

**Negotiating Citizenship Practices:
Expressions of citizenship in the lives of youth-in-care in Greater Victoria**

by

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B.A.H., Queen's University, 2004
M.A., Ryerson University, 2006

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Sociology

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Abstract

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Expressions of youth citizenship are evident in young people's actions, behaviours, and embodied experiences. Young people in late (post) modernity occupy a liminal position when it comes to citizenship. On the one hand, they are conceived of as rights-bearers with particular responsibilities to themselves and others; at the same time, they are presumed to belong to a family unit that will take care of their major interests. Young people with government care experience (henceforth referred to as "youth-in-care") practice citizenship at an intersection of private and public in their lives as wards of the state. They are expected to belong to foster families of some sort, even though this kind of living situation is often temporary, fragmented, and unsettling. In an era of self-responsibility and rights claims, being unmoored from traditional family life illustrates some of the inherent tensions of practicing citizenship. While youth citizenship literature has proliferated in the last two decades, the focus has often been on rights and responsibilities, rather than the differences in citizenship practices amongst youth themselves. Expressions of citizenship by youth-in-care are contextualized by internal and external factors that shape these young people's lives. Furthermore, the history, politics, cultural difficulties and social implications of child protection systems have received much attention from academics and policy-makers, but research on youth-in-care as citizens remains rare. This dissertation explores the gap in the literature by looking at the ways that citizenship is complex, multilayered, and fluid for this group of young people. A qualitative research design is used to examine how youth-in-care practice citizenship in their daily lives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants between the ages of 14-24 in Greater Victoria, all of whom had been in government care at some point in their lives (n= 20). Transcripts were coded using an analytical hierarchy strategy. Findings indicate that the social group in question – youth-in-care – practiced citizenship in a multitude of ways, and that it was important to take situational or social context into consideration when examining how they expressed citizenship. Analysis of participants' narratives revealed three types of citizenship practices, namely self-responsible citizenship, dissenting citizenship and reluctant citizenship. Expressions of citizenship were navigated through experiences of self-responsibility and rights, belonging and exclusion, and risk and resilience. Citizenship, therefore, is best understood through behaviour and actions, as well as enacted and embodied by participants themselves. For youth-in-care, citizenship practices matter in

their relationships with others, the ways they experience belonging and exclusion, and the discourses of resiliency and vulnerability which emerge from their narratives. The dissertation concludes with a consideration of the implications of the findings for the literature on youth citizenship, focusing on the ways that youth citizenship is contextualized by experiences with family, peers, institutions, and the government care system.

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Acknowledgements

Many people helped in the completion of this project, and I am very grateful for all of the assistance. I am so thankful to my supervisor, Cecilia Benoit, for her encouragement, patience, and kindness throughout this journey. I am grateful to Doug Magnuson for sharing his knowledge and experience with the government care system, and for encouraging me to think of the many ways that social workers and MCFD make the lives of children and youth better each day. I want to thank Karen Kobayashi for all her assistance throughout my time at UVic, and for always making time to listen when I needed help. I am also grateful to Helga Hallgrimsdottir for her thoughtful contributions throughout the dissertation process. As well, I want to acknowledge the help of my fellow graduate students, without whom this exercise would have felt very lonely. I am also incredibly grateful to the staff of the Victoria Youth Clinic: I am truly amazed at the wonderful work you do, and you are inspiration as to how to best serve young people in our community. Thank you so much for allowing me to use your space and talk to your clients. Finally, I am so very thankful to my wonderful family: my parents, my siblings, and my Toronto family for always cheering me on, asking questions and never doubting that I would finish, and to Sam and James who support me every day and whom I love so much.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the participants in my study who shared their pasts, their presents, and their futures with me. This research would not have been possible without their generosity of time and spirit.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

Young people in late (post) modern societies¹ negotiate citizenship through competing discourses of rights and responsibilities, risk and resiliency, and belonging and exclusion. As such, citizenship practices illustrate the tensions that emerge for youth as they navigate between being seen as actors in their own right, and conversely, as a population that is *acted upon* by policies governing young people. One area of policy that is particularly relevant to youth citizenship is child welfare: in recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of the young person, the family, and the government on realizing the “best interests” of the child (Hughes, 2006, p. 108). For youth who find themselves subject to the child welfare system through placement in government care [henceforth referred to as “youth-in-care”²], practicing citizenship occurs in a context of change, which may involve new or different living situations, family structures and relationships, rules and expectations, and sources of support. Accordingly, youth-in-care express citizenship in the home through experiences with the foster family unit, as well as in the public sphere, in relations with social workers, the judicial system, the community, and other institutions. Citizenship practices become part of the youth’s broader narratives about self, belonging, and resiliency.

In this dissertation, I explore how youth-in-care can be viewed as having both opportunities and challenges in enacting citizenship claims, and how expressions of

¹ I use the term late (post) modernity to refer to the continuities between modern and late-modern societies, but also to acknowledge the discontinuities that accompany this shift (Carroll and Ratner, 1996, p. 2).

² “Youth-in-care” refers to both youth currently in the care system and those who have previously been in care.

citizenship emerge even when individuals find themselves in uncertain circumstances. As wards of the state, youth-in-care have had experiences with the social services system, and tend to be aware of the legalities around making decisions about their own rights. However, these youth also face numerous inequities around health care, education, work, and family support (Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2005; Fisher et al., 1986; Masten, 2006). Youth-in-care are not necessarily in a worse place to practice citizenship than those who are not in care, but they do exemplify some of the challenges of citizenship for marginalized groups of people. If citizenship is about expressing ones' ideas and being part of a community, what does this look like for youth who belong to (and face exclusion from) a variety of communities, families, and social groups?

The legitimatization of the idea that youth are citizens *now* can be traced in part to a proliferation of interest in the rights of young people due to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] adopted by the United Nations in 1989 (Covell and Howe, 2001, 2007). The UNCRC delineates the rights of young people around the world to provision, protection, and participation, and remains an important starting point for discussions about youth rights and citizenship (Reynaert, Bouverne-De Bie and Vandeveld, 2009, p. 518). As Beauvais, McKay, and Seddon (2001) note, the UNCRC places an emphasis on the autonomy of young people, particularly as it relates to the best interests of the child or youth in question. As such, youth citizenship has taken on an increasingly individualized focus in which the meaning of being a citizen is no longer related to acquiring certain inalienable or universal rights, but instead, is made real through the lived experiences of each individual. Citizenship is expressed by youth in their daily lives, and is contextualized by their experiences and relationships with peers,

family, foster and otherwise, and institutions. To better understand how and why citizenship matters - if it does indeed matter - to young people, I examine the citizenship practices of a particular group of youth, those who have been in government care. This is a story about youth-in-care negotiating citizenship in their daily lives, which is made richer by the insights these young people share about family life, trust, belonging, voice, and resiliency.

1.2 Background to doctoral research

My interest in studying youth-in-care has emerged from work and volunteer experiences with young people on a variety of projects over the past six years in the Greater Victoria area. One of my first experiences with community engagement of youth in the region began in 2006 through a program called “YouthScape”, which was funded by the J.W. McConnell Foundation. YouthScape brought together five communities from across the country with the goal of experimenting with directly granting youth money in order to complete community engagement projects. Each community put forth ideas about how to best pursue a strategy of directly granting to youth, how to best create supportive adult ally teams, and how to best evaluate the functioning of these processes. My role in this initiative was as co-founder and co-coordinator of the Victoria site through a program called YouthCore. In this capacity, I conducted research with many youth participants on issues around community engagement in Greater Victoria. Since that time, YouthCore has continued to build community capacity and youth leadership opportunities, while also working on collaborative projects to support initiatives “by youth for youth” around the city (Youthcore.ca). From this project, I learned how

different many young peoples' experiences were - in terms of making decisions about their lives - from my own. Many of the young people with whom I was dealing seemed to be acting as adults at a younger age than I and my peers had done. These young people seemed to have a lot more to lose, simply because their support systems were so much more limited. As I was going through the stages of emergent adulthood, it was fascinating to see youth who were quite a bit younger than me having similar challenges and issues.

My other major interest in youth engagement came through my work as a mentor to marginalized youth through two different organisations: one in Ontario and another in British Columbia. In all, I spent eight years as a mentor and worked with four different young people, including one girl for five years. During these experiences, I kept re-visiting the uncertainty that plagued the lives of these children, especially around issues of family, home, and community. Furthermore, I came to realize how mentorship programs - while placing an emphasis on the individual - could actually hide structural issues and problems. As a youth mentor, I was encouraged to engage the child in question in the community, in homework routines, and in practices that suggested 'good' citizenship. What was rarely taken into account was that these interventions into young people's lives seemed to miss basic issues such as food, shelter, and safety. Instead these programs focused on school or personal hygiene, concerns that were often rather unimportant in these young peoples' lives.

Throughout my time working and volunteering with youth in a 'front-line' capacity, I continued to be impressed by the passion, commitment, and interest of young people in the Victoria area with projects of social justice and community engagement.

As I became immersed in the literature on the rights of youth as laid out by the UNCRC, I began to wonder what this document actually meant for young people in their daily lives. Did citizenship mean anything to young people, either as a term or as a practice? In what ways, if at all, is the UNCRC - which lays out general principles to guide the practices of countries, institutions, and organisations dealing with young people - beneficial for youth-in-care? Moreover, as others have suggested (Reynaert et al. 2009; Stammers, 1999) the UNCRC relies upon a language of universal human rights in order to legitimate the imposition of norms and ideas which are often based in western, liberal democratic principles: perhaps these rights and/or their UNCRC articulation are not meaningful for young people in their actual lives? Furthermore, questions remain about whether rights themselves are a useful way of dealing with complex issues that are rooted in cultural, historical, and social contexts (Clement, 2008). As such, with my dissertation, I was interested in tying together my experiences from working with youth in Victoria with the problems and challenges posed by a universal document such as that of the UNCRC.

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of my dissertation, which investigates how youth-in-care practice citizenship, are as follows: 1) to explore how youth-in-care envision themselves as practicing citizenship; 2) to discover how youth-in-care navigate questions of belonging; 3) to examine how citizenship practices shape understandings of self. I address these objectives throughout the dissertation, and return to them in more detail in Chapter 7.

1.4 Operationalizing concepts

All participants in my study have been in government care at some point in their lives. I use the term government care to refer to “young people who indicated that at some point in their lives they had lived in a foster home, group home, or been on a Youth Agreement” (Smith, Stewart, Poon, Saewyc and the McCreary Centre Society, 2011, p.10). “Youth Agreements” are “for young people aged 16-18 who are homeless, or can no longer live with their families, but for whom government care is not a suitable alternative; instead, they are provided with financial support for housing and food while they attend school” (Ibid). Youth-in-care, therefore, refers to youth who have either been in government care at some point in their lives, or have been on youth agreements.

Approximately 3% of British Columbia youth in Grades 7-12 have been in government care at some point in their lives (Smith et al., 2011), and 1% have been in care in the past year (Ministry of Children and Family Development [MCFD], 2010, p. 1).³ Besides the 8000 children and youth currently in care, there were also almost 7000 young people living in other care arrangements in 2009: including 4500 children living with relatives under the Child in the Home of a Relative program, 300 children living in “kith and kin”⁴ arrangements and out of care placements, another 1,500 First Nations children living in the home of a relative in the federally administered Guardianship Financial Assistance program on reserves, and over 600 youth per year living

³ There are approximately 8000 youth-in-care in B.C. out of a total of 965,698 people aged, 19 and under in the province (B.C. Statistics, 2011).

⁴ As discussed further below, kith-and-kin relationships refer to arrangements between extended families or community members, the Ministry of Children and Family Development [MCFD], and a youth or child who may be on the precipice of entering care. These arrangements attempt to keep the child in question close to home, particularly in the case of interim or temporary custody (Hughes, 2006, p. 99).

independently on Youth Agreements (B.C. Representative of Children and Youth [RCY], 2009, p. 13).⁵

The demographics of the population of young people in care illustrate that some groups are overrepresented. First, there is considerable overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in the care system: in 2010 there were 4,628 Aboriginal youth-in-care, which is approximately 50% of the care population (MCFD, 2010, p. 1), while only making up approximately 7% of the general population of children in the province (Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2005: ii). Second, in terms of sexual orientation, youth who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT) are also more likely to have experiences in government care: in the 2011 Fostering Potential study, 12% of youth-in-care identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, while the numbers of LGBT youth in the province are likely lower (Smith et al., 2011, p. 12). LGBT youth face unique challenges within the care system, and often feel like their voices are not being heard (Ragg, Patrick and Ziefert, 2006). Sources of support for youth can become sources of stress when youth reveal sexual identity (Ibid, p. 245). Finally, it appears that recent immigrants and refugees, or youth who are “newcomers” to Canada, also face particular challenges being in and leaving care, and may be overrepresented in care systems (Hare, 2007). Government care can be a time of great uncertainty for newcomer youth: not only are they dealing with the foster care system, they also have to handle all the challenges associated with immigration and/or refugee status. These youth are particularly

⁵ It is possible that number of children who are in the care of MCFD may increase as the discontinuation of the Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program may necessitate a move to the care system by children currently in the CIHR program.

vulnerable prior to coming into care and are again vulnerable during the transition to independence (Ibid).

The term youth also requires some explanation, for it remains contested, not only because of discrepancies in what age constitutes a 'youth', but also due to conceptual concerns as to whether chronological age itself is a useful way to look at a category of people. Gauthier (2003) argues that , 'youth' is an unstable sociological category; understanding youth in this way puts the emphasis for the treatment of young people on potentially arbitrary biological and/or demographic factors. Many of the markers, therefore, that researchers use to determine who constitutes 'youth' are actually fluid boundaries marking social and cultural change (Mitchell, 2006; Settersten Jr., 2005).⁶ Youthhood is also seen as a time of transition or as a 'coming of age'. Youth are portrayed as being between childhood and adulthood, but can be defined as either or as neither (Maira, 2009, p. 14). As well, the term youth has the potential to imply a kind of homogeneity of experience, ignoring the many differences between and amongst young people. Youth as a social group is best understood as a category that is cross-cut in relation to ethnicity, gender, class, race, religion, disability, and sexual orientation (Banaji, 2008, p. 556).

Discussions about youth also illustrate the many uncertainties around which age group is being referenced (Beauvais et al., 2001, p. 4). Age-based definitions of youth are tied to the naturalisation of the social order, which shapes the ways that populations are managed through cultural, political, and economic processes (Cole and Durham, 2007, p. 2). Furthermore, youth-in-care have often experienced independence at an

⁶ As life course researchers have demonstrated, this fluidity and ambiguity in terms of chronological age is evident in other stages of the life course as well.

earlier age than youth without care experience. This may mean that they display some characteristics of emergent adults, as well as youth. Emergent adulthood can be described as a defined period beginning with the end of adolescence to the beginning of young adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This period of life involves increased independence from social norms and expectations, an exploration of work and relationships, and a generally optimistic outlook towards the possibilities life has to offer (Arnett, 2000, 2004). Emergent adulthood has evolved over the last 70 years due to demographic shifts in the age of marriage and parenthood, job choices and locations, and increasing levels of education amongst young people (Marcus, 2009, p. 189). These changes, along with the economic, political, social, and cultural consequences of globalization, are important in understanding the differences between youth and emergent adults.

Not all individuals enter into emergent adulthood at the same age: street-involved youth, typically framed as being ‘at risk’, appear to move beyond adolescence towards emergent adulthood while in their early to mid teens (Benoit, Jansson and Roth, 2008). Similarly, in their longitudinal study on ‘Inventing Adulthoods’, Thomson, Holland, Bell, Henderson and Sharpe (2004) suggest transitions to adulthood are differentiated and structured by social class; for example, there are accelerated transitions for working class youth and extended transitions for middle class youth. In North America, this kind of extended transition can be seen through the “boomerang kids” phenomenon, where young adults return to the parental home after an initial launch into the outside world (Mitchell, 2006).

It is clear that young people today construct adulthood (and therefore youthhood) in different and innovative ways and often have relational and individualized

understandings of what adulthood means – understandings that move beyond the so-called ‘formal’ markers of adulthood (Thomson et al., 2004). The choices that young people make may be motivated by competing models of adulthood and youthhood, which are structured by gender, locality, ethnicity, and social class (Ibid, p.229). For instance, Sharkey and Shields (2008) claim that “Youth from socio-economically challenged families, those who are marginalized or stigmatized, ‘young mothers’ or ‘high school drop-outs’, violate one or another cherished tenet of a society and stand out from their peers by not following ‘traditional’ lifecourse expectations” (243). Being a ‘youth’ may have different meanings and implications for young people, depending on both internal and external factors which constrain and enable the choices and opportunities they face.

Another indicator of the fluidity that exists around the concept of youthhood is evident when examining the age limits set out by youth-serving organisations and services in the Greater Victoria region and the province more generally. The Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Network, which is a youth-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to youth who are or have been in care, uses the age range of 14-24 in their definition of youth (Federation of B.C. Youth In Care Network, n.d.). YouthCore, a Victoria based youth portal, which is meant to give young people a place to connect online, targets youth ages 14-25. The Victoria Youth Clinic serves youth ages 12-24 at its two locations. The Alliance Drop-In Club serves youth ages 13-19 for their drop-in programs, although participants in my study mentioned that these drop-ins sometimes allow older youth to come in when there is a need. The youth shelter in Victoria, the Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter, is for youth ages 12-18; youth who are older than 18

are expected to use the regular shelter system. The age range I chose is also reflected in the new guidelines for the RCY, who now has jurisdiction for youth up to the age of 24.

Even with the ambiguities around using the term ‘youth’, I still find it to be a useful descriptor of the participants in my study. I do not see this term as being as unstable a category as Gauthier (2003) does, in the sense that youth *do* share common characteristics that go beyond simply chronology. There are identifiable, shared experiences of individuals who are considered by themselves and others to be differentiated from adults and from children, especially the tensions that youth face between dependence and independence. Using a classifying term allows for an identification of the similarities that these participants share, even though the differences are pronounced. I also prefer the term youth to emergent adults, for many of the young people in my study group do not exhibit attitudes or behaviours consistent with emergent adulthood. In terms of age range, I use 14 to 24 as my definition of youth, which is consistent with the group of young people served by many youth organisations and service-providers here in Victoria, as evidenced by the brief survey in the previous paragraph. Finally, I also use the term ‘young people’ in my writing, even though this expression is not always thought to be synonymous with ‘youth’. I take this practice from Hartas (2008), who uses the term “young people” to refer to anyone under the age of, 18 and from Kemper (2007) who uses the term as a general category for considered to be children or youth.

1.5 Why youth-in-care?

The social group of ‘youth-in-care’ encompasses a wide variety of individuals, who will have had very different experiences with the care system. However, there are some similarities that are worth mentioning. Before I discuss the structural and systemic barriers that youth-in-care face, it is important to note that there are many former youth-in-care who are thriving. As the resiliency literature suggests, there are numerous internal and external protective features that young people develop which allow them to do well even under difficult circumstances (Ungar, 2004). Furthermore, in British Columbia, youth-in-care experience government care differently, and there are many young people who have gone through the system who are leaders in their communities (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care, n.d; RCY, 2009; Smith et al., 2011).

Notwithstanding these success stories, however, many youth-in-care, in B.C. and across the country, face numerous challenges both while in care and when they leave care (Callahan and Swift, 2007; Parton, 2006; Parton, Thorpe and Wattam, 1997). For instance, while children in care and those in the general population experienced the same common health conditions, those in care were diagnosed for these conditions 1.2 to 1.4 times more often than children in the general population (Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2005, p. ii).⁷ Furthermore, young women in continuing care became pregnant 4 times more often than young women who had never been in care (Ibid). As for what these health statistics mean for young people, one telling indicator is that youth between the ages of 19 and 25 who used to be in care experience poorer health indicators than those who were not (Ibid, p. iii). Youth in the care system also report high

⁷ While youth who have been in care are often compared to the general youth population, this is perhaps not the best population to use as a comparison. Many youth who end up in the government care system are marginalized to begin with, due to a variety of individual and systemic factors, including poverty, discrimination, parental or familial abuse or neglect, racism, or other factors.

percentages of abuse (Beauvais et al., 2001, p. 62) as well as neglect. Furthermore, youth who have been in care are at a higher risk of being involved with the youth justice system: 36% of youth-in-care appeared before youth court, in contrast to less than 5% of the general youth population (RCY, 2009, p. 14). These youth are also more likely to be identified as having educational special needs as compared to the rest of the youth population (RCY, 2009).

Moreover, leaving care has been shown to be a traumatic and difficult experience for many youth, as their social support systems can be limited (Munson, Lee, Miller, Cole, Nedelcu, 2013). Youth who have been in care tend to have fewer resources, both financial and otherwise, while in care as well as when they leave (Fisher et al., 1986; Masten, 2006). There are some programs from the provincial government aimed at helping former youth-in-care: in 2008, MCFD established the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program that helps former youth-in-care ages 19-24 transition into adulthood by providing financial assistance for living expenses, child care, tuition costs, and health care (MCFD, n.d.b). However, this kind of program does not reach all youth who need it (according to Woolley (2013) only 7.5% receive an AYA most years), and many young people remain unaware of the help that is out there. Youth leaving care with mental health challenges also face hardships when experiencing adulthood for the first time (Munson et al., 2013). Furthermore, many youth leaving care need practical help locating housing, educational programs, and jobs as well as sustained and meaningful emotional support.

1.6 My approach

In my dissertation, I use an intersectional perspective, which involves “the concurrent analyses of multiple, intersecting sources of subordination/oppression, and is based on the premise that the impact of a particular source of subordination may vary, depending on its combination with other potential sources of subordination (or relative privilege)” (Denis, 2008, p. 677). Intersectional perspectives provide a way of understanding how social problems are identified and experienced in order to better reflect the multiplicities of lived experiences (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2002, p. 23). An intersectional perspective illustrates *how* individuals occupy complex and dynamic social locations and indicates where identities may be more or less relevant depending on the historical, cultural, or social context (Hanivsky and Cormier, 2009, p. 5). Perspectives on difference - including those that pay attention to intersections of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and age - are particularly useful within youth studies (Green and Singleton, 2006, p. 854).⁸

With this critique in mind, I find an intersectional perspective to be useful for thinking about the ways citizenship itself is experienced. While other theoretical perspectives may also consider how differences are experienced, intersectionality approaches allow for an exploration of how differences are interconnected and mutually constitutive (Bilge, 2010). This kind of perspective can thus help to analyze the ways that markers of difference are felt in the lived experiences of youth, and allow for a focus on individual narratives as well as on broader social inequalities. I am able to highlight the social reality of individuals, while taking into account the ways that social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics are determined.

⁸ As such, many youth studies scholars foreground how young people experience differences in their daily lives (see Kennelly, 2009; Maira, 2009).

1.7 Research design

Using a qualitative research strategy, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with youth who had previously been in care. Participants were given a chance to discuss their experiences with citizenship, rights and responsibilities, participation in the community, and belonging and/or exclusion. Participants were between the ages of 14-24, and all had been in government care at some point in their lives. It was a non-random, purposive sample in that all participants were chosen based on whether they had had experience in government care. The interviews were conducted in downtown Victoria at a number of locations in the spring of 2011. Most interview questions were open-ended, but I did include some close-ended questions taken from the Risky Business survey co-lead by my supervisor Dr. Cecilia Benoit (see Appendix A for interview guide).

1.8 Overview of dissertation

In Chapter 2, I begin by presenting the theoretical traditions in which my dissertation is grounded. I then turn to the literature on youth citizenship, paying particular attention to the intersections of youth and citizenship. I also explore the literature on marginalization, as I find youth-in-care to be a social group on the margins. Marginalization should not be equated solely to a lack of economic resources: marginalization is multi-dimensional, experienced differentially and refers to social as well as economic exclusion (Blanchet-Cohen and Salazar, 2009; Jenson, 2000). Finally, I consider intersectionality, which is a guiding perspective of my work. In Chapter 3, I

outline my methodology and methods, giving specific notice to the challenges of studying youth. In Chapter 4, I investigate the context in which citizenship can be practiced by youth. I trace the history of young people in care in B.C. and assess the ways that young people are rights-bearers and also self-responsible citizens. While this information may typically be found at the beginning of a dissertation, I include it here because it sets the parameters of government care in this province, which is important in understanding the chapters immediately following it. In Chapter 5, I discuss the participants' experiences with the care system, paying particular attention to the critical times of entering and leaving care. To do this, I draw on youth's own experiences with specific attention to the ways that they think being in care has shaped their lives. In Chapter 6, I outline the main findings of my dissertation, namely the three types of citizenship practices that I ascertained. In Chapter 7, I continue analyzing the findings suggested in the previous chapter by discussing them in relation to the literature and to the objectives of the dissertation. Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude my dissertation by discussing the limitations of my research, some recommendations based on my findings, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Context

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the bodies of scholarly literature that inform my research: namely, the youth citizenship literature, literature on the marginalization of youth-in-care, and the literature on intersectionality. The body of literature on citizenship in and of itself is immense (and beyond the purview of this research); therefore, I confine my focus to scholarship that primarily investigates the compatibility of youth and citizenship. To do this, I first examine the notion of youth as citizens within the broader context of citizenship theory. I then turn to the composition of youth citizenship: citizenship as rights, citizenship as responsibility, citizenship as participation, and citizenship as belonging. Next, I discuss the literature on marginalization to illustrate that youth-in-care are a social group on the margins. Finally, I situate my dissertation in an intersectional perspective and consequently review the literature on intersectionality as it relates to my topic and research.

2.2 Finding youth in citizenship theory

Citizenship theory is based in the works of theorists that centre their analysis on the lived experiences of marginalized populations (Moosa-Mitha, 2009, p. 123). In detailing these experiences, citizenship theorists tend to draw on T. H. Marshall's influential work on citizenship and social class (Lister, 2008) and Hannah Arendt's work on the power of citizens to act within a political community and take it in new directions (Hayward, 2012). When highlighting social inclusion and exclusion, citizenship theory

adherents discuss both subjective factors, such as the way an individual identifies with and feels integrated into his or her own community, as well as objective factors, such as access to key resources of living (Moosa-Mitha, 2009, p. 24). In this section, I discuss the claims made by citizenship theorists and assess how youth citizenship has become part of this body of literature. I draw particular attention to the tensions embedded in meanings of citizenship, which have emerged when discussing where youth 'fit' in citizenship theory.

Marshall's work on the history of citizenship tells the story of how social, political and civil rights are linked to citizenship practices. In discussing the importance of these rights in relation to belonging to a community, Marshall notes: "(C)itizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Marshall, 1964, p. 84). Marshall sees social citizenship as a contractual relationship that is entered into between citizens and the state (Hallgrimsdottir, Benoit, and Phillips, 2013). Furthermore, there is a permanent tension between the principles of citizenship and the operation of the capitalist market, in that capitalism inevitably involves some inequalities, while social citizenship is about a redistribution of wealth (Marshall, 1964). Marshall's work on citizenship has been critiqued on a number of grounds, notably by feminist theorists (Lister, 2008, p. 13-15). Feminist critics note that Marshall's view of citizenship does not recognise the way that women differ from men as citizens (Young, 1995) and that the care-work women do is as essential to citizenship as paid labour (Lister, 2008). Similarly, researchers investigating the citizenship and rights of young people have taken up these lines of critique (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Liebel, 2008; Lister,

2007). Marshall's notion that children and young people are "citizens in the making" (1964, p. 81) has been criticised for ignoring the ways that young people enact citizenship in their daily lives (Smith et al., 2005). Instead, it is argued, young people are more than simply 'future citizens': the concept of citizenship is applicable to youth if its meaning is expanded. In this sense, one does not simply *become* a citizen; rather, citizenship itself is an identity that is fluid and changing (Ibid).

Arendt's contribution to citizenship theory is substantial as she addresses the dynamic processes by which members of society relate to each other as citizens (Moosa-Mitha, 2009, p. 124), as well as the changes to public and private spheres in modernity (Arendt, 1958). Arendt sees the public and social (or private) realms as increasingly connected, and wants to address what this means for citizenship: "In the modern world, the two realms indeed constantly flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process" (Arendt, 1958, p. 33). She sees the public sphere as made up of the space of appearance, and the common world. The space of appearance is everything that can be seen which constitutes reality; furthermore, every time people talk about things that are experienced privately, they bring them into the public sphere (1958, p. 50). The second part of the public sphere is the common world, meaning a world that is common to all, and related to human artefact and affairs which go on between those in the world (p. 52). To reactivate citizenship in the modern world, it is necessary to rediscover this common, shared world. To do this, there needs to be a creation of spaces for appearance where individuals can establish relations of reciprocity and solidarity (Arendt, 1958). The emphasis on spatiality of the public sphere speaks to the emphasis Arendt places on political action as involving communications and discussions in a public

venue. She highlights the potential power of an individual to act in unexpected ways, and take communities in new directions (Hayward, 2012).

Arendt's work on the common world is important in understanding youth citizenship. Political action, not simply feelings about belonging, becomes important for enacting citizenship (Arendt, 1958). Marginalized young people have fewer opportunities to be part of the public sphere, either through the space of appearance, and in the common world. However, the creation of public spaces where individuals can establish relations of solidarity and exercise agency still exists (Ibid). For instance, youth have often been at the forefront of social movements (Feixa, Periera and Juris, 2009), including recent ones such as the Other Russia movement of 2005, the Green Movement in Iran in 2009, the Arab Spring in 2011, and the Occupy movement in 2011-2012.

In practice, it is worth noting that much has changed since mid-twentieth century scholars originally wrote about the concept of citizenship.⁹ For many people, young and not so young, citizenship is a rather alien term (Miller, 2000). Furthermore, nation-states have lost much of their control over significant matters in the lives of their citizens (Giddens, 1992). This means that collective identifications are often replaced through processes of individualization (Beck, 1992). Citizenship, as a state-defined status, is also challenged by the globalization of markets, trade, communications, and peoples (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2010, p. 12), although it is important to note that globalization has existed in some forms since at least the beginning of the 20th century and the

⁹ Furthermore, Marshall's notion of citizenship types was only ever realized in any way in western liberal democracies (Teepie, 2005).

globalization of capitalist markets at this time (Lash and Urry, 1987).¹⁰ Moreover, citizenship status continues to vary significantly across different nation-states.

In short, when discussing youth citizenship, it is necessary to recognise that being a citizen goes beyond national ties or boundaries, and, simultaneously, is applicable only in relation to local, national, and global settings (Hall, Coffey and Williamson, 1999). In this sense, citizenship is best understood as contested and contextualized: it varies in meaning according to social, political, and cultural contexts as well as different historical conditions (Lister, 2007). Citizenship is thus continually being negotiated and renegotiated, not only during childhood and youthhood, but also across the entire life-course (Hall, et al., 1999, p. 440). In framing youth citizenship as fluid and dynamic, the nuances of the concept in practice become clearer.

To summarise, citizenship is not something that one attains when reaching adulthood: it is a way of behaving and acting in everyday life (Smith et al., 2005). Understanding citizenship, as comprised of processes and actions, requires moving beyond the idea, as seen in literature which sees youth as ‘future citizens’ (see Marshall, 1964), that citizenship is a goal that is achieved when one reaches the age of majority, or becomes financially independent (Shaw and McCulloch, 2009, p. 10). With this in mind, I take youth citizenship to refer to the legitimating quality through which young people are entitled to participate in communities and are recognised as members by other people both within their communities and within social institutions (Mortier, 2002, p. 83). This definition recognises the fluidity and multiplicity of citizenship as it occurs in both

¹⁰ There can be a tendency in some globalization literature to ignore the way that globalizing processes existed before the late twentieth century (Ferguson, 2004). For instance, the Great Depression of the 1930s was the result of a confluence of global factors.

public and private spheres; moreover, it recognises the way that citizenship itself is continually being renegotiated (Smith et al., 2005, p. 440). I turn now to the composition of youth citizenship - that is, the “ingredients” of citizenship of young people (Howe, 2005, p. 43) - before returning to the changes that have come to youth citizenship in late (post) modernity.

2.3 Qualities of youth citizenship

While there is a considerable amount of scholarly literature on children’s rights, and on citizenship theory, the focus on youth citizenship is relatively new especially in English Canadian research (Beauvais et al., 2001, p. iv). Literature on youth citizenship has emerged between children’s rights and adult citizenship literature as a way to explore how youth access and engage with certain rights and responsibilities and how they participate and belong in their communities (Maira, 2009). Youth citizenship literature addresses questions of *what* it means to be a citizen and of *how* young people lack some of the basic rights of adult citizenship, notably the right to vote (Kennelly and Dillabough, 2008; Maira, 2009; Smith et al., 2005). Questions of children’s citizenship are important because there is a risk that by discussing citizenship of youth abstractly as a general well-meaning sentiment, children’s citizenship comes to mean nothing at all. Children all over the world face situations of physical and emotional abuse, a lack of access to participation in their communities, and physical danger; it is not enough to offer platitudes about general citizenship (Cohen, 2005, p. 223).

With this in mind, there is some agreement on the components that comprise *youth citizenship*, beyond simply legal membership in a political community (Howe,

2005). These ingredients are necessary to imbue the concept with meaning for young people's actual lived experiences. Beauvais et al. (2001) suggest that a youth citizenship 'lens' can be useful in connecting the literature on youth and that on citizenship, for such a lens can help to describe and analyze the citizenship status and capacities of young adults. These authors view youth citizenship as comprised of three analytical dimensions: rights and responsibilities, access to rights and responsibilities, and feelings of belonging (Ibid, p. 3). While not everyone has the same rights and responsibilities, access, or feelings of belonging, Beauvais et al. (2001) argue that all three need to be present in order for someone to be considered a citizen. Similarly, Howe (2005) suggests four basic qualities of citizenship: citizenship as access to rights, citizenship as exercising responsibilities, citizenship as active participation, and finally citizenship as belonging. Lastly, Lister (2007) sees four aspects of children's citizenship: membership in a citizenship community, rights, responsibilities, and an equality of status, respect, and recognition. I am informed by all three of these studies in my discussion below of the composition of youth citizenship.

