	RMR
Alternative types	14	22	03/11/2014 15:40	RMR	13/11/2014 18:41	RMR
Challenge elite or hierarchical politics	6	7	03/11/2014 15:41	RMR	13/11/2014 13:18	RMR
Life politics	5	6	03/11/2014 15:46	RMR	13/11/2014 13:08	RMR
Emancipatory politics	4	6	03/11/2014 15:46	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Not supportive of late modernity politics (emergent)	8	19	06/11/2014 12:45	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Online	7	13	03/11/2014 15:49	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Identity management on internet	3	4	03/11/2014 15:50	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Limited capacity of social media (emergent theme)	4	5	06/11/2014 11:29	RMR	13/11/2014 18:38	RMR
Reflexive	5	8	03/11/2014 15:45	RMR	13/11/2014 12:29	RMR
Sub politics	3	4	03/11/2014 15:47	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
local politics (inside conventional boundaries)	4	5	03/11/2014 15:48	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Think global act local	4	5	03/11/2014 15:49	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Values	1	1	13/11/2014 11:31	RMR	13/11/2014 11:31	RMR
Conventional	7	10	03/11/2014 14:54	RMR	13/11/2014 13:04	RMR
Explanations	2	3	03/11/2014 15:36	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Alienation	5	6	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Apathy	4	7	03/11/2014 15:37	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Lack of knowledge and/or efficacy	14	34	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	13/11/2014 18:47	RMR
Lack of trust	8	12	12/11/2014 09:51	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Lifecycle	6	7	03/11/2014 15:38	RMR	13/11/2014 11:48	RMR
Political parties discussed	2	3	12/11/2014 09:54	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Conservatives	11	17	12/11/2014 09:54	RMR	13/11/2014 13:41	RMR
Green Party	8	15	12/11/2014 09:54	RMR	13/11/2014 12:52	RMR
Labour	10	13	12/11/2014 09:54	RMR	13/11/2014 13:15	RMR
UKIP	14	39	12/11/2014 09:54	RMR	13/11/2014 18:46	RMR
Political party involvement	6	9	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Contact with local MP	6	7	06/11/2014 11:33	RMR	13/11/2014 13:41	RMR
Values	2	3	12/11/2014 10:26	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR

RMR 130 items

Figure M 5: coding frame/conceptual lens after analysis (2)