2.3.1 Citizenship as access to rights

Youth citizenship is often portrayed as being intimately connected to children's rights (Reynaert et al., 2009). At the same time, some theorists, scholars and practitioners do not explicitly tie youth citizenship to rights. Citizenship can and does include many other elements other than rights, and some research on youth citizenship is more concerned with belonging, participation, responsibilities, and engagement.

However, rights do form a crucial part of the sociological youth citizenship literature, and therefore require analysis in my dissertation.

The interest in young people's rights is best understood as part of a broader move towards expanding so-called universal human rights, which has been especially pronounced since the end of the Second World War (Teepel, 2005, p. 4). Various social movements have formed to address the exclusion of certain groups of people from accessing civil, political, and social rights, including the civil rights movement, feminist movements, LGBT movements, and anti-poverty movements (Clement, 2008). Historically, children and youth had been confined to the private domain and have had their civil rights systemically denied (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 11).¹¹ However, this began to change in the latter half of the 20th century due in part to social movements, by and for young people that took shape,¹² as well as broader societal changes around family life and the role of young people within the family (Kehily, 2004). Until recently, the push for rights has addressed young people only peripherally: as a 'minority or subordinate group' (Boocock and Scott, 2005, p. 30), although some libertarian theorists (Cohen, 1980; Houlgate, 1980) have argued in favour of granting children full political citizenship.

Rights claims are *socially constituted*, which means that they are signified through conversations, discussions, and shared understandings, which can be understood broadly as rights discourses. Rights discourses include a collection of rights-claims that

¹¹ It is important to note that in earlier times, children and youth were not confined to the private domain. They have worked outside the home and contributed to family income in a variety of ways. In the late, 19th century and beyond, however, children became an economic liability rather than economic advantage, and began to remain in the home and education system for most of their formative years (Zelizer, 1985).

¹² See Margolin (1978) for a history of children's rights movement prior to the UNCRC.

constitute a broader discursive practice, and have become increasingly prominent in the twentieth century. For example, early feminists or suffragettes, waged battles for the right to vote and participate in political and civil life (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Equal rights became a rallying cry for other groups as well, including civil rights advocates, the LGBT movement, and second-wave (and beyond) feminists (Clement, 2008). Rights discourses have proven important to social movements concerned with local, national and transnational issues. A major change in how these rights discourses are expressed, however, is that there has been a shift away from state-centric politics, due in part to the growing powers of multinational corporations, an increase in privatisation, and the reach of globalizing processes (Conway, 2004, p. 11). This has complicated how social actors advocate for rights, as the state is no longer the only appropriate target for realizing rights-claims.

Even so, many social movements still use a language of rights to focus on international interactions involving non-state actors, thus blurring the line between domestic and global politics (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 29). These movements transcend the notion that the state is the sole guarantor of rights. To analyze rights discourse in a post-westphalian era, Foweraker and Landman (1997) contend that two factors must be examined: the depth to which rights are embedded in a society, and the breadth to which these rights are extended to different groups, classes, and sectors (p. 26). The depth and breadth of children's rights are closely tied to the UNCRC and its implementation across the globe.

Sociological interest in youth rights has increased in the last two decades, in Canada and around the world, in large part due to the drafting of the UNCRC in 1989

(O'Neill and Zinga, 2008). The UNCRC has become the definitive guide to young peoples' rights to provision, protection, and participation for signatory countries (Reynaert et al., 2009). The Convention has been signed and ratified by a groundbreaking number of countries with the United States remaining as the only state yet to ratify.¹³ The Canadian government signed the UNCRC in 1990 and ratified it in 1991 (Covell and Howe, 2001). Since this time, young people's rights have received far more attention in legal and political discourses in Canada (Covell and Howe, 2007). Unlike some other signatory states that have changed laws substantially since signing it, Canada was already compliant with many of the provisions laid out in the Convention (Ibid). The federal and provincial governments have split responsibilities for implementation of the Convention: federal jurisdiction includes conduct of war and criminal law; while the provinces work with the federal government on matters including health care, education, and labour laws (Clarke, 2007). According to "A Canada Fit for Children" (2004), a recent publication put out by the Canadian government in consultation with various NGOs, agencies, educators, and other groups, Canada embraces "calls for strategies that are child-centred, multi-sectoral, forward-looking, and collaborative" (p. 4).

Like many other countries that have ratified the UNCRC, the Canadian government has some reservations with the Convention, specifically Article 21, due to concerns about whether this may be inconsistent with customary forms of Aboriginal care, and Article 37(c), due to uncertainties about the feasibility of guaranteeing a

¹³ Somalia, the other holdout, announced plans in November 2009 to ratify the treaty shortly (Child Rights Information Network, 2010).

separation of children and youth in detention centres (Canadian Children's Rights Council, 2010).¹⁴ Overall, Canada has complied with most aspects of the Convention, at least legally (Covell and Howe, 2001, 2007). What remains unclear, however, is the degree to which all young people actually have access to certain rights laid out by the UNCRC (Hartas, 2008).

Certain articles of the UNCRC are particularly important when studying youth citizenship: the articles related to the rights for provision, the articles related to rights for protection, the articles related to participation rights (12 and 13), and the articles related to youth-in-care (p. 20)¹⁵. Article 20 states as follows:

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.
2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.
3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

This article draws attention to the role of the government in providing young people with suitable care provisions if they cannot remain in a family environment. In practice, the child welfare system in Canada in general, and in B.C. in particular, is shaped by historical and cultural factors, as well as UNCRC principles (see Chapter 4).

¹⁴ Article 21 states: "States Parties that recognise and/or permit the system of adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration" (UNCRC, Article 21). Article 37 (c) states: Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances (UNCRC, Article 37 (c))

¹⁵ Article 22 is also useful as it refers to children or young people who are seeking refugee status.

The rights laid out in the UNCRC may indeed be very important for young people. However, rights documents are often initiated by the United Nations, other organisations, and governments, and are usually written by adults. In the case of the UNCRC, youth were involved only very peripherally in the writing and drafting of the document (Liebel, 2008). Furthermore, it is a ‘consensus document’ in the sense that it had to adhere to the lowest common denominator - what everyone could agree upon as a right that young people all over the world needed. One thing, however, that the UNCRC does provide is a framework through which to view the parameters of citizenship for youth. The Canadian and provincial governments, like many other jurisdictions around the world, have used the UNCRC as a basis for framing youth rights, responsibilities, and citizenship (Covell and Howe, 2007) in policies and legislation, a topic to which I return in Chapter 4.

Although young people’s rights have emerged as a crucial issue in the last two decades, there is still considerable uncertainty about what it means for youth to realize and access certain rights. Moreover, rights themselves remain highly contested. Rights, understood as a kind of “social phenomenon, arising from constitutive human action” (Reynaert et al, 2009, p. 519), are thought to be realized through particular rules or laws enacted by national or international bodies. However, legal recognition of specific rights is rarely enough: if prevailing norms and values do not change as well, rights in and of themselves are relatively meaningless (Stammers, 1999).¹⁶ It is not enough to say that youth have the right to express themselves in matters affecting their lives; there needs to

¹⁶ Over time, cultural and historical norms shift, and ‘rights’ of one era may not be considered important in another era or context. Criticisms of so-called human rights by non-Western scholars is an example of the ambiguity that can be found in relation to supposedly universal rights (Nair, 2004).

be opportunities for this right to be realized as well. In terms of young people's rights, then, even when a country or international body tries to enshrine rights into legal codes, many youth may still lack access to these rights. In Canada, tension between legal rights, on the one hand, and actually accessing these rights, on the other, is evident when considering the ways that UNCRC rights are found in Canadian laws and policies. For instance, in the fall of 2012, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child finished a 10 year review of how children are treated in Canada, and how governments here are implementing the UNCRC ("UN Review Finds Canada Falling Short on Child Rights"). The committee was particularly critical of the federal government's crime bill, Bill C-10, which imposes stiffer penalties for youth and thus no longer complies with UNCRC guidelines on youth in custody (Ibid).

The literature on young peoples' rights reproduces the problems of rights scholarship generally when it comes to contextualizing the ways that rights are interpreted and realized (Reynaert et al., 2009). Universal ideas about rights need to be appropriated locally and taken up in ways that are socially and culturally significant (Magnuson, 2007, p. 9). In line with Stammers' (1999) argument that there is a "global human rights industry" (p. 991), children and youth's rights are framed in such a way that any critiques of rights language are brushed aside. This reduces the discussion about rights to technical arguments over language differences and obscures the problems created by rights discourses for youth all over the world (Reynaert et al., 2009). Even though countries may ratify the UNCRC, the context in which youth are supposed to be able to access rights may not change at all. Consensus building, necessary in producing a document such as the UNCRC, has negated many of the critical issues that remain in

youth's access to rights (Ibid). As such, rights may be inaccessible, ineffective, and inadequate for the very individuals that the UNCRC attempts to empower; furthermore, questions about how rights 'fit' with youth citizenship remain unanswered.

2.3.2 Exercising responsibilities

A second ingredient of youth citizenship is the exercising of responsibilities (Howe, 2005). While the minimum responsibility of citizenship involves a responsibility to obey the law (Lister, 2007, p. 706), most understandings of youth citizenship go beyond this. Instead, responsibilities of citizenship are often portrayed as exercising social responsibility to one's community and a responsibility for one's own well-being. Kymlicka and Norman (1995) suggest that rights alone are an inadequate way to understand citizenship: being a citizen is also about responsibilities to others as well as to oneself. Conversely, Hayward (2012) suggests that there has been a shift to a 'citizenship-as-personal' responsibility, which has been exacerbated by neoliberal economic theory (12).

When discussing the responsibilities of young people, it is helpful to examine the literature on 'teaching' citizenship through some form of citizenship education (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Kennelly, 2009; Kennelly and Dillabough, 2008; Thomson et al., 2004). Citizenship education usually refers to educational practices, typically in school settings, in which young people are taught what citizenship looks like (Abu El-Haj, 2009). Youth are encouraged to be 'active' citizens, and this often means being aware of one's responsibilities as well as one's rights. Active citizenship means participating in and engaging with activities that the state defines as appropriate, while at the same time,

exercising broader social responsibilities (Kennelly, 2009). The notion of active citizenship comes from the New Right concerns in the late 1980s that emphasise self-interest, individual responsibilities, and active participation in one's community (Thomson et al, 2004, p. 220).

The concept of 'active citizenship' has been called into question for its shallow ways of measuring young people's participation as citizens (Kennelly and Dillabough, 2008). As Barber (2009) notes, the language used to demonstrate active citizenship may simply maintain and promote dominant ideological positioning (p. 27). This dominant ideological positioning extends to citizenship education more generally: as numerous scholars have suggested, citizenship education has tended to emphasise neoliberal ideas of individual responsibility (Abu El Haj, 2009; Barber, 2009; Kennelly, 2009). As well, as Moosa-Mitha (2009) argues, certain kinds of active citizenship have achieved prominence in government circles by virtue of becoming *outcomes* of social policy, so that participation becomes understood in "instrumentalist and managerial terms" (p. 134). However, it is important to note that not all youth read the citizenship-education material they receive, at school or in other settings, in the same ways. As Abu El-Haj (2009) shows, young people may problematize citizenship education by challenging the idea that citizenship and national belonging go hand-in-hand. While some authors have suggested that citizenship education is still useful - provided it focus instead on building a stronger sense of civic engagement and social belonging (Abu El-Haj, 2009) - others are more critical of the whole citizenship education enterprise (Kennelly, 2009).

The literature on responsibilities of youth citizens illustrates that young people are portrayed as both immature and innocent, and at the same time risky or dangerous

(Beauvais et al., 2001). Youth are presented as symbolising the unknown future, and therefore become the site of adult hopes and fears about society more generally (Maira and Soep, 2005). Responsibilities are a place where these hopes and fears play out. For example, in their study of how youth are viewed, Shaw and McCulloch (2009) argue that youth are portrayed as hooligans or rebels, lacking social responsibility. Similarly, active citizenship is seen to be equated with ‘good’ youth, while those who are disengaged are considered deficient (see former British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s 1996 book for an example of this). Kelly (2006) argues that young people are seen as irresponsible in part because youth have little ‘pull’ or access to media production to their age, as well as their social locations (p. 28). She notes that even when youth attempt to tell their stories and show the ways that they are ‘responsible’, mainstream media reports still tend to be unbalanced as youth are portrayed as a public concern, often as ‘gang bangers’, irresponsible teen mothers, or naive and impressionable (Kelly, 2006).

Citizenship responsibilities, including social and individual ones, thus become part of youth’s lives through the formal education system as well as through media, family, and peer interactions. I now turn to the ways that participation, which can be framed as both a right and a responsibility, is a component of youth citizenship.

2.3.3 Citizenship as participation

A third quality of citizenship is participation: this involves access to rights and responsibilities, but also a level of civic engagement. In this way, participation is about the actual exercising of rights and responsibilities (Howe, 2005). Participation is closely tied to the rights and responsibilities of young people as envisioned by the UNCRC:

Article 12 states that young people should be able to participate in decisions that affect them. Some scholars, in fact, have used participation as a proxy for citizenship even though these two concepts are very different; instead, participation is perhaps best seen as action: “(participation consists of) acts that occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in” (Vromen, 2003, p. 82-83). Citizenship and participation are often framed as being intertwined: without the ability to participate in decisions that affect them, it is not possible to ask youth to practice citizenship. Young people may be citizens in name, but not in practice. Conversely, they may have the right to participate - but if they do not use it - they may not be seen as citizens in their communities.

However, citizenship can - and does - occur without necessarily participating. The two concepts are related in the sense that participation has typically been thought of as constitutive of ‘good’ citizenship (see Blair, 1996), but they are not *always* related and are not *necessarily* related. The decision to not participate can lead to a kind of dissenting citizenship (Maira, 2009) wherein youth, who are participating (albeit in ways that may not normally be constituted as good youth citizenship – such as protesting unfair policies, etc), may not see themselves as citizens in the same way that other youth do.

Article 12 of the UNCRC refers to participation as a right that young people have (or should have), but leaves unsaid what this may actually look like in practice. It is generally accepted that this right to participate means that young people should be able to express opinions on matters that affect them (Hyder, 2005, p. 4). As Hartas (2008) notes, “Young people’s participation in civic life and democratic processes are fundamental... The right to participation is the least realised right” (p. 84). Participation rights

incorporate civil, political, and social rights, but refer specifically to the right to participate in decision-making in social, political, and economic life (Lister, 2008, p. 10). In this way, participation rights affect access to other rights in the sense that if one cannot realize civil, political, or social rights it is difficult to participate in decision-making in one's home, family, and community. This is particularly true for children and youth, in that they have traditionally been excluded from achieving some major civil, political, and social rights, such as the right to vote and the right to hold office (Cohen, 2005).

The challenges of enacting participation rights are indeed highlighted in Article 12 (1): "State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (UNCRC, 1989). The wording of this article leads to more questions than answers. Which children and youth are thought to be 'capable' of forming and expressing their own views? Who decides how young people 'can or should' express these views? How is 'due weight' given to these views? It is no wonder, then, that governments that have ratified the Convention have had difficulties in enacting participation rights (Covell and Howe, 2007).

Even though the UNCRC states that young people have the right to participation, access is often fragmented and cursory. As such, participation as a citizen is contextual: that is, the degree to which an individual is able to participate depends upon his or her independence and interdependence in and from the family and community, not to mention the variety of social and economic factors that influence the understanding of rights and the ability to engage (Invernizzi and Williams, 2008, p. 82). In addition,

cultural factors, such as discursive and material familiarity with the concept of participation, have an influence on whether young people can participate in meaningful ways. For example, pre-migration, young immigrant girls and young women may have been denied, due to historical and cultural factors, the Western ‘privilege’ of participation (Jiwani, 2006). Moreover, these young women may have experienced challenges in accessing cultural and social capital opportunities.¹⁷

Many scholars have turned towards research which looks into the rights to participation of young people in relation to particular issues in a Canadian context (Denov, 2004; Howe and Covell, 2003; Mitchell, 2000; Moore, Melchior and Davis, 2008). For instance, Mitchell (2000) studies an advocacy campaign for young people in the Capital Health Region of British Columbia that used the UNCRC framework to inform policy decisions. He claims that this was the first attempt in Canada to use UNCRC principles to frame health promotion and health care for young people as an issue of participation rights, and that it has, for the most part, been successful (Mitchell, 2000). Similarly, Moore et al. (2008) assess youth rights within a context of disability rights and argue that this kind of framework can illuminate power relationships that limit young people’s participation activities. Others have studied the right to participation for young people in detention centres and youth custody facilities (Denov, 2004). Finally, the issue of child poverty, and the way that young people in challenging social conditions generally can participate, has also been studied (Howe and Covell, 2003).

¹⁷ It should be noted that post-migration, more opportunities for greater access to cultural capital, including education and employment, as well as participation are present for these girls and young women.

Citizenship as participation also includes research that examines alternative ways in which young people participate (Barber, 2009; Bennett, Wells and Rank, 2009; Edwards, 2009; Harris, et al., 2010; Moosa-Mitha, 2009). These authors highlight the ways that alternative forms of engagement and participation can be seen as citizenship practices. For instance, young people may see voting as a part of democratic citizenship, but question whether it can actually make a difference (Chareka and Sears, 2006). Policy-makers, politicians, and educators tend to misperceive youth citizenship practices in marginalized communities as non-existent even though the young people in these communities might actually think of themselves as participating (Kelly, 2006; Smith et al., 2005).

Furthermore, studies that focus on the deficiencies of youth-as-citizens miss the barriers that can precipitate young people's disenfranchisement (Edwards, 2009; Harris, et al., 2010). For example, young people in Britain played a crucial role in protesting the war in Iraq, and yet this kind of participation or expression of citizenship was not valued: young people were portrayed as opportunistic rather than as engaged in this case (Banaji, 2008). Youth have also been at the forefront of some social movement organizations and have taken lead roles in trying to affect social change (Feixa, et al., 2009; Sall, 2004). The role of youth in social movements is missed in part because of a tension that exists between the citizen and the activist: community engagement, rather than activism, is encouraged (Smith et al., 2005, p. 128).¹⁸ In short, traditional measures of understanding

¹⁸ The summer, 2011 riots in England could be viewed as another example where youth's participation in the political sphere is widely criticized by those who have, at other times, been clamoring for youth 'engagement'. Similarly, recent research on the Other Russia movement has shown the criticism that youth may face from government and pro-business media when attempting to participate in collective action.

youth citizenship practices, such as voting or participation in political parties, are not always the most useful ways to understand young people as citizens (Banaji, 2008).

2.3.4 Citizenship as belonging and community

A fourth quality of youth citizenship draws on the concept of belonging: how does one conceptualize his/her belonging to a particular community; and what does this mean for how youth see themselves as citizens? Marshall (1964) noted the importance of citizenship in creating a sense of belonging to a particular community: belonging comes about through recognition of rights by and for people in the community. Young (1990, 1995) illustrates some problems with a homogenising view of belonging, which misses the important differences within a political community. As Howe (2005) notes, emphasising common citizenship rights that do not acknowledge cultural differences is detrimental in promoting a belonging that is meaningful in people's lives (p. 44).

In terms of understanding youth citizenship, tensions in the concept of belonging can be thought of as central to understanding the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy experienced by young people. Belonging can come from feelings of inclusion, but also from those of exclusion (Sharkey and Shields, 2008). This speaks to the ways that marginalized communities can connect through expressive means such as feelings of exclusion. Being excluded can lead to a new sense of belonging, and cultural or group differences can be important in strengthening elements within a broader community. Schmitt (2010) suggests that belonging is about a constant reproduction of one's own position within discourses and structural frameworks that are informed by their adaptations. This understanding of belonging takes into account the ways that belonging

has not only an expressive dimension, but also an instrumental one: belonging (or not belonging) is part of systemic as well as individual conditions.

The importance of belonging to a community is related to rights: social inclusion translates into recognising rights pragmatically, meaning that inclusion shows us how these rights actually operate in practice (Moosa-Mitha, 2009, p. 123). Social inclusion can be understood dynamically to involve the interactions and relationships between citizens and society (Ibid, p.124). Social inclusion has been considered an important part of youth citizenship arguments in the sense that children, like adults, are thought to have a need for a sense of belonging to a community (Howe, 2005, p. 48).

In summary, the four qualities of citizenship discussed above are deeply connected to one another, and to youth citizenship practices. For instance, participation is conceived of as a right, but also, in many cases, as a responsibility. Young people are encouraged to be active citizens in their communities, and yet the spaces for participation often remain rather remote, especially for those who face marginalization due to social, economic, or cultural factors (Sinha and Uppal, 2009). Moreover, citizenship cannot be reduced to any one of these qualities on its own. As Jaap Doek, former Chairperson of the UNCRC, argues, citizenship is closely linked but not synonymous with rights and/or responsibilities. Instead, citizenship confers on young people the status of subjects: this connection “links the issue of children’s citizenship to that of ‘children’s participation’” (2008, p. xii).

I have discussed the literature on youth citizenship to illustrate where youth fit into citizenship theory, and what the concept of youth citizenship refers to. Next I turn to the ways that practicing this kind of citizenship is differentiated depending on social

location. Youth-in-care constitute a social group situated on the margins in that they are positioned as outsiders, and this positioning shapes their lives and choices. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to the ways that an intersectional framework helps me to understand practices of citizenship for marginalized youth.

2.4 Locating marginalization

Marginalization is a dynamic process wherein structural and societal forces work together to create inequities. By investigating what is meant by marginalization, understandings about the vulnerable groups that are situated at the peripheries of society are illuminated (Vasas, 2005, p. 194). For youth who have been in care, their experiences on the peripheries are important in understanding how they practice citizenship. Their position as outsiders or ‘others’ shapes the context in which they come to understand what it means to be a citizen. To situate how youth-in-care are marginalized and what this means for their citizenship practices, I turn to the literature on marginalization to illustrate why youth-in-care may be considered to be a vulnerable group on the so-called ‘margins’.

Marginalization is sometimes reduced to a descriptive term conveying a vague sense of disadvantage and injustice, and writers thereby end up paying little attention to what they actually mean when referring to something or someone as marginalized (Vasas, 2005). Marginalization is best understood as a process – one by which some individuals or groups are denied access to important positions or types of power (Ibid). Both the process and the experience of marginalization are complicated by socio-economic status and other intersections of inequities, and are intricately connected to

questions of power (Jenson, 2000). Margins provide the physical and psychological constructs around which people who are marginalized reside, and they tend to be defined in contrast to a central point (Vasas, 2005). Everyone, therefore, who does not fit into this centre falls outside the margins and is thus considered to be *marginalized* (Hall et al., 1994). However, as Vasas (2005) notes, the problem with this kind of understanding of a centre-periphery relationship is that it reinforces the notion of a binary: centre versus non-centre, or centre versus the ‘other’.

It is also possible though to understand this margins-centre relationship as more fluid or continuous; for example, in some situations, particular individuals or groups may reside on the margins, while in other situations this same group may perhaps be part of the centre. Furthermore, the process of ‘othering’ an individual or group is always in flux, for groups or individuals on the margins can push back against their subordinate positions (Hall et al., 1994). The othering process occurs when an individual or group of individuals is ‘made different’ or perceived as different from oneself or from the mainstream (Johnson, Bottoroff, and Browne, 2004). A process of othering is used to reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination; in turn, it maintains margins. Those on the margins are invisible to those in the centre, but marginalized people are identified in the literature very clearly, especially those who experience health disparities (Vasas, 2005, p.196).

The sociological literature on marginalization has its roots in classic sociology. Marx famously suggested that the ‘reserve army of the proletariat’, those who are unemployed or partially unemployed, are used by capitalists to keep wages low (Marx, 1960). Marx also acknowledged that the presence of ethnic minorities - the Irish in his

example of the English working class - illustrates how capitalism divides the working class along ethnic lines (Ibid). Bourdieu, a French neo-Marxist scholar, continues this discussion of the ways that people are marginalized through his analysis of how elites' cultural capital has continued the dominance of the upper class in positions of power (1986). Furthermore, his discussion of symbolic violence shows the ways that the poor and disenfranchised are kept to the margins of society by unspoken, tacit norms about power relations.

In more recent scholarship, feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theorists have been at the forefront of identifying the ways that social location matters in discussions of marginalization. bell hooks (1984) argues that race, class, and gender are sources of exclusion that keep certain groups of people on the margins. Iris Marion Young's (1990) well-known work on the five faces of oppression, which includes marginalization as one face of oppression, has influenced thinking about the processes that lead to marginalization. Young understands marginalization as referring to what happens when a whole category of people are expelled from participation in social life, thus being potentially subjected to material deprivation (p. 53). Excluded individuals or groups are hidden beneath the surface of society. Furthermore, Young sees marginality as having to do with boredom, uselessness, and a lack of self-respect. This kind of understanding of marginalization speaks to the interplay between cultural, practical, and institutional conditions that can lead to difficulties in exercising one's full capacities (Ibid, p. 55). Young is particularly concerned with labour market exclusion, which she sees as very detrimental to a sense of belonging.

Marginalization, as process or outcome, is thus about poverty as well as social exclusion. For youth-in-care, economic factors as well as social exclusion certainly play a role in their positioning as outsiders. However, Jenson (2000) suggests that while limited access to economic resources may characterize marginalized groups and individuals, a lack of knowledge, thwarted rights, and a barring from power are also factors in marginalization. When people face severe material and social deprivation, opportunities to be fully engaged citizens may be limited (Qvortrup, 1996). Furthermore, being on the periphery of society exposes groups and individuals to experiences that can threaten their health and well-being. In this way, the process of marginalization can create vulnerable populations (Vasas, 2005, p. 194).

For youth-in-care, then, their experiences as outsiders can be construed as part of the marginalization process. As discussed in Chapter 1, youth-in-care face numerous barriers while in the care system and when they leave it. The challenges experienced by youth who have been in care illustrate how marginalization operates. These young people have the potential to miss out on meaningful participation in social life due to social, cultural, political, and economic exclusion. Opportunities for engagement may exist, but the voices of marginalized youth are often ignored (Blanchet-Cohen and Salazar, 2009, p. 6). While many youth may face marginalization due to uncertain ties to the labour forces, transient living situations, or a lack of social support (Lister, 2008, p. 11), youth-in-care are in a particularly difficult position due often to a combination of such factors. To better understand how the marginalization process is felt, I consider the

ways that social location is experienced. In the next section, I review the literature on intersectionality and why this guides my perspective.

2.6 Intersectionality as a theoretical framework

I use an intersectional perspective in an attempt to recognize the different ways that social location matters in the lived experiences of my participants, especially as it relates to citizenship. Intersectionality refers to the idea that identity is formed through the “interlocking and mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality” (Nash, 2008, p. 3). Intersectional analysis involves a concurrent investigation of both the multiple and intersecting sources of oppression, while acknowledging that the impact of a source of subordination may vary depending on other sources of subordination: such as life experiences, other structural factors, and individual matters (Denis, 2008, p. 677). For my study, then, I see an intersectional perspective as allowing for an analysis of the ways that categories of differences are interconnected and mutually constitutive.

Intersectionality has been conceptualized as a theory, methodology, approach, paradigm, and perspective (see Benoit et al., 2009; McCall, 2005; and Shields, 2008). The crucial insight of intersectionality theory has been that dimensions of social stratification - such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and geographic location - culminate in generating greater marginality and disadvantages for some categories of people (Benoit et al., 2009). As such, it differs from other approaches such as gender-based, gender-and-sex-based, and sex-and gender-based analyses in its emphasis on social justice through inter-sectoral coalitions, its placement of power at the centre of analysis, and its conceptualization of social identity and categories of difference

(Hanivsky and Cormier, 2009, p. 10). However, there is still considerable uncertainty about what it means to use an intersectional perspective and how to best actually engage in intersectional analysis (McCall, 2005; Sen et al., 2009; Shields, 2008). Furthermore, intersectionality itself remains a contested concept (Knapp, 2005; Nash 2008). In this section, I delve into the development of intersectionality as a theoretical construct; I then turn to explore some of the questions that have emerged in the intersectionality literature; and finally, I discuss why it is an appropriate perspective for researching the citizenship practices of youth-in-care.

McCall (2005) suggests that the study of intersectionality has been the defining construct in the development of contemporary women's studies, for it has provided feminist scholars with a way to foreground the complicated ways that social location matters (p. 1771). To understand why McCall and others have placed so much emphasis on the potentials of intersectional analysis, it is helpful to examine the history of the concept.

While Kimberlé Crenshaw is often credited with originating the term intersectionality in 1989, many feminist scholars were already using a perspective that could be described as intersectional (Collins, 2009; Nash, 2008). For instance, Deborah King (1988) discusses the idea of multiple-jeopardy to contest the notion that race and sex can be separate as well as contest the view that an additive version of racism plus sexism equals double jeopardy. Multiple-jeopardy not only helps to describe oppression, but also provides a way to analyse the multiple-consciousness that is needed to resist the interconnectedness of oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism (King, 1988, p. 72). Similarly, Collins (2009) notes that the 1970s and 1980s were an exciting time for

feminist scholars such as herself, for there was an increasing focus on the ways that systems of inequality worked together to create or exacerbate social inequalities (p. ix). Nash (2008) states that even before the term intersectionality existed, feminist writers were working to destabilise the term 'women' in order to illustrate the heterogeneity of experiences of women specifically in late (post) modernity. In short, as Denis (2008) suggests, the trend toward intersectional analysis emerged out of criticisms of early currents of feminisms - in academia as well as in social movements - in relation to its erasure of the differences that existed between and amongst women. Intersectionality became a strategy to address the need for more complicated analyses of subordination and oppression that people were experiencing.

Crenshaw, an American legal scholar, used the term intersectionality to refer to perspectives that attempted to move beyond single categories of analysis in order to investigate intersections of race and gender (1989; 1991). In this way, Crenshaw was naming a diverse set of practices that, as noted above, had been acknowledged for quite some time (Collins, 2009, p. viii). In her work on violence against women, Crenshaw (1991) convincingly argues that gender-only frameworks are too narrow in that they failed to highlight the ways that race, class, and immigrant status intersect with gender. After Crenshaw named this set of practices – one that disrupted notions of gender as a stand-alone category of analysis - as intersectional, other feminist scholars took up the concept of intersectionality in more detail.

Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) influential work on intersectionality as a paradigm through which to research the experiences of Black women, provides further illustration of the multidimensionality of marginalized individuals' lived experiences. Collins puts

forward four domains of power with the view that intersectionality can be broadened beyond the analytic domain to a more paradigmatic approach (Bilge, 2010, p. 65). These four domains of power mean that the researcher is analyzing laws and institutions (structural domain), bureaucratic and administrative management (disciplinary domain), cultural and ideological relationships of domination (hegemonic domain), and everyday lived experiences as influenced by a variety of hierarchies (inter-personal domain) (Collins, 2000, p. 18). If one follows Collins' approach to intersectionality, then, it is clear that the potentials of using this kind of perspective allows for the researcher to study a wide range of topics.

The study of intersectionality has been taken up by many other authors, both those using the phrase and those who are not. In Canada, Stasiulis takes up the concept of intersections of race, class and gender when she investigates interlocking oppressions in a Canadian context (1991, p. 99).¹⁹ Additionally, with the proliferation of intersectionality literature, both quantitative and qualitative work has been undertaken by scholars using this framework, which has added questions of methodology to the conversation (Davis, 2008, p. 681). In short, over the past two decades, intersectional approaches have emerged as a potent way to critique identity politics, while also challenging a history of essentialism and exclusionism of some feminist scholarship (Nash, 2008).

The potential of an intersectional perspective lies in its ability to interrogate social disparities that are linked to race, class, gender, sexuality, and age as well as to analyze

¹⁹ Stasiulis had previously written about her interest in disrupting additive forms of gender analysis. She suggests the term 'rainbow feminism' as a helpful way to understand the experiences of immigrant women in Canada (Stasiulis, 1991).

structural and system inequities (Dill and Zambrana, 2009, p. 1). However, intersectionality literature has not been without criticism, both from those who find it a useful concept or perspective, as well as those who are critical of the whole project of intersectionality (Hankivsky, 2010; Nash, 2008). Next, I focus on some of the major issues and questions that divide scholars of intersectionality - internally and externally - in an effort to illustrate how it can still be a useful framework.

The first area of concern relates to questions of epistemology and ontology. Some quantitative scholars using intersectional analysis are clearly influenced by a positivist epistemological stance (Covarrubias, 2011); while others, such as Collins (2000), see an intersectionality paradigm as constituting an alternative between positivism and postmodernism (p. 296). Other scholars, such as Buitelaar (2006), position intersectionality as part of a poststructuralist epistemology, one in which knowledge about the world is mediated through meaning and understanding. In terms of ontological concerns, Bilge (2010) suggests that intersectional scholars need to pay more attention to the underlying question of what is meant by categories. More importantly, what does it mean to talk about *mutually constitutive* categories? (Ibid) In most definitions of intersectionality, the phrase 'mutually constitutive categories' is present: does this mean that one category cannot exist without the other? Or is it the processes of subordination that leads to this mutual constitutiveness? There seems to be a tokenistic attitude towards this idea of mutually constitutive categories: in some ways, intersectional scholars seem to just be drawing up a list of differences (Stasiulis, 1999). As Bilge (2010) notes, there has tended to be such a wide acceptance of the usefulness of intersectionality that scholars have sometimes failed to probe how categories are mutually constitutive and

why this matters. Failing to consider *how* categories are formed results in the risk of simply reducing identities to categories, so that the “boundedness of identity becomes overconflated and rigid *even when multiple axes of identity are considered...*

(E)ssentializing identity claims demand that differences are placed into easily recognisable categories, when in fact some identities defy normalised categorisations” (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 233 [emphasis in original]). Therefore, when using a language of categories - even if these categories are conceived of as mutually constitutive - previous understandings of categories as whole or separate are in some ways being preserved.