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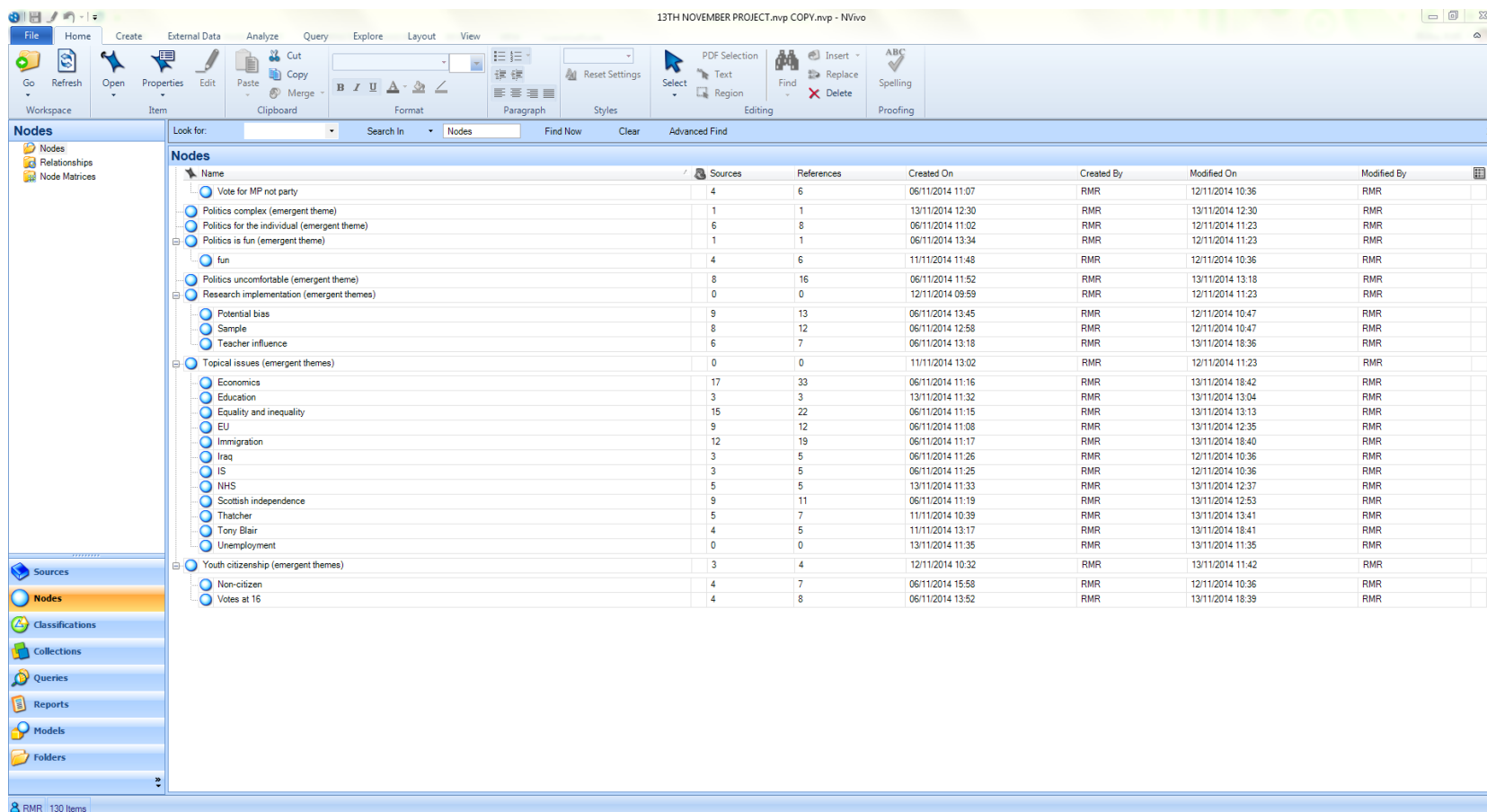
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Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Values	2	3	12/11/2014 10:26	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Britishness	2	3	12/11/2014 10:51	RMR	13/11/2014 18:45	RMR
Left-wing	13	18	06/11/2014 11:14	RMR	13/11/2014 18:23	RMR
Right-wing	9	12	06/11/2014 11:16	RMR	13/11/2014 18:45	RMR
Work hard for yourself	3	4	11/11/2014 15:27	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Voting	20	41	03/11/2014 15:43	RMR	13/11/2014 18:37	RMR
Spectator of system (emergent theme)	4	5	06/11/2014 11:30	RMR	12/11/2014 10:58	RMR
Directly affected by political change (emergent theme)	3	11	10/11/2014 17:56	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Discontent with politics (emergent theme)	16	30	06/11/2014 11:12	RMR	13/11/2014 18:41	RMR
Educational experience (emergent themes)	2	3	12/11/2014 10:41	RMR	12/11/2014 11:14	RMR
Previous school experience	3	4	11/11/2014 14:17	RMR	12/11/2014 10:40	RMR
Gender (emergent theme)	3	4	07/11/2014 12:18	RMR	13/11/2014 13:06	RMR
Linguistic differences (emergent theme)	1	1	12/11/2014 11:42	RMR	13/11/2014 13:10	RMR
Local political context (emergent theme)	2	2	07/11/2014 12:43	RMR	12/11/2014 11:44	RMR
Political interest (emergent themes)	3	4	06/11/2014 16:36	RMR	13/11/2014 18:37	RMR
Personal or academic interest in politics	7	11	06/11/2014 14:47	RMR	13/11/2014 13:41	RMR
Political knowledge (emergent themes)	0	0	12/11/2014 10:44	RMR	12/11/2014 10:51	RMR
Basic knowledge	5	5	13/11/2014 12:38	RMR	13/11/2014 13:06	RMR
Contradictory views	5	8	06/11/2014 14:51	RMR	12/11/2014 10:45	RMR
Inaccurate political knowledge	3	4	12/11/2014 10:44	RMR	12/11/2014 10:44	RMR
Political learning (emergent themes)	0	0	12/11/2014 10:00	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Awareness of self or learning	6	9	06/11/2014 15:38	RMR	12/11/2014 10:42	RMR
Citizenship learning (old school)	6	17	06/11/2014 13:21	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Future political learning (emergent theme)	10	19	06/11/2014 15:17	RMR	13/11/2014 18:47	RMR
Personal research (emergent)	5	7	06/11/2014 16:25	RMR	13/11/2014 13:21	RMR
Politics teaching (emergent)	4	10	06/11/2014 10:57	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
social media influence	5	5	13/11/2014 12:35	RMR	13/11/2014 18:44	RMR
TV (emergent)	4	5	06/11/2014 12:51	RMR	13/11/2014 12:38	RMR
Political parties (emergent themes)	2	3	12/11/2014 10:01	RMR	12/11/2014 10:51	RMR
Personality of politician	6	9	06/11/2014 16:19	RMR	13/11/2014 13:13	RMR
Strong leadership	3	4	11/11/2014 15:24	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Political parties all the same	10	16	06/11/2014 11:04	RMR	13/11/2014 13:21	RMR
Political parties different	4	5	07/11/2014 11:45	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Politicians as experts	3	4	11/11/2014 15:23	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Vote for MP not party	4	6	06/11/2014 11:07	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Politics complex (emergent theme)	1	1	13/11/2014 12:30	RMR	13/11/2014 12:30	RMR

Figure M 6: coding frame/conceptual lens after analysis (3)



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Workspace Item Clipboard Format Paragraph Styles Editing Proofing