Some scholars have tried to avoid reducing identities to categories. For Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), each axis of social division has a separate ontological basis, and these divisions interact with one another. Bilge (2010) is critical of this approach, however, as she finds it theoretically weak; instead, she is interested in analyzing the different manifestations of social formation - within systems of race, class, and gender - while also acknowledging the specifics of each social inequality system (p. 68). Others have tried to move beyond questions of identity and categories of difference altogether and, instead, ask whether intersectional analysis would be better focused on processes of differentiation and systems of domination (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 233).

In many ways, it is impossible to reduce questions of epistemological and ontological underpinnings of intersectional analysis to one or two approaches. Instead, this body of literature has been taken up by scholars across the epistemological spectrum, and with very different understandings of what categories and processes look like. As well, there are many different ways that intersectionality is applied in research and theory by feminist and critical race scholars who embrace it. Bilge (2010) sees a difference in

approaches to intersectionality between European (especially Nordic and German writers) and North American scholars: North American scholars are more likely to emphasise the importance of structural forces, thereby keeping within a neo-Marxist tradition, whereas European scholars tend to focus more on the postmodernist potential of intersectionality (p. 61).

However, in analysing at the diversity of work done by intersectional scholars, it is clear that a European/North American divide in terms of epistemological and ontological questions is likely overstated, and, moreover, may miss the important contributions of intersectional scholars from the global south. In terms of seeing intersectionality as part of the structuralist tradition, Collins (2000) clearly lays out the differences she sees between the study of identity and structure; both are, she claims, worthy of intersectional analysis, albeit in different ways. In her more recent work, Collins continues to identify the importance of understanding social structure in intersectional analysis (2009). She decries the emphasis on identity narratives as the major focus of intersectional research in the last decade: “In recent years, intersectional analyses have far too often turned inward, to the level of personal identity narratives, in part, because intersectionality can be grasped far more easily when constructing one’s own autobiography... Yet this turning inward also reflects the shift within American society away from social structural analyses of social problems” (p. ix). On the other hand, an emphasis on personal identity narratives can be seen in the work of Buitelaar (2006), a Dutch social scientist, who uses the concept of the dialogical self to assess the ways that the multiple voices of the self are intersecting and co-constructing with other categories of identity (p. 273).

Another major question of intersectionality literature has been around issues of identity in intersectionality. First, there is the question of the '*who*' in intersectional analysis. Can intersectionality be useful in understanding advantages as well as disadvantages? For Hanivsky and Cormier (2009), the answer is certainly yes: they say that intersectional analysis can be used to appraise the ways that people experience privilege as well as disadvantage. Denis (2008) also sees intersectionality as a way to understand relative privilege as well as relative disadvantage (p. 677). However, most studies using intersectionality still highlight disadvantaged groups rather than privileged ones, indicating that perhaps intersectionality's strength lies in its ability to explore disadvantage.

A second concern about identity is Nash's (2008) suggestion that intersectionality, as a concept, might not actually capture subjectivity - meaning that it may not explain how and why people mobilise their identities as they do (10). Some postmodernist and post-structuralist scholars have tried to address this concern by foregrounding the ways that intersectional analysis can contribute to an individual's understanding of self (Bilge, 2010, p. 61-2). Moreover, many qualitative researchers working within an intersectional perspective attempt to show how identity shapes people's understandings of themselves, meaning that over time, this criticism will perhaps be less relevant.

Finally, questions of methodology have arisen around how people actually *do* intersectional analysis. While intersectional scholars may differ on how they see the concept of intersectionality, there is also a lot of uncertainty about implementing it in empirical research, especially in qualitative research. As Denis (2008) notes,

“(P)roposing generalisations about the interaction of several variables on the basis of qualitative data about relatively small samples is not easy to do” (p. 685).²⁰ With this challenge in mind, McCall (2005) develops a continuum to understand three main approaches to intersectionality in terms of researchers’ stances towards categorical complexity.

First, using an anticategorical approach, some intersectionality scholars choose not to use any kind of traditional ‘categories’ at all, for they see categories as having no basis in reality (McCall, 2005). McCall notes that this approach is particularly successful at dealing with the complexities of how oppressions are fluid and changing. The second approach, which McCall refers to as intracategorical complexity, focuses on “particular social groups at neglected points of intersection... in order to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups” (p. 1774). Researchers working in this tradition are critical of broad, sweeping categories that suggest homogeneity rather than heterogeneity and difference, and instead, focus on personal narratives in order to discover complexity and diversity within a social group (p. 1781). Third, there is the intercategory complexity approach which requires adopting existing analytical categories to study relationships of inequalities among social groups, while challenging these patterns of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions (p. 1773). McCall herself uses the

²⁰ This is not to state that it is in any way easy to do quantitative work using intersectional analysis. While it is simple enough to do multivariate analysis using categories of race, class, gender, and so on, it is much harder to interpret these results within an intersectional framework (Denis, 2008, p. 685).

third approach to study traditional categories and then compares them across social groups.²¹

There are also some general concerns with the term intersectionality. Related to concerns about the de facto use of mutually constitutive categories, intersectionality perspectives more generally run the risk of becoming merely a descriptive, rather than a critical, way to analyze interlocking systems of subordination. Furthermore, some scholars question whether intersectionality actually offers anything new. As noted above, Collins (2000) called attention to the fact that scholars were working on issues of intersectionality in the 1970s and, 1980s, even if they did not refer to them as such. Others no longer use the term intersectionality, but continue to conduct research within what would broadly be considered an intersectionality paradigm (Dhamoon, 2011). While intersectionality, as theory, methodology, or paradigm, remains contested (Hankivsky et al., 2010; Nash, 2008), the sustained interest in intersectionality by social researchers suggests that it remains a useful way of investigating macro and micro sociological questions (Stasiulis, 1999).

An intersectional perspective can be a very useful one for considering the ways that young people's lives are differentiated by social location. While some scholars have used an intersectionality approach to understand how experiences of youth are constructed, (for example, see Daley et al.'s, 2007 work on the intersectionalities that exist in LGBT peer victimisation), such an approach remains an under-used way to examine the differences between and amongst young people (Green and Singleton,

²¹ Nash (2008) is critical of McCall's classification of intersectionality methodologies that shows the gaps that exist in terms of actual intersectionality investigations, as researchers often replicate exactly what they are trying to challenge.

2006). As Siurala (2000) argues, there is a need for a strategy that addresses the marginalization of youth from formal politics, but also takes seriously their attempts to shape society through everyday ordinary acts (p. 9); I see intersectionality as helpful in analyzing the ways that youth are marginalized. An intersectional approach attends to the interplay between marginalization and everyday life and could open up new possibilities for redefining, reinvigorating, and reinscribing politics for, and by, ordinary youth (Harris, et al., 2010, p. 29).

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have gone over the theoretical and substantive literature in which my dissertation is situated by first considering the concept of youth citizenship in relation to citizenship literature more generally. Next, I have assessed the components of youth citizenship and what they looked like within a Canadian context. Third, I have reviewed the literature on marginalization, and have discussed how youth-in-care constitute a social group facing marginalization. Finally, I have surveyed the literature on intersectionality itself. An intersectional framework has helped me to illustrate how intersecting and interlocking identities and oppressions may shape experiences as citizens. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodological considerations guiding my dissertation as well as the choices I have made regarding method, sample, data analysis, and rigour.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe how I conducted my dissertation research. I begin by outlining my methodological underpinnings and the implications of these assumptions for the research process. Next, I describe my data collection procedures, followed by a discussion of how the analysis was conducted. Finally, I consider the ethical issues that I encountered while conducting the research - along with my role in the research process - as well as some of the special considerations of doing research with youth.

3.2 Methodology

My research question, as discussed in the introduction, asks how youth-in-care practice citizenship. To investigate, I use a qualitative approach, and utilise a combination of open-ended and close-ended interview questions (Cresswell, 2003).

Qualitative research is “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Research using qualitative methodology tends to address questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena within particular contexts (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 5). A qualitative orientation allowed me to focus on the ‘thick descriptions’ of the experiences that participants described in interviews. As Cresswell (2003) notes, unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers are not interested in representing the population at large in their research. A quantitative methodological approach alone can be very important, but not useful in

answering my research question. Rather, in qualitative research, the researcher tries to gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural meanings of people's experiences. I was interested, however, in obtaining some data from participants that was best asked through close-ended questions, including information on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and type of government care that participants had been in. As such, I gathered demographic data from participants in this way.

As noted in Chapter 2, my work is guided by an intersectionality perspective. Many scholars have taken intersectionality as being more than simply a theory and, instead, have elevated it to the level of a research perspective or paradigm, meaning that most aspects of the research process can be understood through an intersectional analysis. I take Shields's (2008) definition of an intersectional perspective as privileging the ways in which "social identities... serve as organizing features of social relations, (that) mutually constitute, reinforce, and naturalize one another" (p. 302). Like Bilge (2010), I see an intersectional perspective as allowing the researcher to go beyond a recognition of the multiplicity of systems of oppression functioning out of categories such as gender, race, and class and, instead, focus on the interplay of these categories in the production and reproduction of social inequalities (p. 58). An intersectional perspective allows for an investigation into the social reality of individuals that takes into account the ways that social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics are determined simultaneously and interactively through various axes of social organization (Stasiulis, 1999, p. 345).

It is this emphasis on the axes of social organisation that I find resonates so well with my research. It is not possible to extrapolate findings from a qualitative study onto a larger population; however, I think that an intersectionality perspective helps me to

foreground the ways that societal forces intersect with processes of identity. This focus on both macro and micro level processes means that an intersectionality perspective must be woven throughout a study, especially one that attempts to use it as an orienting framework. Throughout the dissertation, I hope to show that I have indeed done this in my work. With this in mind, I discuss some of the main ways that an intersectionality perspective has influenced my theoretical orientation and research design choices including recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

In terms of where I see myself in these questions of epistemology and ontology, I locate my research within a post-positivist stance. While the potential for using an intersectional analysis to link contemporary politics with postmodern theory is interesting (Bilge, 2010, p. 61), I find intersectionality approaches especially helpful in acknowledging broader social inequalities as well as individual histories and life experiences. As for doing empirical intersectional research, I am guided by McCall's second approach, anticategorical complexity (discussed in Chapter 2). An anticategorical approach allowed me to address the complex ways that differences are experienced by individuals, and takes into account the challenges that are encountered when labelling categories. Using categories can simplify the complicated and fluid processes by which individuals identities are formed. For my research, this kind of anticategorical approach allowed me to focus on the similarities and differences amongst youth-in-care, without placing undue attention onto categories which may not be important to the youth themselves. Employing an anticategorical approach to a perspective of intersectionality allowed me to illustrate the diversity in experiences of oppression that participants

discussed. Diversity in this case includes experiences with race, class, and gender as well as Aboriginal status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and government care status.

Intersectionality as a perspective influenced the choices I made in the design of my research. First, during the recruitment stage, I had to think about how I conceptualized categories. I wanted to reflect on the differences of individuals who had been in care, and I wondered whether I should set limits, for example, on how many people considered themselves to be Aboriginal, or on how many identified as queer. However, by using an anticategorical approach to intersectionality, I realized that by simply labelling social categories, I would not be any further in analysing why these categories mattered. Therefore, instead of having particular quotas to fill (i.e., 5 men, 5 Aboriginals), I opened up my study to any youth who had been in care, regardless of social location.

Another question about employing intersectionality came up when I was developing the interview guide for my open-ended interviews. At the beginning of the interviews, I asked a number of structured questions about the background of participants. I thought these were important because I wanted to know the composition of my sample. As I was using a qualitative methodology, my sample was not meant to be representative of the population of young people in care in Greater Victoria. However, at the same time, I did not want to privilege the idea that it is possible to say something about how ethnicity, gender, and race matter simply by marking down social characteristics. My interest, therefore, was in the ways that individuals talked about differences and their social location. I needed to be careful in the process of asking questions that I gave respondents space to answer however they wished - without putting

words in their mouths about why these differences mattered. For example, the question about sexual orientation was confusing for many participants and led to answers that were sometimes contradictory.

In analysing my data, I also found myself to be influenced by an intersectional perspective as I began to consider participants comments about their experiences growing up. Specifically, how could I tell what difference ‘*difference*’ makes? For instance, did Shelly, a young Aboriginal woman who told me she felt like she was very overweight and that it weighed on her at all times, see her weight as a source of oppression, or, were her experiences in care a part of why she felt so isolated from others? Or was being an Aboriginal woman something that I needed to focus on, even though she did not discuss this in very much detail? As Collins (2000) notes, “(I)ntersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type and that oppressions work together in producing injustice” (p. 18).

I kept coming back to the questions of which injustices were produced and experienced at certain times, and in what ways were oppressions working together? Analyzing my data illustrated how complicated these issues are when using an intersectionality perspective. I started my coding by looking for instances where individuals mentioned race, class, Aboriginal status, sexuality, and gender. As expected, these issues did come up in respondents answers to questions about their lives in care, their communities, and their understandings of rights and citizenship – to mention a few. However, when looking at the ‘whole picture’ in a way that I consider to be consistent with an intersectional analysis, I found that it was not possible or useful to pinpoint the exact ways that gender discrimination differed from racial discrimination or differed from

any other discrimination. The respondents' lives were complex: they could not be reduced to simple examples of discrimination or oppression. Instead, the ways in which they were marginalized were multiple, varied, and fluid. Thus the way I dealt with the complexities inherent to participants' lives was by foregrounding the themes that I found across and within interviews. These themes are not meant to eclipse the differences that social location can make; instead, they are meant to show the variety of responses, feelings, behaviours, actions, and understandings of seemingly similar experiences.

An intersectional perspective has been important throughout my research process in that it provides a way to understand how oppressions can be interlocking and multiple. In using such an approach to study how youth interpret rights, practice citizenship, and engage in their communities, I take seriously the challenge that Nash (2008) puts forward to intersectional scholars:

it is incumbent upon intersectional scholars to critically interrogate the goals of the intersectional project as they determine how to chart the future of this theoretical and political movement. The important insights that identity is complex, that subjectivity is messy, and that personhood is inextricably bound up with vectors of power are only an analytic starting point; it is time for intersectionality to begin to sort out the paradoxes upon which its theory rests in the service of strengthening its explanatory power (p. 13).

With this in mind, I hope not only to draw attention to the complexities of identity, but also to explore what this means in terms of divisions and differences among young people in their experiences. To this end, like Hankivsky and Cormier (2009), I am hopeful that an intersectional perspective can be a way to integrate social justice work into academia.

I also want to acknowledge that I have been influenced by the literature on life course approaches. As Mitchell (2006) notes, life course perspectives draw attention to the importance of time, context, process and meaning on human development and social life. For youth-in-care, therefore, life course perspectives can show us how the context in which events occur in individuals' lives - including entering and leaving care - shape and influence the choices and decisions that these youth make both now and in the future. I am particularly influenced by the life course tenet of "linked lives", which postulates that lives are interdependent and reciprocally connected on a variety of lives (Elder, 1998).

Finally, I also draw on the tenets of Giddens theory of structuration to illustrate how an account of human agency is connected to a theory of the acting subject, and is situated in time and space as a continuous flow of conduct (p. 2). In his analysis of the tensions and dependence between agency and structure, Giddens illustrates how structure is both enabling and constraining of action (p. 69-70). An intersectionality approach is compatible with this understanding of structure and agency as it provides a way to comprehend how the actions that people take are mediated through structural realities. Now that I have laid out my methodological underpinnings, I turn to a discussion of the method I used to investigate the citizenship practices of youth-in-care.

3.3 Methods

In order to examine citizenship practices in participants' lives, I conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with youth in Greater Victoria. In-depth interviews were an appropriate method for my study, as they allowed me to engage in a sharing of

experiences and in a process of mutual discovery (Neuman and Robson, 2009, p. 268). Doing research with youth directly helps us to understand their standpoint because, as Corsaro (1997) notes, “children (and youth) are the best sources for understanding childhood” (p. 103). Although some research on youth and children use focus groups as a research strategy, I utilised one-on-one interviews instead. While focus groups are useful for generating group discussion on a particular topic, they have the potential to result in groupthink behaviour and may produce data that is less rich in detail than in-depth qualitative interviews (Neuman and Robson, 2009: 354, p. 5). Conversely, qualitative interviews allow participants to give accounts in their own words thus creating space for unexpected or surprising responses (Ibid).

The interviews began with close-ended background questions about participant experiences in government care and with parental and/or non-parental guardians. I used probes when necessary to elicit further detail about certain answers or comments. I then introduced participants to the UNCRC through a short oral overview on what the Convention purports to do, what Canada’s commitments to the Convention are, and what rights youth have according to the Convention (UNCRC, 1989). This was followed by questions to participants about rights, citizenship, and community in their daily lives (see Appendix A). I also asked about how they understood the meaning of the term citizen as well as how they saw their responsibilities in their daily lives. In terms of community, I was interested in how they envisioned their community: what makes a good community from their viewpoint, and whether they felt safe in their community. Additionally, I asked questions about their interactions with various service providers, including the police, social workers, as well as the service providers in the justice, health, and

educational systems. I was less interested in whether they knew exactly about the job descriptions of these institutional representatives and more interested in how they actually affected the youth's lives - from the point of view of the youth themselves. Finally, I posed a small number of open-ended questions about challenges the youth had experienced while being in government care, about their thoughts on their lives so far, and about what the future might hold for them.

3.4 Sample

I used non-random purposive sampling, which means that the selection of participants was based on a specific criterion (Cresswell 2003); in this case, the criterion was whether youth had previous experience in government care. Purposive sampling was useful in that I was able to find participants who shared a particular characteristic (experience with government care) thereby allowing for an investigation of themes across and within their responses (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003, p. 78). Although this process involved deliberate choices, it did not mean that undue bias was involved in the choices that were made. Instead, participants were chosen because they illustrated characteristics that allowed the researcher to consider a phenomenon in greater detail (Neuman and Robson, 2009, p. 137-8).

In terms of the composition of the study participants, there were eight men and twelve women. There were four participants ages 14-17, nine participants ages 18-21, and seven participants ages 22-24.²² Fifteen participants identified as non-Aboriginal, four identified as Aboriginal, and one was unsure. Of the four who identified as

²² Mean age of participants: 19.9 years old. Mode: 22. Median: 20

Aboriginal, two participants identified as Métis as well as First Nations, and the other two identified only as First Nations.²³ In addition, one person who identified as non-Aboriginal did include Métis as part of her ethnic background. Four individuals identified as visible minorities, but one participant who said he was a visible minority expressed some ambiguity about the term (he said “both yes and no” to the question of whether he identified as a visible minority). In terms of ethnic background, seven were unsure of their ethnic background, while other answers included French-Irish, Canadian-Italian, German-Thai, Dutch-English, Métis-Irish-French, African-American-British, Italian-Costa Rican. In terms of sexual orientation, fifteen participants identified themselves as ‘straight’, while five identified themselves as bisexual or ‘queer’.²⁴

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

<i>Participant Characteristics</i>								
	Aboriginal Status		Visible Minority		Sexual Orientation		Age	
	Identify as Aboriginal	Identify as Non-Aboriginal	Identify as visible minority	Do not identify as visible minority	Identify as non-straight	Identify as straight	19 and Under	20 and Over
Male	1	7	1	7	1	7	3	5
Female	3	9	3	9	4	8	4	8
Total	4	16	4	16	5	15	7	13

²³ Due to the fact that I was using participants own descriptions of their ethnic heritage, some participants chose to identify as Metis and First Nations, even though these are separate subordinate categories of the category ‘Aboriginal’. I have chosen to leave this in, even though it is inconsistent with the classification system I was using, in an attempt to honour participants’ narratives of their own lives.

²⁴ All participants who identified as non-straight chose the term bisexual rather than queer to describe themselves, regardless of whether they were in a same sex or opposite sex relationship. However, throughout the interviews, some of them would talk about experiences of coming out as gay to their parents, friends, and so on. The terms gay, bisexual and queer seemed to be dependent on participants’ current relationship status.

I interviewed 20 individuals for my research, after which I felt I had reached a certain type of saturation. As Cresswell (2003) notes, saturation occurs when the researcher starts to see the same themes emerge over time in the interviews they are collecting. In terms of how many participants are required for saturation, my sample of 20 is consistent with other qualitative work. In their study involving 60 participants, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that they achieved ‘theme saturation’ after 12 interviews. Furthermore, the number of participants in my study was constrained by time limitations and cost constraints of being a graduate student and completing my doctoral research in a timely manner.

For my sampling criterion of experience in the care system, I did not specify whether youth had to have been in care in B.C. This meant that the experiences with care are not be considered to be representative of the B.C. system in any way. For the most part, the youth in the study had been in care in B.C., but there were certainly exceptions (including experiences in foster care or group homes in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and England). In many cases, the youth who had experienced care outside of B.C. had also been in care or on a youth agreement in B.C.

Before I began recruitment, I was unsure if finding youth who had been in government care would emerge as a sensitive subject for potential participants. It turned out that this was not the case: most participants were very willing to talk about their experiences in government care. For the most part, it was interesting to note how satisfied they were with the experiences of being in government care.²⁵ Even the ones who had moved around often from government care home to government care home

²⁵ Over half the participants said they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their experiences in care.

would self-report being somewhat satisfied with their experiences in care. They were often adamant that they had been ‘lucky’ and had avoided the ‘horror’ stories they had heard from friends or acquaintances.²⁶ Such an individual focus is not uncommon for people who are vulnerable or marginalized (see Kennelly and Dillabough, 2008). As Hayward (2012) illustrates many young people are influenced by the neoliberal ideals of citizenship as personal responsibility, which places a great priority on the role of the individual in determining their life course.

My sample was recruited from various organisations around Victoria that work with youth. The recruitment strategy that I used was multi-pronged. To find youth to participate in my study, I emailed and called numerous non-profit youth services and youth outreach organisations in Victoria; hung posters in coffee shops, recreation venues, and youth centres; posted an advertisement on Facebook seeking participants; and asked various academic and community-worker acquaintances to let potential participants know that I was starting this research (see Appendix B for recruitment poster). I met with front-line youth workers from a number of organisations around Victoria, including B.C. Healthy Communities, the Victoria Youth Council, Youth Core, the Victoria Youth Clinic, the Youth Service Providers Network, Volunteer Victoria, and Rock Bay Shelter. Furthermore, many of the people I emailed forwarded my information on to their contacts and hung posters at their facilities to help me recruit.

In terms of how I actually found youth to participate in my dissertation, there were four main ways that this occurred. First, the Victoria Youth Clinic proved to be a helpful connection. I found out about the Victoria Youth Clinic (VYC) from the Chair of

²⁶ For a further discussion of how youth discussed their experiences in care, see Chapter 5.

the James Bay Community Project board who put me in touch with the director of the Youth Clinic. After meeting with her and the social worker at the Victoria Youth Clinic, I was given permission to recruit participants and also conduct the interviews on the VYC premises. In total, I found eleven of my participants at the Victoria Youth Clinic. Second, I was in touch with the Alliance Drop-In Club and used their services to find three participants. Third, I approached youth downtown at coffee shops, at malls, and on the street and asked them to hand out my flyers to acquaintances or anyone who might be interested. Through this rather direct recruitment technique, I was able to find five additional participants. Finally, I remained in contact with the Rock Bay Shelter coordinator, and she helped me find one eligible participant.

At the Youth Clinic, I had a regular weekly-scheduled session during which I would talk to youth arriving at the clinic about my research, and I would often give them a handout about the study.²⁷ For those who agreed to participate, they were able to do the interviews at the clinic, either immediately or sometime during the next week, if they wanted. Others preferred to meet up elsewhere, and gave me their contact information. I did not use snowball sampling, so I did not formally ask them to recruit friends.²⁸ However, because I did use the youth clinic as my main source of finding people, it was inevitable that I would see some of the same youth week after week. Participants from previous sessions would often chat with me, and sometimes they would encourage a

²⁷ At the Youth Clinic, I would often help volunteers with whatever needed doing - making grilled cheese sandwiches, preparing cutlery/napkins, or cleaning up. I am very much indebted to the amazing staff at the Clinic. They were so helpful and welcoming. In addition to letting me recruit participants at the Clinic, they also let me use their space to conduct interviews, and were very helpful in talking through some issues, such as whether to use gift cards or not, and expanding the age range.

²⁸ While snowball sampling is a good technique for connecting with hard-to-reach populations, it was not necessary for my research because of my other recruitment strategies.

friend or acquaintance to participate if they were eligible. For the most part though, this kind of peer encouragement was not a major factor in my recruitment. Instead, I tended to find people to participate through conversations with those waiting to see a doctor or nurse, or occasionally, from clinic staff who would suggest someone who might be eligible and who might like to participate.

In some cases, I would see the same youth in a variety of places. In these cases, I have tried to refer to the place where I first chatted with them about the study. This was particularly challenging when speaking with youth outside of the Victoria Youth Clinic and the Alliance Drop-in Club. These two locations are in the same building and, as their programs are often co-shared, youth seem to go from one to the other quite seamlessly. Furthermore, I would sometimes be outside the building waiting to go upstairs to one or the other and would talk to youth outside. I did not always know which one of the two venues they were waiting to go to, and it appeared that they would sometimes visit both.

My sampling and recruitment strategy have definite limitations. First, most of the youth service providers and organisations that I was dealing with were located in downtown Victoria, so youth who lived further out of the city core were not targeted. While I handed out pamphlets to youth organisations and recreation centres in the Saanich peninsula, Oak Bay, and Esquimalt, I did not have much success connecting with youth in these areas. Furthermore, the youth service providers outside the downtown core who I was in touch with often claimed that their youth populations would be less appropriate for my study than youth who lived downtown.²⁹ With this said I did find that

²⁹ I do not think that the youth workers were necessarily correct in this assessment. Youth-in-care and former youth-in-care live all over the Greater Victoria area and use a variety of services (Federation of B.C. Youth-in-Care Network, n.d.).

some of the youth who participated in my research were from the surrounding communities and just came downtown to hang out with friends or go to school. A second limitation was that I found a number of my participants at one location (the Victoria Youth Clinic). This meant that some of the youth had heard about the interviews and the research even before I talked to them, and therefore had certain ideas beforehand about what they wanted to discuss. Furthermore, because I found most of my participants in one location, it is possible that my sample may have been biased towards individuals who were already seeking assistance. This could have accounted for how many youth considered themselves to be 'lucky'.

As the sole researcher, I conducted all interviews on my own. The interviews were stored in such a way as to ensure that individuals remained anonymous to anyone outside of the research. I used a separate password protected spread sheet to keep the identities of the individuals separate from their transcripts. As well, all names and identifying information were changed for the purposes of ensuring confidentiality. In this way, participants were assured of anonymity in the presentation of my findings. The voluntary nature of participation is also important: all participants had the option of stopping the interview at any time although none of them chose to do this.

3.5 Data analysis and rigour

With the consent of participants, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data analysis, therefore, was conducted using transcripts of the interviews. In analysing qualitative findings, the researcher needs to stay close to the original data in order to capture the social worlds of the people that are being studied (Spencer, Ritchie and

O'Connor, 2003a, p. 213). It can be hard to find patterns and themes across interview data, but it is important to build "a structure of evidence" in order to see the building blocks of the analysis (Ibid). With this in mind, I used an analytical hierarchy strategy - which involves data management and categorization - as suggested by Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor (2003a: 2003b). Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor (2003a) argue that this kind of data analysis technique is particularly useful for research analysis based on interpretations of meaning (p. 213). Thus, such a technique was particularly applicable to my study, in that I was focused on how youth see themselves as expressing citizenship.

After transcribing the interview data, the first step in using an analytical hierarchy strategy involves data management (Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor, 2003b, p. 220). This stage involves labelling, sorting, and synthesising the data. I began by re-reading the transcripts of the interviews, looking at my interview guide, and reviewing the notes I took during data collection. I made a lengthy list of concepts and ideas that emerged in the course of the interviews. Then, I began to synthesise this list into a more compact one, which I called an index. This index had seven major categories and involved topics such as life histories, understandings of rights and citizenship, and dealings with institutions. There were many subcategories to each of these, which incorporated the very different phenomena that emerged through my careful examination of the transcribed interviews. I then turned to indexing the data by going through the respondent answers, line by line, and assigning each response an appropriate index number. Finally, the last stage of the preliminary analysis was to create thematic charts in order to sort and synthesise the data (Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor, 2003b, p. 228-9). I went through each interview and searched for comments about certain major topics

from the interview guide: including demographic information, experiences in care, family relationships, understandings of rights and citizenship, experiences of community or work or school, reflections on life so far, thoughts on the future, as well as interactions with institutions. As I did this, I tried to condense the data by synthesising and summarising, while also including some direct quotes from interviewees that I thought would be particularly important or illustrative.

At this point, the broad topic areas that I looked for were helpful in organising the data, but were subject to change as the data analysis continued. Additionally at this stage, I involved a second person, a fellow graduate student doing her Ph.D. in the Sociology department at the University of Victoria, in my coding process in an attempt to satisfy questions of inter-coder reliability. As Morse (1997) points out, it is not always applicable to use inter-coder reliability, especially in unstructured interviews. However, when interviews are semi-structured, and questions are generally asked in the same order, inter-coder reliability can be helpful (Ibid). Ryan-Nicholls and Will (2009) note, “it can be useful to have another person examine segments of data or emergent coding frameworks but in so doing it is highly recommended that this is undertaken with caution” (p. 83). The other coder looked at a sample of my interviews and coded them as she saw fit. We then met and went over what themes we saw as important (Quinn, et al., 2009, p. 225). I revised my initial coding scheme after our discussions, and went back over all the transcripts with the modified coding plan.

The second step in the analytical hierarchy technique involves making use of the summarised data to identify key descriptive dimensions and accounts (Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor, 2003a, p. 214). This means checking over the actual language used by

participants as well as the content of participants' accounts in terms of how they expressed their understandings of citizenship, rights, responsibilities, belonging, community, and other key themes. Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor (2003b) suggest that this stage involves detection, categorisation, and classification in order to present data in a way that is meaningful, consistent with a participant's language, and illuminating of concepts and ideas (p. 237).

At the beginning of this stage, the descriptions stay close to the original data, but as the analysis is carried out, the researcher works toward more abstract categorisations. During this step, it is important not to ignore data that does not seem to fit in with the general picture that may be emerging (Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor, 2003b, p. 238). To carry out this stage, I focused on identifying categories from the data I had labelled, organised, and synthesised in the previous stage. To do this, I created a master thematic chart, in which I identified responses or comments about similar topics or classifications. For example, I sought out comments on work throughout the interviews and began to identify how participants saw the adult world of work in terms of past jobs, current jobs, or job searches as well as their ideal careers and work paths. This allowed me to see similarities (difficulties many participants had finding work) and differences (especially around age, and to a lesser extent, gender) in responses. At this stage, it was possible to engage in a higher level of abstraction as some categories could be combined, and as a result, more meaningful classifications emerged. One of the biggest challenges was figuring how to make sure that the categorisations were comprehensive, so that relevant aspects were not ignored even if they were only mentioned once or twice.

At this phase in my data analysis, I started to see the emergence of a typology of citizenship practices. Typologies allow for a more complex portrayal of a position or characteristic because they allow for multiple dimensions to be classified at the same time (Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor, 2003b, p. 244). Typologies can be a useful tool as they can be employed at various stages of data analysis and can help with structuring, sorting, and presenting data (Hennick, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p. 255). For my research, the typology that emerged was helpful, both in structuring how I saw the data and in creating a way to present my findings (see Chapter 6 for a full discussion of citizenship practices.).

The third step in data analysis when using an analytical hierarchy strategy involves moving towards “patterns of association” in the data and looking for linkages between and across accounts (Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor, 2003a, p. 215). This is an important step for qualitative research as it means that the researcher is attempting to describe certain patterns and associations as crucial to understanding a particular phenomenon. The researcher engages in third-order interpretation by connecting the data to broader understandings of concepts (Neuman and Robson, 2009, p. 87). At this stage in my data analysis, I attempted to find patterns across the responses of participants by analysing the concepts laid out in my master thematic chart. This went beyond looking only at descriptive accounts and moved to the level of linking participants' accounts to unspoken or tacit assumptions as well as to various bodies of literature on citizenship, youth rights, and emerging adulthood. I began by reviewing the categories I had created in the second stage of my analysis when I was looking for descriptive accounts. I created a new central chart, where I plotted the typologies and the categories I had found, and

attempted to account for the variations and similarities in the classifications. Finally, in writing up my findings, I once again returned to the central chart, and revisited themes and concepts once again in order to search for meaning within and across participant accounts.

There are a number of suitable standards of rigour for qualitative research, some of which vary substantially from quantitative research. Qualitative researchers strive for validity by offering candid portrayals of social life that illustrate the relationship between the people studied and the conclusions arrived at by researchers (Warren and Karner, 2005, p. 215). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that qualitative researchers should aim for validity through a kind of truthfulness by adhering to four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is about whether the results of the qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To establish credibility, I met with youth who had been in government care and discussed my findings. Furthermore, I presented my research findings in an accessible way online in the form of a blog (katepbutler.com), and linked this to other youth blogs in Victoria. After sending the blog out to all participants, I met with one participant who wanted to discuss the results. She agreed with many of my findings and was interested to see the similarities between her life and that of the other participants. Transferability refers to the extent to which the research can be generalised or transferred to other settings. To this end, qualitative researchers should be thorough in describing their research setting and context as well as their procedures; throughout this chapter, I have described the conditions in which I conducted my research, along with the procedures I used. Dependability of findings is

about consistency and thereby shows that the findings could be repeated. In qualitative research, this does not mean that the process needs to be repeated exactly, but rather suggests that researchers should be as clear as possible in describing how they carried out their research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I have tried to establish dependable findings by describing in detail how I recruited participants, conducted interviews, and analyzed results in this chapter. Finally, confirmability has to do with the degree to which research findings are shaped by participants rather than by researcher bias. One way to avoid researcher bias is to be reflexive throughout the research process, which, as I illustrate below, I have attempted to do. Being reflexive does not lead one to avoid bias completely, but it does foreground the ways that my own social location - as a white, heterosexual woman - may have influenced my experiences of the research process.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Qualitative research is guided by the principle of doing no harm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I tried to conduct my research in such a way as to adhere to this ideal. Prior to beginning recruitment and data collection, my study was approved by the University of Victoria Human Ethics Research Board. All participants were asked to review and sign a Letter of Consent before the interview began, and after the interview finished, they received a copy of this letter (see Appendix C for consent form). When recruiting potential participants, I emphasised that participation was confidential and voluntary. Many of the participants had questions about what my role was and who would see this data. After explaining my research to them and how the information

would be presented, all of those who expressed concern chose to continue doing the interview.

I also undertook some further precautions due to the involvement of youth in this study. Working with youth presents some unique ethical challenges. Youth are generally considered to be vulnerable populations in that extra caution is required when doing research with them (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 157-8). One of the major challenges I encountered with the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) was the issue of consent. I wanted to avoid getting parental consent if possible because of the sensitive issues that the interviews covered and the transitory lifestyle of many participants. In the end, the HREB agreed that as long as I agreed to give a copy of the Letter of Consent for participants to take home, competent youth ages 13 and up would be able to give consent themselves.³⁰

Effective qualitative researchers aim at being reflexive in their work. Reflexive research means locating yourself in the data that you generate and seeking a way to capture or express this (Mason, 2002, p. 149). For me, this means that I have a responsibility to be clear about my background, values, and position while being aware of my role in the research process. Throughout this research, I have tried to think in “personal terms about the social sciences I do” (Krieger, 1991, p. 2). Even if it is very difficult to ‘bracket’ feelings or biases (Ceglowski, 2002, p. 22), qualitative researchers can still attempt to make visible who they are and how this affects the research they

³⁰ According to the HREB, studies of minimal risk involving competent youth ages, 13-16 do not require parental and/or guardian consent. However, it may be appropriate to give parents and/or guardians an “information letter” about the study (UVic Human Ethics Research Board Guidelines, 2010: p. 24). I was given approval to gain informed consent from participants, while also sending home an information letter to the parents. I did not require parental consent though, and this letter was only for information purposes, after the interview had been conducted. For youth ages 17-18, parental consent is not usually required (Ibid: p. 25).

undertake. In this way, by acknowledging that backgrounds and beliefs that might be relevant, researchers make their own biases and opinions explicit (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 20). At the same time, reflexivity also involves acknowledging inclusivity, transparency, and humility in the research process (Masuda et al., 2012). Inclusivity means that the researcher is not only listening to the ways of knowing that are comfortable, but also the ones that are uncomfortable. Transparency is about making one's research purpose clear and explicit. Finally, humility is about acknowledging all of what you do not know as well as what you do know. I have tried to integrate these principles in my work.

Throughout the research process, the qualitative researcher is an active participant not just in analysing the data, but also in supplying meaning (Cresswell, 2003). The role of the researcher is particularly important when conducting in-depth interviews (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003, p. 139). In conducting interviews, I was inevitably a part of the research process that I carried out. Furthermore, in analysing the data, one voice – mine – ended up speaking for the participants, for I am the one presenting this information. As others have noted, a qualitative researcher puts her own interpretations into the words of participants in the writing and analysis stages of the research (Creswell, 2003; Mason, 2002). My research followed this pattern as well in that it was my interpretations of participants' comments and thoughts that have made it into this written work. While I certainly attempted to understand participants' standpoints, my work undoubtedly reflects my own interpretations of what was said. In doing this research, I was inevitably bound by my own cultural frames of reference.

On this note, I want to make a few comments about my role in the research process. When I was conducting the interviews, I was seven to eight months pregnant. At first, I was nervous about how this would affect the data collection stage of my research. As Reich (2003) suggests, pregnant bodies are public bodies: they are bodies to be touched, commented upon, given advice to, and surveilled. However, I found that my worries were unfounded: my pregnancy proved to be an interesting topic with which to begin many conversations with youth, both with those who were eligible for the research and those who were not. One day, I was volunteering at the Youth Clinic, and talking to various youth who came in. I ended up spending a little while sitting with four young women - none of whom that were eligible for the research sample - but who all seemed quite interested in what I was doing and in how far along I was in my pregnancy. They all told me stories about their own experiences of being pregnant - two of them were currently pregnant; while two others had been so in the past - and how they felt about pregnancy, abortion, and children. One of them expressed considerable interest in how I was able to go to school and have a baby. She wondered if I was still with my partner and whether I would go back to school immediately after the baby was born. She expressed a lot of empathy for the plight of being a student and having a baby, for she was also pregnant, but had not decided whether she was going to continue with the pregnancy or not - partly because she was currently without a permanent address. Having a pregnant, marginalized teenager express the complexities of these decisions with such eloquence -- about my pregnancy and her own -- was eye opening. The focus on my pregnancy by the youth made me feel more like an insider than I think I would

have felt otherwise. It made me feel as though I had something in common with the participants despite all the surface differences between my life and theirs.³¹

The fact that I was a student also seemed significant in the sense that many of the youth were interested in what I was going to do with my research. On the other hand, some participants forgot I was a student and would ask for clarification during the interviews and about who was going to see the finished interviews. Their main concern was that a social worker or income assistance official would hear about something in their lives which was not supposed to be happening, such as living with a partner while on welfare, using drugs or alcohol, or not taking certain medications. When I re-explained that I was a graduate student at the University of Victoria, however, and using the data to research how young people practice citizenship, all participants seemed to be reassured and continued on with the interviews.

I also want to mention the ways that the youth responded to the interview process. They seemed apologetic at times for bringing up difficult things that had happened to them in the past. For example, Ella, age, 16, told me that her twin brother had cancer, but then told me how sorry she was to bring that up in an interview about rights and citizenship and care.³² Other participants commented on how cathartic they found the interview process. Sawyer, age, 22, said at the end: “I know I went off on a bit of a rant and I said some really inappropriate things during this interview, but it felt good”. Others thanked me at the end of the interview for choosing to interview them, and some commented on the questions themselves. One participant told me that I had done a good

³¹ In terms of participant interview responses, pregnancy, including mine, theirs and that of their friends or peers, often came up. For example, one male participant said that too many girls get themselves pregnant because they are desperate for approval and love, and then turned to me and said quickly, “But no offense!”

³² All names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

job of asking questions that made sense; another remarked that the questions were more interesting than he had first imagined. One participant ended his interview by offering some unsolicited criticism and advice on how to improve my interview skills, namely by switching the order of the questions around and using more accessible language. These comments are interesting in that they illustrate how the interviews themselves shaped the responses from participants, as did my framing of the questions.

Finally, I want to make a few comments about doing research with young people. In doing youth research, there can be an assumption that because researchers were all once young, they know exactly what it is like to 'be' a youth (Boocock and Scott, 2005). I have tried to avoid this bias as I highlighted the values, lives, and perspectives of young people in my study. Instead, I have noted, the similarities and differences of their experiences in what I hope is an accurate and sensitive manner (Hartas, 2008, p. 169). It is important to remember that how researchers study young people affects what is learned about them (Boocock and Scott, 2005, p. 33). Too often, studying youth has involved an 'othering' of young people (Thorne, 2003). It is possible to explore the experiences of youth without reducing their lives to simply *difference from* adulthood. Contemporary research on young people works to avoid turning children into the other through perspectives that are "unified by a view of children as active and constructive members of society and childhood as an integral part of the social fabric" (Boocock and Scott, 2005, p. 6).

Much has been written about how best to include young people in social research that is about them. From these various perspectives, I see three important methodological themes of youth research. First, when researching young people, researchers should

attempt to include young people's voices in all possible aspects of the research process: from research design to data analysis to dissemination. Bancroft, Fawcett and Hay (2008) call this a "pedagogy of listening" and claim that it involves recognising everyone's worth and contributions, while supporting and really hearing what youth are saying (p. 6). While it was not possible for logistical reasons to include youth in every aspect of my research, I attempted to satisfy this criterion by using open-ended interviews that allowed for youth to discuss issues they consider important. After the interviews were completed, I sent all participants electronic copies of their transcripts for them to comment upon.³³ As noted above, this is important for validity purposes as well: by giving youth a chance to provide feedback on my research, they could clarify their narratives and comments to better reflect their beliefs and experiences. Furthermore, as noted above, I presented my findings to young people who had been in government care, both online and in person, and gave them the chance to discuss some of the themes and ideas to see if my research was indicative of their experiences of care and citizenship practices.

Second, it is important to avoid adult ideological bias (Boocock and Scott, 2005: 41). This means that researchers need to take seriously the idea that youth are social actors who make, at least, partially independent decisions and choices about their lives and experiences. These choices are influenced by structural constraints. Researchers need to understand youth as part of a broader discourse on life-course and generational difference (Qvortrup, 2002). For instance, youth are not only future bearers of rights; they are bearers of rights *now* (Fawcett and Hay, 2008, p. 15). Viewing young people as

³³ I was unable to contact one participant because the contact information she gave me did not work.

'human becomings' rather than 'human beings' negates the agency of young people as social actors (Arneil, 2002). Youth are not simply worthy of rights because they are preparing to be adults. In drawing attention to this, one challenges traditional binary notions of childhood and adulthood by illustrating the relational nature of these categories (Mayall, 2002, p. 7). As such, youthhood is best understood in relation to other stages of life. For my research, I satisfied this condition by treating youth as co-collaborators in the interview process. We worked together to create a dialogue rather than engaging in a one-way question-and-answer format. Youth were not formally involved in creating the interview guide, but I did try to respond to common themes I found in the first few interviews by adding questions about these topics to later interviews. For instance, I did not have a question about work in my preliminary interview guide. After the first three interviews, I realized that this was a huge gap and made sure to ask all future participants about their experiences with work, searching for work, and work-related goals.³⁴

Third, there has been a tendency of some researchers to conduct research in such a way that youth who are disadvantaged or marginalized are ignored or forgotten (Mayall, 2002). I avoided this tendency by providing young people with a space and place to describe their lives as they see them within the context of the research questions (Boocock and Scott, 2005, p. 40). This is particularly crucial for youth who do not fit into preconceived notions of what 'good' youthhood looks like (Ibid). I satisfied this criterion by making sure that I used young people's words and phrases in my analysis of the data. In this way, I attempted to give a voice to diversity and difference among youth

³⁴ Unfortunately, youth were not involved in the data analysis process. This limitation was due to my research design, which did not call for youth involvement in the data analysis stage. For future research of this nature, I would certainly try to include participants in this stage, because I think it would have been insightful.

who took part in my study and challenged preconceived notions of what youth citizenship ought to be.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined my methodological considerations, sampling, recruitment and data collection procedures, data analysis practices, and ethical considerations. As well, I have written about my experiences as a researcher both studying this topic and engaging in interviews with participants, while being sensitive to each participant and his or her thoughts and ideas. From recruitment to data analysis to writing up my findings, I have continued to remind myself that I am the one who is giving a written voice to the words of these complex individuals. In the next chapter, I provide some context surrounding the lives of these participants by reviewing the conditions of late (post) modernity, as well as the framework guiding B.C.'s government care system.

Chapter 4: Contextualizing Youth Citizenship

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the context in which youth-in-care practice citizenship by reviewing the historical and contextual factors which set the stage for citizenship to be practiced. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, being a citizen means having the opportunities to realize one's rights, exercise one's responsibilities, access institutions, participate in decision-making processes, and share a sense of belonging with one's community (Beauvais et al., 2001). For youth-in-care, citizenship practices are complicated by the fluidity between public and private: as wards of the state, the government is responsible for their well-being, and yet, as foster children placed in group or family homes, they clearly inhabit the private sphere in their daily lives. In this chapter, I investigate the broader social, economic, and political changes that have shifted the context in which youth, including the youth in my study, practice citizenship in the contemporary era.

First, I examine how the processes of globalization, individualization, and, neoliberalization of the welfare state have all shifted practices of citizenship, as well as understandings of children and childhoods. I also discuss the ways that youth today are considered to be both risky and at-risk. Next, I trace the history of the child welfare in British Columbia. All participants in my study had previously been in government care, mainly in B.C.; these experiences in care play a major role in shaping the ways they practiced citizenship, for their lives – while in care - were lived at an intersection of the private (home) and the public (state intervention) spheres. Finally, I consider the

proliferation of rights discourses in policies governing children-in-care. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the ratification of the UNCRC has elicited academic and popular interest in rights discourse, even though this document remains aspirational. Research on youth citizenship must be cognizant of the ways that the UNCRC has influenced understandings of what it means to be a citizen (Reynaert et al., 2009).

4.2 Youth and youthhood in late (post) modernity

There have been a number of economic, political and social changes that have shifted the context in which young people practice citizenship. These changes can be seen as part of the broader processes of globalization, individualization and neoliberalism that have characterised the post-1973 era in the global North (Hobsbawm, 1994). These processes, along with the shift to ‘risk societies’ (Beck, 1992), are important in shaping how youth and youthhoods are constructed (Kehily, 2004) in understanding youth citizenship practices in the contemporary era.

Globalization entails a transformation of social institutions coupled with the growing strength of economic organisations that are international in reach, and a corresponding decline in the power on the nation state (Parton, 2006, p. 51). As Caputo (2007) notes, globalization has shaped many aspects of life: “it is clear that the societal changes related to growing globalization – privatization, deregulation and other ‘free market’ developments – have had an impact on the way both women and children experience their lives” (p. 190). For instance, globalization has allowed for an increased flow of information across the world, even as it has impacted the lived experiences of children in the global north and those in the global south very differently (Hayward,

2012, p. 3-4). In terms of what this means for citizenship, Kennelly and Dillabough (2008) suggest that wider global changes shape meanings attributed to concepts such as citizenship in this new era (p. 506).

The process of individualization is important in understanding individual agency in late (post) modernity in that “individuals are less constrained by the influence of traditional social demands and absolutist moral codes” (Parson, 2006, p. 54). Ties to institutions such as church and family are weakening, as are determining powers of class, race and gender in dictating one’s life course (Hobsbawm, 1994). This process can be conceptualized as disembedded individualization: “individual action becomes qualitatively more important... Biographies cease to be pre-given by society” (Beck and Willms, 2004, p. 63-64). When the individual becomes the basic unit of social reproduction (rather than collective identities or commitments), previous distinctions, such as those between class, race and gender, become more fluid and flexible. Ferguson (2007) notes that a core meaning of the individualization process is that intervention in the family life - in the form of child protection for instance - can lead to new opportunities for children, women and men to engage in life planning (p. 136). Women have the opportunity to plan a life other than motherhood and nurturing if they so choose, and children also have the ability - in theory at least - to make their own choices and decisions (Ferguson, 2007, p. 138). As Mitchell (2006) notes, trends towards individualization indicate that, “young people are becoming less bound to do what a particular informal or formal group is doing and can legitimately choose their own pathways en route to adulthood” (170). This shift towards individualization is reflected in the UNCRC’s emphasis on the rights of the child and the best interests of the child,

both of which speak to the autonomy that young people are assumed to operate with (Beauvais et al., 2001).

The third process that is worth nothing in more detail is that of neoliberalism, which involves policies that have both social and economic consequences (Hayward, 2012), and involves explicit and implicit pressures (Hallgrimsdottir, Benoit, and Phillips, 2013). Neoliberalism describes policy changes that embrace the free market values of efficiency, competition, and access to everything from education to employment insurance and health care (Hayward, 2012, p. 21). The term neoliberalism is often used inaccurately and imprecisely to describe processes that are actually diverse and that have an economic basis that affects the lives of individuals'. Neoliberalism is best understood as a prizing of economic growth over measures of social justice while concurrently limiting the role of government to that of regulation (Hayward, 2012). The introduction of neoliberal economic ideas into the political realm has transformed understandings of citizenship (Ibid), leading to an increased emphasis on personal choice and individual responsibility. The trend towards the neoliberalization of the welfare state has emerged from the spread of neoliberal economic and social policy involving “a minimal state, critiqued regularly and with vigilance; the market as the primary mechanism of wealth distribution; economic risk-taking and an entrepreneurial spirit; individual responsibility for risk; and the inevitability of social inequality” (Swift and Callahan, 2009, p. 52).

In many Western democracies, significant changes have taken place in the “social safety net” that had been an important part of the post-WWII welfare state (Swift and Callahan, 2009, p. 41). In Canada, these changes, which are associated in part with neoliberal governance, have included substantial cutbacks in funding to human service

professionals, the outsourcing of programs and tasks to private and non-profit organizations, and the discontinuation of a variety of services and programs (Ibid). As Hallgrimsdottir, Benoit and Phillips, 2013) note, Canada's welfare state is lopsided in that some areas of social investment, such as health care and higher education, receive substantial funding, while others, such as services for families and children, receive far less (p. 28). In British Columbia, the election of the B.C. Liberals in 2001 led to a substantial reduction in the budget of MCFD: the net outcome for the ministry was a budget reduction of 23% over three years (Foster, 2007, p. 188). Similarly, other social service ministries including Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women Services, as well as the Ministry of Human Resources, both received major reductions in their budgets (Ibid). When MCFD, and other social service ministries, have less funding, there is the potential for children and families in need to be missed.

On a broader level, neoliberal policies have shaped the economic lives of individuals, which in turn have an effect on social policies.³⁵ Changes to policies governing welfare more generally have shifted the landscape for families in poverty in Canada in the last 30 years. After an influx of funding to social programs such as Unemployment Insurance and Social Assistance in the 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s saw a host of changes that made receiving government help more difficult (Albanese, 2010). Many provinces, including B.C., saw the implementation of restrictions regarding eligibility for programs, the contracting out of social services, and the beginning of user fees for particular services (Foster, 2007). In 1995, Prime Minister Chretien announced

³⁵ I do want to draw attention to the idea that neoliberalization is only partially explains the reluctance by the government and by Canadians to increase support for services for children and families. Hallgrimsdottir, Benoit and Phillips (2013) suggest that the social citizenship contract, which is embedded in Canada's welfare state, also plays a role.

that the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) would replace the Canada Assistance Plan, leading to significant reductions in funding for health care, social assistance, and post-secondary education (Albanese, 2010). In 2005, the CHST was split into the Canada Social Transfer, and the Canada Health Transfer, which furthered moves towards defunding certain programs and privatizing services (Ibid).

For children and youth, the effects of the changes to social assistance are felt through increasing rates of child poverty, which can only be understood in relation to family poverty. As Albanese (2010) notes, “Children are poor for a large number of reasons, but principally due to their parents’ relationship to the Canadian labour force, the wages they receive, and the high cost of housing and living” (74). Many children come into care in part because of their family’s economic situation; in some cases, parents and children will agree to a voluntary care agreement because they realize the child is better off in care than in the parental home (McKenzie, Palmer and Barnard, 2007: 224).³⁶

Neoliberalism - as an economic policy and as an ideological project that extends market values into public life - has changed the way that young people can and do practice citizenship (Hayward, 2012). One of the ways that this change has been felt is the increasing emphasis on self-governance, in part because of the abdication of social services from certain areas of life. Self-governance refers to the monitoring of one’s own behaviour and actions in accordance with norms and expectations. A tension that imbues the concept of youth citizenship emerges when examining whether young people have the capabilities to make rational and informed decisions that characterise the self-governance needed to practice citizenship (Cohen, 2005, p. 221). Questions about whether youth

³⁶ At the same time, children and youth come under the child protection system for many reasons other than family poverty.

have the capacity for self-governance are evident when studying children and youth in 'risk societies' (Beck, 2002). A major change to the social construction of childhoods and children in late (post) modernity is that young people are increasingly viewed as both at-risk and risky (Parton, 2006). Ferguson (2004) notes that the social construction of children is more ambiguous than ever with cultural obsessions with risk on the one hand, and, on the other, the understanding that children now have the capacity for individual and collective action as moral actors (p. 146).

In terms of riskiness, childhood is constructed as a precious realm that is under growing threat from adults trying to rob children of experiencing childhood as they did, and from children themselves, who are refusing to act as children by committing violence or who "refuse to remain childlike" (Parton, 2006, p. 59). It is not that the current era is necessarily riskier, although there is a higher exposure to a context of proliferating stories and information about potential risks and threats (Swift and Callahan, 2009). Discussions about children's riskiness can be framed within the larger literature on risk (Beck, 1992, 2000). Youth increasingly occupy a position of risk in that they are a risk to themselves and others, but also are at-risk in an increasingly dangerous world (Beck, 1992). Our current era is characterised by 'risk societies', in which the diffusion of responsibilities, as well as the uncertainty of what *could* happen, have both become important. The unknowingness of where, when, or how risks might occur necessitates the formation of communities that are cognisant of risk potentialities and possible responses (Beck, 1992, 2000).

There is a paradox in how young people are seen in late (post) modernity: there is a fear *for* children and a fear *of* children operating simultaneously (Jones, 2009; Parton,

2006). This tension - between children being both at risk and risky - is exemplified in the attention being given to prominent examples of violence committed by children against other children. The 1993 murder of James Bulger, a two-year-old boy, by two ten-year-old boys captured a fear of children-as-evil that had begun to make its way back into popular discourse, particularly in the U.K. (Kehily, 2004, p. 16). The ten-year-old boys were vilified as monsters, and the parents were blamed as being at fault (Ibid). Similarly, the Columbine high school massacre, committed by youth, elicited discussions about the effects of mediated violence on children and again framed children as either fearful or feared (Buckingham, 2000). In order to manage the riskiness facing young people, children and young people face increasing surveillance from a variety of sources, as do parents (Best 1994; Caputo, 2007). For instance, parental advocacy groups - concerned about violence in video games, explicit lyrics in rap songs, and sexual content in movies - justify their actions as being protective of children (Best, 2004). Moreover, parents are expected to supervise and regulate their child's behaviour through the ever-more-available technology, as evidenced through the explosion of video cameras in shopping malls, V-chips on televisions, and stricter ratings systems on music. While children may be the ones targeted as in need of protection, it is often parents, particularly mothers, who have been the intended subjects of supervision (Caputo, 2007). While mothers are targeted and moralized to, children themselves become subjects in the neoliberal undertaking of self-governance (Hunt, 1999, p. 10). A tightening net of supervision and scrutiny has come to be considered normal in the modern construction of childhood.

One of the ways that the emphasis on risk has changed constructions of youthhood is through the description of some youth as 'at-risk' (James, 2012). The

designation of 'at-risk' is often used to refer to young people struggling against poverty, racism, and stigmatization (James, 2012: 96). The at-risk label is used in relation to structural and systemic inequities of race, class, gender, family composition, language, and immigration status (Ibid). An at-risk designation of youth, therefore, may actually further stigmatize young people, rather than allowing for a more complex understanding of the structural factors that are inherent in the 'at-risk' label.

Risk tends to dominate many social practices, including those engaged in by human service professionals (Swift and Callahan, 2009, p. 39). Child protection agencies have turned to risk assessment as a way of managing children and families (Callahan and Swift, 2007; Parton et al., 1997). The emphasis on risk, which can also be seen as indicating vulnerability of a particular population, has been imposed by governments to justify the allocation or dis-allocation of resources. As Callahan and Swift (2007) illustrate, the last two decades of child welfare in British Columbia have been dominated by a shift towards a risk assessment framework, in which decisions about which kinds of cases or families get financial priority are determined by assessing the families 'risk'. This means that the role of professional child welfare workers is to assess risk through a strategy of managerialism, which privileges managerial knowledge over professional knowledge (Callahan and Swift, 2007, p. 159-160). While child welfare has always been concerned with assessing the safety of children in families, actual formal risk assessment tools are new (Parton et al., 1997). Neoliberal thinking has led to professional bureaucracies, such as child welfare, being transformed into models that reflect the business world (Callahan and Swift, 2007).

The processes of individualization, globalization, and neoliberalism, along with the emphasis on risk, have all changed contemporary child protection practices, as well as constructions of childhood and children. These changes are interconnected: the shift towards individualization needs to be understood in relation to neoliberalism and risk. The withdrawal and reallocation of resources, which are both key parts of neoliberal policy, further entrench the notion that the individual is responsible for services that used to be taken care of by the state. Moreover, the emphasis on risk, in the social services as well as in understandings of contemporary childhood, is also indicative of the trend towards personal responsibility. I now turn to investigate the institutional contexts that guide the lives of youth-in-care by tracing the development of the B.C. government care system over the last century.

4.3 History of policies governing youth-in-care in B.C.

To understand the government care system in which participants practice citizenship, I review the history of child protection and child welfare in British Columbia. As Wharf (2007a) has noted, the story of the evolution of services and policies for abused and neglected children in B.C. has been told by a variety of sources including scholarly articles and book chapters (Callahan and Wharf, 1982; Foster and Wharf, 2007; Swift and Callahan, 2009; Wharf, 1987), judicial inquiries (Gove, 1995; Hughes, 2006), reports from the government (MCFD, 2003, 2010), and independent representatives (Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2005; RCY, 2008, 2009, 2013a; 2013b). For the purposes of my dissertation, this section focuses on the ways that the child welfare system has shaped the context in which young people can practice citizenship. I trace the

trajectory of child protection and government care formalized through various acts, policies, and judicial inquiries, for it is the history of these texts that have shaped the government care system that participants in my study experienced.³⁷ The terms child protection, child welfare, and government care are often used to describe both the work being done by professionals in the field, and the system which guides this kind of work. I refer to the field more generally as ‘child welfare’ in accordance with the phrase used by experts in British Columbia (Wharf, 2007a). I use ‘government care’ to refer to the care system which youth who are wards of the ministry belong.

It should be noted that the establishment of child protection agencies in the early 20th century often began with the worthwhile intent of helping children in need (Parton, 2006). Before this time, children who were neglected by their families could not depend on the state for assistance, beyond perhaps an orphanage or work home (Parton et al., 1997). The early attempts at formalizing child welfare in B.C. may have enshrined middle-class values and ideologies about parenting, however, at the same time, countless child welfare workers have provided invaluable support, assistance, and attention to children and families (Callahan and Walmsley, 2007). To this day, social workers and others involved with child welfare are engaged in making a difference in the lives of young people, often under considerably challenging circumstances. As Wharf (2007a) notes, “the day-to-day work of child welfare staff and the many instances of effective assistance to families go unnoticed and unrecorded” (p. 5). While I now turn to illustrate the history of child welfare in B.C., and in doing so, note many of the gaps and biases of

³⁷ It is important to note that as the government care system in British Columbia was being formalized in the early years of the 20th century, informal practices involving children and youth living with relatives or family friends when their parents were unable to care for them certainly remained in place (O’Donnell, 1996).

the system, I acknowledge the hard work and sincere effort that many individuals have brought to their positions as child protection professionals in this province over the past century.

The development of child welfare in B.C. was influenced by and followed from child welfare and child protection experiences in Great Britain and the rest of English Canada (Little, 1998; O'Donnell, 1996). The emergence of child protection laws in North America and Western Europe were closely connected with the broader social stresses accompanying industrialization, urbanization, and immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Callahan and Wharf, 1982). As cities became the norm for much of the Canadian population, family life came under increasing surveillance from the state, particularly families whose members were poor, racialized, or otherwise differentiated from the mainstream (Little, 1998). The first law in Canada dealing with child neglect was the Ontario Children's Protection Act (1893), which authorized the establishment of children's aid societies to deal with neglected and abandoned children (Callahan and Wharf, 1982). British Columbia soon followed suit with the 1901 Infants Act, which legalized the establishment of children's aid societies, funded by local charities and set up care for neglected or orphaned children, and allowed for the apprehension of these neglected or orphaned children (McBride, 2006).³⁸ However, only three children's aid societies were formed in British Columbia, all in current-day Greater Vancouver and Victoria, indicating that such societies were not as widespread as the government had imagined (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 16). The difficulties in setting up children's aid societies, combined with the complications in monitoring them, meant that

³⁸ The Infants Act was repealed in 1939 and replaced by the Protection of Children Act (O'Donnell, 1996).

many regions of the province did not have a society in place (Ibid). The Infants Act also allowed for the appointment of a Superintendent of Neglected Children, who was assigned overall responsibility for the administration of the legislation on child protection as well as the supervision of the children's aid societies (Callahan and Wharf, 1982, p. 8).³⁹

The role of the Superintendent of Neglected Children (and others working under her) was to acquire placements for children who became wards of the state. At this time, children under protection of the Superintendent did not have any meaningful control over their living situation: they were bodies in need of discipline and care (Hendrick, 2003).⁴⁰ The challenge for the Superintendent and her staff was to determine who would be best able to execute this kind of care: tensions emerged between those who viewed children as part of the private sphere, and those who saw children as needing public intervention. Foster care was not the official response to children in B.C. who were neglected, orphaned, or abandoned until the late 1920s (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 34).⁴¹ Instead orphanages, sometimes called Children's Homes, were thought of as the best solution for children who did not have a home even though they were underfunded, overcrowded, and faced significant health concerns. Foster care, also known as "putting out", was only an alternative measure that was often used in times of housing crises or for temporary care (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 39). Part of the hesitation around getting involved in the private sphere was due to tensions around differing views: were children best served by being in

³⁹ This position was later renamed as the Superintendent of Child Welfare (Callahan and Wharf, 1982: 8).

⁴⁰ Of course, the development of the child protection system in the first place was about stepping into the private sphere and stopping children from being hurt by their families. It is essential to acknowledge the good that child protection systems have done in protecting those young people at risk of abuse or neglect within their homes.

⁴¹ In Victoria specifically foster care was not a favored strategy of Children's Aid Societies until a decade after this, meaning that foster care only emerged here in the late 1930s (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 34).

their family home, even if this home was not ideal, or was it better to take them away and put them in foster care or an institution? This question speaks to broader concerns around the regulation of parenthood in general and of motherhood specifically (Little, 1998).

The regulation of mothers and the surveillance of their children are key parts of the historical trajectory of government care in the province of British Columbia. For example, debates over mothers' allowances or pensions were on-going in the media and within the child protection field (Abramovitz, 1996). The first Mothers' Allowance legislation in Canada passed in Manitoba in 1916, and other provinces, including B.C., soon followed suit with laws that stipulated state assistance to widowed women with children (Little, 1998). The government of B.C. adopted mothers' pensions in 1920 shortly before an election, thereby giving further legitimacy to the notion of children as part of the private sphere (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 19). At first, only white women whose husbands had died or abandoned them were eligible for this money; however, other groups of women were soon deemed appropriate recipients (Little, 1998). Mothers' allowances were designed to allow single women to raise their children 'properly' by staying home (Abramovitz, 1996, p. 184). Those who received a Mothers' Allowance and other early forms of welfare had to abide by strict moral guidelines concerning their lifestyle choices: women who did not live their lives in ways seen as acceptable by state workers could have their privileges revoked immediately (Little, 1998, p. 25). While these stipends were put in place to give poor parents a chance to keep their children, they tended to reinforce mothering ideologies of the day, which premised women's self-worth based on their roles as mothers. Furthermore, they allowed for an intrusion into the home

life of working-class women by middle-class reformers and state officials (Abramovitz, 1996).

The ambiguity around the best interests of the child - whether they should remain in the home or not - can be seen as a manifestation of ideologies about children and childhood (Ferguson, 2004, 2007). Hendrick (2003) notes that children in the pre-1914 period were often seen as bodies that were sick, malnourished, and abused; conversely, in the inter-war period, experts became interested in the minds of children and this led to a 'scientific' view of children, which resulted in a deeper appreciation of the threats facing children as well as a desire to promote a 'normal' kind of childhood (p. 12-13). Therefore, in the pre-1914 period, the emphasis tended to be on removing children to orphanages or institutions, as this would be the most straightforward way of dealing with children-as-bodies, while in the inter-war period, keeping children with their mothers was seen to be best for promoting and valorizing the family unit (O'Donnell, 1996).

By the end of the 1920s, however, the professionalization of social work led to a new direction of state intervention: individuals involved with the child welfare system encouraged the removal of children from less-than-desirable family environments and the placement of these children in foster care (Adamoski, 1988; Ferguson, 2004). Critics of mothers' allowances charged that many women receiving these pensions were not fit parents (Little, 1998). The B.C. Survey on Child Welfare in 1927 declared that too many children were remaining in homes that were unsuitable, and that Mothers' Allowances ought to be removed from 'unworthy' recipients (Adamoski, 1988). The B.C.