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Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Vote for MP not party	4	6	06/11/2014 11:07	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Politics complex (emergent theme)	1	1	13/11/2014 12:30	RMR	13/11/2014 12:30	RMR
Politics for the individual (emergent theme)	6	8	06/11/2014 11:02	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Politics is fun (emergent theme)	1	1	06/11/2014 13:34	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
fun	4	6	11/11/2014 11:48	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Politics uncomfortable (emergent theme)	8	16	06/11/2014 11:52	RMR	13/11/2014 13:18	RMR
Research implementation (emergent themes)	0	0	12/11/2014 09:59	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Potential bias	9	13	06/11/2014 13:45	RMR	12/11/2014 10:47	RMR
Sample	8	12	06/11/2014 12:58	RMR	12/11/2014 10:47	RMR
Teacher influence	6	7	06/11/2014 13:18	RMR	13/11/2014 18:36	RMR
Topical issues (emergent themes)	0	0	11/11/2014 13:02	RMR	12/11/2014 11:23	RMR
Economics	17	33	06/11/2014 11:16	RMR	13/11/2014 18:42	RMR
Education	3	3	13/11/2014 11:32	RMR	13/11/2014 13:04	RMR
Equality and inequality	15	22	06/11/2014 11:15	RMR	13/11/2014 13:13	RMR
EU	9	12	06/11/2014 11:08	RMR	13/11/2014 12:35	RMR
Immigration	12	19	06/11/2014 11:17	RMR	13/11/2014 18:40	RMR
Iraq	3	5	06/11/2014 11:26	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
IS	3	5	06/11/2014 11:25	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
NHS	5	5	13/11/2014 11:33	RMR	13/11/2014 12:37	RMR
Scottish independence	9	11	06/11/2014 11:19	RMR	13/11/2014 12:53	RMR
Thatcher	5	7	11/11/2014 10:39	RMR	13/11/2014 13:41	RMR
Tony Blair	4	5	11/11/2014 13:17	RMR	13/11/2014 18:41	RMR
Unemployment	0	0	13/11/2014 11:35	RMR	13/11/2014 11:35	RMR
Youth citizenship (emergent themes)	3	4	12/11/2014 10:32	RMR	13/11/2014 11:42	RMR
Non-citizen	4	7	06/11/2014 15:58	RMR	12/11/2014 10:36	RMR
Votes at 16	4	8	06/11/2014 13:52	RMR	13/11/2014 18:39	RMR

Sources Nodes Classifications Collections Queries Reports Models Folders

RMR 130 items

Figure M 7: coding frame/conceptual lens after analysis (4)



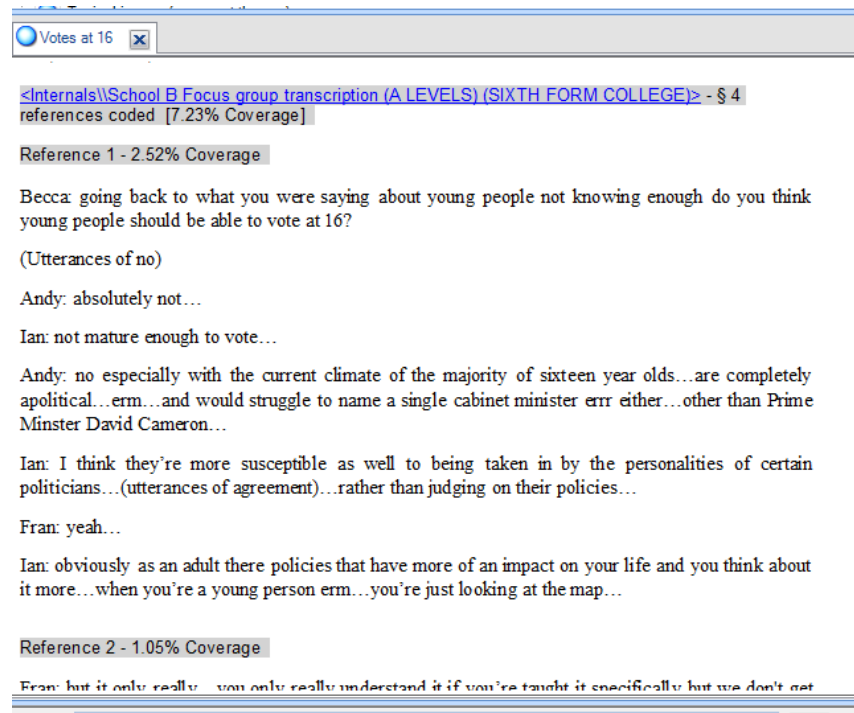


Figure M 8: example of codes linked to data.



Figure M 9: example of codes linked to data

Family influence (strong) [X]

Reference 1 - 3.14% Coverage

Becca: hmmm...ok let me see so yeah you...you...we've spoken about your home...and errr yeah like do you parents...did they ever, when you were growing up did they ever give you sort of direct political information... were they like this...stuff...give you stuff to read...how did they...

Tim: Yeah they'd sort of talk about like I remember I do remember one time my dad discussing with me... I was quite young... but he discussed how we were erm a socialist country and America was a capitalist country and sort of errr I sort of had when I was growing up I sort of had an idea of what capitalism and socialism was from quite an early age that capitalism was more geared towards sort of...towards sort of focusing on the free market where as socialism is more geared towards people... so yeah I sort of had those views when I was quite young

<Internals\\SCHOOL G Focus group transcription (FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE)> - § 4  
references coded [1.96% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.59% Coverage

Becca: so what else might, if you do politics, what do you do?