Government took steps to adhere to these suggestions by tightening regulations for children who were in what would now be considered to be foster care situations.⁴²

The mid-twentieth century reinforced notions of the necessity of child protection work as a way to look after those young people most in need of help. Changes to the legislation guiding child welfare in British Columbia in this era were relatively minor and tended to only involve adding circumstances to the list of reasons why children could be taken into care (Callahan and Wharf, 1982, p. 8). While child protection agencies worked to keep children in the home when possible, the numbers of young people in care increased during this period. The most common cause used (in over 90% of cases) was that parents were “unfit or incapable of exercising proper parental control” (Ibid). There were some changes to the ways child welfare was administrated; perhaps most important to note is the elimination of a focus on ‘families’ for Child Welfare workers, as the Family Division split off from the Child Welfare Division (McKay, 1945). The notion that child welfare is somehow separate from families points to the ways that the welfare of children was increasingly being seen as separate from the welfare of families.⁴³ Policies of this era furthered the implicit tendency to treat children homogeneously: their individual needs received little attention from the child protection system (Hendrick, 2003, p. 12).

⁴² Before the 1920 Adoption Act, there was very little distinction between foster care and adoption, and children’s aid societies did not investigate what was happening in private homes that took children in (O’Donnell, 1996).

⁴³ As a side note, it is interesting to note that in 1944, the Child Welfare Division was separated to illustrate a burgeoning caseload for the department as a whole, and an increase in expertise of workers. The department was divided into four different kinds of cases: Protection, Unmarried Parents, Adoption, and Placement/ Supervision of Children in Foster-homes (McKay, 1945, p. 5). The fact that unmarried parents - i.e. mothers - were a central concern remains evident.

There are three noteworthy developments regarding the rights of children and youth occurring in the period from the 1930s to 1970s. The first is a push to professionalize the field of child and youth protection (Rose, 1983). The move towards professionalization included the establishment of formal education and training that embodied specific knowledge about child and youth care, the development of professional journals and texts, the establishment of a code of ethics, and finally the organizing of professional conferences and associations (Ibid). What this meant for children and youth was that it legitimized the opinions of child care workers as ‘experts’ in the field and spoke to the need for these experts to be involved in deciding what was best for the young person in question (Ferguson, 2004). This move to professionalization is evident as early as 1945: Ruby McKay, Superintendent of Child Welfare, writes about the specialization of the field of child welfare during her tenure as Superintendent, and throughout the report, discusses children as belonging in categories (McKay, 1945). She discusses a new policy that would require the gathering of “personal histories” of each child with the goal that a care worker could take this information and use it to decide which type of care or foster home would be best suit a particular child (McKay, 1945, p. 7).

Towards the later part of this era, the 1960s and onwards, another key issue emerged around the professionalization of the field: the ‘discovery’ (or rediscovery) of child abuse. However, as Ferguson (2004) has noted, abuse was certainly around before this time, and was in fact, addressed by many professionals in the early part of the 20th century. Before this rediscovery of child abuse, child welfare workers were more concerned with child neglect, and aimed to homogenize practices across the

bureaucracies to address instances of neglected children (Ibid). With the new emphasis on child abuse, child welfare workers were told to focus on both neglect as well as abuse. The professionalization of social workers, coupled with the emphasis on assessing the child for abuse and neglect, contributed to a changing climate in which child welfare practices were carried out (Swift and Callahan 2009).

The second development in this period involves an acceleration in the province of the number of children in foster care as opposed to the number in institutions or orphanages. Even though foster care became a viable strategy for children in care from the late 1920s onwards, it was not until the 1970s that this trend is fully realized. In B.C. in 1945 about 11% of the children being cared for in the Child Welfare Division were in foster-homes, but by 1974 approximately 61% of the 9800 children in the care of the Superintendent of Child Welfare were in foster homes (McKay, 1945, p. 5; Report on Services to Children, 1975, p. 2). The move to foster families from institutions is part of a more general shift towards de-institutionalization which occurs in the 1970s and onwards (Scarth and Sullivan, 2007). Foster homes became the main place where children who were removed from their biological families were sent. This development speaks to ambiguity about children's proper place: though children with 'deficient' families were taken into state care, they are then sent out to foster families, once again putting them into the private sphere. In some ways, this can be seen as another kind of professionalization: this time, the professionalization of parenting and foster parenting (Cojocaru, 2008).

The third development during this period was the increase in the number of Aboriginal young people in the child welfare system (O'Donnell, 1996). Any history of

child welfare in British Columbia would be incomplete without addressing the legacy of residential schooling, and the fact that Aboriginal youth remain vastly over-represented in the B.C. care system to this day. As Callahan and Walmsley (2007) note, child welfare in this province has been greatly shaped by the legacy of residential schools: Aboriginal languages, religions, histories, family ties, and knowledge of communities were, in many cases, erased.⁴⁴ From 1890 onwards, religious organizations were responsible for indigenous children's 'well-being' when they were removed from families (Ibid). Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, thousands of indigenous young people were robbed of their culture and placed into residential schools or facilities that were often very far from their homes (Wharf, 1987). Not only were children unable to learn about their own cultural heritage, they also experienced neglect, abuse, discrimination, and racism from the individuals in charge of these schools and institutions.⁴⁵

What role did the B.C. child protection system play in this process? At the same time that child welfare reformers in this province were decrying the institutionalization of Euro-Canadian children in the late 1920s, this same practice was being enshrined for Aboriginal children (Callahan and Walmsley, 2007, p. 19). As Callahan and Walmsley (2007) note, social workers in British Columbia during the early and mid-twentieth century raised numerous questions about the middle-class values they were supposed to support, and yet, few of them challenged the development of the residential school system or the high number of Aboriginal children in care (p. 10). These social workers brought a deep commitment to reform, and yet they failed to note the discrimination

⁴⁴ See Callahan and Walmsley (2007), Johnson (1983) and Wharf (2007) for a more detailed and thorough picture of this tragic and complex rendering of the history of residential schooling.

⁴⁵ In fact, new research from the Missing Children Project claims that at least 3000 children died in residential schooling across Canada from its inception until the last closure (Perkel, 2013).

facing Canada's Aboriginal population. This absence is due in part from divisions in Canada along racial lines, but also because Aboriginal peoples were part of federal jurisdiction under the British North America Act (Ibid, p. 17).

The practice of placing young people in residential schools peaked in the 1950s, and the child welfare system of B.C. began to replace schools as the instrument of assimilation (Wharf, 1987). The 1960s still saw many children taken from reserves, as the infamous 'Sixties Scoop' was underway: children from reserves were 'scooped' by child protection agencies, and placed into foster care or residential schools off reserves (Wharf, 1987, p. 10). Removing children from their homes exacerbated social problems on and off reserves for children and families, and Aboriginal youth were taught to assimilate with dominant societal values, thus robbing them of a chance to grow up in their own community (O'Donnell, 1996). In 10 years, the percentage of Aboriginal children in care of the Superintendent of Child Welfare went from 1% in 1955 to 32% in 1964 (Callahan and Walmsley, 2007, p. 27). By the 1975 "Report on Services to Children", it is reported that over 40% of the total number of children in the care of the Superintendent of Child Welfare were Aboriginal (Report on Services to Children, 1975, p. 2).⁴⁶

By the 1980s, the stage was set for a new emphasis on children in government care as subjects that could be encouraged to act in their own best interests. As discussed above, the emphasis on children as autonomous beings is part of the broader process of individualization, in which people's biographies are less tied to previous distinctions of class, race and gender (Beck, 2002). Furthermore, a discourse of rights became

⁴⁶ The Superintendent writes about his concerns with this trend, especially because of the implications for Aboriginal children who are separated from their communities (Report on Services to Children, 1975).

increasingly prominent, thanks in large part to the successes of movements such as the feminist movement(s), the civil rights movement, and the beginnings of the LGBT movement (commonly known as the gay liberation movement at this time) (Clement, 2008). The 1973-75 Royal Commission in B.C. studying child welfare was the first to invoke children's rights when they examined the then-controversial topic of children's rights to legal representation, and proposed a 'Children's Act' that suggested enshrining the rights of children in legislation (Callahan and Wharf, 1982, p. 18-19). The suggestion by the Royal Commission authors to include a reference to children's rights to be heard and consulted on judicial hearings affecting them was subsequently ignored by policy makers; however, the interest in children as rights-bearers was just beginning (Callahan and Wharf, 1982, p. 51). In 1981, the Family and Child Service Act came into effect in B.C., replacing the Protection of Children Act (McBride, 2006). It gave social services additional powers to remove children immediately from dangerous situations and also allowed for children to be consulted regarding their living situations. Yet, many within the field did not think that the Family and Child Service Act went far enough, and subsequently it was criticized for its lack of attention to children's rights (Wharf, 1987).

However, embedded within these preliminary discussions about rights-claims of young people in B.C. was an accompanying trend towards claims about the *responsibilities* of youth both within and outside of the government care system. By the mid-1980s, the focus on children and young people as potentially productive and responsible citizens is evident; for instance, a publication called "Abandoned Teens: A Report on Government Services for Teenagers in B.C." published by the B.C. Government Employees Union in 1986 focuses on youth as being both a risk to society as

well as 'at-risk' of being harmed. Youth are seen as deserving attention because of their role as future adults: "Today's troubled adolescents do not want mollycoddling. They want help. And it is up to the government of B.C. to provide them with adequate services. It is NOT the government's role to abandon young people. They are, after all, future workers, taxpayers and parents of this province" (p. 14). Youth are treated as important due to their capacity as citizens of the future who need to learn how to be productive members of society.

Connected to the emphasis on both rights and responsibilities was the turn towards risk assessment discussed above. Funding for child welfare became based on risk: if a case needed mostly preventative attention, there was not money for workers to prioritize it (Swift and Callahan, 2006, p. 124). Case management became about risk rather than prevention, and managerial practices of assessing risk were considered to be the most efficient way for child welfare workers to practice their professions (Parton et al. 1997).

In the 1990s, a widespread consultation process evolved in order to draft new legislation involving academics, policy-makers, and social workers. This resulted in two new pieces of legislation: the 1994 Child, Youth and Family Advocacy Act, which outlined the need for an independent advocate for children, youth and families, and the 1996 Child, Family, and Community Service Act, which articulated principles about children remaining with their families whenever possible (McBride, 2006). In many ways, the legislation changes in B.C. in the 1990s represented a major change from earlier policies as the narrow focus on child protection was expanded to include recognition of family involvement in the child welfare process (Callahan and Swift,

2007). This emphasis on family involvement was an indication of the retreat of the welfare state, as families were encouraged to practice self-sufficiency.

The mid-1990s also saw the publication of the Gove Inquiry, an independent inquiry into the services, policies, and practices of the Ministry of Social Services that emerged out of concern over the neglect, abuse, and death in 1992 of Matthew Vaudreuil (Armitage and Murray, 2007). The Gove Inquiry may have been the first of the so-called ‘death reviews’ in B.C., but there were other prominent examples of these reviews across Great Britain and North America (Ferguson, 2004; Swift and Callahan, 2006). Death reviews tended to emphasize child-saving at the expense of advocating for more structural changes to family and child services (Armitage and Murray, 2007). The two pieces of legislation plus the Gove Inquiry highlighted a number of matters that would become increasingly more important in the years to come, namely the establishment of an advocate for children and youth, and a streamlining of government operations for children and families.

Today, the situation for young people in care is a complex one: the Child, Family, and Community Service Act remains in place, albeit with some important amendments around the creation of the RCY, the responsibilities of the B.C. Coroner, the delegation of care for Aboriginal children to Aboriginal authorities, and the complaint process for youth-in-care (Hughes, 2006). The legislative changes of the 1990s, coupled with the Gove Inquiry and the Hughes Report of 2006, reinvigorated interest in child rights discourses in discussions about youth-in-care, who are increasingly seen as rights-bearers in accordance with the UNCRC. As Ferguson (2004) notes, child welfare legislation in the global north now tends to take children’s wishes into account (p. 146). However, at

the same time, the potential exists for child welfare workers and related legislation to miss the very real ways that young people need help navigating through care and practicing citizenship. Therefore, I now turn to the contradictions present for youth-in-care due to multiple designations: as rights-bearers, family members, and wards of the state.

4.4 Youth-in-care as rights-bearers and responsible citizens

Parton (2006) argues that there is a moral emphasis in neoliberalism on the notion that rights *imply* responsibilities, and benefits *entail* contributions (p. 87). For young people, the ability to access these rights and benefits is complicated by their status as both dependent and independent. Youth-in-care have been established as rights-bearers, and, therefore, must also act as self-responsible citizens (Cradock, 2007). In this section, I discuss the ways that the rights of children in care are laid out in the Child, Family, and Community Service Act (Part 4, Sections 70 and 71) in order to draw attention to the ways that young people in care are portrayed as rights-bearers. An overview of this policy document is helpful in understanding how the current legislation sets the stage for youth-in-care. Specifically, this synopsis analyzes the establishment of the Representative for Children and Youth in B.C., the establishment of kith-and-kin frameworks (and other policies aimed at keeping children within the extended family), and finally, youth agreements. All three of these developments speak to the ways that youth today must negotiate being rights-bearers and self-responsible citizens at the same time.

Before the 1990s, the B.C. Government rarely framed policies or publications about youth-in-care as issues about rights. However, by 1996, the Child, Family, and Community Service Act changed, devoting an entire section - Part 4 - to children in government care. As such, the rights of children and youth-in-care have become the de facto narrative underlying the treatment of young people by child welfare. Section 70 of the Child, Family, and Community Service Act includes a list of rights of youth-in-care which are informed by the principles and articles of the UNCRC. They include the right to be fed, clothed, and nurtured; the right to be informed about plans for their care; to be consulted and to be allowed to express views about significant decisions affecting them; the right to be informed of their rights under this act; and the right to privacy during discussions with a representative from the Representative for Children and Youth Act, the Ombudsperson, or a member of the Legislative Assembly or a member of Parliament (Child, Family and Community Service Act, 1996). Interestingly, and somewhat controversially, youth in government care who are in confinement do not have access to these rights, except for the right to privacy during discussions with a lawyer or representative from the Representative for Children and Youth Act (Ibid).

Section 71 of the Child, Youth and Community Service Act states that the best interests of the child must be considered when it comes to out-of-home living arrangements. Section 71.2 states as follows: “The director must give priority to placing the child with a relative or, if that is not consistent with the child's best interests, placing the child as follows: (a) in a location where the child can maintain contact with relatives and friends; (b) in the same family unit as the child's brothers and sisters; (c) in a location that will allow the child to continue in the same school”. Aboriginal children are targeted

in the following Section, 71.3: “If the child is an aboriginal child, the director must give priority to placing the child as follows: (a) with the child's extended family or within the child's aboriginal cultural community; (b) with another aboriginal family, if the child cannot be safely placed under paragraph (a)”. The focus is on keeping children and youth in their homes and, if that’s not possible, in their own communities.

As noted above, in Section 70.1.m, children in care have the right to consult with a representative from the Representative for Children and Youth or Ombudsperson. For young people in care, having a voice through an official advocate or representative has legitimized their cause. The development of the position of provincial advocate for children and youth is a relatively new phenomenon. Before 1995, child advocacy was not a provincial service, even though the Ombudsman had recommended creating an advocate position in reports in 1990, 1993, and, 1994 (McBride, 2006). There were some child advocate services at the level of local government, including the City of Vancouver’s Child and Youth Advocate, which was created in 1989 and had a mandate to work inside city hall and in the community (Ibid). In 1995, the B.C. Government established an Advocate in advance of the Gove Report being released (Hughes, 2006). However, as Hughes (2006) notes in his independent review of the child welfare system in British Columbia – a review that involved 70 plus experts and more than 300 children’s welfare groups - the province was in need of an independent advocate that was able to operate without interference. Out of this report emerged the impetus for the creation of the Representative for Children and Youth. In 2006, an all-party committee unanimously recommended that Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond be appointed to the position for a five-year term. Ms. Turpel-Lafond, a former lawyer, a Provincial judge in

Saskatchewan, and a professor of law at Dalhousie, was chosen in part for her extensive work in the field of restorative justice and child welfare issues. Even though she was appointed by the Province, her position with the B.C. Government is independent, and her role requires her to often critique provincial guidelines and policies. Advocates for the RCY work towards ensuring that youth across the province have a voice in decisions affecting them (RCY, n.d.). They also work towards furthering policies and legislation that will better protect the safety and well-being of all youth in B.C. (RCY, n.d., 2013a).

A second development tied to the Child, Family, and Service Act was the new emphasis placed on trying to keep children in the extended family. A program called ‘Children in Home of a Relative’ was initiated by the Ministry of Social Development, and attempted to give extended family members an opportunity to raise a child if the child’s parent/s were unable to do so (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). The Ministry did not require the extended family’s home to be monitored, which led to some criticism of the program, and its eventual discontinuation in 2012 (Ibid). Other attempts to keep children in the extended family or community were also evident in various MCFD policies; for example, the establishment of ‘kith and kin’ arrangements in 2002 (Goertzen, Chan and Wolfson, 2007) and the Extended Family Program (MCFD, n.d.a).

The provincial government has increasingly become aware of the over-representation of Aboriginal youth-in-care, and there have been attempts by First Nations communities to assert control over child welfare services since the 1970s, and the establishment of delegated Aboriginal care agencies in the mid-1980s (Wharf, 1987). However, Aboriginal Canadians still make up a large portion of youth-in-care, and one benefit of these programs is that they are framed as helpful in keeping Aboriginal

children in their communities. The implementation of kith and kin arrangements (also known as kinship care), which involve placing children with extended family or community members who have a strong relationship to the child, has been particularly prominent in cases involving interim or temporary custody (Hughes, 2006, p. 99). Kinship care relationships are defined as “families providing full-time nurturing and protection of children with whom they have a kinship bond” (MCFD, 2003, p. 18). Scannapieco, Hegar and McAlpine (1997) suggest that a main advantage of a kinship care arrangement is the continuity of a young person’s relationship with his or her ethnic and/or religious community of origin. As the B.C. government document Strong, Safe and Supported (2008) notes, “Working with Aboriginal children and youth means working to facilitate and enhance attachment to culture and community.” The emphasis is on trying to keep Aboriginal children in their communities, as stated in section 71.3 of the Child, Youth, and Community Service Act, and kinship arrangements are seen as a way to honour family and community commitments to children.

However, as Goertzen et al. (2007) note, the effects of residential schools on generations of Aboriginal families has meant that kith and kin arrangements can sometimes be problematic because the burden of care often falls on the extended family, especially grandmothers or great aunts who may be in poor health themselves. Furthermore, these caregivers may be facing financial struggles at the same time making it extremely difficult to raise extended members of the family (Ibid). Responsibility for the well-being of youth who would previously have been looked after by the child protection system is offloaded onto Aboriginal communities. As such, it can be argued that programs like the kith-and-kin one leads to an increase in responsibilities - financial,

emotional and otherwise - for a marginalized group of British Columbians. Moreover, even with the implementation of programs such as the kith-and-kin program, Aboriginal children still face differences in treatment in and out of care than non-Aboriginal children. Many of the issues around Aboriginal youth-in-care cannot be separated from the larger issues of colonialism, institutional discrimination, entrenched poverty, and past actions (Wharf, 2007b). Furthermore, although authority has been ceded in part to delegated Aboriginal child welfare agencies, the province still retains final control over procedures and processes.

A final development worth noting that has emerged out of the Child, Family, and Service Act is the establishment of ‘youth agreements’ (MCFD, n.d.d). These youth agreements are meant to ensure youth have rights “[to be] healthy and independent; protected from abuse, neglect or harm; given guidance by a parent or adult; supported in [their] cultural identity; supported to make safe, healthy choices; and helped to gain self-confidence” (MCFD, n.d.d). Youth ages 16-18 can acquire an agreement that will let them live independently. These youth agreements are specifically for youth who are difficult to place in foster care, and they have the potential to really help a marginalized part of the population. However, as Hughes notes in his 2006 Hughes report, these kinds of agreements need funding and resources for youth to thrive (Hughes, 2006). Furthermore, many youth describe interest in getting on this kind of agreement, but are unable to do so because they are not deemed eligible; social workers still have the ability to grant, or not grant youth access to this kind of arrangement.

Youth-in-care may have certain rights; however, they are also expected to perform certain responsibilities. As Cradock (2007) argues, children are perceived as

free rights-bearers, but this is complicated by the conception of children as family members. For children in care, the family unit, in this case a foster family, has direct responsibility for the well-being of the child. At the same, the child or young person is encouraged to be a self-responsible rights-bearer in the neoliberal order through emphasis on active citizenship. Children are clearly part of the home where they are placed, even if the home they are in is not of their choosing, or is unsafe. Foster families are assumed to be independent of government apparatuses, and thus so are foster children (Ibid). A foster family occupies a liminal position between public and private, as does the child within this home (Ibid). As such, if a foster home decides to ignore children as rights-bearers, or if a child is unable or unwilling to embrace their supposed rights, the fault seems to lie with the individual, rather than the system. This means that there is little recourse for the youth except to attempt to re-enter the public sphere by convincing a social worker that he or she needs to be moved to a different situation. The onus of responsibility lies with the youth in question.

The emphasis on responsibilities of foster families and youth-in-care are evident when viewing the Children in Care page of the MCFD website. The visitor to the site is greeted by this emphasis on the offloading of responsibilities in the foster care system:

Coming into government care can be a very difficult experience for most children and youth. It can be a sad and confusing time, even when children and youth are in safe and caring foster homes. To assist young people in dealing with some of the challenges of being in care, on this page children and youth (along with their foster parents) can find useful links to supportive resources, as well as information regarding their rights as children in care. (MCFD, n.d.c)

This information for children in care emphasizes the importance of rights in the discourse about young people in care. Furthermore, the links to various resources all emphasize the

responsibilities and rights of the individual (or family) in the care system. The acknowledgement of the structural issues behind who gets to be in care - especially around the surveillance of poor families - is missing. It is unfair (and unrealistic) to ask foster parents to take on many of the systemic barriers facing foster children when in care and when leaving care, and yet, in many ways, that is what the emphasis on rights and responsibilities of the individual and the family can lead to.

While there are undoubtedly some advantages to talking about the rights of youth, and in publicizing these rights, having rights alone does not necessarily make the situation any better for youth. Furthermore, this change to viewing youth as rights-bearers, and thus responsible for their own situations, can be seen as part of the larger neoliberal project (Cradock, 2007). This shift over the years can be attributed to a change in the way children are seen: they go from being targets of interventions (and future ‘citizens’) to subjects with rights and obligations who have a responsibility to advocate for themselves. Youth-in-care are encouraged to learn about their rights and responsibilities; these principles are intended to affect how they think about self-governance.

The development of the RCY, kinship arrangements (and other policies around keeping children with the extended family), and youth agreements all indicate a trend towards placing responsibilities on youth and on families, while also expanding the rights of the child. First, with the establishment of the RCY, children and youth have an advocate for their voices, but the provincial government also has the ability to ignore the RCY’s recommendations. As the RCY notes, this has often been the case (RCY, 2008). Second, while kinship arrangements may be part of a strategy that aims to keep

Aboriginal children in their communities, further attempts to reconcile differences between Aboriginal child and family agencies and the provincial government are needed (Wharf, 2007b). Finally, youth agreements can be an exciting possibility for youth, but they also illustrate the ways that young people are only allowed to take care of themselves if they show proper adherence to neoliberal ideals.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has explored the context in which youth-in-care can practice citizenship by examining the ways that the government care system emerged in British Columbia over the past century. I also analyzed how processes of individualization, globalization and neoliberalism have changed constructions of childhood and youthhood, as has the emphasis on youth as risky and at-risk. A crucial development in recent years has been the implementation of certain policies that frame youth as rights-bearers, first and foremost; these are important in understanding how youth-in-care come to express citizenship. In Chapter 5, I discuss participants' narratives about their experiences with the care system before turning in Chapter 6 to analyze the ways youth conceive of themselves as citizens.

Chapter 5: Participant Experiences in Government Care

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the experiences of my participants with the care system and the context in which they practice citizenship. It examines circumstances surrounding youth citizenship practices, particularly the ways that participants contextualize their own lives based on their government care experiences. I assess how the narratives of youth-in-care are illustrative of participants' experiences in and out of care, and how they see themselves as outsiders and/or insiders. I first explore the ways that youth describe their experiences in care by presenting their accounts of entering care, being in care, and leaving care. In this way, the meanings that youth themselves attach to their care experiences are highlighted, as are the similarities and differences across their stories. Secondly, I turn to the social location of participants in my study, using their discussion of social location as a starting point.

5.2 Describing care: youth narratives of government care

Individual narratives can be important for understanding a topic because they can illustrate the uniqueness of certain events or understandings. People construct their own stories of truth about themselves, and from these, social life becomes part of the enacted narrative (Czarniawska, 1998). Furthermore, by listening to participant narratives, it is possible to delve deeper into particular issues and concepts as well as see similarities and differences between stories. While they are not representative of the youth population of Greater Victoria, the narratives presented below are helpful in understanding personal

troubles and public issues (Mills, 2000). They are also illustrative of the ways that youth see themselves as insiders and outsiders, which indicates understandings of their social location.

5.2.1 Entering care

One of the interesting entry points in the narratives about care experiences were the stories participants related about how they entered the care system.⁴⁷ Their understandings of why they entered care may not be what happened objectively, and yet they are important when considering participants' expressions of how child welfare operated.⁴⁸ I quickly became aware of the many different ways that young people understood their entry into the care system. The circumstances that they saw as leading to care illustrate the complicated nature of family life. In describing why he entered care, Tyler, age, 20, says the reasons were as followed:

“Mostly the fact that I don't have parents. My grandparents abandoned me a while back... My dad he's like a raging alcoholic and he was in and out of my life and then he left for years. Then basically my grandparents abandoned me with him out in Calgary and my dad assaulted me so, that's when I got into foster care cause I didn't know where else to turn. I went to my friend's mom, (and) I called them and went to their house and the cops came and they took pictures of me and then they threw me into foster care and that's how that whole thing started.” (Tyler, age, 20)

Similarly, Ruby, age, 22, mentions the upheaval that she was experiencing at home as part of the reason she entered care.

⁴⁷ All names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

⁴⁸ The child welfare system in B.C. does not simply 'put' youth in care, even if a particular individual wants this to happen, or if their parents want this to happen. It is a more complicated process than this and usually involves many interactions with social workers, MCFD, and others. However, I do find participants' understanding of their entry into care important in terms of how they see their lives thus far.

“My mom was doing lots of drugs, and this guy adopted me. My mom got married to him and left us with him and he didn’t want us so he kicked us out on the street and I ended up going into foster homes.” (Ruby, age, 22)

As Robert, age, 21, put it, he entered care because of the instabilities at home. “Well, it was just on and off. Parents break up every year, on and off travel, back and forth the whole time.” Like many youth, Tyler, Ruby, and Robert’s stories illustrate that going into care does not follow one trajectory: the people in their lives who were supposed to take care of them clearly did not. In some ways, foster care was almost accidental. Many of them talked about almost falling into care and not knowing what to expect once entering the system. Robert continued his story about going into care by noting that “I was going to court and the judge asked if there was any problems in the house, and my dad was like ‘oh, yeah, there is,’ and the judge was like ‘oh, we can put your son in foster care if you want,’ and my dad was like ‘go for it.’” His description of entering care indicates that his entry into care was haphazard and casual, even if his experiences in care were long-lasting.

Participant narratives about their care trajectories illustrated the complex ways that young people understood their own lives. No matter how youth framed their experiences entering government care, it was clear that they saw going into care as often the result of many factors, and involving a ‘push-pull’ process. They were both pushed to leave home because of problems there – problems often having to do with addiction, violence, abuse, and neglect - while also being pulled into the care system by MCFD. Their stories about entering care often involved running away from, or being kicked out

of, the home, ending up on the streets, or being in contact with social or judicial services like welfare, the police, or the courts.⁴⁹

Overall, seven participants claimed that they were placed into care by their parents when things got out of hand at home, even though parents cannot just put their children in care. Nine participants claimed that they were put in by social services or the justice system, usually after a court appearance, or after running away from home. Four participants claimed that they put themselves in care, even though this is not possible, except in extreme cases (MCFD, n.d.a, n.d.c). What is more likely is that these participants felt as though they had some agency in the situation, through conversations with various people in child protection, including social workers. For instance, the four participants who claimed to have put themselves into care mentioned telling counsellors, teachers, neighbours, and parents of friends that they felt like they could not live at home, and it is likely that MCFD either got involved at this stage, or was already involved. One participant described feeling as though she was adopted: “I went to a counsellor at school and was I like ‘I must be adopted,’ and they’re like ‘Jenna, why must you be adopted?’ [laughs] Yeah, and they were like ‘these are options you can look at.’” (Jenna, age, 20).

For the nine youth who claimed that they were put into care by social services, removal from the home environment may have occurred when the participant was very young. In my study, there were two youth who were put into permanent care as a baby or toddler because they were born to parents who could not handle having a young child. These participants claimed that this meant that they had no option about their care

⁴⁹ Police do not ‘put’ people into government care, even though some participants described this as how they ended up in care. A rare exception would be the Voluntary Custody Agreement (VCA): sometimes in cases of domestic violence a VCA may be the choice of the parent and youth as a temporary solution (MCFD, n.d.a).

situations, at least when they were very small. One other participant, who was put into temporary care as a toddler, started going in and out of the care system at a young age.

Abuse was also a common theme around entering care, and often played a part in participants' care narratives, regardless of how the youth first ended up in care. Sophie, age, 21, said she put herself in care when she was 13 in large part due to her abusive relationship with her father. As a toddler, she had been in temporary care before returning to live with her biological family, but at the age of 13 she made the choice that she wanted to go back into temporary care, mainly to get out of the house.⁵⁰ Molly, age, 24, says she entered care at the age of 2 because her mom was an addict, and Molly had been sexually abused. She says she still remembers some of the ordeals she had to encounter as a toddler, including looking after her mom. Molly self-identifies as having Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) as well as a mental health illness, and this has made her experience with the care system even more challenging.

Sophie and Molly's experiences with abuse were not unique: abuse and/or neglect were common themes in the stories that youth told about going into care. Nineteen of my participants said they had experienced some form of abuse at home, and that abuse was partly responsible for them going into care, running away from home, or ending up living with friends.⁵¹ Robert, age, 21, sums up the role that abuse played in his care experience as follows: "I was kind of abused, and nothing, nobody really helped me. It was basically either go into a foster home or staying at home and dealing with all the problems we had." Abuse also played a role that participants continued to have with their families,

⁵⁰ Again, I want to note that this is not how the care system works. Likely, MCFD was involved in her family's case, and she and a social worker decided that care was the only option.

⁵¹ Abuse is certainly not exclusive to homes in which children enter or have experience with the government care system.

even after they had left care or home. Ella, age, 16, states that her mother and her are not close “because she let (my step-dad) beat me up - he (would) smash my head into walls and stuff”. Her mother’s continued relationship with the man who abused her has meant that she is not interested in having too much contact with her mother now.

Finally, while Molly, age, 24, was the only person who discussed FASD, three other participants talked about mental health challenges. For Molly and these three participants, dealing with mental health issues was a particular challenge; and for some of participants, such issues became part of the story of why they went into care. As Lauren, age, 16, says:

“My family had really high expectations of me and there’s not enough awareness about depression and mental health issues for youth. I’ve struggled with these things and they just do not understand how I’m a different person when I’m having an anxiety attack, when I’m feeling depressed. That’s kind of what started off me going into care.”

For many of the participants in my study, entering into care was an important part of their life experiences so far, even if this care was temporary. Leaving one’s parents or home - even if the participant could not remember his or her biological parents - was considered to be a crucial part of their stories about government care.

5.2.2 Being in care

Responses as to how satisfied youth were with their care experiences were, as one might expect, quite variable.⁵² Eleven participants said they were very satisfied or

⁵² Response choices came from a closed-question about how participants would rate their experiences in care, which were part of the Risky Business survey, which was co-led by my supervisor, Dr. Cecilia Benoit (see Appendix A).

somewhat satisfied with government care, six said that they were both satisfied and dissatisfied, and three said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. One common theme across a number of responses was that many participants talked about how care was less complicated than life at home, regardless of whether they were satisfied or not with being in care.⁵³ Life in foster care or a group home was seen as almost ‘boring’. Similarly, there was a sense for many participants that care did not teach them very much about what life is “really like”. They wanted their care families to be more aware of the challenges that were awaiting them when they left the home environment.

Moving around while in care was also common amongst participants. Sawyer and Tyler were both in at least 8 care homes, most of which they did not like because of all the rules. Seven of the participants were in at least 5 care homes, seven were in 2 to 5 homes, and six were only in 1 care home. Molly was only in 1 care home: she sees her experience in care as a unique situation because she stayed with the same family from the age of 2 to 18 and is still in close contact with them. She was never adopted formally, but feels like she is part of the family. She had to undergo a “huge fight” when her “now” family tried to move her from Alberta to British Columbia while she was still a minor.

Many youth talked about being luckier than some other youth in having had good experiences in care, which is consistent with a neoliberal emphasis on personal responsibility. Mira, age, 20, said, “it (foster care) changed my life. It showed me what I actually have and what I could have never had... I could have been homeless, I could have been living on the streets, but instead I got foster care”. Ella, age, 16, bounced

⁵³ While it is also possible that a certain type of individual, i.e. one who had more positive experiences with care, self-selected into my sample, it is more likely that this emphasis on being lucky is related to the emphasis on self-responsibility in late (post) modernity. I discuss this idea in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

around from care home to care home, but she finally found one with a foster mom that she liked. “She was just so nice to me and always proud of me.” Sophie did not mind her experiences in care too much and feels that she was fortunate: “I’ve never had one of those horror story experiences... with foster care.” This was a common sentiment among participants, as they seemed to think that they were unusual to have not had bad experiences in care. They mentioned feeling like they had avoided some of care’s more unfortunate aspects and counted themselves as “lucky”.