Sylvia: errr canvas, errr, you hand out leaflets, I've done it for my mum at times...I went out...there was one road she couldn't do cos of her back so she erm asked me for monetary benefits...(laughing)

Reference 2 - 0.28% Coverage

Becca: Ok, so how do you learn about your politics, like...

Figure M 10: example of codes linked to data

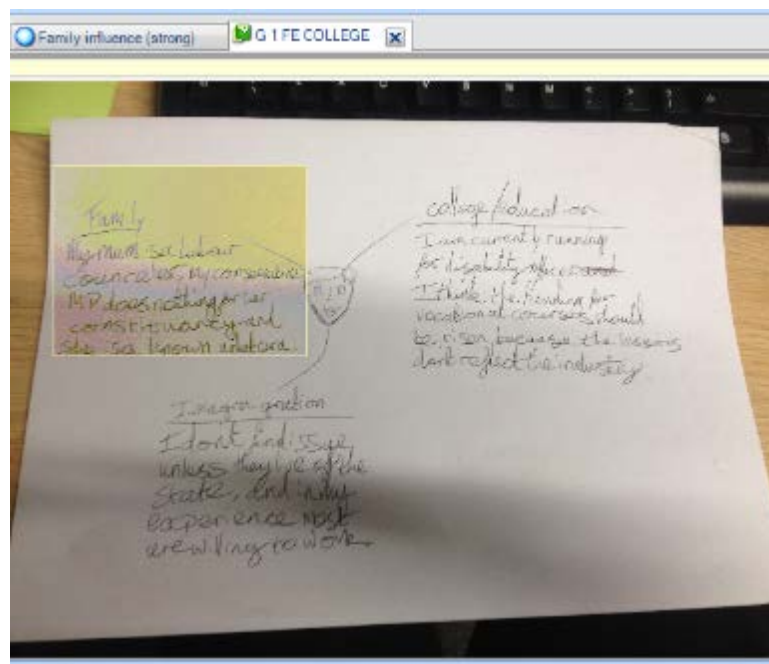


Figure M 11: example of codes linked to data.