For many of my participants, being in care was at times a very negative experience, and they expressed dissatisfaction with it. Robert, age, 21, described his experiences in care in the following way: “I hated it, I wanted to kill everybody.” He goes on to say that he found his temporary foster parents to be “just like strict and over-wrung [sic] with power to (make) the child do whatever they want. (They) use negative power... to get shit done their way.” Similarly, Lauren, age, 16, said the following:

“It was a pattern because of the mental health issues I’ve had really bad anger issues and I had nobody there for me. I didn’t know where to turn. The people in the foster homes, obviously they were just trying to help, but they weren’t much different from my parents. They were trying to stay these squeaky clean citizens and helping out society and the government but really they weren’t in the right places to try and help me.”

She went on to say:

“They should have very separate places for youth and kids: if they have depression they could go to a good school counsellor, (who would) be like a foster mom or dad.”

Becky, age, 22, succinctly summed up the struggles that youth-in-care face in terms of the uncertainty of home life as follows: “the jumping from house to house, and, you know...worrying where you were going to be the next day, where you were going to

sleep the next day.” Karina, age 19, described the uncertainties that plagued one of her care homes by saying that she often thought, “how am I ever going to be normal when I’m surrounded by so much crazy?” Furthermore, there was often a divide of sorts between one’s biological family and the foster family. Mira, age, 20, described how she felt in one care home where the foster mom seemed to favor her own child. “She always discriminated me for who I was and, she favoured her son. I wasn’t family enough for her to love me.”

One of the major points youth expressed discontentment with in relation to living in care was the way they were treated due to their age. For many youth, the fact that they were young was a barrier in that they were not allowed to do certain things because of age.

“They were giving me the same curfews as somebody like three years younger than me. I’m a certain age you know! I should be able to come home last bus.” (Becky, age, 22)

“I felt like as I got older I was still having the same rules. It was very strict rules, like no sleepovers or stuff like that, and I thought: ‘I’m sixteen, I should be having sleepovers with my friends. Girls are supposed to have sleepovers!’” (Karina, age, 19)

Age was also a source of difference in the sense that other people (i.e., adults) treated the criteria as a proxy for maturity, even though youth did not always feel this was the case. Shelly, age, 14, says that sometimes she thinks she is “making myself grow up faster, and sometimes I’ll even think I’m older than I am.” She considers this to be negative, but relates that she has to act mature in order to be taken seriously by her mom: “I’m pretty straight edge now. I don’t do a lot of things and I’m just more cautious of what (is) going on, and if I’m going out I will tell my mom so that she knows and it’s not like awkward,

and she doesn't freak out." Blake, age, 19, states that even though he is older than many of his friends, they may be more mature than him:

"I hang out with fourteen year olds. They're cool. I know some fourteen year olds that are more mature than I am. They're thirty ... on the inside, I'm still stuck at fourteen" (Blake, age, 19)

Age as a restriction seemed nonsensical for Shelly because she felt she was growing up too quickly. Conversely, Blake - who also agreed that age was not a restriction that made a lot of sense - saw himself as acting younger than his age.

5.2.3 Leaving care

Participants talked about leaving and re-entering care numerous times. Some returned to biological families, others returned to alternative families or home situations (often to the home of an extended family member, family friend, or friend's parents), some left because they 'aged out' of the system, and others because they entered into independent living contracts. Furthermore, leaving care the first time certainly did not mean that the participant was 'done' with the care system. The participants often talked about bouncing around between care and their biological parents, which speaks to the transience that is often associated with young people who have been in care.

Ten participants left care to return to their previous homes, usually to some member of their biological family. Five participants referred to running away from care homes, leading to homelessness or couch-surfing. After Tyler left care, he bounced back and forth between his grandparent's house and friend's houses. Eventually, he was homeless and wanted to get on an independent living contract, but was unable to do so. Currently, he is homeless and considers himself to be struggling. Lauren, age, 16, has

returned to her family after being in care, but has found her relationships with family members to be strained. Her parents moved her to Canada to give her a fresh start, but they still do not really understand each other. Shelly, age, 14, has returned home after being in temporary care, but says it is “awkward” because she feels like her mom hates her. Her mom has a new boyfriend who makes Shelly feel sick every time she is around him. Richard, age, 15, went back to his mom after being in temporary care because relations improved after a little while, and he has been getting along better with her since he returned home. “We have our ups and downs. She knows I’m struggling and helps me through stuff a lot.” The experiences of participants after they leave care illustrate the ways that experiences with the child welfare system can be seen as life-altering, uneventful, or more likely, somewhere in between.

Five participants left care or their biological families to start an independent living contract or youth agreement. Ruby, age, 22, entered a youth agreement after bouncing around from care home to care home:

“(If I did not like a care home), I ran away, or I’d go to the outreach worker and say ‘this person is bugging me.’ I was very open and tell people that I don’t like what they were doing. I noticed a lot of youth are really quiet about it, and I didn’t take that, I wouldn’t stand for it. I’d just end up in a different foster home and if I didn’t like it there I’d just run away and then they’d put me into a different one, so, then finally they were like, ‘K, youth agreement.’”

Sophie really liked being on an independent living contract, for she was able to have a lot more responsibility. She said, “well, it was just because my dad’s health really wasn’t good... for me to be in at all, so. And they saw that I was mature and going to school and stuff like that, so they let me sign the youth agreement.” She felt like her social worker was supportive of her going on an independent living contract, and this made it easier for

her to leave care. Karina, age, 19, also found that being on an independent living contract was helpful. When she wanted to get a cell phone, her social worker helped her do this. “I was really well provided for. I had really excellent communication. I actually really lucked out.” Many others wanted to go on an independent living contract, but were unable to.

Molly left care when she was, 18 and “aged out”, but she still stays in contact with the family that fostered her for so long. Like Molly, three participants left care when they aged out. Most participants discussed how difficult it was to leave ‘home’, whether this was a care home or a family home once reaching age eighteen. Some participants, were still living with their families, friends, or partners during the course of the interviews.

Experiences entering, being in, and leaving care certainly varied amongst participants, but the themes of *uncertainty* on the one hand and *belonging* on the other seem to be evident across narratives. Being in care was for some youth, an incredibly important experience in the sense that they were able to get off the streets, or out of bad situations at home. For others, entering care was a last resort, one about which they may have had little or no choice. Even so, being in care, was not always as bad as they had expected.

5.3 Social location of youth-in-care

The term social location is used to refer to the junction of social identity categories that a person considers him/herself to occupy (Essers, 2009, p. 174). When using an intersectional approach, it can be helpful to know the social location of an

individual in order to situate his or her experiences within a structural context. It is not that social location is determinative of a person's beliefs or experiences, but that by acknowledging such a location, there is the potential to illuminate how power operates. As Callero (2003) notes, "the self is constituted within relations of control and is deeply embedded within systems of knowledge and discourse" (p. 118). I was interested in the ways that youth discussed gender, race and ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation and, therefore, needed to understand their social locations. Although breaking individuals' experiences down into one part of their identity may not show the interlocking nature of oppressions, it can tell us something about the ways that social location operates in participants' lives.

The social marker that was most important for youth in their discussions of differences in practicing citizenship was age. There were many examples of participants talking about the ways that age was a factor in their actions, behaviours, and feelings about citizenship. For instance, Jenna, age, 20, notes that "it's hard to stand up for yourself at a young age, (because) being an adult kind of overpowers a child. Being a young teenager, you don't really know all your rights. And it's hard to put your foot down and be like 'this is my right, you can't do this to me,' when the other person's like going (to be) in control". One of the few times that Becky, age, 22, felt empowered in her life was when she got to look after her younger siblings: "So then at a young age I had to look after my brother and my sister... It was really hard, but it was really exciting at the exact same time, because my step dad would be downstairs and he wouldn't do anything but I was the only one that got to see my little brother take his first steps." Age also played a role in how Richard and Shelly discussed the differences between rights for

adults and youth. Richard, age, 15, says that teenagers and adults have similar rights, but that being older is equated with more rights: “I have the same rights, but once you get older, you get more rights.” Shelly says that “adults probably get more respect, like the right to be respected more and listened to and the right to have people like follow their orders.” Age thus is seen to illustrate maturity, even when such maturity is not warranted.

Other dividers such as sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and Aboriginal status were less often invoked by participants.⁵⁴ Of the four participants who identified as bisexual, only one discussed in detail how this had created a challenging situation for him growing up.

“Well, I went to a Catholic high school, so I went up (to) the Christian counselor all the time and talked to her, and she was helpful but I was a gay kid in high school, so I dealt with a lot of shit, I really did, I got beat up all the time, they called me a faggot, I dealt with it all. Yeah, I dropped out of school for a while because they couldn’t do anything. Twenty of them jumped me” (Blake, age, 19).

However, he still feels that coming out was not necessarily a terrible part of his life.

“it was alright, I was friends with a lot of girls, so coming out wasn’t that hard, it was just dealing with all the fucking- (stuff). My parents were open with it cause they knew their kids were going to be growing up in the 2000 era and everything was going to be open at that point.”

Gender emerged as part of the youth’s narratives about their lives, particularly in terms of dating or relationships. Sawyer, age, 22, says as follows:

“Yeah, I’m kind of shocked by the experience but I’m like, oh, wow, is that the kind of power I have over women? Like maybe I should just stay inside longer, I don’t know, I find... no offense, but I find women to be very hurtful and judgmental and they turn on you like an animal you mistreat. Men too, men are worse, if anything.”

⁵⁴ Class was only invoked specifically by one participant, although many participants talked more generally about their parents’ jobs, incomes, houses, and education when discussing their lives growing up.

Karina, age, 19, also stated that entering the dating scene exacerbated the way she experienced gender:

“And I had a boyfriend and I got in huge trouble because I’d go to his house and then I’d just get in so much trouble and it was kind of, in a good way, cause now I have a really good gauge of like, how far I want to go with people, but it did mean that I was very naive about boys when I was first allowed to explore [laughs] I think its really important for people to be allowed to like learn about that at a younger age and not just be dropped into it once they turn seventeen.”

Gender concerns in their lives can also be perceived in the ways that youth talked about becoming aware of discrimination. Jenna, age, 20, says that her step-mother politicized her around gender issues:

“she’s not really a feminist but how she brought me up I became a feminist, but I’m not one of those who are like ‘boo men, boo men, boo men!’ [laughs and gives the thumbs down sign]”.

Ethnicity was also brought up by some participants, mainly in relation to how their families raised them and how some of their challenges were inherent to this:

“when she was five her mother died, and she was raised by a large family and her father in Thailand, so I don’t know how they raise families there but I felt when she was raising me she didn’t really know how to nurture and comfort a child, ‘cause I guess she was never nurtured” (Jenna, age, 20).

“my family is very traditional, I guess, maybe it’s something to do with them being British” (Lauren, age, 16).

Although four of my participants identified as Aboriginal, only three of them talked about the ways that they felt like such identification had had an impact on their lives:

“Well my dad... was addicted to drugs and stuff and I didn’t know what he was doing at the time and I thought it was just normal and it’s kind of just been like, I saw that, and I’ve been influenced by it and it’s like that’s what I’ve considered normal and my friends and stuff, their family life is so different and I wish I had that cause it’s

like I don't have a dad anymore because he had to you know, go back to ---- and deal with his stuff and what he did, it messed up a lot of my child hood and I had to grow up really fast and I'm already grown up, it's like not fair for me, I'm going to have to deal with his mistakes for the rest of my life" (Shelly, age, 14).

Mira, age, 20, talked about being Aboriginal, but for her, it influenced the way she thought about citizenship: "Aboriginal and other cultures... Like, I guess, like 'outsiders'." For Sawyer, age, 22, his upbringing was influenced by the same racism his grandmother experienced living on a reserve: "my grandmother was horribly abused back in the day."

It is hard to get a sense of social location merely by examining the ways that youth described gender, ethnicity, Aboriginal status, or age. However, such descriptions do help to provide a sense of the ways that youth saw these cleavages as being important to their experiences of growing up. I return to a discussion of the ways that social location matters in citizenship practices in Chapter 7.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has illustrated the variety of experiences that participants in my study expressed in relation to their time in government care. As evidenced by the stories youth-in-care tell about their lives in care, the diversity and variety around care experience is vast. However across the narratives, there is an opportunity to acquire a better sense of the feelings of belonging, exclusion, and uncertainty that link these individual lives; as such, critical insight into these youth's lives is gained.

Chapter 6: Findings: Practicing Citizenship

6.1 Introduction

As Beauvais et al. (2001) note, a youth citizenship lens, which includes feelings of inclusion and exclusion as well as legal distinctions as to who gets to practice citizenship, encompasses the ways that youth think, feel, and act as citizens even when they are ambivalent about the term itself. For youth who have been in government care, the notion of citizenship, involving both legal and cultural expectations, may not reflect their actual experiences. Moreover, inequitable democratic processes, fragmented access to rights and responsibilities, as well as feelings of exclusion and isolation have the potential to limit citizenship as a useful concept for youth-in-care. Even so, citizenship practices provide a way to view the barriers and challenges - as well as the possibilities and potentials - facing marginalized youth within the context of contemporary late (post) modernity. With this perspective in mind, in this chapter I investigate the complex ways that my study participants express citizenship as well as their ambivalence towards the term itself. The ambiguity, expressed by many participants about the concept of citizenship, highlights the ways that experiences are negotiated through structural factors, as well as personal agency.

The interviews I conducted with the youth in my study are illustrative of the ways that one sub-group of young people practice citizenship in their daily lives. Their experiences give some insight into the concept of youth citizenship: an understanding of citizenship which focuses on legal rights or responsibilities, or cultural expectations around participation, misses the ways that citizenship happens as expression, action, and

embodiment. It should be noted that I see many other themes in the work as well; however, the themes around the expressions of citizenship relate best to my research objectives and purpose of this research.

6.2 Three ways of practicing citizenship

To understand how citizenship is practiced by youth, I explored a number of questions about youth's lives: what did they think about their rights; what were their daily responsibilities; how did they see their care experiences in the context of these rights and responsibilities; in what circumstances did they feel empowered; how and when did they feel like they belonged, or how and when excluded; and what resources and opportunities did they feel like they had, or did not have. By asking these questions, I observed what practicing citizenship meant to participants, even when they did not identify with the term at first. I found that youth identified actions, ideas, and feelings in their discussions about their capacities as citizens. They talked at times about being a citizen (or not) and about acting in ways that may be compatible with citizenship. They spoke about what they thought citizens ought to look like; they also discussed barriers, as well as possibilities, for practicing cultural citizenship in their own lives. I found that youth within the social group in question – youth-in-care – practiced citizenship in particular ways, and that it was important to take situational or social context into consideration when considering how they expressed citizenship.

The three ways that youth in my study practice citizenship were identified through the ways that practices and behaviours were described, enacted, and embodied by participants. While participant descriptions of being a citizen can be indicative of the

different ways that they see citizenship as practiced, it is necessary to also investigate the ways that citizenship is an action and a feeling. Asking people to define a term does not necessarily mean that the definition they use is the only way that they are expressing a concept. Terms like citizenship, rights, and responsibilities were often met with a blank stare, and my analysis of how citizenship is practiced, therefore, only came from assessing the different ways that youth understood and expressed the dimensions of citizenship. In fact, as Kennelly and Dillabough (2008) note, asking young people about terms like citizenship and rights actually implicates wider political and sociological questions about the ways that language shapes peoples' images of themselves (p. 497). For this reason, I avoid reifying citizenship as a concept described by youth, for their understandings of citizenship may be shaped by broader neoliberal trends towards individualism and self-surveillance (Kennelly and Dillabough 2008). The expressions of citizenship and rights and responsibilities through youth's actual words are merely a starting point. Thus their understandings of citizenship must also include actions and embodiment. For this reason, I begin by introducing citizenship practices through youth's own description of the term and then turn to the ways that they are actually *doing* citizenship and *being* citizens.

It is important to note that these citizenship practices are not exclusive; they are, in some ways, overlapping and interrelated. These practices act as ideal types of citizenship, but there are, of course, many variations within and amongst answers. I resisted labeling participants themselves as self-responsible citizens, or dissenting

citizens, or reluctant citizens, and instead examined their practices as indicative of the ways that they understood and expressed citizenship.⁵⁵

6.2.1 *Self-responsible practices*

Other scholars of youth and citizenship have illustrated that many young people in contemporary western liberal democracies see citizenship as involving a kind of contract of responsibilities (Kennelly 2009; Maira, 2009). Hayward (2012) labels some of the youth in her study of New Zealand pre-teenagers as practicing *thin* environmental citizenship, which is consistent with an understanding of citizenship as self-responsibility. According to this study, these youth claim that citizenship is about self-help agency, market participation, a priori universal justice, representative decision-making, and technological transformation. Similarly, Maira (2009) describes neoliberal citizenship as being based on “the legal and economic regulation of citizens and workers, and on the need for a low-wage, undocumented, or noncitizen labor pool” (p. 138). In my research, I found that many youth discuss citizenship as an expression of the ideal of *self-responsibility*. Being a self-responsible citizen means striving for experiences in the labour market, volunteering based on individual goodwill and virtue, and pursuing education as a means to get ahead (Maira, 2009, p. 136-7). Hayward (2012) summarizes ‘good’ citizenship as including personal responsibility and responsible consumption (p. 12), both of which emerged in my participants’ discussions of self-responsibility. Moreover, accessing rights is part of a ‘good’ citizen’s responsibilities, and some youth must activate their citizenship (Clarke, 2005) in order to continue to be seen as such

⁵⁵ Some participants expressed more than one kind of citizenship practice. For this reason, I see these practices as fluid and dynamic.

‘good’ citizens. Below, I explore three main expressions of self-responsible citizenship: the emphasis on individual responsibility; the focus on personal choice as an indicator of one’s life trajectory; and the attention given to the principle of equality as a basic framework for understanding.

First, youth practicing self-responsible citizenship were very comfortable discussing the responsibilities that they associate with being a citizen: *individual responsibilities* were central to how they saw citizenship. When asked to discuss the responsibilities of citizenship, some participants began to frame their conceptions of citizenship in terms of self-responsibility, such as voting, or paying taxes, or even in terms of legality. For example, Karina, age, 19, associates citizenship with being in Canada legally:

“Somebody who has...the rights of the country. So somebody who was born there or who has landed in the country. But if you’re an illegal alien or an illegal immigrant then you’re not going to have those rights ‘cause you’re not supposed to be there.”

Thus, in this instance, being a citizen was a badge worn only by those who were ‘legitimate’, and legality was equated with good citizenship. Similarly, Ella, age, 16, says citizens “shouldn’t break the law”, also emphasizing a basic individual responsibility as indicative of citizenship, rather than any kind of collective right or goal that needs realizing.

Discussions about responsibilities often emphasized the role of the individual in trying to overcome a challenging situation, which was seen by many of my participants as paramount to citizenship. As Robert, age, 21, says, his responsibilities are as follows:

“I got to get a job. I was just looking for a job today. It’s hard; there’s nothing around. Trying to get a job, pay rent, pay off my

visa, my phone bill. I'm in the hole pretty big right now... 'Cause I'm going to be screwed over in life if I don't."

Robert's emphasis on a job as central to personal responsibility was a common theme when talking about their experiences. Pierre, age, 22, even says he is not a good citizen right now because he does not have a job: "Not right now anyways... I don't have a job." He goes on to say that a job is "the common thing that people see as being a good (citizen)." Similarly, Karina, age, 19, also sees having a job as a central responsibility of a citizen:

"to be respectful of those around me and try [to] provide for myself and not rely on the government, and you know, have a job and keep order and peace in myself."

When youth did not learn individual responsibility at a young age, they saw this as a failure on the part of the government care system or parents. Blake, age, 19, discusses his frustrations with his foster parents and biological parents for not teaching him to be responsible:

"I think your parents should be able to show you how to survive later on in life...they never taught me anything about getting a job, or how to save money, or pay rent or where groceries went or how to pay my bills, and so basically I was eighteen and I didn't know what to do. I thought everything was free!"

Similarly, Richard, age, 15, says he did not learn about personal responsibility as a kid and has only recently learned about this:

"I didn't really realize what life was like until I was like, 14, 15, and then I actually realized like what was going on and how it works... When I was a little kid I had no worries and things- I thought I was invincible and that nothing could happen to me. But then stuff started happening and I realized how, like, dangerous it really is out there... getting involved with the wrong people and getting in trouble. Stuff like that."

Rather than questioning why there is so little structural support for them, Blake and Richard both emphasize their roles as self-responsible citizens.

A second aspect of self-responsible citizenship is the emphasis placed on *personal choice* in participants' lives. Participants' personal choices about friends, relationships, care, work, school, and community were important in understanding their expressions of citizenship. Sophie, age, 21, claims that she needs to make better choices as a parent, because the challenges she is facing as a single parent are largely due, in her opinion, to bad choices that she has made in the past: "I screwed up and went to jail... I just needed to make better choices for my kids." Becky, age, 22, sees herself as responsible for ending up in unsafe situations, including times when she was raped, in an abusive relationship, as well as when she was almost raped, almost kidnapped, and almost jumped. She talks about now knowing how to "keep myself out of situations like that".

According to these young people, therefore, being a self-responsible citizen is about being accountable for one's personal choices. A self-responsible citizen, in their view, manages one's own life without surveillance from social service workers, parents, foster parents, or probation officers and also without support from the state in the form of income and/or disability assistance. Sophie, age, 21, claims that she was able to get on an independent living contract, which was seen as very desirable, because she was mature. When asked what this meant, she said it was because she was going to school, did not live with her boyfriend, and was personally responsible for handling her own finances: "They saw that I was mature and going to school and stuff like that, so they let me sign

the youth agreement.” Sophie saw her choices as positively received and thus as a means to an end - in this case, a youth agreement.

The notion of personal choice is an important aspect of self-responsible citizenship because it indicates that the youth embracing this kind of practice see citizenship as something they can control. Within this framework, the idea is that by making good choices, each individual has the chance to put him or herself on the path to citizenship. Conversely, those who make bad choices - such as Becky sees herself as having made when she was raped - are responsible for whatever happens. Citizenship is not ‘a given’, and instead is tied to prescribed ways of being and acting in these youth’s everyday lives.

A final aspect of self-responsible citizenship is that of an *equal opportunity framework*. The emphasis on equal opportunities for all youth is consistent with Maira’s (2009) neoliberal citizenship; it illustrates the idea that if one cannot get ahead, it is one’s own fault because everyone has an equal playing field. Equality was the point where everyone, in the study group, started from, and, in his or her opinion, it was up to each one as to what happened next. Tyler, age, 20, comments on the subject as follows:

“I think, you got a be a productive human or else life’s going to be really, really, really, difficult on you. [L]ife’s not going to just hand it to you on silver platter. You have to go out there and get it. If you don’t go out there and get it, and you just sit back and expect everything to fall into your lap. [I]t’s not going to happen; it’s not the way life works. You have to actually go out there and do it.”

This idea that he needs to be productive because everything will not be handed to him fits nicely with the self-responsible version of what a ‘good’ citizen is. This participant has internalized what it means to want a middle-class life of responsibility and hard work.

Similarly, in discussing what it meant to be a citizen, Mira, age, 20, explained, that

everyone needs to have a “fair share in sayings and doings”. In general, youth who practice self-responsible citizenship discussed rights in a very instrumental sense or as a means to an end. Underlying this sense of rights as a means to an end was the idea that rights were about treating everyone equally:

“Everyone’s equal, everybody should be heard exactly the same. No matter what. Just because I had a bad past, someone may have had a worst past than me, or someone may have had a better past than me...but it doesn’t matter, we’re all still (equal)” (Andrew, age, 22).

Such an emphasis on everyone being equal negates the very real ways that equality was merely an illusion for many participants.

An equality framework also emerged when youth talked about the ways that young people should participate. They said that citizens had a responsibility to participate, and many of them took this seriously - in their homes, at school, in volunteer settings, or in the work world. Participation in this kind of citizenship practice is connected to ways of acting that indicate self-worth and responsibility, particularly by a giving of effort or contribution. Tyler, age, 20, states that participating means that one should behave as follows:

“Throw 110 effort, 110 % effort into whatever you’re doing, even if you don’t like it [S]till participating is showing an effort and actually putting at least something out there, you know. Not like, if you’re sitting there and you don’t like something, school or whatever, and you’re sitting there going, you know...[I]t’s just throwing this, at least effort; it’s like put in some effort into it. [T]hat’s to me participating.”

In this way, participating is something that citizens do, and if a person rejects mainstream societal goals, he or she is not being a citizen. Thus, the participants felt that one’s actions, or inactions, illustrated one’s commitment to good citizenry, and everyone was seen to have opportunities to participate.

In summary, the study's self-responsible citizens emphasized their individual responsibilities, the role that personal choice played in their lives, and an equality framework which meant that everyone could (and should) participate in particular ways as citizens. Thus for those practicing self-responsible citizenship, being a citizen was something they could aspire to: it meant acting like an adult, fitting in, having a job, and being a member of the community. These young people equate good citizens as people with jobs, who are not dependent on the government, and are integrated into mainstream society. They wanted to be part of this trajectory, even if they felt like they were not yet considered to be 'good' citizens. These participants attempted to lead 'normal' lives and participate in practices that they saw as good and desirable (such as working, paying bills, and recycling.). The idea expressed by a number of participants was to "play by the rules"; they saw personal choice, individual responsibility, and an acceptance of an 'equal playing-field' as essential parts of being a citizen. I now turn to participants who rejected the premise that being a citizen meant helping oneself first and foremost. Instead, they embraced the idea that the community, the family, and the state have a role to play in young people's citizenship practices.

6.2.2 Dissenting citizenship practices

Although youth are often inundated with images of the good self-responsible citizen, it is crucial to note that youth have agency in how they read these images and the discourse surrounding such images. It is not enough to say that there are structural constraints in place that limit citizenship expressions to a self-responsibility model: instead, some young people express citizenship by distancing themselves from this kind

of citizenship. Maira (2009) calls this ‘dissenting’ citizenship in her discussion of Muslim youth in post 9/11 America. For Maira’s participants, dissent is about challenging dominant ideologies and discourses about being Muslim-American. In my study, participants expressed such dissenting citizenship by challenging the ways that they read citizenship discourse. This meant rejecting the idea that individual responsibility, personal choice, and an equality framework are the only ways to practice citizenship. Dissenting citizenship practices challenge the idea that self-responsible citizenship is universal. When expressing dissenting citizenship practices, participants mentioned knowing what ‘good’ citizenship was supposed to be (in their opinion), but in practice they worked to act as citizens in different ways. Furthermore, this subgroup appeared to be more aware of the structural constraints that exclude some people from being considered citizens, meaning that they mentioned the various ways that systemic issues shaped their daily lives. Dissenting citizenship practices for participants in my study involved recognizing collective responsibilities, social agency, and finally embracing non-conformity.

First, for those expressing dissenting citizenship, the *responsibilities of citizenship* were not only the realm of the individual, but also of the state. These participants noted that the community more generally had a responsibility to individuals, and they downplayed any emphasis on the notion that individuals are solely responsible. Blake, age, 19, claims as follows:

“Victoria is pushing the homeless population under and under and under... There this youth van and...they give them out [food] for free and they give you hot chocolate and stuff. The city cut [the funding]. They were like ‘we don’t want any more homeless... We don’t want anybody seeing our homeless’... Everybody’s going to find out how much [of a] homeless [population there] is in this city,

yeah, like right now they kind of see it and they're trying to push it under the carpet cause there's a lot of junkies here...they don't have a place to go, they're out on the street."

Blake is insinuating that the city has a responsibility to help deal with the homeless population, and that various levels of government are abdicating this role. Molly and Lauren also mention the challenges of being homeless in their discussions of citizenship:

"A citizen of, like, Canada is everybody from who immigrates who need refugee claim, to homeless people. We often look over homeless issues in our own country and prefer to send money to other ones, but our homeless people are citizens too, so everything under the sun for Canada, if you're in Canada, you have your visa or you're trying to get refugee status, you're a citizen as far as I'm concerned, you have every right as everybody else to be there" (Molly, age, 24).

"You could live in a place where you have no food, no money, you know, you could live on the streets, and you could have like nothing, you know. You try, obviously with discrimination and stuff trying to get a job, you can't just get a job, like, people think 'ok if they're homeless how come they can't get a job?' maybe they don't know anyone, you know?... That's not how it works, and it's not like if you live on the streets you can go into a job everyday looking how you do, because you're not going to be, you're not going to look presentable" (Lauren, age, 16).

As Molly and Lauren suggest, dissenting citizenship practices mean recognizing the different levels of responsibility that exist in a community. Youth who expressed dissenting citizenship practices were careful to acknowledge the existing structural factors that shaped their choices and responsibilities. They showed an awareness of the complex ways that people end up on the street, and the systems that are in place.

As Robert, age, 21, Lauren, age, 16, and Ruby, age, 22, note, opportunities are needed for youth who are struggling:

"[A] good home growing up, not get kicked out on the streets, get your education and go to the college or something. Maybe your parents can help you with some rent when you're doing that to start

you off as a boost. When you don't have that boost, it's going to be hard. Really hard" (Robert, age, 21).

I wouldn't have been able to do it (live on the street) if someone didn't realize, 'oh, ok, there's homeless people, well, we kind of need a place called a homeless shelter,' you know, or 'we should give out food on these days,' and someone else saying 'we should give out food on a different day,' you know, I wouldn't have survived without that. You know, so it needs to be facilitated to some extent, but you need opportunities too" (Lauren, age, 16).

[T]here's some social workers you know, that go to school and then they're just really rude to you, they have this book degree but they don't have the street knowledge of what they're actually getting themselves into and then are like, 'oh, well you should do this, and you should get a job and 'ta da!' and it's - sometimes it's a lot harder, you know? But just cause they went to school and they didn't you know, actually be through it, and..." (Ruby, age, 22).

This recognition of the opportunities that are needed for youth to be citizens speaks to the ways that structural and contextual factors play a role in shaping how citizenship is practiced.

Secondly, for young people who practice dissenting citizenship, being a citizen means taking actions and making decisions about their own lives and also about the well-being of the community. Bronwyn Hayward (2012) notes that young people have '*social agency*' to organize and collaborate for the common good. This was certainly the case for dissenting citizenship practices. Participants discuss the ways that youth needed to take control of their own lives and attempt to help the community or others, even under difficult circumstances.

"I think it's the kids needing to have initiative of talking to their workers about what is available to them instead of just being like, a lot of kids choose not to go back to school, so it's hard for the social worker to be like 'hey, you don't want to go to school anymore but if you do- (here are the options)" (Karina, age, 19).

“I just needed that independence and to be able to make decisions for myself, and now I’m like going to university in a couple years and I know I’m moving out of my parents house so that’s kind of motivation to get my stuff done and move out of there” (Lauren, age, 16).

“Because I’d just run away, my voice wasn’t being heard, I was like, ‘well, I’m not going to be here,’ cause usually I’m all down for compromise, and I think everybody should have compromise in their life, especially in their own life, and if I didn’t feel like I was getting that, I would run away and just run my own life” (Ruby, age, 22).

Instead of putting up with practices that they felt to be unjust, youth who expressed dissenting citizenship took action to make changes. As such, being part of a community meant taking action. Karina, age, 19, said, “we all created our own communities because it’s your choice to meet the people that you live around and it’s your choice to help them or not help them”. Similarly, Ella, age, 16, contrasted community with family: “I’m just friends with people that are nice to me and people that I’m nice to, and my family – well I don’t really have a choice.” In this sense, a community was chosen purposefully, while a family was made up of biological relatives with whom she could not avoid being in touch. Her responsibilities as a community member were taken because she wanted to, not because she had to. Sawyer, age, 22, also sees his responsibilities as being a community member:

“Like I’ve broken up so many fights out there between the youth that it’s not even funny. I know it’s not my job but... they just sell drugs to each other, they do gangster shite, they graffiti the walls, like I’m out there to prevent the graffiti, but I’m also there to make sure no girls get hurt and abused and men don’t beat each other up over testosterone driven gangster mumbo jumbo.”

Sawyer sees himself as a “representative of these fine young people”, so his responsibilities are to them, not only to himself.

According to Elliott, age, 19, having social agency sometimes means exercising the right to protest: “You have the right to protest, or disagree with the government, or to just say whatever you want.” Exercising citizenship was therefore tied to the relatively traditional form of citizenship wherein one’s protesting of government was important. Similarly, Ruby, age, 22, says: “You have the right of speech and what you say has a right to be heard instead of just trampled over.” Acting in the public sphere becomes part of these youths’ citizenship practices.

Social agency can also be seen in the ways that youth talk about wanting to give back to the community by working with younger youth who have been in government care. For instance, Mira, age, 20, says that going forward in life she is motivated, “to contribute to the world and all that stuff. Give back what I’ve been given.” Similarly, Sophie, age, 21, says that she wants to be a support person for troubled youth:

“ISP – Intense Supervision Support. It’s for kids who are just getting out of juvie or like on probation, and you just pick them up and talk to them, take them out for coffee, take them out for lunch. And I think I’d be good at it because I’ve been there, done that.”

Many of the youth interviewed saw their experiences with the care system as giving them insight into what it was like to be a youth-in-care. Part of practicing citizenship for them, therefore, may entail getting involved with other youth-in-care.