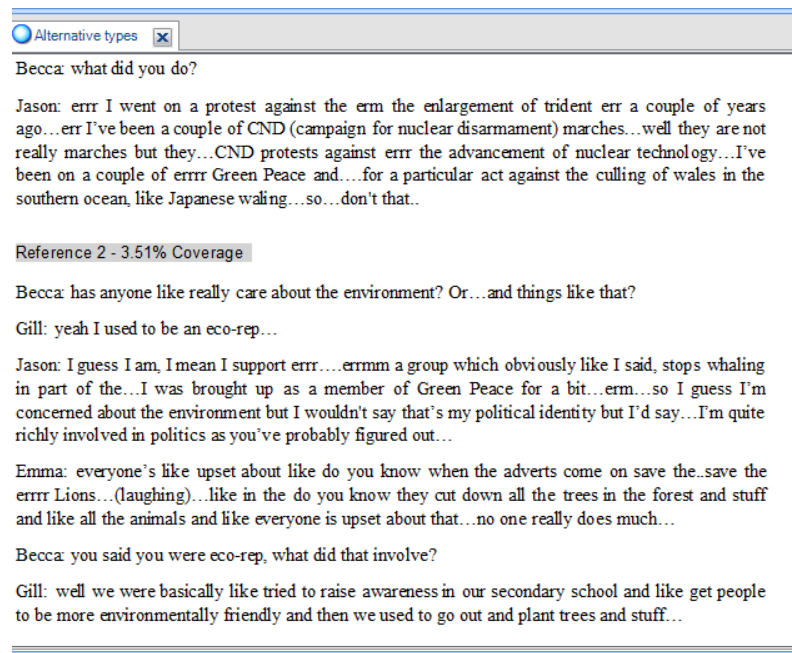


Figure M 12: example of codes linked to data

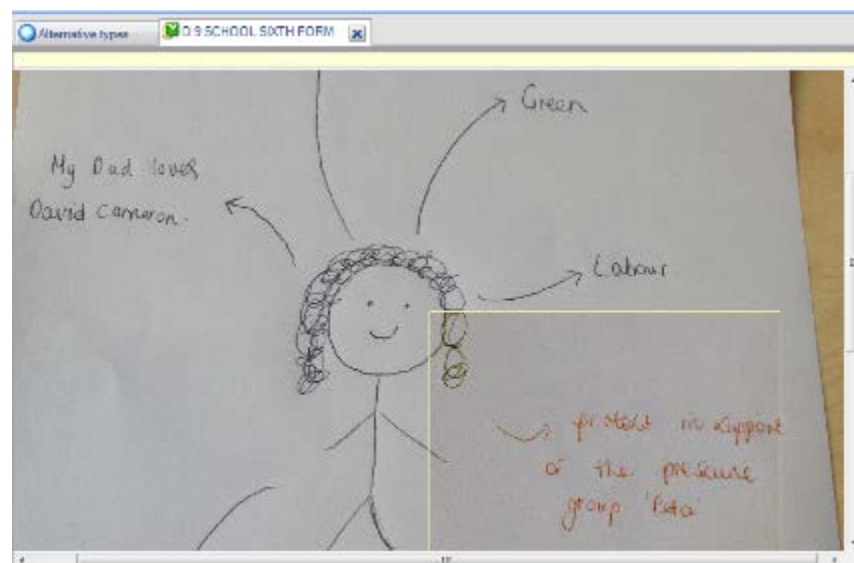


Figure M 13: example of codes linked to data



Figure M 14: example of codes linked to data

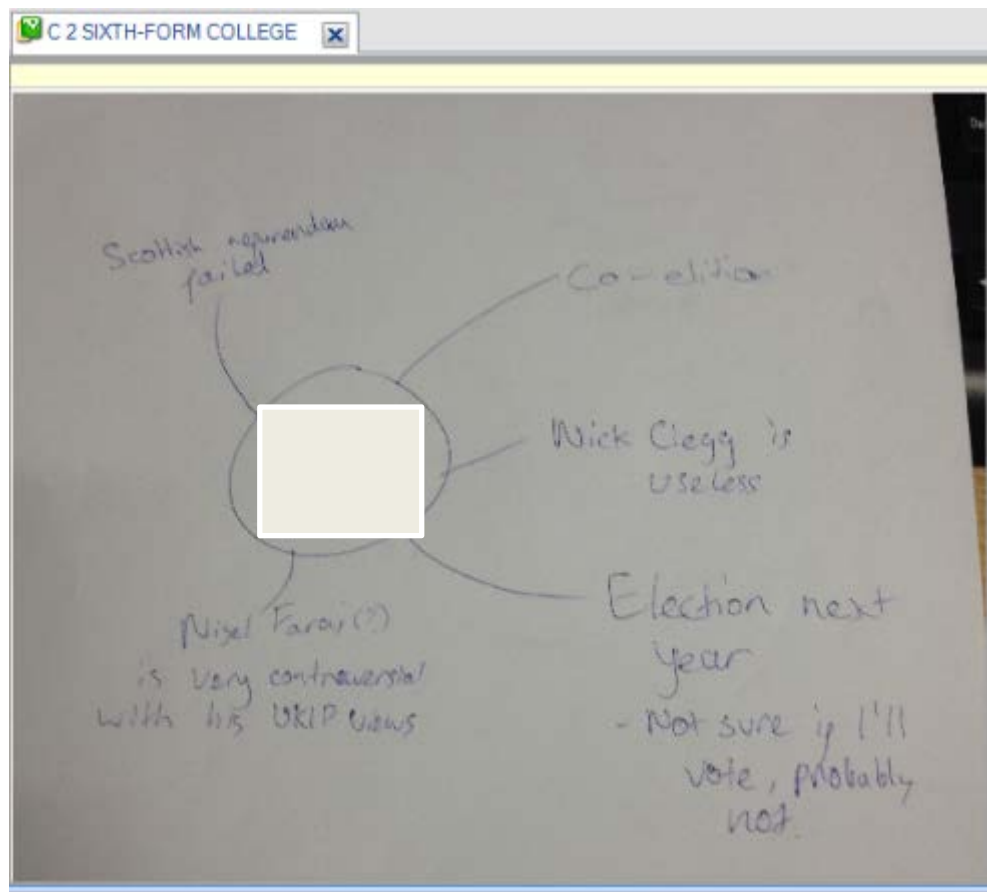


Figure M 15: example of political 'selfie' analysis

## M.5 Step 5

The data from each code (both ones developed before the analysis and the emergent codes) were then synthesised into themes to form the basis of a preliminary qualitative findings report. Each theme included data from all three of the qualitative methods (focus groups, interviews, and political 'selfies'). This was then refined by removing data that was deemed irrelevant to respond to the research questions. The focus group, interview, and political 'selfie' data were then combined with the quantitative survey data to form a first draft of a findings chapter.

## Appendix N Focus group transcription examples

### N.1 School G

Becca: so that's recording now...

Sylvia: Hi!

Mike: hello... Karl, say hello!

Karl: Hello...

Mike: hello.

Becca: so the first word is politics...

Mike: well what it means to us is we're part of a council and we all run cos we want to try and help...politics for us is just generally just want you know...we're trying talk amongst each other and try and get things fixed...try to debate it...

Sylvia: I don't think we'll ever get utopia but...

Mike: we can try and achieve it...

Sylvia: yes...

Mike: as much as we can...

Sylvia: the thing is about humans, we all want to be accepted by our views the way we dress the way we talk, I mean...one minor...erm thing that pops up, some people say scones I say scones...that...that will, that will want to be accepted...we want our view to be heard.

Mike: but yet you're probably get mocked because you sound different...some people will...

Sylvia: yeah...

Karl: everyone's forgetting that politics does come with money as well cos basically we're in say running our college or our student council or a student union, money comes into it...

Mike: or requires everything from everybody but not everyone pulls there weight...