Finally, being a dissenting citizen often meant embracing *non-conformity* in their appearances, in their approaches to work, and in their understandings of self. Participants discussed the ways that their looks were integral to their understanding of citizenship and took pride in making their appearance unique or different. From tattoos to piercings, the body mattered in the ways that participants acted as citizens. For Andrew, age, 22, his body represents his attempts to move on from his past: he has a tattoo that reads, “Always

Forgive, but Never Forget”. This statement embodies his feelings about the choices he has had to make in his life and his experiences growing up. Lauren, age, 16, sees her body as inferior because it does not look the same as her stepmother. However, she also resists the image that her stepmother is striving for:

“And she’d be really like, she’d make sure she looked like pristine and her hair was perfect and everything was you know, perfect, and yet I didn’t have money, you know. I’d go over there and my hair would be messed up, I’d be wearing dirty clothes and like, you know, it doesn’t matter like she couldn’t understand that, she was really like shallow and stuff I guess.”

Lauren acknowledges that appearances matter in how people are regarded, but that this is a rather surface concern.

Participants also felt like they were embracing a kind of non-conformity in the ways that they saw the world of work. Rather than the notion that work was something that had to be done no matter what, those practicing this type of citizenship saw work in a more nuanced way. Molly, age, 24, and Ruby, age, 22, talk about the ways that work should be meaningful.

“I’m very picky about jobs because a) I want respect, and b) I want to be able to be knowledgeable about what I’m doing, and c) I want to be able to have fun and actually enjoy my job, so it all has to encompass who I am and what I am and an acceptance of what I am” (Molly, age, 24).

“I wouldn’t work a job that I didn’t appreciate, I’d rather be poor, because I’m not going - I probably wouldn’t go to work if I didn’t, if I wanted to sleep in and if I didn’t appreciate it, I want to appreciate my boss and what I’m doing cause - I know, you’re supposed to go to work even if you don’t like it but, I only live once and I’m not going to be stressed out working a job I don’t want to work” (Ruby, age, 22).

Non-conformity of dissenting citizens can also be seen by reviewing the ways participants talked about understanding their own places in society. Molly, age, 24, talks about herself as a “gypsy” - in that she can merge or meld into any group of society:

“I’m one of those people that can fit into any sort of society, so I’m kind of like gypsy-ing I guess. It’s one of those things I am able to do.... It means to be able to actually merge, become unnoticed in any crowd of people, so I can actually probably go and sit down with a bunch of rich people, dress up nicely and completely be able to have a normal conversation with them. At the same time, five minutes later you can see me standing outside the Bay Centre with a bunch of drug dealers. And it only takes a few quick changes to your clothes, whether you’re wearing high heels or not, and you wouldn’t be able to notice me. That’s what I call true ‘gypsy’-ing.”

This notion of ‘gypsying’ speaks to the ways that participants discussed how they were defined by what they wore or how they looked, and yet also about how they actually had control over how they were seen. Molly goes on to challenge the way that people see youth: “It is hilarious to see how scared upper and middle class people are of people who have back-packs on their back”. Pierre, age, 22, also talks about fitting in with people who are on the move: “I’d be with travelers, I guess I just get along with them.” Pierre’s connection to those who are similarly displaced speaks to the importance of non-conformity in his life, while at the same time to belonging somewhere. Lauren, age, 16, speaks to the ways that she uses creative outlets to express who she is: “I write rap and it’s a way for me to deal with my, my, my anger, my emotions, my feelings and put things into words and change them into positive things and get me out of a depressed mood or something.” Molly, Pierre, and Lauren are all interested in dissenting citizenship practices, yet they still want to belong and they still engage as citizens.

To conclude, practicing dissenting citizenship is about challenging many of the norms of self-responsible citizenship, particularly the focus on citizenship as being about

individual self-help. Instead, participants who practiced dissenting citizenship talked about collective responsibilities, social agency, and non-conformity. In many ways, dissenting citizenship illustrates that rights and responsibilities are not always the most important ways to frame discussions about citizenship. Practicing citizenship involves a reframing of self as an actor in a community, and as a participant in one's own citizenship narrative.

6.2.3 Reluctant citizenship practices

The final kind of citizenship practice can be called reluctant citizenship. Reluctance is associated with being unwilling, or somewhat hesitant. Some participants indicated discomfort with the term citizenship, and questioned many of the practices that may be associated with citizenship. Participants practicing reluctant citizenship were hesitant in terms of identifying as citizens, but, more importantly, they were also hesitant in their actions as citizens. They expressed uncertainty, disinterest, and apathy towards their understandings of being a citizen. In some ways, the reluctant citizen resembles Merton's (1957) 'retreatist' who rejects cultural goals and institutional means – a positioning which involves a complete escape from the pressures and demands of organized society. Individuals in the study practicing reluctant citizenship had no interest in being part of mainstream goals expressed by those who did self-responsible citizenship, and also were not interested in dissenting citizenship practices that privileged alternative ways of being or expressing citizenship. Reluctant citizenship practices do not tend to challenge the status quo; rather these practices can be seen through expressions of exclusion and apathy. In some ways, they espouse an emotional distance

from the very idea of citizenship. The three characteristics of reluctant citizens, discussed in detail below, are: rejection of citizenship norms; disillusionment with mainstream society; and tension between being risky and at-risk.

First, participant youth who practiced reluctant citizenship expressed their *rejection of citizenship norms* as pertinent to their own lives. They did not see themselves as ‘doing’ citizenship or ‘being’ a citizen. Being a citizen was framed as something that happened to others rather than themselves. They did not identify with the term citizen and instead talked about their rights and responsibilities as secondary to many other parts of their lives. As Blake, age, 19, notes, a citizen is someone who “takes a test”. This association of citizenship with something others do illustrates the unease that many of them felt with the concept. The responsibilities of a citizen were also seen to be very different from what they saw happening in their own lives. As Molly, age, 24, says, the requirements of being a citizen can seem so foreign as to be irrelevant:

“It’s very odd to me, I know I have to pay my taxes, I’m on disability so I don’t end up paying taxes, um, if I’m subpoenaed to go as a jury member I have to do that, which is completely unacceptable to me, um other things include voting, voting, I don’t vote anymore, I’m so fed up with the way the governments going, you don’t even want to get me started on that.”

Part of being ambivalent about the concept of citizenship was due to a discomfort with aspects of citizenship that some youth in the study group found alien. For instance, when I asked youth about their experiences with rights to provision, which are a key part of the UNCRC and include the rights to housing, food, and other ‘survival’ rights, those expressing reluctant citizenship challenged whether these rights were important. For example, for some youth, housing was a right that they had rejected: while the street

became a last option, it was still better than some very unhappy foster homes (and biological homes). Molly, age, 24, notes as follows:

“A lot of my friends in care ended up on the streets and preferred to live on the streets because their right of being protected and being important as a child was made into ‘you’re my nanny now, you’re my housekeeper,’ so that’s one of the biggest rights I have issues with... A lot of people end up living on the streets because they prefer it because it’s continuous, they’re not treated badly, a lot of them don’t get the help they need, because with their anger management or the fact that they don’t have a family, the fact that their life is completely screwed up.”

Rights are not only irrelevant, but in fact, for these youth they obscure the real problems that young people face.

This rejection of citizenship ‘norms’ was also found in participants’ disavowal of participation as a way to express citizenship. Those expressing reluctant citizenship seemed ambivalent about any form of participation in the community. For Taryn, age, 20, participating in school or the community is about being able to do what “normal people do”, and she did not consider herself to be normal so she did not think of herself as participating. Participants also discussed feeling like they could not participate as citizens because it required resources that they did not have. Sawyer, age, 22, says, “I don’t really grasp that term because I never liked participating unless it was something fun and expensive”. Similarly, Ruby, age, 22, notes that a lack of resources makes it hard for youth to participate:

“it’s hard for the youth to be open, because everybody’s like, ‘oh, you don’t have nice shoes, or you don’t have this, or you don’t have that,’ and then kids make fun of you so it’s hard for people to be open around communities.”

Lack of resources are not the only reason youth choose not to participate, however.

Sophie, age, 21, expresses the fears that she thinks youth feel when they try to act:

“they’re not smart enough to do it, and then they don’t feel like they can say anything because they don’t want to look dumb”. Shelly, age, 14, talks about her appearance as being a barrier to participation:

“It’s always, cause I’m overweight and it’s obviously like a challenge for me, so it’s like the pressure of being in a new place and starting over again, plus that, it’s like ‘oh.’”

Participation, therefore, is not something that youth necessarily can or even want to do. In fact, participating in something like a protest or voting was dismissed by these participants as relatively useless. Molly, age, 24 says, “I find that voting doesn't get me very far. I can yell and scream about the fact that the government no longer pays for my uh, my birth control (but nothing happens)”. As well, Sawyer, age, 22 notes that youth may have different wants or needs from what adults (or the UNCRC for that matter) imagine:

“(Youth want) drugs, friends, sex, and music. I’m being frank here, that’s the only things they want. They don’t want camaraderie, they don’t want Dad taking them to the hockey game and doing all this clichéd bullshit, they want someone to bond with and build a life with and understand them, hence why there’s so many pregnant girls out there.”

The very concept of citizenship - as well as its relationship to participation - is called into question in that it seems rather unimportant in these youth’s daily lives.

Second, participants expressing reluctant citizenship discussed their *disillusionment around fitting in* with mainstream society. For Sophie, age, 21, her choice of friends was a result in part of her experiences in care:

“I feel like if I go and try to get like stereotypical normal kind of friend, they’re not going to understand where I came from or what I’ve been through... I always feel like I’m going to scare them away. So I just stay clear of it and stick to what I know, because if

someone else has had a scary life then they're not going to judge you as much."

The way she connects with others illustrates her discomfort with so-called "normal" friends. Ruby, age, 22, talks about the reasons she rejected pursuing self-help citizenship ideals:

"I lived out in the woods and didn't want to be part of society, I didn't want to have the government know how much money I made and I didn't you know, I thought it was kind of stupid that you had to pay for food when you need it, you know, food should be free."

These participants are ambivalent to the values they see as normal. Robert, age, 21, mentions feeling stable when he got an apartment, but he also expresses his ambivalence to traditional views of 'being clean':

"I just ended up getting a job and got the first thing I came, cause I had to get off the street. Well I wasn't really on the street I was couch surfing but I was still homeless and hungry and broke. And not baked. Which is a piss-off."

His feelings of disinterest in what is happening in his life speak to the ambivalence towards his supposed responsibilities. Similarly, Sawyer, age, 22, talks about his reasons for staying on disability:

"But I'm scared of getting off it, the way the economy is going and everyone is struggling and, I don't want to go off it because people are all 'you're on disability, you're a free-rider,' but it's like fuck you then, I'm going to stay on it just to spite you."

The idea that being on government assistance was something to be avoided was rejected by Sawyer. The dissatisfaction that participants expressing reluctant citizenship mentioned included feelings of exclusion. Participants talked about the ways they were made to feel like they did not fit in at home, at school, or anywhere. Molly, age, 24, notes the following when talking about youth who have been in care:

“You get that sense of, I don't know what you call it but displacement disorder, because they're - they don't know who they're real mom is after a while, they'll go away around with anybody, because they have no real attachment to society they have no real attachment, they're not accepted as a person.”

This dissatisfaction goes beyond a surface level of apathy and instead is manifested in how they see themselves and others. Sawyer, age, 22, discusses how youth feel disengaged:

“Because no one listens to them and they think that they don't know anything but we're evolution, we're the next step in building this planet and everyone seems to think we're stupid, we don't hold in information, we're young and we're blinded by hormones and rage, but... yes, to a degree that's true, but we like to think for ourselves, we don't like people telling us what to do because it makes us feel weak and inferior.”

Sawyer is expressing dissatisfaction with ways that youth are seen, but also with how he (and perhaps other youth) feel.

This disillusionment with mainstream society also extended to their expressions of being silenced and excluded: sometimes by social workers who did not listen, by judges who seemed to be uninterested in what they wanted to say, and at home by their biological parents and foster parents. As well, law enforcement was a particular source of dissatisfaction for participants expressing reluctant citizenship. Many participants talked about experiences with police as being part of the reason that they felt safer when there were no police around. Police were seen as being in opposition to youth. Molly, age, 24, discusses her dislike of police officers as follows:

“I don't like police officers because I've seen what they've done to people downtown. I see them all the time, and they pick on the wrong people. A lot of my friends... have done illegal activities like such as selling pot, which is one of the safest drugs to actually deal, because a bunch of stoners, we all just kind of stand there like

'what?' and we're the easiest to pick on, are just kind of like 'fine, whatever.' But, I just don't like cops.”

Becky also says that she has had police officers pick on her unfairly, and that by knowing her rights she was able to challenge the implicit authority of the police officers.

Similarly, two young male youth talk about the ways they have been labelled by others:

“I just got labelled it young. I got labelled young, thrown in the system with a no drinking order and a male teenager growing up you're obviously going to be partying and all it takes from there is a cop to be like 'oh, you're Robert? Were you drinking tonight?' Growing up in a small town screws you around... I've seen them like illegally search people. Just cause they're sitting on a bench in a park and that's probable cause? Like, anything is probable cause, like you're walking down an alley, you're on the street, you're in Victoria, it's night time, you're wearing a hoodie, anything can - they can use anything as probable cause and just use that as their way to screw you” (Robert, age, 21).

“me and my buddy, like for an example we went into a store the other day, downtown, and we were followed around everywhere we went by a worker and it's just like, and I told him like, 'you don't need to follow me,' and he's like, 'well you know, you're a teenager,' and I'm like, 'what's that supposed to mean?' Just because I'm a teenager it doesn't mean I'm going to steal from here” (Richard, age, 15).

Robert and Richard note that the way they look is integral to how they are treated by police officers, and this is part of their frustration with law enforcement in particular, and mainstream society more generally.

Third, reluctant citizens illustrated the tension that many youth felt between being *at-risk and risky*. Participants identifying with this citizenship practice classified themselves as being seen as *risky*, as well as being *at-risk* depending upon the context. Some participants focused on how they themselves were risks. Mira, age, 20, comments on being perceived as a risk by others:

“I got into a fight on the bus and got into a fight with my principal when I was under the influence of being on drugs... I guess I was a threat to the humanity of that little area, so they locked me up.”

Her discussion of being a “threat to humanity” is sarcastic. Similarly, Blake, age, 19, says that “I was the trouble child - I was like a little shit when I was a kid”. He goes on to say that this continued in high school until he had a teacher who encouraged him to do well, “I basically was just a shit disturber. I didn’t want to go to school and he pushed me.” Blake equates not wanting to go to school with being a troublemaker or a risk.

Richard, age, 15, pushes back against the notion that youth are risky:

“I understand why adults like think that we’re like bad kids, but a lot of us aren’t like that. People... they think the worst, instead of like ‘oh, this kid could be nice,’ they think ‘this kids going to take my wallet,’ or [laughs] I get that a lot, people, even at school, like I’ll walk down the hall, like at Mount Doug High, and kids’ll move out of my way, like look at me and move to the side, and I’ll be like [laughs] ‘I’m just walking down the hall, man.’”

Richard is struggling with being seen as a threat; he wants to disassociate himself from that kind of image. Sophie, age, 21, describes her activities, and even herself, as “scary” because she was in trouble with the law:

“I used to not feel safe walking down the street, because I’d be scared of the teenagers, but then I stopped and thought about it - and I was one of the scary people! So I was kinda contradicting myself.”

Becky, age, 22, whose story was discussed above in section 6.2.1, sees herself as at-risk, while also *being* a risk, by referring to times she has been raped or almost raped and saying she needs to “keep myself out of situations like that”.

Youth also discussed the ways that other youth were risky. Tyler, age, 20, discusses safety for youth in Greater Victoria:

“there are some crazy people out there. It’s hard to tell nowadays, actually, (because) the world is kind of scary, (and) you can’t tell

whether it's safe to walk down the street. You don't know what areas are good anymore".

Tyler sees youth as risky, but also as at risk of being victimized by others. Tyler goes on to say that youth need to be productive:

"I guess you could say, not be little rebels, like actually do productive things with their time instead of like vandalism and all that kind of thing like, keep doing the things that you're doing."

For participants expressing reluctant citizenship, riskiness was a part of youthhood and was thus connected to their citizenship practices. Their access to rights, responsibilities, belonging, and participation was in many ways mediated through risk: they could only access these components of citizenship if they were negotiating risk.

In conclusion, for those expressing reluctant citizenship, there was a real resistance to the notion that their lives were consistent with anything they understood as citizenship. Not only did they dismiss any identification with being a citizen, they also expressed dissatisfaction with mainstream society and rejected the idea that participation is tied to citizenship. Their citizenship practices, therefore, were not necessarily compatible with notions of citizenship that involve action, participation, accessing rights, or having responsibilities. Instead, the reluctance of these individuals to embrace the concept of citizenship illustrates the challenges with the meaning of youth citizenship itself. If citizenship does not resonate with youth themselves, is it still a valuable way to assess the lives and practices of young people? The experiences these youth have had with being silenced seem to preclude any relationship with citizenship. The isolation they have experienced and their mistrust of others in the community, in schools, and in social services speaks to the ways that citizenship is complicated. Even when participants who expressed reluctant citizenship started to 'act' as citizens, these

complexities could be overwhelming. For example, Sawyer, age, 22, illustrates the ‘messiness’ of citizenship practices as he discusses both his compliance with being a citizen, but also his resistance:

“I got high, drank moonshine, played video games in the back room, met all these people, and then as soon as I cleaned up, things starting getting complicated and ugly. So now I’m going with the complicated and ugliness, and I’m trying to make everyone’s life better around me and not have them go down the path that I did.”

6.3 Summary

Self-responsible, dissenting, and reluctant citizenship practices illustrate the variety of ways that youth negotiate their lives as citizens. Youth in my study discussed being excluded formally and informally from full participation in the institutions and structures that grant access to basic rights, but they still expressed citizenship on their own terms. Practicing citizenship included descriptions of the term ‘citizen’, actions and behaviours, and an embodiment of what it meant to them to be a citizen. Their relationship to the idea of citizenship was contextualized by structural realities: their own life histories, as well as cultural, social, and economic factors. In the next chapter, I discuss such findings in relation to the literature on youth citizenship by returning to the research objectives I set out at the start of this dissertation, as well as the literature on youth citizenship.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, I have discussed how youth-in-care practice citizenship by illustrating the gaps in the literature, my methodological premises, the collection and analysis of data, and, finally, in Chapter 6, I have laid out the findings of my research. I now turn to appraise these findings in more detail by exploring the three main objectives, which were stated in Chapter 1, in more detail. The first objective aimed to examine how youth-in-care envision themselves as practicing citizenship. Practicing citizenship encompassed many aspects of participants' lives: expressions of citizenship involved behaviours and actions, embodiment and expression. Being a citizen was not something that all participants embraced easily; the tension between wanting to be a citizen, on the one hand, and not knowing how, on the other, constrained the ways that their citizenship practices took shape. Moreover, the struggle to understand how rights actually mattered in participants' lives illustrates the contradictions of rights claims for marginalized peoples. While rights may be present in some form, a language of rights has the potential to obscure the challenges that remain in the daily experiences of youth-in-care.

The second objective aimed to investigate how youth-in-care navigate questions of belonging. As the literature indicates, belonging is considered to be an important part of youth citizenship (Maira, 2009; Smith et al., 2005). Belonging - in some way, shape, or form - clearly matters to youth-in-care, and yet, feelings of exclusion also must be acknowledged when studying youth citizenship practices. A continuum of belonging-exclusion may be helpful in highlighting the ways that individual youth navigate

questions of inclusion, while also showing how experiences of belonging-exclusion may be shared. Furthermore, a continuum of this sort has the potential to illustrate the ways that participants imagine themselves as part of a particular community, as well as the barriers that exist in fully joining one's community.

The third objective aimed to assess how citizenship practices shape understandings of self. For participants, expressing citizenship involved a re-examination of the experiences in their lives and the impact these experiences had on their conceptions of citizenship. In particular, many members of my sample framed themselves as resilient despite dealing with considerable struggles and challenges. This speaks to the way that the concept of resiliency has come to play an important part in youth's understandings of themselves, even if being resilient is not an actual outcome that youth-in-care have achieved. There is a tension between resilience and vulnerability with this group, as their attempts at being resilient illustrate the ways that they are vulnerable under neoliberal economic and social policies. I now turn to consider each of these objectives in more detail.

7.2 Implications of findings

7.2.1 Practicing citizenship

The first objective of my research is aimed at discovering how youth-in-care expressed citizenship practices. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, youth citizenship is comprised of many qualities, including rights, responsibilities, participation and belonging (Howe, 2005). How these ingredients are negotiated by youth gives insight into how participants came to see themselves as citizens (or did not see themselves as

citizens, depending on the case). Citizenship was not something that youth automatically attained when they reached a certain age: it is a fluid, dynamic process involving aspects of the personal and the public realms. Moreover, understandings of citizenship as something that can be achieved with hard work alone negate the structural and political implications that youth bring to their experiences of the concept of citizenship. As Beauvais et al. (2001) note:

It [citizenship] is more than having theoretical rights... it means actively seeking to engage so as to realise one's rights, exercise one's responsibilities, have access to political institutions, be empowered, and share a sense of belonging to the community – national as well as local. Being a full citizen means having the resources and opportunity to participate in different areas of life (p. 2).

When citizenship is understood as an action and process rather than only/merely as a status, citizenship is recognized as part of an individual's lived experience (Shaw and McCulloch, 2009).

At the same time, contextual factors that may shape youth's experiences with practicing citizenship include: the changing views of childhood and youthhood in conjunction with processes of individualization, globalization, and neoliberalism; the turn towards 'risk societies' (Beck, 1992); the emphasis on rights since the UNCRC; and, the specific framework guiding the government care system in British Columbia. As discussed in the previous chapters, it is difficult to separate participants' citizenship practices from the context in which these practices occur.

Citizenship practices were closely tied to participants' understandings of rights and responsibilities. Like other youth, participants' lives have been largely shaped by circumstances outside their control, and so citizenship can only be understood in context with these other factors. The adoption of the UNCRC, and the shift to rights discourses

in MCFD's approach to youth-in-care, are important in understanding how rights are realized, and citizenship is practiced. For my study, therefore, I wanted to further examine participants' experiences with the care system when discussing their understandings of rights and responsibilities. The interactions that participants had with foster (and biological) families, social workers, teachers, and the police helped them understand aspects of citizenship. These youth had extensive knowledge about what their rights are, and they were very comfortable discussing what it meant to have rights. They had often been exposed to the idea of rights and responsibilities at a young age, but their access to rights may have been limited, as they were often been formally and informally excluded from belonging in the home, in school, and in the community. Most participants, even if they were somewhat unsure of what actual rights looked like, expressed confidence that they were holders of certain rights (such as rights to protection, participation and provision).

However, as Beauvais et al. (2001) note, having rights without the capacity to practice them is not necessarily particularly meaningful. Even when participants were aware of their rights, they often noted that they did not know how to realize them. More accurately, perhaps, their access to rights was mitigated by significant barriers. As such, for participants, rights existed as an ideal, but the limits of these rights often seemed to depend on individuals' social location and other situational factors. While it was possible to talk about the participants' rights abstractly, it is only when concrete examples were given that participants noted how these rights did not often provide them with anything in particular in their daily lives.

Rights were not only just unrealized by participants however; in some ways, the reliance on a language of rights by youth-in-care themselves (and by adults in their lives) may obfuscate inequities that these youth were facing. An illusion of rights can actually hide the ways that youth face structural and systemic challenges (Clement, 2008). A major assumption about rights in general, and the UNCRC in particular, is that there are some universal ‘norms’ that young people all over the world share (Reynaert et al., 2009). However, universal rights approaches have been criticized for missing cultural differences and local specificities that make them rather unsuitable for many of the people they are supposed to help (Nair, 2004). For instance, for participants in my study, rights approaches seemed to indicate a kind of formal equality, which negated discussions of difference amongst youth. Many of the youth talked about how rights meant that everyone has an equal voice so it does not matter which young person speaks up in the public sphere as long as someone was doing so. While all youth may face barriers of ageism (see below), the notion that the experiences of youth-in-care may be somewhat unique - or at the very least worth sharing with others - seemed to be at odds with how highly participants viewed rights as meaning some kind of surface equality. A language of youth rights, therefore, has the potential to hide the very barriers that a document like the UNCRC is focused on spotlighting.

Participants were comfortable talking about their responsibilities, both individually and, sometimes, collectively. What was interesting, when looking across the narratives, was that the concept of responsibility often had a moral component attached to it. As scholars of citizenship have shown, some people have to continually prove themselves as citizens, while others take such rights for granted (Kennelly, 2009;

Kennelly and Dillabough, 2008). I found that the youth in my study were very likely to act as though they had to ‘activate’ citizenship. The concept of “activated citizenship” indicates that some individuals must continually assert (and reassert) their status as citizens by behaving in ways that are consistent with so-called good citizenship (Clarke, 2005, p. 448).

All youth, not just youth-in-care, face barriers when it comes to practicing citizenship in that they tend to be seen as less capable than adults of *being* citizens (Cohen, 2005). As Smith et al. (2005) note, youth are socially constructed as ‘distinct from’ and ‘other than’ adult citizens (p. 429). Ageism is a problem faced not just by marginalized youth but by youth more generally in that they have traditionally been seen as citizens in the making rather than citizens now (see Marshall, 1964). However, to an even greater degree, youth with less access to resources are constituted by others as less than ideal citizens (Blanchet-Cohen and Salazar, 2009), and as such, must prove that they are capable of expressing citizenship in a normative way. For the young people in my study, citizenship had to be constantly re-activated: their citizenship status was only as good as the current ways they practiced it. For instance, the reliance on work as indicative of good citizenship, expressed by most participants even though some were critical of this, illustrates the ways that a self-responsible citizenship discourse has permeated the consciousness of participants.

Practicing citizenship also became part of the way that youth conceptualized themselves as connected to the world around them. While participants often discussed themselves as lucky or hard-working in their narratives, they also touched upon the ways that their lives, and their citizenship practices, were shaped by outside forces, including

other individuals. One way that this comparison occurred was the invoking of a “generalized other” (Mead, 1962), to whom they could refer to when thinking about their choices, their life course, and their citizenship practices. Often, they compared who they were and what they had been through to an imagined youth, who may or may not resemble someone they actually knew. In some cases, this generalized other had it much worse than they had, while in other cases, the other person had been treated better, which affected how they saw their own opportunities to practice citizenship as well as the opportunities of others to practice citizenship. What is interesting about this comparison to the ‘other’ is that it illustrates how youth-in-care conceptualize themselves as ingrained into a broader picture. Even while they talked about individual difficulties that they had experienced, youth were still keen to talk about how their lives ‘fit in’ to the family, the community, and Victoria more generally. In discussing what citizenship practices entail, these youth envisioned and embodied citizenship as a part of their own daily lives, and, at the same time, as a part of other processes and structures to which they belong.

As citizenship scholars has shown, citizenship is differentiated by gender, class, age, race, and sexuality (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Liebel, 2008; Lister, 2008; Young, 1995) As Lister (2008) notes, women’s experiences with citizenship have traditionally been very different than men’s, in large part due to differences in understandings of dependence and independence. Similarly, as Cohen (2005) discusses, children have been excluded from formal citizenship, including those involving civil, political and social rights. With this in mind, an intersectional analysis is helpful in highlighting the ways that citizenship is expressed in young people’s daily lives. As discussed in Chapter 2, intersectionality scholars highlight the ways sources of oppression are multiple and

intersecting, while also studying how sources of subordination differ depending on other sources of subordination, including life experiences, family situations, and individual characteristics (Denis, 2008, p. 677).

For participants in my study, then, citizenship practices emerged in relation to gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality and other sources of difference. As this is a qualitative research project, generalizations about the ways that these differences influence citizenship are not possible; however, by keeping an intersectional perspective at the forefront, it is possible to draw out some of the ways that differences may shape citizenship practices. Markers of differences, such as race, class, gender, sexuality and age, were not experienced in the same way by each individual; however, citizenship practices were described, acted out, and embodied by participants in particular ways which illustrate that these sources of differentiation were evident to participants when thinking about citizenship. For instance, gendered experiences of citizenship for youth can be evidenced in the ways that some of the young women participants foregrounded their experiences as mothers in their understandings of what their rights were, how they practiced responsibility, and what they thought about participation and belonging. Similarly, discussions of safety in the community illustrated the different ways that women and men conceptualized the right to protection, which may have influenced the way that they practiced citizenship. There were also examples in the narratives of citizenship in which sexual orientation and ethnicity became a part of citizenship practices through negotiations of belonging, and experiences of difference, in relationships with families, friends, peers, and social service workers.

In summary, practicing citizenship is best conceptualized as involving action, as well as experiences and expressions within particular historical and social contexts. Actions and experiences are constrained by structural factors and historical realities. Differential social locations of subjects (or intersectional standpoints) enable and constrain possibilities of citizenship. Thus practicing citizenship must be seen through a lens that recognises the structural as well as the agential aspects of individual's lived experiences. Moreover, as intersectionality scholars note, recognizing the social reality of individuals means taking into account the ways that social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics are determined simultaneously and interactively through various axes of social organisation (Stasiulis, 1999, p. 345). The ways that youth practice citizenship occur in a context of institutional and structural realities, as well as through individual actions.

7.2.2 Belonging and exclusion

The second objective of my research is aimed at considering how youth-in-care negotiate questions of belonging. The literature on youth citizenship emphasizes the connection between accessing citizenship and being seen as a full member of a community (Beauvais et al., 2001; Lister, 2007; Mortier, 2002). Furthermore, in many ways, expressions of citizenship give rise to community (Glover, 2004). For youth-in-care who are navigating tremendous upheaval, fewer resources and a lack of support may

mean that they struggle to create and sustain their place in the community or home (Callahan and Swift, 2007).⁵⁶

I found that citizenship practices were shaped by and comprised of how youth experience social inclusion and exclusion. For participants in my study, belonging was something that they discussed implicitly and explicitly, even if they had very different ways of conceptualizing just what inclusion meant, and even if, for some participants, belonging remained elusive. In some ways, the concepts of belonging-exclusion seemed to form a kind of continuum: youth did not reject a notion of belonging all together. Instead, they mentioned that at times they felt like they belonged -- whether at school, at home, or in the community, while at other times, they felt like they were excluded from these same places/institutions and the relationships they produced. As the literature on youth citizenship indicates, it is not surprising that I found belonging to be such an important theme in my research (Beauvais et al., 2001; Maira, 2009; Moosa-Mitha, 2009).

As youth citizenship researchers have illustrated, experiences of both belonging-exclusion contribute to young people's interactions with their families, communities, institutions, peers, and the state (Sharkey and Shields, 2008; Smith et al., 2005). A sense of belonging refers to an ability to participate and contribute in ways that are meaningful to the individual and to the community (Smith et al., 2005). The suggestion that inclusion can be seen as a kind of continuum – embracing both belonging-exclusion – illustrates the complexities of social inclusion and exclusion, particularly for youth-in-

⁵⁶ By place in the community or home, I mean both the physical location, but, more importantly, how one fits in emotionally, socially, and culturally with family, friends, peers, and other relevant people in one's life.

care. Greene (2007) uses an image of a continuum to reference ‘active citizenship’, where young people’s citizenship falls somewhere on the continuum; however, using a continuum to represent the ways that belonging-exclusion experiences are part of citizenship practices more generally has not been explored. A belonging-exclusion continuum is consistent, though, with other scholars work on youth citizenship, as it is hard to discuss how young people act as citizens without addressing how they belong, and how a sense of belonging changes over time (see Maira, 2009; Moosa-Mitha, 2009; Smith et al., 2005).

A continuum of belonging-exclusion is helpful in locating how feelings of inclusion are relationally dependent: these feelings shift over time, and depend upon the very citizenship practices that youth are engaged in. Furthermore, a continuum of belonging-exclusion can be useful in seeing the simultaneity of different feelings that exist in a single individual at one time, but also in assessing similarities in understandings of belonging-exclusion across participants. Belonging-exclusion is context-dependent: there is a tension between how youth-in-care in my study want to belong on the one hand, but, on the other, they struggle against feelings of exclusion from the mainstream on the other. As intersectional scholars suggest, the ways that differences matter in people’s lives has both a personal and a structural component (Collins, 2009). The notion that one may feel a sense of belonging while also experiencing exclusion speaks to the ways that social location actually plays out in people’s lives.

A continuum of belonging-exclusion emerged in a number of ways for youth as they were practicing citizenship. For some, striving for belonging meant embracing self-responsible ideals of citizenship; whereas for others, it was much more about rejecting

these ideals; and for others still, belonging remained incredibly elusive. Many youth talked about the ways they strived for belonging to something or someone who would accept them - often in alternative communities or alternative families. It was also interesting to note their desires to belong to institutions and processes that they felt excluded from. Discussions of belonging - or not belonging - were present in participants' narratives across citizenship practice typologies of self-responsible citizenship, dissenting citizenship, and reluctant citizenship. From their relationships with others, to their notions of their place in the community, belonging was important. For instance, belonging to a foster family was often a complicated question for participants. Many of them spoke about the ways that foster families were kind, but that they never felt as though they actually belonged. As Cradock (2007) notes, for young people in foster care, the ultimate responsibility for their well-being lies with the foster family. This arrangement has the potential to isolate children from the state in order to preserve the privacy of the foster family (164). For youth without a sense of belonging either in the home or elsewhere, this exclusion in the private sphere may be unhelpful or even harmful.

Participants discussed how being in care often made them feel alone and isolated, even if the care was temporary or if they thought care was better than home. Instabilities that occurred in birth families or care homes were often linked in the participants' narratives to describing how they felt excluded from relationships with parents and foster parents, social workers, group home workers, and other children or youth in the home. When they did not feel like they belonged - whether in foster care, on the streets, or at home - they talked about the challenges in their lives that resulted from this exclusion.