Karl: no

Mike: it's like people come up with ideas, it's like, in my campaign, your campaign...even your campaign...we've all got ideas and then people say oh but I want that and that and then it's just not achievable...Yet some people will actually say...

Sylvia: well I think fundamental basics is that erm well first why is the role you're applying for, I mean chances are the Chancellor of the Exchequer... he's there to sort out the money..erm within...within local government what goes in, what departments get what...erm like the MOD or the home office, so erm...it all depends on what you're trying to go for and what your principals are...

Becca: so when I say politics...like what's the first thing that comes to your mind?

Mike: lies...

Karl: for me...politics comes into like everything like different parts of different parties first of all and also about one...about our president and how he runs....

Sylvia: we don't technically have a president, we have a prime minister...

Karl: oh president, prime minister...its just...

Mike: like Nick Clegg?

Sylvia: errr he's deputy...

Karl: he's like underneath the queen, so the queen could say something, he can say something to the queen and say 'oh can we have this?'...are we able to do it, and then they like...so you think that the queen and all the government parties are actually together...cos the queen actually runs the whole of the different, different parties...

Sylvia: I don't wanna say this but she's mainly a show figure...she's the one who opens the parliament...and then erm...I really don't wanna say this but she's not allowed to express her political views...there was a whole big argument between erm...Alex Sammond right at the end of errr the say yes or no Scottish referendum and basically David Cameron made an inappropriate comment...

Mike: oh he always does though...

Sylvia: yeah but it's about the queen...she

Mike: she has the power to take away the government if she wants...she does have that power, she's got a white glove...she can just get the white glove and say look I've had enough of you lot goodbye! That's it she's back in control...

Sylvia: yes...

Mike: because they cannot overturn that, cos she put that rule in place...

Sylvia: noooo her one of her predecessors...

(a lot of background noise)

Mike: to discuss you views really isn't it...do you think?

Sylvia: yes...

Mike: discuss you views and try and get people to hear what you think...

Sylvia: what you're trying to say...

Mike: yeah and see if other people think the same...

Sylvia: but people express their views all the time

Mike: true...is politics also getting involved?

Karl: in different variations...like how to get back in, how they can make...the country...

Sylvia: it's easier getting to the top than staying there, it's why David Cameron, no no not David Cameron, erm...Tony Blair (Mike shudders)...errr I'm using him as an example...he was in there for 7 years...

Mike: I know but...(makes noise as though he is shuddering)

Sylvia: it's hard getting to the top it really it...but staying for two terms or more...

Mike: how he managed that...we will never know...

Sylvia: how did thatcher just sail in?

Mike: Huh?

Sylvia: how did Thatcher come back...in the...errrr...it was the 83 or 84...elections...and I'll tell you why...the Falkland's war...she used that war to her advantage...

Mike: so using her strength to...he strength basically...so using that to get herself back in?

Sylvia: exactly...

Mike: it's exactly what everyone else does...

Sylvia: exactly...

Mike: they find a point that everyone will be interested in and use it to...

Sylvia: and I would bet a lot of money...the reason why Barack Obama got back in was because it was his administration that got rid of bin laden...I would not be surprised!

Becca: so what else might, if you do politics, what do you do?



Sylvia: errr canvas, errr, you hand out leaflets, I've done it for my mum at times...I went out...there was one road she couldn't do cos of her back so she erm asked me for monetary benefits...(laughing)

Becca: and what about you? What do you do?

Karl: me, I'm not really in the politics bit...I just listen to what's going on and how what...and the thing that I have trouble with...when you listen to it something's that David Cameron does, he doesn't actually say it upfront...he does it behind people back and when it hits you... you don't even know it's coming, you don't really know it's coming along...

Mike: well it's it's like the American government, they brought in things in like...they actually brought in a bill at the beginning of this year which caused...sorry it's a bit techy...but they brought in a secret bill, a quiet bill, they told nobody about it in the parliament, they brought it in and now, they can look at everybody's emails without having to ask literally...so...

Sylvia: they're trying to do that here...

Mike: it's just the fact that they've gone against constitutional rights...

Karl: that's when a riot can actually happen...that because if the government is actually...believe it or not the governments is actually meant to evolve...but actually what they're doing is actually...when they say it...they actually put it on the news each time they say it...so I think if they're gonna change say like child tax then want they have to say it...before they do it...so we know we're aware of it...

Sylvia: I wish I could text my mum cos she would be able to answer that perfectly...

Becca: ok, so talk about the next question...do you think politics just about voting and political parties...

Mike and Sylvia: no

Sylvia: Hell no.

Mike: there's a *lot* more to it than that...

Karl: for me one of them it's not...it's a part of it, it's a *part* of it, it's a part of it...it's...the politics is basically trying to make, try to make our, our country better in a way...

Sylvia: in somebody else's view...

Karl: yeah...but then in...we want someone in that that can actually keep our country up and running...and not fall back...and like that's why sometimes we have vote, we vote for political parties ...like you got erm...the new one...UKIP...

Mike: what about UKIP?

Karl: that they're trying to come in and they wanna get all...all....

Mike: yeah but this is their first year of actually getting into the top four, or is the top 5

Sylvia: top three..

Mike: top 3?! Ok so they're the top three...

Karl: they want to...

Mike: (much background noise at this point) because...the Lib Dems don't have anything good to offer...tax reductions...to help their life because they are saying ...

Karl: they want...

(all three are trying to speak and get a word in at the same time as they all have something to say)

Mike: yes ok...that peoples' wages are rising...but still people are suffering...

Sylvia: oh yeah...

Karl: what UKIP...what UKIP has actually tried doing....

Sylvia: my mum...

Karl: part of it is trying to get *us* to stay like as one country...like one country...not have all different...

Mike: yes that's what UKIP...that's another reason why UKIP got in...so we could leave the EU...that's another one of the big things...

Sylvia: I don't want...

Karl: when, the reason...

Sylvia: cos the European social fund...

Karl: I can tell there's one thing...

Mike: but the problem we've got is the European court...that's the one reason that everyone's a bit like well...people...got...you've got the European court...the European court they get control over our country because people have gone there...which is you know...

Sylvia: true...

Mike: you know...they've got completely different laws and...it just...

Sylvia: whilst I understand the argument for people who don't like the EU they're worried about their jobs and everything...

Mike: yeah but it's also the fact that if you look how much aid we give per year to the EU...compared ok yes...

Sylvia: true

Mike: this is not a great compassion but Spain and Italy...if you look, put those two countries together we still give three times more than them, if you put France and Germany together we give...less than them but not by much...we give a lot of money...

Karl: I was gonna say...erm...now...we're in the...in the euro thing ain't we? Like in...but then there's one thing that Margaret thatcher didn't do...she didn't put us in there, the second that took over from her...they did...

Mike: well...

Karl: she kept us out of it because that's how come we got into debt...

Sylvia: yes, but she also...(can't understand)...miners strikes, errr so many bad things happened to us...I to this day still feel the ramifications of what she did...

Mike: yes but a lot of the things she did actually helped as well...ok yes we had the miner strikes and a lot of people were against a lot of the things she was doing but if she didn't do them we wouldn't have thought about the economy at that time and we would've been in a worse state...

Sylvia: you mean the deficit...

Sylvia: yeah...all right I don't like football but I do know one really important thing...

Mike: go on...

Sylvia: Manchester United have ran about 6 point 8 billion pounds in deficit...

Mike: well that's no surprise cos they're one of the top league football teams...

Sylvia: exactly...we are a top running country...

Becca: so the next question what are your political and social values?

Sylvia: political...I want fairness... I don't want, I don't want errr the high earning billionaires to get the tax cut whilst we...whilst VAT has risen...my mum went absolutely AWOL when they, the government gave the erm the billionaires a tax cut, she went...*flipped!* One of the hardest things she has to deal with...

Mike: is paying a lot of tax...

Sylvia: no...City G...the are...the area a councillor for is one of the urm least affluent areas in the whole entire city and...she has people having to go to *food banks* to be able to...be able to *feed* their kids...*single parents*...the people on the low minimum wage are suffering...

Mike: this is why UKIP was one of the parties...that attracted people

Sylvia: that's why I'll be voting for Labour...

Becca: and will you be voting?

Karl: urrrrrrrr...in the next one...in the last one....

Sylvia: my mum went into politics...

Karl: the last one I actually missed...I actually missed it cos I actually for....I actually forgot the day it was actually meant to be...I went to where it was and it was actually the next day...so I missed my first vote...*but* I knew I was gonna vote for Labour because they don't, labour think...don't just think about the country, they think about the people that's in the country...and how they can...and how...I mean a load of old homes are getting destroyed *because* they are getting rid of them...if Labour come back in they can bring that back, old homes like people like...I mean I've got a nan at 90 years at 91 years old and she can barely even try to even feed *herself* because she's, she shakes a lot cos she's that old...she's got diabetes...so if we haven't got a home for them to go...how are they gonna...how are they gonna surv...how are they gonna survive?

## N.2 School C

Emma: (laughing) what is politics?

Eva: I don't really no...

Ava: me neither

(silence)

Eva: Ava: it's like parliament and like politicians (laughing)...they do stuff there don't they

Jason: well I guess for me politics is how the country is run and err who runs the country and how they run it and where its positioned, so it's mostly done in sort of London, Westminster...the Houses of Parliament...

Eva: that's what I said (speaking very quietly)

(Awkward laughing)

Peter: I agree

(more laughter from the girls)

Jamie: politics affects everything you do, how much things are, like...yeah...how...how you can do things in your everyday life like if a bus fare is raised you can't use the bus, if petrol's made too expensive you can't use your car that sort of thing...

Jenny: and don't we elect MPs and then the MPs go to the houses of parliament or something...? And then they all vote and stuff...

Emma: wait so, I thought an MP was a person who run for like to be prime minister...

Jason: Member of Parliament...

Emma: yeah...so what's...

(Silence)

Eva: MP.....

(Laughing)

Jason: there are ministers but they're not not all MPs are ministers...

Ava: so how can we run things?

Jason: well you've got to be in your party...there's a party elections um inside the people who are in the party and then they they essentially decide if they want them to be into the next election so...um...after this next election in 2015...there's most likely going to be party election where they'll pick who they think is gonna best candidate they want for Prime Minister and ministers are also made up when someone's in parliament around different vicinities so you're minister of education, trade things like that...

Emma: so you can't do it basically

(Laughing)

Ava: I thought Boris Johnson was running for MP?

Emma: no he's like...mayor London or something isn't he?

Charlie: yeah but he is isn't he?

Jason: he's dropping his...his dropping his Mayorship to run as an MP...cos he's not an MP yet

Ava: and then, does that mean he could be prime minister?

Jason: yeah he could be but he's...

Ava: I'd vote for him

(Laughing)

Jenny: he's an idiot

Jason: I think a lot of people would...but yeah you're right I think he's an idiot but erm...but yeah you have to be an MP to run as prime minister like we couldn't right now do it...would be cool but we can't...

Eva: why is Boris Johnson an idiot?

Emma: he like doesn't know like the price of milk and stuff and he's like...whenever he talks in an interview or whatever... I watched that milk interview, I don't know why (laughter)...he was like, he was being like really stupid and he has this stupid haircut and like he was on like that zip wire thing...he's such an embarrassment...

(lots of laughing from the girls)

Ava: he's so funny

Jason: the thing is though that's what appeals to people is that he's funny not the fact that he's actually politically unsound and the fact that he has no idea really how to run the country but because he's funny people vote for him...and that's what he rides on essentially...

Charlie: do you think David Cameron's a good prime minister?

Jenny: who's Nick Clegg?

(laughing quietly)

Ava: Nick Clegg... the coalition...

Eva: what is a coalition?

Ava: it's like there's two parties together because there wasn't enough votes or something...

Eva: oh yeah

(Quiet laughing and then silence)

Eva: does he give prime minister. Does he... (can't understand here)

Jamie: no (laughing)

(Laughing)

Charlie: did he make the fees like £9000 a year?

Jason: yeah

Jamie: yeah...

Ava: didn't Nick Clegg say if he became prime minister he was gonna lower...

Jason: that's why everyone hates Nick Clegg when he said...he said that if they got into power the lib dems...that he would freeze and stop tuition fees going up from I think it was 6 or 3 grand and then he didn't have the power to stop David Cameron and that's why everyone hates the Lib Dems and Nick Clegg at the moment...

Ava: but that's not really his fault...if he didn't have enough power...

Jason: well he promised it and the problem is when you make a promise as a politician everyone expects you to do it and they really do and that's why....and because students are such a big body of voters errr that's why he's hated so much...

(Silence)

Emma: doesn't like benefits have to do with politics and that...

Jason: yeah they control how much benefit's given to people

Ava: so politics pretty much controls everything that happens in our country...

Jason: yeah

Emma: what does the queen do then?

Ava: yeah what does the queen do?

Jason: nothing

(Lots of taking all together)

Jamie: tourist attraction....

(Laughing)

Emma: she probably doesn't even remember what she has for breakfast somedays...

(Laughing)

Becca: so is politics just about voting and political parties?

Ava: nooo...there's loads more to it....

Jason: it depends what political parties do...

Pete: well politics like he said controls everything we do...it's not just about voting for political parties...

(Utterances of agreement)

Becca: so what else might you do that's political then, like yourselves, rather than vote?

Jason: protest I guess...

(Utterances of agreement)

Jason: I've done that a few times...

Becca: what did you do?

Jason: errr I went on a protest against the erm the enlargement of trident err a couple of years ago...err I've been a couple of CND (campaign for nuclear disarmament) marches...well they are not really marches but they...CND protests against errr the advancement of nuclear technology...I've been on a couple of errrr Green Peace and....for a particular act against the culling of wales in the southern ocean, like Japanese waling...so...don't that..

Becca: has anyone else done anything they would consider political?

Charlie: does like signing petitions and...stuff considered political?

Emma: I was psychology class rep last year...does that count...does that count?

(Laughing)

Jenny: I don't think it's very political though...

Emma: well I didn't do a speech or anything but it's still like....

(Laughing)

Becca: you were representing people?

Emma: yeah exactly...people *came* to me...

Jason: what did you do?

Emma: I like, I went to the like this meeting once...

(Laughing)



Jason: once....

(Laughing)

Emma: they're just like... like how can you like what are the problems you having in psychology and...like what...what do you want in your lesson and stuff and then you had to ask people in your class like...what they like and stuff....

Jenny: yeah I got loads of emails from loads of psychology students...

Emma: that Lucy girl organised it all and she was rubbish... I should have been...

Ava: she was in my lesson

Emma: she's in my photography...

(Silence)

Emma: that's a bit off topic...

(Laughing)

Becca: so would you say that you're interested in politics as a, most of you are interested or? What do you think?

(Hmmmmmm from many)

Pete: I'm not uninterested....

Eva: yeah I'm not uninterested... just not interested...

Ava: I don't think *I know* enough about it to be interested...like fully interested...

Eva: it's more like adults that get involved in...with that





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