Conversely, when participants talked about times of stability in their lives, they spoke about feeling like they belonged, in some way, to the family, community, school, or other group. Feelings of exclusion and belonging carried over to other parts of their lives - they did not feel like going to school, for instance, when their home lives were volatile. In this way, inclusion/exclusion linked citizenship practices across institutions.

The belonging-exclusion continuum is evident in the relationships that participants described: how they belonged (or did not belong) with families, teachers, counselors, and with peers - both in romantic relationships and friendships - and finally, and with community members more generally. Relationships are important for understanding the ways in which people are “othered”, marginalized, or turned into abject citizens (Sharkey and Shields, 2008). In my study, I found that participants often talked about supportive people in their lives who were there for a short period of time, but who then disappeared. This was often true of parents, grandparents, and foster parents. Inherent to such discussions was an emphasis on trust and mistrust. Feelings of belonging-exclusion often manifested as trusting or mistrusting adults in their lives, peers, and service providers such as social workers, front-line youth workers, and the police.

A continuum of belonging-exclusion is a useful concept in examining how individual youth deal with questions of inclusion and exclusion. Not all youth-in-care are excluded from institutions which allow them to practice citizenship in the ways that they find to be empowering. Many of the participants in my study take care to illustrate that their experiences of belonging are fluid and context-dependent. Foster care in and of itself is not a reason for exclusion; instead, living situations, foster parents, social

workers, and the youth's own biological families all play a role in contributing to the ways that youth-in-care identify as experiencing belonging-exclusion in foster care settings. A continuum that acknowledges these factors can highlight the similarities and differences across participant experiences, and perhaps, to further research aimed at promoting and encouraging belonging.

7.2.3 Narratives of self in expressions of citizenship

Finally, my third objective aimed to investigate how citizenship practices may play a part in shaping understandings of self. As this is a qualitative study, I am not attempting to illustrate that some citizenship practices 'caused' youth to think about their lives or themselves differently. Instead, with this objective in mind, I considered the ways that citizenship practices seemed to be important in the narratives that youth told about their lives. In particular, I was interested in the ways that participants saw themselves as thriving or resilient, even under very difficult circumstances. In recent years, the concept of resiliency has emerged as part of a strengths-based approach aimed at understanding positive practices and personality traits of young people (Ungar, 2004). I am not asking whether the youth in my study have these so-called 'resilient' personality traits or whether they are engaged in these practices. Instead, in investigating expressions of citizenship, I am interested in how being a citizen becomes part of the narratives youth tell about themselves.

As discussed in Chapter 4, children and youth are increasingly characterized as risky and at-risk. Some theorists suggest that risk - an ever present part of the contemporary era - is to be managed through strategies (and protective factors) that

encourage resilience (Klein, Kufeldt and Rideout, 2006). Resiliency can be used to invoke the capacity of an individual or community to withstand “unexpected and unpredictable shocks” (Boyle, 2012, p. 351). Literature on resiliency has emerged to account for the ways that young people can develop internal and external protective features to safeguard themselves (Ungar, 2004). The resiliency literature, which became prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, attempts to address how young people who are ‘at risk’ navigate through difficult situations (Judd, 2006). Ungar (2004) suggests that resiliency-as-a-social construction has become an important basis for child protection work. Furthermore, literature on marginalized youth often seems to suggest that there are some behaviours and/or attitudes that will be shown by those youth who are ‘resilient’ (Judd, 2006; Masten, 2006).

Resilience refers to “positive patterns of functioning or development during or following exposure to adversity, or, more simply, to good adaptation in a context of risk” (Masten, 2006, p. 4). Any living system or human organization, like a family or a school, can be considered resilient if it has faced a challenge and has overcome that challenge (Ibid). Resiliency has been described as an alternative rationality or way of thinking that seeks to manage the consequences of high-impact events (Boyle, 2012). Risk factors, which include personal and environmental factors, may act as barriers to well-being; they can be internal (such as those occurring within the individual) or external (such as those occurring in a social context including school, family, or community) (Klein, Kufeldt and Rideout, 2006). Protective characteristics that are shared by resilient youth may include social competency, resourcefulness, autonomy and independence, and a sense of purpose in their lives, as well as external protective factors including a supportive relationship

with at least one adult, high expectations placed upon them by adults, and opportunities to participate in and contribute meaningfully to their environments (Ibid, p. 36-39).

Youth practicing all three types of citizenship expressed the concept of resiliency in their narratives. Some youth-in-care end up with very positive long-term outcomes, and it is impossible to know how the youth in my study, many of whom were still teenagers, will fare in the years to come. However, this tendency to think of oneself as resilient, even if participants did not use this word to describe their experiences, is indicative of the general shift towards self-governance in late (post) modernity. Youth-in-care have internalized the notion that they need to act as though they are responsible for their own life trajectories, even in the face of often overwhelming personal challenges. While the participants who practiced self-responsible citizenship were very likely to talk about the ways that their actions made them 'resilient', participants expressing the other two typologies of citizenship suggested in Chapter 6 - dissenting and reluctant citizenship - also embraced the concept of resiliency, either to show that they were on their way to resiliency or that they wanted to become resilient in some capacity in the future. Participants were very clear that their pasts had made them who they are today; even negative experiences reflected their success as survivors. In some ways, claims to resiliency operate in a similar way to rights claims. At times, youth-in-care cannot actualize their rights, and yet they still talk about why rights are important. Similarly, even when these individuals were struggling, they were quick to claim that their circumstances were not too bad and that they were doing well.

The issue of resiliency is also evident at the macro level when examining the ways that marginalized youth have resiliency 'imposed' upon them by situational or

structural factors. For youth-in-care, this may take the form of forced transitions, either in the form of leaving a care home for another home, or, when these youth age out of care. In both cases, youth are often expected to adapt to new situations with little acknowledgement of the challenges that may exist when leaving whatever kind of home that an individual was used to. On a broader level, therefore, it is possible to see the failures in achieving resiliency for youth-in-care as a social group. For instance, half of youth aging out of care in BC apply for income assistance in the six months after they turn 19 (Woolley, 2013). For two-thirds of these youth, this is in the form of disability, and for the other third, this assistance is in the form of welfare (Ibid). While being on income assistance is not a sign that resiliency is impossible, it is telling that so many youth who leave care are needing assistance from the government.

Using the concept of resilience (albeit usually with slightly different terms such as survival and strength) was effective for participants in their desire to tell a story about themselves in which they overcame particular challenges. The notion that ‘what does not kill you, makes you stronger’ is a very common sentiment across various circumstances, and is not unique to youth-in-care. For people who have experienced marginalization, the idea that one can embody personal characteristics that will make him or her resilient to challenges is undoubtedly a very attractive one. In understanding the appeal to the concept of resiliency, intersectional scholarship on the ways that social location shapes how individuals act and see the world is helpful. For youth facing multiple and intersecting sources of oppression, a framework of resiliency may offer a strategy of individual agency to overcome structural problems. With this in mind, the desire by participants to embrace resiliency illustrates some of the challenges with the concept of

resiliency itself. As Ungar (2004) suggests, there is much ambiguity in terms of the emphasis on the individual and the community in the resiliency literature. He notes that it is difficult to place all the responsibility on the individual for developing protective factors which can insulate oneself against problems (Ibid). The structural challenges that are perhaps at the root of many of the reasons that youth are supposedly at risk remain untouched, as is the emphasis on the riskiness of youthhood in the contemporary era. Furthermore, an acknowledgement of how dimensions of social stratification culminate in greater marginality and disadvantages for some people (Benoit et al., 2009) may be missed in an effort to show individual examples of resiliency.

While the attraction of the concept of resiliency to the youth in my study may show some of the problems with the resiliency literature, it also illustrates the ways that this concept has the potential to be an effective tool for empowering young people. For instance, not all resilience literature ignores the systemic issues related to questions of risk and resilience. Khoo, Nygren, and Hyvonen (2006) suggest that it is necessary to examine children's social worlds to understand resiliency as it relates to the institutional contexts that may guide their lives. For youth-in-care, institutional contexts may include both formal institutions such as the school system and the justice system, as well as the policies and legislation governing youth-in-care. Youth-in-care have embraced the idea that to be resilient is to be successful, and there may be ways to incorporate the lived experiences of these youth with the concept of resiliency.

The tendency of youth to see themselves as resilient can be understood within the context of a discourse of individual responsibility, prevalent in contemporary economic and social policies. Youth-in-care, like other youth and adults, are expected to take care

of their own needs and be responsible for their lives, as is evidenced from the weakening of welfare state social safety net provisions. A cultural ethos of individualism, prevalent in contemporary capitalism, is compatible with resiliency-as-life-course-narrative. In some ways, this desire to be seen as resilient, even in the face of struggle, speaks to the tension between resiliency and vulnerability that underlies the daily experiences of youth-in-care in my study. Their vulnerabilities are a liability in terms of presenting a particular version of themselves to social service providers, who also tend to promote the notion of individual responsibility of clients (Little, 1998). The veneer of resiliency is consistent with approaches to citizenship which see self-responsibility as a key aspect (Hayward, 2012).

The connection between resiliency and citizenship is an important one because it illustrates the complexities for marginalized young people in actually realizing the promises of being a citizen. Resiliency, even when it was not necessarily ‘achieved’, was mentioned by participants as something they wish they had accomplished: it spoke to a sense of failure in those youth who did not experience or enact resiliency. Furthermore, the goal of being resilient - and of being able to overcome many past, current and future challenges - certainly spoke to participants’ sense of what one ought to strive for. Whether the academic literature on resiliency can account for the multiple sources of oppression facing these youth, and whether it can come to represent something achievable for them, is debatable.

7.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have explored the objectives of my research in more detail. In particular, I have looked at the ways that practicing citizenship encapsulated the complexities of participants' lives. Being a citizen is not a status that youth-in-care felt they had achieved; instead, it was about the choices they made in their lives, as well as their behaviour, actions, and feelings, and, finally, the embodiment of the concept. The connection between rights and citizenship was somewhat complicated: on the one hand, youth-in-care were very aware of why rights were important, and yet they often lacked mechanisms to realize these rights. As well, a reliance on a language of rights seemed to obscure the inequities these youth were experiencing. The relationship between citizenship and belonging is an important one when considering how youth-in-care talk about citizenship practices. The ways that they expressed citizenship were best understood in the context of their belonging-exclusion from institutions, families and in relationships. In other words, the interactions that the youth-in-care had with others played a role in the ways that they came to see themselves as citizens. Finally, for the youth-in-care in my study, claims of resiliency in their personal narratives about themselves spoke to the ways that young people internalize discourses of self-governance: they see themselves as responsible for their own well-being, regardless of the situation. However, this embrace of resiliency may limit deeper analyses of how youth-in-care are marginalized, and how the challenges facing youth-in-care are not always surmountable through individual actions and agency.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed how youth-in-care in my study practiced citizenship, experienced belonging, and reflected on their lives. Their expressions of citizenship illustrate tensions between self-responsibility and rights, exclusion and inclusion, and resiliency and risk.⁵⁷ In this chapter, I conclude the dissertation by first offering some brief recommendations around policies governing youth-in-care. My recommendations are focused around the narratives of the participants in my study, rather than on broader policies that shape wealth distribution and family poverty in Canada. While it is impossible to discuss child welfare without addressing child poverty, I have kept my recommendations focused on the policies around child welfare and youth citizenship. Secondly, I discuss some limitations of my study, as well as some suggestions for further research.

8.2 Recommendations

In light of the findings discussed above, I now turn to some recommendations for policies governing youth-in-care in British Columbia. As Wharf (2007b) illustrates, it is very difficult to separate questions of how to change the child welfare system in this province without addressing larger questions of child and family poverty, cultural issues around Aboriginal communities, and organizational concerns such as whether child protection, and support for families should be dealt with by the same government

⁵⁷ As noted in the previous chapters, the emphasis on risk is seen through the shift towards risk assessment by child welfare, as well as the ways that children and youth are both at-risk and 'risky'.

ministry (p. 227-233). On the latter issue, I find Wharf's suggestion that these two functions be separated to be convincing. My research also indicates that youth would be interested in having social support from community social workers whose very role would be to assist families in difficult times, rather than investigate problems. While I hope that this dissertation has raised some questions that deal with these issues, my research has instead focused on youth-in-care as a social group, and so, my recommendations come from my experiences interviewing and analyzing the responses from participants.⁵⁸

My first recommendation deals with youth agreements, which, as noted in Chapter 1, are "for young people aged, 16-18 who are homeless, or can no longer live with their families, but for whom government care is not a suitable alternative; instead, they are provided with financial support for housing and food while they attend school" (Smith et al., 2011, p. 10). One of the major challenges discussed by participants is the desire to live independently at a relatively early age. Many youth who were not on a youth agreement expressed interest in getting on one. Certainly, it is important to note that in many cases, youth agreements may not be appropriate; these arrangements require a certain amount of responsibility and maturity to work out. However, as various reports have indicated, there are good reasons for giving more youth access to independent living arrangements, especially for those individuals who are able to show that they want to enter into one of these arrangements and make a commitment to fulfill the conditions on their end (Hughes, 2006). In an era where youth are increasingly encouraged to be

⁵⁸ I found Gove (1995) and Hughes (2006) to be very helpful in assessing policy recommendations aimed at making child welfare in B.C. more responsive. These two documents have influenced the direction of MCFD in the last two decades, even when the recommendations have not been implemented.

responsible citizens, youth agreements take seriously the desires of young people to manage their own lives.

It may also be possible to include families or foster families in the organizing and maintenance of youth agreements. Many participants spoke about challenging living situations at home, and how they wished they could get on a youth agreement but their parents were resistant to the idea. Parents, foster parents, or other familial or non-familial guardians could be a part of the solution by helping youth learn to manage their own finances, find a place to live, secure meaningful employment, and learn to be independent economically and otherwise. This could be a good way to avoid the high numbers of former youth-in-care on income assistance once they turn 19 (see Woolley, 2013). Moreover, with parental support, it is possible that social workers could be less involved, and therefore, could take on a greater number of these kinds of cases. While it would certainly cost the government money now, there is the potential to save money in the future that would have previously gone towards disability or welfare. In addition, if the Agreements with Young Adults program could be expanded, these kinds of arrangements could last beyond the youth in question's 19th birthday.

My second recommendation is also about changing the living situations of youth-in-care: I propose that a return to some form of institutionalization might be useful for some youth. While this suggestion may seem unorthodox, I believe that certain kinds of institutions (namely group homes rather than orphanages), may actually be beneficial for some youth-in-care. Group care can often mitigate some of the many challenges of individual foster families. For youth who have jumped from care home to care home, the potential for continuity in a group home may be greater. Those participants in my

research who had experienced group homes were relatively happy with how they had gone, and many spoke about group homes as sometimes allowing for more bonding between youth in the system. For young people who feel like they truly do not belong, being in a group home may illustrate the commonality of the experiences that they are going through. Furthermore, many of the youth in my study talked about how much they liked the structure of institutions as compared to their foster family life. The regularity and consistency that they came to associate with these institutions (including group homes, juvenile detention centers, and rehabilitation treatment facilities) were seen positively.

Another benefit of group homes or institutions for youth-in-care could be the potential for youth themselves to have more of a say in designing some of the structure of the home. It is difficult (and undesirable) for MCFD to get involved in the ways that participation works within foster families, or how foster parents choose to enforce rules and responsibilities in the home. However, in a group home or institution setting, perhaps youth who live there could form a council or sorts where they help to decide on some issues, and as such, exercise citizenship within the home. Inevitably, this recommendation would likely receive criticism as the system seems to have moved in the other direction in the last half century (Scarth and Sullivan, 2007). Convincing policymakers, social workers and youth themselves that an institutional approach might actually be helpful for some youth would be a challenging task. While foster families would still certainly have a role to play for many youth-in-care, institutions, albeit ones that truly

involve input from youth-in-care themselves, may be the best solution for some young people.⁵⁹

My third recommendation touches on the ways that inclusion and exclusion are experienced by youth in the community. This final recommendation is not only for youth-in-care but would potentially be relevant for vulnerable youth in this province more generally. As noted in Chapter 7, there is potential to strengthen expressions of resiliency amongst vulnerable young people through a deeper engagement with an inclusive understanding of youth citizenship. Citizenship practices that might be relevant may include encouraging social agency, challenging notions of self-responsibility, and creating spaces for youth without a voice to have their views heard. There are a number of ways that inclusion and resiliency could potentially be fostered. For instance, in schools, citizenship (or civics education) could be taught in such a way that youth are encouraged to express citizenship in an inclusionary, participatory manner, thereby framing citizenship as a protective factor against risk. In the community, there could be more engagement between youth and elected officials, leaders in the business community, and non-profit organizations around issues of youth decision-making and voice on issues that affect them. In terms of how this might work at home, there could be a continuation of the trend towards child welfare policies that encourage a fostering of young people's knowledge of their own cultural communities such as the kith-and-kin program and Extended Family Program, but also including support for youth who are not placed with guardians who share a cultural or ethnic background.

⁵⁹ Again, this is not to suggest that all youth-in-care would be better off in institutions or group homes. Instead, it would be one tool, like youth agreements, for social workers to consider when figuring out where to place a youth who has come into the government care system.

All three of these policy recommendations would benefit from further research, particularly data on how policies can best be made to serve young people in question. Getting former youth-in-care to discuss these issues with relevant policy-makers would be a step in the right direction. I know turn to the limitations of my study, as well as to future research areas that would strengthen my findings and implications.

8.3 Limitations and future research

While this research has illustrated the complexities of citizenship practices of youth-in-care, I want to touch on some important limitations with this research, as well as on where future research may be needed. First, the relatively small sample size of the research, coupled with the single method for examining citizenship (interviews) may mean that I missed some of the other ways that citizenship is practiced or expressed. Future research on youth-in-care might address this in a few ways. One way would be to include more participants in a study, perhaps those from all over the province, or at least from the rest of Vancouver Island. With a larger sample, a researcher might decide to do survey research using only close-ended questions. This could produce some interesting data around citizenship practices of youth-in-care more broadly. Also, it would have been fascinating to interview foster parents or those who work with youth-in-care in a front-line capacity (i.e. social workers or youth workers) about how youth-in-care practice citizenship in their opinion. These interviews could have provided insight into the broader implications of participants' actions and narratives.

Alternatively, further research could supplement interview data by also using other qualitative techniques, such as focus groups, arts-based methods or ethnographies,

or, by also employing quantitative methods. Focus groups may have allowed for a rich discussion amongst youth about these ideas in a group setting. An ethnography of the Victoria Youth Clinic would have given me access to adults working with marginalised youth, as well as a wider youth population. I was interested in the number of young women who brought their babies or small children to the clinic - an ethnography could have allowed for interviews or at least observations with this population of young parents who had been in care themselves, and whose children may also have contact with child welfare. Lastly, if I had conducted a study where youth were given the chance to communicate their expressions of citizenship using graffiti, drawing, music, dance, or another form of artistic expression, a broader variety of citizenship practices may have been illuminated (see Kennelly, 2009; Kennelly and Dillabough, 2008 for an example of how this might work). In terms of quantitative methodology, further research may include a survey of a large number of former youth-in-care, or former foster parents. My findings on the belonging-exclusion continuum could be used to create a quantitative measure of feelings of inclusion, which could be studied across life experiences.

A second limitation of the dissertation was that I was only able to interview participants once. Longitudinal studies are useful in research on youth because they can illustrate how people's attitudes and behaviours change over time (Cresswell, 2003). In their longitudinal, qualitative and biographical research project, Thomson et al. (2004) follow a group of youth's transitions to adulthood, and study the processes that contribute to the diverse biographical projects that young people engage in. A similar project on youth citizenship could investigate the processes that shape how young people's conceptions of citizenship shift as they transition into emergent adulthood. Furthermore,

a longitudinal study could potentially illustrate some interesting data about the social, cultural and familial factors important to individual and community resilience. As noted in Chapter 7, I was not highlighting resiliency specifically when I was collecting data; however, a longitudinal study might be better suited to look at the ways that young people and their communities encourage resiliency. A longitudinal study may also have been able to better capture the ways in which intersections of diversity and inequality play out in the lives of youth over time.

Thirdly, my dissertation research lacks involvement by youth in the planning stages of the research as well as in the data analysis stage. It may have strengthened the validity of my results - and perhaps increased the 'buy-in' from participants - if I had been able to have youth help me create the interview guide, conduct the interviews, and analyze the data. As Masuda et al. (2012) note, reflexive research is about transparency, humility, and inclusivity; these three characteristics could have been more fully realized by involving youth more deeply in each part of the research process. Further research conducted in this area could potentially involve youth in the entire research process from initial planning, to sample composition and recruitment, to data collection and data analysis, and finally, to dissemination of results.

Finally, future research might assess the implications of the concept of global citizenship on the lives of young people in care. As noted earlier, the concerns of children in the global north and global south are very different (Hayward, 2012), as are the concerns of youth who face marginalization, discrimination, and poverty (Kennelly, 2009). Research on global citizenship of youth-in-care could be carried out by assessing the similarities and differences of care experiences cross-culturally. The UNCRC, as a

global document of universal rights, could provide an interesting starting point to research how care experiences are culturally differentiated.

8.4 Summary

In this dissertation, I have explored the ways that youth-in-care in Greater Victoria come to understand and express citizenship. In doing so, I have tied the literature on child welfare to that on youth citizenship. A language of child rights permeates both bodies of literature, but uncertainties remain about how these rights can be realized. I have also drawn attention to the ways that differences - including those of age, class, race, and gender - matter to the experiences of youth-in-care. My findings may be helpful for policy makers and youth-serving organizations by providing insight into how youth-in-care express citizenship. Like other youth, youth-in-care in my study were navigating challenges such as family and peer relations, the school system, and questions about belonging. However, unlike many other youth in Greater Victoria, the position that participants occupied - as wards of the state in an era of self-responsibility - has meant that they are asked to negotiate their own citizenship within a context of changing care homes, transient living situations, and relations with social workers, judges, and other youth workers. The challenges facing these youth are numerous, and yet, in many cases, the diversity in experiences with the care system and in expressions of citizenship highlight the need for an approach that focuses on individual narratives and differences, as well as on broader social inequalities.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Questions

Before asking questions about your rights and how you interpret them, I would like you to answer some background questions. If any questions make you uncomfortable, we can skip that question. Also, we can stop the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

1. What is your gender? (1.Female, 2.Male 3.Transgendered MTF 4.Transgendered FTM)
2. In what month and year were you born? Month _____ Year_____
3. Were you born in Victoria? (1.yes , 2.no) (if yes, go to question 9)
4. Were you born in Canada? (1.yes , 2.no) (if yes, go to question 7. If no, go to question 5)
5. In what region of the world were you born? (1.USA/Mexico, 2.Central/South America 3.Europe 4.Africa 5.Asia 6.Oceania 7.Other - specify)
6. What year did you move to Canada? Year_____
7. In what province were you born? Province_____
8. In total, how many years have you lived in Victoria? Number of years _____
9. Do you identify as Aboriginal? (1.yes , 2.no) (if no, go to question, 12)
10. If yes to question 9, do you identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit?
11. If yes to question 9, did you ever go to school on a reserve? (1.yes, 2.no)
12. What is your ethnic background? Ethnic background_____
13. In this survey, we define a visible minority person as a non-Aboriginal who is not white in colour. Are you a visible minority person? (1.yes , 2.no)
14. What is your sexual orientation?

I now want to discuss your experiences being in care. I want to remind you that if any questions make you uncomfortable, we can skip that question. Also, we can stop the interview if you feel uncomfortable.

15. Have you ever been in care? “In care” means in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) - e.g. Ward of the state, in group or foster home/institution. (1.yes , 2.no)
16. What type of care were you in? (1.permanent 2.temporary 3.both 4.don't know)
17. When did you leave care?
18. Can you describe the circumstances that led you to be in care? What was your role in participating in decisions about you going into care?

19. Overall, how do you feel about the care you are/were in? (1.very satisfied
2.somewhat satisfied 3.neither satisfied or dissatisfied 4.somewhat dissatisfied
5.very dissatisfied)

I now want to turn to your experiences with parents and guardians, and what your life was like when you were growing up.

20. How many male parents and/or male guardians have you ever lived with (father, step-father, mother's boyfriend, fosterdad, older brother, etc.)?
21. Think of the male guardian with whom you lived the longest (while at home). How were/are you related to the male guardian you lived with the longest (probe if necessary: Biological father, adoptive father, stepfather, mothers boyfriend, fosterdad, older brother, etc.)?
22. At what age did you first live with this male? At what age did you last live with this male?
23. Did he work full-time or part-time? (1.full-time, 2.part-time 3.occasionally.)
What was his usual occupation?_____
24. Was there a male guardian who you think had a very positive influence on you? Was this the male you described earlier (the one you lived the longest with)? How were/are you related to this male (probe if necessary: Biological father, adoptive father, stepfather, mothers boyfriend, fosterdad, older brother, etc.)?
25. Was there a male guardian who you think had a very negative influence on you? Was this the male you described earlier (the one you lived the longest with). How were/are you related to this male (probe if necessary: Biological father, adoptive father, stepfather, mothers boyfriend, fosterdad, older brother, etc.)?
26. How many female parents and/or female guardians have you ever lived with (mother, stepmother, fostermom, father's girlfriend, etc.)?
27. Think of the female guardian with whom you lived the longest (while at home). How were/are you related to the female guardian you lived with the longest (probe if necessary: (mother, stepmother, fostermom, father's girlfriend, etc.)?
28. At what age did you first live with this female? At what age did you last live with this female?
29. Did she work full-time or part-time? (1.full-time 2.part-time 3.occasionally).
What was her usual occupation?_____
30. Was there a female guardian who you think had a very positive influence on you? Was this the female you described earlier (the one you lived the longest with)? How were/are you related to this female (probe if necessary: (mother, stepmother, fostermom, father's girlfriend, etc.)?
31. Was there a female guardian who you think had a very negative influence on you? Was this the female you described earlier (the one you lived the longest with). How were/are you related to this female (probe if necessary: (mother, stepmother, fostermom, father's girlfriend, etc.)?

32. This is the end of the background questions. Is there anything else you want to add about your life growing up?

Questions about understandings of rights and citizenship

We're now going to turn to our discussion on human rights, and what these rights mean to you. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every young person has certain rights. The UNCRC, which I will refer to as the Convention, is signed by almost every country in the world. It states that all young people have the right to protection, provision (meaning food, survival), and participation. For this part of the interview, we will be discussing how you access these rights in your daily life, what you think these rights mean, and whether rights are a useful way to think about your life. To answer some of these questions, I am going to ask you to think back to when you were in care, and how you accessed your rights then. Remember, if you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, we can stop the interview at any time.

33. First of all, let's talk about what we mean by rights. When you think of human rights, what comes to mind? Can you name some human rights? In general, who lays out or decides what rights are, and who gets which rights?
34. We often talk about rights in relation to citizenship. What or who is a citizen? Is being seen as a citizen something that is desirable? What does the term citizenship mean to you? In general, what are the responsibilities of a citizen?
35. Responsibilities are often talked about as the 'other side' of having rights. What are your responsibilities in your daily life? Describe how you deal with these responsibilities.
36. We're now going to turn to what rights look like in your daily life. As mentioned, according to the UNCRC, there are rights to protection, provision and participation. These are broad categories that encompass a lot of different 'rights'. We're going to start with the survival or development rights that young people have to basic economic well-being and security. First of all, what does it mean to have the right to survival or development? What do young people need to survive or develop?
37. When you were in care, who provided you with the necessities that were basic for your survival (food, shelter)? What was your role in providing for your own survival and development? What is your role now in providing for your survival and development?
38. Rights to survival and development also involve health care. Can you tell me about your experiences with having access to health care? What do youth need in terms of accessing healthcare?
39. Now, let's turn to the right of the young person to be protected. Young people are supposed to be protected against all forms of physical and mental violence, injury, or abuse, neglect and exploitation by parents or others in positions of authority. We know that this is not always the case. In your life, what has this right looked

like? Thinking back to when you were in care, how did you have access to this right? In what ways have you not felt like you have had this right?

40. This right also has to do with how safe you feel in your community. Have you usually felt safe in your community? In your current life, how do you feel safe in your community?
41. Rights to protection also have to do with treatment in the criminal justice system. Can you talk about any experiences you've had with the criminal justice system? (Experiences with police, social services)
42. The third set of rights that the UNCRC lays out for youth is the right to participation. What do you think it means to have a right to participate? What is participation? In what areas of their lives should young people be able to have a voice/participate?
43. I now want to discuss how you participate in your family life while in care, school, and in the community. Lets start by thinking back to when you were in care, and when you were growing up (before care if applicable). How did you participate in decisions about your family? Did you participate in decisions about friends? Dating? Vacations? As you got older, how did your participation in family life change?
44. Next, lets turn to your participation in or at school. First, can you tell me about your experiences at school while being in care or growing up?
45. When you were growing up, how did you participate in school activities or school-sponsored activities? And in your life now, how do you participate in school activities or in the classroom? What about school-sponsored activities outside of school? Are there specific challenges that the school system poses for youth-in-care?
46. Lets now turn to the community. First of all, what is a community? Who or what is your community now? How did you make or create this community? What makes a good community? Growing up, would you say that you participated in your community? If so, how?
47. What role do you think youth should play in making decisions in their communities? Is participation of youth in communities important? What are some challenges that youth face in participating in their communities?
48. Do you think your experiences of accessing your rights are similar to other youth? Why or why not?
49. Are there specific challenges that you think youth-in-care face that other youth do not?
50. How did your experiences of being a youth-in-care make you who you are today? Work? Child-raising? Relationships?
51. Thinking about the future, what would you like to do as an ideal career? What are some challenges you see with this?

- 52.** Finally, we have been talking about rights, and what rights young people have. There is still a lot of confusion about this topic. How did you learn what you know about rights? Did you learn about this in school? How do you think we can better talk to youth about rights?
- 53.** With that last question, we have concluded the interview. Are there any other comments you want to make about rights?

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

Youth research participants needed



Are you a youth age, 14-24? Were you previously in government care? Interested in discussing your rights and responsibilities?

Volunteer to participate in a research project about youth rights. All participants will receive a small honorarium (\$15) for their participation in the study. Interviews will include questions about your experiences while you were a youth in government care, as well as questions and discussion about your rights and responsibilities. Individuals who are still in care are **not** eligible for this study. Interviews to be conducted March - April, 2011.

Contact info: Kate Butler - kbutler@uvic.ca or, 250-853-3923 if interested. Please note that this is a University of Victoria research project.



Appendix C: Consent Form

Department of Sociology University of Victoria	<i>Participant Consent Form</i>
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Negotiating Citizenship Practices: Expressions of citizenship in the lives of youth-in-care in Greater Victoria

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Negotiating Citizenship Practices: Expressions of citizenship in the lives of youth-in-care in Greater Victoria” that is being conducted by Kate Butler.

Kate Butler is a Ph.D. Candidate in the department of Sociology at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at kbutler@uvic.ca or phone at, 250-853-3923.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for my doctorate degree in Sociology. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Cecilia Benoit. You may contact my supervisor at, 250-885-3132, or cbenoit@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The objective of my research is to explore how youth interpret and access human rights specified by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, using qualitative in-depth interviews.

Importance of this Research

The significance of my research lies in its potential to show how markers of inequity shape how youth interpret and access rights. These supposedly universal rights remain elusive for many youth in Greater Victoria, and around the world. Furthermore, by looking at how youth understand and access rights, this research will draw attention to the relationship between rights and citizenship for these youth.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as a youth in Victoria, between the ages of, 14-24, who has been in government care at some point in your life but are no longer in care.

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a 45-90 minute in-depth interview at a public location of your choosing. I will also ask you if you want to review the transcript of your interview. I will record these interviews (with your permission) and a transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including taking time away from your busy schedule to answer my questions in an interview setting.

Risks

The interviews will include questions about your experiences in government care. It is possible that you may discuss topics that are emotionally difficult, which may result in some feelings of discomfort.

Benefits

Benefits to the you include a chance to discuss your life and experiences as a youth who has previously been in government care. In this way, you will have the space to share your knowledge and experiences, and have these experiences taken seriously. The qualitative interview process can be a cathartic experience in the sense that voices are listened to and given space in academia and potentially policy-making. Benefits to society include improving how the sub-group of youth who have been in government care understand rights. This could be helpful for policy-makers aiming to understand the experiences and perspectives of youth-in-care. Benefits to the state of knowledge include providing insight into how disadvantaged and marginalized youth come to enact rights, and what this means for their conceptions of citizenship.

Compensation

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given an honorarium of \$15. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used in any way.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your personal identity will not be attached to any audiotapes or interview transcripts. When I write up my findings, I will not use your personal identity but will provide you with a pseudonym.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data you provide me are very important. They will be protected by the procedures described in the section on Anonymity above. In addition, all digital recordings and interview transcripts will not be stored with any identifying information. I will also destroy the recordings and transcripts within three years of the project's completion.

Limits to confidentiality exist, however, due to legal requirements about reporting instances of child abuse or neglect, in accordance with the Child, Family, and Community Service Act. The Act states that there is an obligation to report to the Director or delegated social worker if I believe that you have experienced abuse, neglect or some other reason for needing protection.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: dissertation, public lectures, presentations at scholarly meetings, media and journal articles.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in the following ways: paper copies of transcripts will be shredded, and digital recordings will be destroyed. The disposal of data will occur after the final copy of my dissertation is approved by my committee, and within three years of the project's completion.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include myself, Kate Butler (250-853-3923 or kbutler@uvic.ca) and my supervisor, Dr. Cecilia Benoit (250-885-3132 or cbenoit@uvic.ca).

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

<i>Name of Participant</i>		<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher