



Citizenship Imaginations

AN EXPLORATION OF YOUNG SINGAPOREANS' ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

BY

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Abstract

Nurturing young people to be active citizens has increasingly captured the imaginations of politicians and education policymakers in many countries in recent years (Jochum, Pratten, & Wilding, 2005; Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Ross, 2012). Politicians and policymakers in some countries, who have traditionally preferred more passive forms of law-abiding ‘good’ citizens, are seeking more participatory forms of citizenship, largely fuelled by their concerns about a perceived civic deficit among young people, characterised by declining rates of voting and community engagement (Ross, 2012). However, efforts to promote active citizenship among young people have been narrowly confined to public participation, for example, voting and volunteering. This focus on public participation overlooks young people’s diverse forms of citizenship practices in their personal and private worlds, and thus has the potential of leading to a false perception that young people are apolitical, apathetic and disengaged (Bessant, Farthing, & Watts, 2016; Wood, 2014). Moreover, citizenship education that aims to nurture active citizens has focused too much on trying to fix the perceived civic deficit in young people, neglecting how young people actually learn in and through the everyday practices in their lived world (Bessant et al., 2016; Biesta, 2011).

Similarly, educational policies and programmes in Singapore have prioritised nurturing active citizens, but these have also focused on didactic forms of citizenship education, through formal and public participation, such as volunteering and service projects (Han, 2015). Although all young Singaporeans undertake such forms of citizenship education, little is known about how active citizenship is actually defined in educational policies in Singapore and exactly what kind of citizens these policies and programmes aim to nurture. Moreover, not many studies have examined how young people understand and enact these policies, who or what has shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices, and what their experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives are. This thesis advances a call to recognise young Singaporeans’ experiences with citizenship beyond a focus on their formal and public forms of civic learning and participation, and to turn our attention to their lived and relational experiences in their everyday lives.

This research examined the citizenship experiences of 40 young Singaporeans aged 17–25. A qualitative, case study approach was adopted where verbal and visual data were collected from a series of focus group dialogues and a visual methodology, photovoice. A thematic analysis of policies and programmes for citizenship education was also conducted

to identify the kinds of citizen that are prioritised by the Singapore government, and this was analysed against what shaped young people's citizenship and how they lived and imagined their citizenship in their everyday lives. Central to this thesis is the exploration of young people's *citizenship imaginations*, which I define as *a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and repair the world in order to live in it as well as possible*. This conception of citizenship imaginations is guided by critical and feminist theories, particularly a feminist ethic of care.

The findings in this research suggest that policies and programmes for young people's citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore prioritise character-driven citizens, social-participatory citizens and 'citizen-workers of the future' who will contribute to the social cohesion and economic prosperity of Singapore. Although at the surface level many participants' conceptions of active citizenship seemed to conform to the government's policy intents, a deeper analysis revealed that these conceptions were undergirded by a relational disposition rooted in care. It emerged that participants prioritised relational forms of citizenship that were focused on small, mundane and everyday acts of care with, and for, family, friends, others in the community and the natural environment. At the same time, their citizenship imaginations involved active critiques of society and politics, a search for social justice and a prioritisation of relational forms of care as their citizenship practice in their everyday worlds. Their citizenship imaginations also comprised an ideal Singapore society that is more inclusive, with a lighter focus on economic success, and more reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education.

Three big ideas emerged from the findings of this research. First, policies and programmes that aim to foster active citizenship amongst young people need to recognise and include their experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives. The second is a call to attention to the politics in young people's everyday relational forms of citizenship. And the third is that young people's citizenship imaginations can be awakened through more critical forms of education for active citizenship. This research contributes to theoretical and methodological advancements in researching young people's lived citizenship in a number of ways, and also presents the potential to reimagine policy formulation, curriculum design and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people. Drawing from the findings, this thesis proposes a unique model of nurturing critical and caring citizens in Singapore.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| CCE | Character and Citizenship Education |
| CIP | Community Involvement Programme |
| FGD | Focus group dialogues |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| NIE | National Institute of Education |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PV | Photovoice |
| SES | Social and economic status |
| SUSS | Singapore University of Social Sciences |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UniSIM | SIM University |
| US | United States |
| VIA | Values in Action |
| VUW | Victoria University of Wellington |
| YCS | Youth Corps Singapore |

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Why research young Singaporeans' lived citizenship?

In recent years, politicians and education policymakers in many countries have been increasingly prioritising the nurturing of young people to be active citizens, in the wake of growing concerns about perceived civic deficit and apathy amongst young citizens (Jochum et al., 2005; Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Ross, 2012). In that regard, education is seen as an important means to 'fix' young people and to 'produce' good citizens (Biesta, 2011). This heightened interest in citizenship and citizenship education is well articulated in the recent report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on trends that are shaping education around the world:

A well-functioning democracy relies on the civic knowledge and skills of its citizens, as well as their direct engagement in public matters. Yet in many countries, key measures of civic participation such as voter turnout have fallen throughout the last half century [...] There is an important role for education to play in improving civic and social participation and fostering democratic citizenship. (OECD, 2019, pp. 9–10)

Education and citizenship are connected in the popular imagination. Education is often blamed for not 'teaching' citizens whenever there are concerns over issues related to young people's citizenship. These concerns include, for example, low voting rate, a perceived decline in interest in politics and an increase in anti-social behaviour (Biesta, 2011). Such thinking is problematic because it tends to overemphasise the teaching of citizenship and does not adequately consider how citizenship learning is influenced by young people's diverse and democratic ways of 'acting' as and 'being' citizens in their everyday lives, and how they see themselves as citizens (Biesta, 2011). However, while young people around the world are notably voting less, paradoxically they are increasingly seeking new forms of democratic participation (Chou, Gagnon, Hartung, & Pruitt, 2017). This has resulted in policymakers and researchers seeking deeper insights into young people's political participation at all levels of society, including in their everyday lives.

Understanding how society, culture and politics shape young people as citizens is important (Hartung, 2017). For example, while it is impossible to generalise all citizens of a nation, national studies of citizenship have identified that more liberal democracies such as the United Kingdom, Australia and those in Europe and North America have interest in nurturing active citizens who can engage in political processes, preserve democratic values

and protect human rights (Kennedy, 2019). In contrast, Asian conception of citizenship tend to focus on ‘good’ citizenship where it is often argued that ‘good’ people make good citizens (Kennedy, 2019). Despite these differing approaches, large-scale studies conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement in 2009 and 2016 found that there was consensus amongst young people across various countries in the studies. These studies found that young people prioritised social engagement, such as volunteering, working with the elderly and collecting money for a social cause, over political activities such as joining a political party, nominating oneself as a candidate for an upcoming election or even participating in illegal political protests (Kennedy, 2019).

However, notions of ‘citizenship’ and ‘participation’ are contested (Hartung, 2017; Lister, 2003). For example, traditional conceptions of citizenship are largely linked to status and membership, as articulated by T. H. Marshall (1950). Such conceptions are primarily concerned with citizens’ involvement in politics and civic affairs, and their responsibilities to the wider community, usually in the form of voluntary service (Lister, 2003). In contrast, Roger Hart (1992) conceived citizenship as a form of participation in the sense of a “process of sharing decisions which affects one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives” and argued that such participation is the “fundamental right of citizenship” (p. 5). These concepts differ in that the former sees citizenship as formal acts in the public domain whereas the latter cognises on relationships in the private realms that are intricately woven with citizens’ lived experiences. Such contested conceptions have implications for how people, particularly the young, are treated as citizens, and how politicians and educators respond if citizens perceivably do not conform to these conceptions.

In light of these definitional issues, this thesis highlights the problematic nature of conceptions of young people’s active citizenship when citizenship is viewed through definitions such as that of the OECD (2019). It also discusses the role of education in responding to these conceptions of citizenship and in promoting more active forms of citizenship among young people, focusing particularly on the experiences of Singapore. Three key issues emerged as central concerns in this thesis. First, the thesis reveals the way young people’s citizenship practices have been narrowly confined to public participation, for example, voting and volunteering. Such a narrow conception overlooks young people’s other diverse forms of active citizenship in their personal and private worlds. A narrow definition of citizenship that focuses too much on formal and public participation could lead to a false perception that young people are apolitical, apathetic and disengaged (Bessant et

al., 2016; Wood, 2014). This thesis sheds light on young people's personal, private and relational forms of active citizenship that could also be considered political.

A related second problem to which this thesis pays attention is the perception of a “crisis in democracy” (Bessant et al., 2016, p. 271) that sees young people as apolitical, apathetic and disengaged or refers to deficiencies in citizenship education. Citizenship education is seen as crucial for preparing young citizens with the necessary knowledge, skills and values for such forms of active participation in society (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018). However, in discussions that are centred around the notion of a crisis in democracy, there is a tendency to think that the introduction of more citizenship education might be a possible ‘fix’ for the perceived crisis in young people (Bessant et al., 2016; Biesta, 2011). However, the focus on citizenship education as a solution to the perceived civic deficit in young people assumes that politicians and educators know what needs to be done to nurture good citizens, as opposed to co-creating citizenship education experiences with young people themselves, whom the curriculum is meant to serve (Bessant et al., 2016). Biesta (2011) also argued that too much attention to the teaching of citizenship tends to neglect how young people learn experientially in and through the everyday practices in their lived worlds.

A third problem is how young people have been conceived as citizens with the advent of globalisation. Globalisation is associated with a neoliberal worldview which promotes the benefits of free trade across countries in the global market (Kennedy, 2019). A neoliberal worldview favours “self-regulating” (p. 20) citizens who are free of any forms of government restraints, take responsibility for their own welfare, and are able to work on their own in order to contribute to increased personal and national economic productivity. Driven by neoliberal intentions of increasing economic prosperity through an idea of shared responsibility between citizens and state, active citizenship is often conceptualised in the form of public participation (Lister, 2007a). Often in such conceptions young people as citizens are reduced to merely “citizen-workers of the future” (Lister, 2007a, p. 54) instead of being seen as citizens as they are now, and more than just contributors to the economy. This again narrows the discussion of citizenship and citizenship education.

The context for this thesis is Singapore. Singapore is a nation-state with a population of 5.6 million that is ethnically diverse – approximately 75% Chinese, 13% Muslims and 8% Indians. It has achieved remarkable economic success within the three decades since independence, rising meteorically from a Third World ex-colony to a First World economy and a global city (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). The government has effectively utilised education as an instrument to prepare young Singaporeans for economic productivity in the

global knowledge economy (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). In line with this, citizenship education has featured in various forms in Singapore since its self-governance began in 1959, with a primary purpose of contributing to nation-building, and has evolved in response to changing national priorities and the demands of globalisation (Deng, Gopinathan, & Lee, 2013; Han, 2000; W.-O. Lee, 2015). In Singapore, social cohesion and economic growth have formed the backbone of social and education policies in the past 20 years (Gopinathan, 2015). In keeping with global trends and driven by globalisation, nurturing young Singaporeans to be ‘concerned citizens’ and ‘active contributors’ has recently emerged as a key priority (Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a). Policies and programmes for citizenship education in Singapore highlight this ideal in a paradoxical way: a global orientation is mixed with a nation-centric conception of citizenship education (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Thian, 2019). However, these policies are primarily implemented through didactic forms of citizenship education and through formal and public participation, such as volunteering and service projects (Han, 2015).

Despite the fact that all young Singaporeans undergo citizenship education, little is known about how active citizenship is defined in educational policies and programmes. Equally unclear is how young people understand and enact these policies in their everyday lives. In addition, few studies in Singapore have examined who or what has actually shaped young Singaporeans’ perceptions and practices of citizenship, and what their experiences with citizenship are in their everyday lives. This research aimed to address this gap by gaining deeper insights into young Singaporeans’ lived citizenship. A growing body of research on young people’s citizenship in different parts of the world suggests that focusing on everyday experiences of citizenship, rather than formal and public participation, reveals much about the complex spatial, relational and affective aspects of their citizenship (Kallio, Häkli, & Bäcklund, 2015; Lister, 2007a; Wood, 2014). Such studies on young people’s lived citizenship is limited in Singapore.

Central to this thesis is the idea of *citizenship imaginations*. This concept is concerned with not just what people do as citizens but also their understanding of citizenship and their ability to critique society, political and economic injustices. Such a quality of mind becomes expressions and acts of citizenship because it is concerned about the rights and well-being of the self and others in society. With this as a backdrop, and drawing from Paulo Freire (1970), C. Wright Mills (1959) and Joan Tronto (1993), I define *citizenship imaginations* as a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and

repair the world to live in it as well as possible. This definition is undergirded by critical theory and feminist theory, which I elaborate in Chapter 3.

The overall goal of this research was to explore young people's active citizenship by examining the citizenship experiences of 40 young Singaporeans aged 17–25. This is explored through the following sub-questions:

1. What kind of citizens do education policies and programmes in Singapore aim to nurture?
2. What shapes Singaporean young people's citizenship?
3. How do Singaporean young people live and imagine their citizenship?

Personal motivation for this research

As with all research, researcher positionality is important. I have been a teacher, a youth worker and a senior curriculum specialist for Character and Citizenship Education at the Ministry of Education in Singapore. For over 15 years, I have worked directly and alongside young people in service-learning and youth development programmes. At the same time, I have worked in their interest through formulation and implementation of citizenship education policies and curriculum. My initial thinking was shaped to regard young people as active citizens only if they are active in volunteering and public participation. Paradoxically, I was influenced by the prevailing view that young Singaporeans were generally getting more politically apathetic and self-centred, do not care about others, and had a deficit in civic knowledge. With such a narrow thinking about young people, I was involved (with others) in the development of a constant influx of policies and programmes, aimed at 'fixing' young citizens. While these ever-evolving policies and programmes have differed in names and forms over the years, in most cases, the starting point was a deficit outlook of young Singaporean citizens.

This research is my attempt to genuinely gain deeper insights into young people's lived experiences with citizenship in order to forge a better understanding of them as citizens as they are now, instead of being seen as "citizens-in-waiting" (Lister, 2007b, p. 696), "not-yet-being-a-citizen" (Biesta, 2011, p. 86), or even worse, "citizen-workers of the future" (Lister, 2007a, p. 54). As a result, I hope that educators and policymakers will be better informed in designing purposeful and inclusive policies and programmes that aim to promote active citizenship amongst young people.

Outline of this thesis

Having introduced the focus of this study, highlighted the setting and provided a brief account of my position as a researcher, the thesis continues in Chapter 2 by reviewing literature that highlights the contexts and conceptions of citizenship. This includes an overview of traditional ways that citizenship has been understood, namely, liberal, civic republican, and communitarian perspectives, as well as more recent conceptions that view young people's participation as active citizens differently. The chapter then provides details of changing global contexts, primarily driven by globalisation, that have resulted in many governments around the world pursuing more active forms of citizenship, albeit with diverse interpretations. I then turn to the context of my research – Singapore – and provide a chronological literature review that establishes that the Singapore government (henceforth, the government) has increasingly drawn on notions of 'active citizenship' in educational policy since self-governance began in 1959. This then leads to the research problem – that little is known about how active citizenship is actually defined in educational policies in Singapore and exactly what kinds of citizens these policies and programmes aim to nurture. Also, not many studies have examined how young people understand and enact these policies, who or what has shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices, and how they live their citizenship in their everyday lives.

This thesis, then, advances a call to recognise young people's citizenship experiences beyond their formal and public forms of participation, in ways that attend to their lived and everyday experiences of citizenship. To do that, I develop a theoretical approach in Chapter 3 by positioning my research within a critical paradigm, and by drawing on critical theory and feminist theory. Adopting critical and feminist approaches allowed me to gain deeper insights into young Singaporeans' lived worlds and explore their diverse experiences and expressions of citizenship. In particular, using a feminist ethic of care was important to focus my attention on young people's relationality within their everyday experiences of citizenship, and to identify what can be political in young people's personal and private worlds. While there are many forms of both critical and feminist theories, I sought theorists within these traditions that best supported my exploration into young people's lived citizenship. In that regard, this research primarily employed the ideas of critical theorist Paulo Freire and feminist theorists Joan Tronto and Ruth Lister to inform the underpinning theoretical framework. In particular, I turned to a feminist ethic of care and the concept of relationality as a lens for considering the political in young people's

lived experiences. The idea of sociological imagination of sociologist C Wright Mills was also foundational in theorising my conception of *citizenship imaginations* in this thesis.

Chapter 4 provides details of the qualitative multiple case study approach that I adopted to access deeper insights into, and multiple perspectives of, young people's experiences with citizenship in the natural settings of their everyday lives. The chapter explores the participatory intent of the research, and the steps that I took that were within my control to achieve that. Two data collection methods – focus group dialogue and photovoice – were employed in this study. The focus group dialogue facilitated discussions and debates among the young people about what active citizenship meant to them and who or what shaped their perceptions and practices of citizenship. The discussions enabled the young people to develop their, previously ambiguous, conceptions of active citizenship (Vromen, Xenos, & Loader, 2015). Photovoice, on the other hand, allowed the young people to illustrate the diverse ways they understood and lived their citizenship in their everyday lives through visual images (Bragg, 2011). In addition, an analysis of citizenship education policies and programmes in Singapore was conducted using a thematic analysis, and this is presented in Chapter 5. Together, the rich data from the policy analysis, focus group dialogues and photovoice provided a deeper insight into the citizenship perceptions and practices of the specific group of young Singaporeans who participated in this research. In addition to detailing the decisions of my case selection, participant selection and participant recruitment, I discuss my process of data analysis using a thematic analysis approach. I then discuss the ethical considerations in this research, particularly about confidentiality around young people's lived experiences, and using visual data from the photovoice activity. I also justify my claims of credibility of this research and, finally, highlight my research limitations.

Chapter 5 is the first of the three findings chapters. This chapter critically analyses conceptions of ideal Singaporean citizens that have been communicated through official policy speeches, press releases and curricula. It addresses my first research question: What kind of citizen does Singapore aim to nurture? I first describe and justify the deductive analytical framework that was employed for this policy analysis. Using Sim, Chua and Krishnasamy's (2017) 'typology of citizenship' revealed an overriding policy emphasis on character-driven citizenship and, to a lesser extent, on social-participatory citizenship. There was very little evidence of a desire for a critically reflexive citizenship across the texts analysed. Three additional policy emphases were identified through an inductive analysis: (a) citizenship for social cohesion and harmony in a multiracial, multicultural society; (b)

‘citizen-workers of the future’ who contribute to the government’s agenda of continued economic success; and (c) the pursuit of a holistic citizen, which recognises young people’s life experiences as part of their citizenship. Later in the chapter, I argue that these emergent themes could provide a useful expansion to typologies of citizenship education in the Asian-Singaporean context.

Chapter 6 addresses my second and third research questions pertaining to young people’s perceptions and practices of active citizenship. It presents the analysis of data from both the focus group dialogue and the photovoice activity, and highlights (a) the young people’s perceptions of active citizenship, (b) what shaped their active citizenship, and (c) their experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives. On the face of it, participants were seemingly conforming to much of the policy intent outlined in Chapter 5, that is, for them to be community focused (social-participatory citizens), loyal citizens (character-driven) and citizen-workers of the future. A deeper analysis revealed that the young people prioritised relational forms of citizenship that generally took the form of small, mundane and everyday acts of care with, and for, family, friends and others in the community. Many participants also reported that formal citizenship education did not shape their citizenship perceptions and practices because they considered it didactic, disengaging and lacking in criticality. Instead, they reported that their citizenship perceptions and practices were shaped primarily by relational forms of care that were emphasised and modelled by their family and friends.

Chapter 7 explores young people’s citizenship imaginations in detail. It was evident that they were engaged in “quiet politics of the everyday” (Hankins, 2017, p. 503), in which small decisions, actions and relational encounters had the potential for gradual social change. Their citizenship imaginations involved a lively critique of society and politics, a search for social justice and prioritisation of relational forms of care within their everyday worlds. They held aspirations for a Singaporean society that is more inclusive, has a lighter focus on economic success and offers more reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education. Such a diverse, critical and relational imaginary contradicts perceptions and concerns that young Singaporeans are apathetic, apolitical and disengaged – and points to a need to interrogate mainstream perceptions of young people’s engagement.

In Chapter 8, I draw together the findings from Chapters 5–7 and discuss three key themes that emerged across the findings: first, recognition and inclusion of young people’s lived experiences in citizenship policies and education; second, a focus on relational forms of young people’s everyday citizenship; and third, awakening of young people’s citizenship imaginations through critical and dialogic forms of pedagogy.

Chapter 9 concludes this thesis with a summary of the key findings in response to the research questions and details my research contributions. In keeping with my intention to contribute to policy formulations, curriculum design and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship, I suggest reimagining citizenship education in Singapore by proposing an idea of a ‘critical and caring’ citizenship. I conclude with my imaginations for further research arising from this study.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

The previous chapter offered an overview of this thesis, which studies young Singaporeans' experiences with citizenship. The literature review in this chapter provides evidence that a study such as this is needed for at least three reasons. The first is the need for clarity around conceptions of active citizenship in a field where multiple definitions are in use. The literature review highlights the contested conceptions of citizenship, namely, the liberal, civic republican and communitarian perspectives of citizenship, as well as more recent and varying conceptions that consider young people's participation as active citizens differently. Second, changing global contexts, primarily driven by globalisation, have resulted in many governments around the world pursuing more active forms of citizenship, which has led to problems of diverse interpretations of citizenship and citizenship education.

Third, in keeping with global trends, a chronological literature review then establishes that the Singapore government has increasingly drawn on notions of 'active citizenship' in its educational policy since its independence in 1959. Particularly pertinent to this study is that little is known about how active citizenship is actually defined in educational policies in Singapore and exactly what kinds of citizens these policies and programmes aim to nurture. Moreover, few studies have examined how young people understand and enact these policies, who or what has shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices, and how they live their citizenship in their everyday lives. I end this review of active citizenship literature by examining a growing critique of how active citizenship has traditionally been researched and analysed.

Resulting from this literature review, this thesis calls for a broader conception of young people's citizenship by shifting focus from the formal and public to the private and personal. This is explored through three research questions that are presented at the end of this chapter prior to a presentation of the study's theoretical framework in Chapter 3.

Contested conceptions

T. H. Marshall's definition

Citizenship is a contested concept; there is no single definition because its meaning varies according to social, political and cultural contexts, and reflects different historical legacies (Lister, 2008b). Citizenship has traditionally been expressed as a legal status, particularly of the nation-state, and is encapsulated in British sociologist T. H. Marshall's (1950) well-known definition from his essay *Citizenship and Social Class*: "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” (pp. 28–29). This conception of citizenship includes a triad of rights – civil, political and social. Civil rights include individual rights to freedom of speech, faith and liberty of the person, the right to own property and the right to justice. Political rights focus on participation in politics. Social rights emphasise rights to economic welfare and security, to share social heritage in full, and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in society. Social rights have been seen as a vital underpinning for the other two sets of rights (Heater, 1999). Citizenship is linked in this tradition to rights because citizenship is seen as evolving towards greater social equality, beginning with the achievement of civil rights, moving to political rights and finally to social rights (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). In short, as described by Marshall (1950), social citizenship is “a general enrichment of the concrete substance of civilised life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalisation between the more and the less fortunate at all levels” (p. 56).

Marshall’s (1950) conception of citizenship is important because it highlights the roots of a debate within citizenship studies. It has been argued that Marshall’s conception reduces citizenship to taking ownership of rights and being active in the formal and public worlds. In such a conception, there is little focus on an individual’s experiences with citizenship in their personal and private lives. Moreover, little attention is given to relationships among citizens in creating a better society; instead, the main relationship that is acknowledged is between the state and person and a top-down conception of citizenship from the state to citizens through rights. Marshall’s (1950) conception of citizenship led to a number of debates and critiques following its publication (Torres, 1998). First, the neoliberals are averse to Marshall’s idea of social citizenship because they uphold an ideology that is against a welfare state and that the government’s non-interference in economic protection will provide the foundation of a good society (McCluskey, 2003). This is important for the discussion of active citizenship because in the neoliberal view, Marshall’s ideas on social responsibilities to help the poor to utilise their civil and political rights are thought to promote passivity and create a culture of dependency (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). Second, feminists have argued that Marshall’s thinking is representative of working-class white males and that he has taken for granted the gender and race hierarchies (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). More recently, Marshall’s (1950) conception of citizenship has been widely critiqued because it is confined to belonging to the nation-state and does not

truly represent the complexities of citizenship, particularly those brought about by globalisation (Turner, 1994).

Liberal, civil republican and communitarian ideas of citizenship

Conceptions of citizenship have traditionally drawn from two main orientations: liberal and civic republican. In the liberal tradition, citizenship is seen as a status that entitles each individual to the same formal rights as others. These rights are protected in law. The function of governance is to protect and maximise the individual interests of citizens. Thus, the emphasis in this tradition is on independent and self-interested individuals, their equal rights and the rule of law that assures these (Jochum et al., 2005). However, in the civic republican tradition, citizenship is an overarching civic identity shaped by a common public culture and produced by a sense of belonging to a particular nation-state. Citizenship here is defined by rights and obligations, leading to the idea of citizenship as a particular kind of practice – one that is associated with civic virtues and participation in public affairs (Jochum et al., 2005). Thus, whereas the liberal tradition emphasises individual liberty and limited obligations to the state held in place by a set of civic rights, the civic republican tradition stresses citizens' duties to the nation-state and active political participation (Heater, 1999). Despite their differences, both the liberal and the civic republican traditions have had significant influence on conceptions of citizenship education (Sim et al., 2017).

In both civic republican and liberal traditions, citizens need to learn about their rights and/or duties. The acquisition of knowledge regarding matters such as democratic ideals and cultural and historical heritage is central to citizenship education in the civic republican tradition. Citizens also need to participate in community service in order to develop a sense of commitment to their community and nation. However, in the liberal tradition, citizenship education tends to promote individual and group rights. Here, participation focuses on governance and decision-making (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006).

Communitarianism is another conception of citizenship that has strong links to the civic republican tradition, particularly in the way it gives less emphasis to individualistic rights-based citizenship and focuses on a sense of duty and community over individual interest (Heater, 1999; Lister, 2003). Central to communitarian thinking is the idea that an individual's sense of identity is produced through relations with others in the community of which they are a part (A. Smith, 1998). In such thinking, the "common good" is prioritised through public service over the pursuit of "individual liberty" (A. Smith, 1998, p. 118). Isin and Wood (1999) contrasted communitarianism with liberal thought by arguing that whereas liberals "dismiss the possibility of assigning any political or legal meaning to group

rights; communitarians assert the group as the defining centre of identity that all individuals imagine themselves only in relation to the larger ‘community’ as the basis of a common ground” (pp. vii-viii). As with other conceptions of citizenship, communitarianism had its fair share of critique. For example, feminist critiques of communitarian ideals, which rest on the idea of shared interests, argue that multiple identities are underplayed, potentially leading to the marginalisation of women and ethnic minorities (Heater, 1999).

These distinctions highlight the relationship between the conceptions of citizenship in the different traditions and the kinds of education required to nurture the appropriate type of citizens within these traditions. Any study that seeks to investigate citizenship experiences and citizenship education, such as this research, needs to be cognisant of these relationships.

Interrogating ideas of citizenship

As a result of these varied conceptions, citizenship remains a contested and complex concept that cannot be understood or practised in a simple or straightforward manner because it can hold different meanings for different people, even within the same state (Faulks, 2000; Kymlicka, 2002). Faulks (2000) suggested three questions that are appropriate when exploring conceptions of citizenship. First, who should be regarded as citizens and what criteria, if any, could be used to legitimately exclude some from the benefits of citizenship? This question sheds light on another reason why citizenship is a contested concept. Just as citizenship operates as a force for inclusion, it is also a means of exclusion with the potential to marginalise some groups from being recognised as full citizens when it is defined as a legal status (Lister, 2008a). This question is important for this study because if citizenship is conceived solely as a legal status, young people could be treated as citizens-in-the-making, and not ‘citizens as they are now’ because they do not have the same status as adults (Lister, 2003).

A second question is, what should the content of citizenship be in terms of rights, duties and obligations? Faulks (2000) argued that citizenship is a dynamic identity, and as creative agents, citizens will always find new ways to express their citizenship. Therefore, new rights, duties and institutions will be needed to deal with the changing needs and aspirations of citizens. This question is pertinent because this study is an exploration of young people’s experiences with citizenship in times of a rapidly changing world. Young people’s imaginations of their citizenship as creative agents is an important factor for this study.

A third question arising from a reading of Faulks (2000) is, how deep or thick should our conception of citizenship be? Faulks leaned on the definitions of Clarke (1996) and Tilly (1995) to elaborate on ‘deep’ and ‘thin’ citizenship. Clarke (1996) defined deep citizenship as:

the activity of the citizen self-acting in a variety of places and spaces. That activity shifts the centre of politics away from the state and so recovers the possibility of politics as an individual participation in a shared and communal activity. (p. 4)

Clarke’s (1996) definition of deep citizenship shed new light on the possibility of looking for what might be political in everyday experiences of relational activities with others, away from traditional and public forms of citizenship participation. This is an important consideration for this thesis because young people’s actions could be more active in their personal and private realms than in the public, since they largely lack access to such opportunities and resources in comparison with adults (Lister, 2003).

Tilly (1995), on the other hand, defined thin citizenship as involving few citizenship transactions between government and citizens with regard to rights and obligations and thick citizenship as involving shared transactions. This is an important consideration for this study because it concerns power relations between the government and citizens, particularly for young people. Unlike adults, young people are largely not considered full citizens (Lister, 2003), and therefore may not be fully included in citizenship transactions.

Both deep and thick conceptions question whether citizenship should be confined to public participation, or whether it also pervades the private lives of citizens (Faulks, 2000). These questions were useful in critiquing traditional conceptions of citizenship within this research because the site of young people’s citizenship formation and practice, and what shaped these, were central to the inquiry. In addition, in light of the varied conceptions we have discussed thus far, citizenship remains a contested and complex concept that cannot be understood or practised in a simple or straightforward manner. Moreover, citizenship can hold different meanings for different people, even within the same state (Faulks, 2000; Kymlicka, 2002). This gives me all the more reason to conduct an in-depth study on how young Singaporeans interpret and enact citizenship in their everyday lives.

Active citizenship

More recent conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education have focused on young people participating as *active* citizens. The term ‘active citizen’ implies that people will possess understanding and knowledge about civic processes in order to participate (Wood,

Taylor, Atkins, & Johnston, 2018). Although a variety of conceptions of active citizenship exist, the conception of active citizenship used within this thesis was drawn from the work of McLaughlin (1992) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004b). McLaughlin (1992) conceived of citizenship on a continuum from *minimal* to *maximal* interpretations. Variables on this scale include aspects of identity, virtues, political participation and social prerequisites. In a minimal interpretation, citizenship is defined narrowly in “formal, legal and juridical terms” (McLaughlin, 1992, p. 236). Citizenship education at this end of the continuum is characterised by narrow and formal approaches that are didactic, dialogic to a limited degree and strongly focused on formal assessment (Sim et al., 2017). In the maximal interpretation, citizenship is more broadly inclusive of groups and interests in society. Citizenship education at this end of the spectrum reflects a broad range of interactive and participatory approaches. There is a primary focus on nurturing students to “understand and enhance their capacity to participate as citizens” (Sim et al., 2017, p. 93).

In another conception of active citizenship, Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) developed a three-part typology – namely, personally responsible, participatory and justice-oriented citizens – to describe and analyse the kinds of citizens that policies and programmes aim to nurture. The model was developed from a multi-year study of school-based programmes that aimed to teach democratic citizenship in North America. Personally responsible citizens are those who act responsibly in their community, for example, by volunteering or participating in recycling programmes. Such citizens are honest, law-abiding and responsible; for example, they pay their taxes. Participatory citizens play different kinds of active roles in the community by leading and organising community efforts to care for those in need. In this way, they are actively participating, by taking leadership roles within established systems and community structures. Justice-oriented citizens are associated with questioning, debating and changing established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time. Such citizens critically assess social, political and economic structures to see beyond surface causes, seek out and address areas of injustice, and have knowledge about democratic social movements, and how to effect systemic changes (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b).

It is helpful to consider the merits of these two conceptions of active citizens by McLaughlin (1992) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) through comparison. Wood, Taylor, and Atkins (2013) have compared the two conceptions, as summarised in Table 2.1. This unifying framework is helpful for describing and analysing the nature of active citizenship and the kinds of citizens policies and programmes aim to nurture.

Table 2.1. Framework of citizenship participation

| Nature of citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992) | Kinds of citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b) |
|--|---|
| Minimal citizenship ↑ | Personally responsible citizens |
| ↓ | Participatory citizens |
| Maximal citizenship ↓ | Justice-oriented citizens |

Source: Wood et al. (2013, p. 86)

Bringing these models together highlights the similarities that serve to strengthen ideas of active citizenship. For instance, ‘minimal citizenship’ equates with the ‘personally responsible citizen’, who is law-abiding and community minded, and participates in conventional citizenship activities such as voting and helping others. The ‘justice-oriented citizen’, who can be placed at the ‘maximal citizenship’ end of the continuum, is one who is involved in ‘social change citizenship’ (Nelson & Kerr, 2006) and ‘political action’ (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Typical activities include initiating petitions and protesting against political injustice. The ‘participatory citizen’, in the middle of the continuum, is one who is involved in volunteering, fundraising for social causes and working with the community to improve society (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b).

This process of comparison suggests that the models of McLaughlin (1992) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) are complementary rather than contradictory. This also provides a useful way to think about active citizenship on a continuum because it does not limit thinking about active citizenship to one form or another. In addition to these models, Kennedy (2019) proposes an additional conception of citizenship termed as the ‘economic model of citizenship’. In this conception, the citizen engages in ‘self-regulating’ activities such as seeking financial independence, adopting entrepreneurial values, and developing self-directing learning and creative problem-solving skills. This conception is particularly useful to study citizenship in a rapidly globalising world which prioritises self-regulated citizens who would contribute to the economic prosperity of the nation-state and the world as a whole (Kennedy, 2019).

Education for active citizenship

Education that promotes active citizenship is concerned with young people being intrinsically involved in shaping their society, individually or collectively. This can be in a range of contexts, including schools, homes and their local neighbourhood, as well as in their wider communities at the national, regional and international levels (Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Vromen, 2003).

Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) argued that education for active citizenship should aim to nurture young people to be able to critically analyse and understand the structural causes of deeply entrenched social and political issues, and to be equipped with the capacity and motivation to participate at local and national levels to act and effect change. However, they highlighted that many school-based service-learning and community service programmes that aim to promote citizenship do not involve politics or discussion about democracy. Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) also suggested that many programmes do not facilitate social movements, transformation or systemic change. In other words, programmes tend to prioritise personal acts of compassion and kindness over social action and the pursuit of social justice. An emphasis placed on personal responsibility and character may hinder collective social action and discourage learners from deeply analysing the root causes of social problems. Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) argued that an overemphasis on volunteerism and acts of kindness is a form of guise by policymakers and educators to avoid discussions around politics and policies.

Westheimer and Kahne (2000) also argued that to become truly effective citizens, students should be expected to learn how to create, evaluate, criticise and change public norms, institutions and programmes. However, while they favoured educating ‘activists’ who practise ‘justice-oriented citizenship’, they also acknowledged that the kind of critical analysis on which justice may be founded does not necessarily foster abilities for or commitments to social participation. The reverse is also true: students can learn to participate in society without engaging in critical analyses of macro structural issues, power dynamics and social justice. Nevertheless, a heightened interest in preparing young people to be active citizens has resulted in a number of educational and community policies and programmes globally that aim to encourage participation as more active kinds of citizens (Wood et al., 2018). Examples include service-learning, community service and volunteerism. Programmes that operate in this way are often undergirded by an assumption that civic learning and social participation will lead to an increase in civic engagement (Wood et al., 2018). Yet, it is known that students will not necessarily learn what is taught. There is a lack of research on how young people actually learn democracy through such forms of education for active citizenship (Biesta, 2011; Biesta, Lawy, & Kelly, 2009). This is a further gap this research sought to address.

Contextual conceptions of citizenship

Social and political contexts are critical in conceptualising citizenship education because practices of active, democratic citizenship have contextual temporal and spatial differences

(Sears, 2011). Ideas of citizenship must make sense in their contexts, but there are some global forces that provide a background for local conceptualisations in any society, one of which is the influence of globalisation (Reid, Gill, & Sears, 2010). This section details how globalisation has significantly contributed to the emergence of more active conceptions of citizenship.

Globalisation is seen as a debatable concept that refers to the social, political, cultural, technological and economic processes involved in increasing global interconnectedness, more specifically in the latter part of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century (Hartung, 2017). It has been characterised as a compression of time and space, aided by technological innovation, and an associated transformation of social and economic relations (Giddens, 1991). Globalisation has produced new set of challenges such as how to ensure cohesion within nation-states with the flow of capital, goods, and people as well as questions around the role of citizens in decisions made beyond nation-states with the emergence of transnational organisations such as the European Union, United Nations, OECD, World Bank and more (Reid et al., 2010).

In an increasingly changing, complex and uncertain world that is driven by the effects of globalisation, many countries have responded with educational, political and economic reforms that place a greater focus on children and young people (Hartung, 2017; W.-O. Lee, Grossman, & Kennedy, 2010). Internationally, there has been a shift towards conceptualising citizenship as an active process. Politicians and policymakers, who have traditionally preferred more passive forms of law-abiding ‘good’ citizens, have become more interested in participatory forms of citizenship, largely fuelled by concerns about a civic deficit among young people, evident in the declining rates of voting and community engagement (Ross, 2012, p. 7). A perceived individualistic mindset and lack of collective engagement in civic life, especially among younger generations, has also fuelled an interest in citizenship education in many countries (Nelson & Kerr, 2006).

Driven by forces of globalisation, conceptions of citizenship were influenced by neoliberal ideology in the 1990s with the emergence of ‘Third Way’ policies in the United States of America (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and elsewhere in Europe (Giddens, 2000, 2003). The Third Way was envisioned as a pathway to boost economic prosperity and stability by strengthening the relationship and trust between citizens and government. The Third Way was intended to make societies more democratic and accountable as well as to balance the rights and responsibilities of its citizens (Giddens, 2000, 2003). Politicians in the UK and the US were turning to ideals of communitarianism to mask their pragmatic

neoliberal approach in order to convince citizens to take responsibility in the nation-building project; this was evident from the multiple references to ‘community’ and ‘responsibility’ in political speeches and in the Third Way policies (Heater, 1999).

The forces of globalisation also led to the emergence of a global ‘knowledge-based economy’ in the 1990s. This led to an important shift in many countries towards developing human capital to replace the previous focus on industrialisation. Ideas, creativity and innovation were seen as key drivers for economic growth to the extent that many countries embarked on educational reforms aimed to equip citizens with the skills and competencies, such as problem-solving and critical thinking, required for the twenty-first century (Castells, 2000; Kennedy, 2008; OECD, 1996). The report *A Nation at Risk*, released in the context of the US recovering from an economic downturn in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was indicative of a neoliberal turn in American education towards producing citizens who would serve the economy (Chong et al., 2016). Thus, globalisation led to a demand for an “all-encompassing citizen” to meet the economy’s needs and respond to social, economic and environmental problems (Hartung, 2017, p. 6).

In keeping with the emergence of the Third Way and the knowledge-based economy in the US, the UK and elsewhere, many governments acted quickly to establish a more reciprocal relationship with their citizens, sharing responsibility and decision-making, primarily to strengthen social cohesion, and boost economic prosperity and stability (Giddens, 2000; Jochum et al., 2005; Nelson & Kerr, 2006). This was a catalyst for neoliberal conceptions of citizenship in these countries, where the previously passive citizen in the welfare state was to take a more autonomous and active role with duties, obligations and expectations in order to contribute to economic success (B. Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252). For example, in July 1997, the UK Labour government pledged to strengthen education for citizenship and democracy. An advisory group headed by Sir Bernard Crick was established and its final report, titled *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, was published in September 1998 (UK Parliament, 2007). This advocated a three-pronged approach to citizenship education: knowledge and understanding, skills of enquiry and communication, and participation and responsible action. The recommendation for a national citizenship curriculum was largely adopted and became compulsory in September 2002 for UK secondary schools, as well as part of the non-statutory framework for primary schools (UK Parliament, 2007). The introduction of ideas such as ‘participation’ and ‘responsible action’ as part of the UK curriculum marked a strengthening commitment to more active forms of citizenship education. Such conceptions

of active citizenship was focused on the citizens' contribution to social cohesion and economic prosperity. Another example of a heightened prioritisation of active participation in citizenship education is the implementation of 'social action' in the New Zealand social studies curriculum in 1997, and later revised in 2007 (Barr, 1997; Wood et al., 2013). Young people in New Zealand were encouraged to explore how societies work and how they themselves can participate and take action as critical, informed and responsible citizens (Barr, 1997; Wood et al., 2013).

Conceptions of citizenship have also been shaped by global forces other than economic policy (Chong et al., 2016). Citizenship identities have increasingly become more fluid, plural and multi-layered, especially with the unprecedented rate of human migration around the world, both legal and illegal. There has also been an increase in rights movements where marginalised groups have sought more equal recognition in their societies where they live (Chong et al., 2016). These issues have contributed to contesting traditional notions of who is a citizen. In addition, critical events around the world, such as the 9/11 terror attack in the US and the US-led war in Afghanistan and later in Iraq, the global financial crisis in 2008 and the ongoing global fight against terrorism, have destabilised national and international relations. These globalising factors have strained the principle of universalism embedded in traditional notions of citizenship, contributed to the enduring problem of contested conceptions of citizenship and have resulted in many countries being faced with a challenge of deciding what to teach for and about citizenship, within and across borders (Chong et al., 2016). These forces have also challenged traditional conceptions of citizenship that were traditionally linked to status and membership to nation-states, and have led to a pursuit of active citizenship that prioritises citizens' active participation in community and politics in order to ensure social cohesion within and across borders.

What kind of citizens? International comparisons

In light of a heightened global interest in pursuing more active forms of citizenship, it is important to investigate international trends around policies for active citizenship, how they are implemented, what kind of citizens they nurture, and how young citizens understand and enact these policies. A thematic study of policies and practices of active citizenship in 14 countries¹ by Nelson and Kerr (2006) provided some insights into these questions. First, it

¹ Australia, Canada, England, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, the US and Wales.

was found that the idea of active citizenship itself was not clearly understood or well defined across the participating countries. While there has been a general trend among many countries prioritising a more participatory form of citizenship, there remains a lack of clarity and common understanding of active citizenship's meaning and theoretical foundations. Secondly, there is a diverse range of policy approaches to promote and implement active citizenship across the countries, prompted by the changing nature of the relationship between governments and its citizens in the twenty-first century. This report is significant because it provided a comprehensive analysis of conceptions of active citizenship and the state of citizenship education implementation across a wide range of countries.

Nelson and Kerr's (2006) report also confirmed that many countries were quickly responding to the effects of globalisation. Citizenship was increasingly being considered an active process, not just a status, with a focus on citizens' participation in civic and civil society, leading governments to nudge their citizens to perceive citizenship with a dual focus on status and as an active practice. This was also one way of counterbalancing the impact of globalisation by "reinforcing and broadening identity and belonging, strengthening social cohesion and civic responsibility and encouraging and supporting the active participation of people in the communities to which they belong" (Nelson & Kerr, 2006, p. 8). It was observed that many governments saw educational policies as critical to actively preparing young citizens with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to thrive in the changing global contexts. This became a key driver for the pursuit of more active forms of citizenship and reforms of citizenship education in many countries.

While there was a rise in prioritising citizenship education in educational policy across many countries, the definitions of citizenship education and the degree of emphasis on active citizenship varied. This was largely influenced by the respective cultural and political traditions of the various countries and their government's motivation for pursuing more active forms of citizenship. For example, it was observed that in countries with more liberal approaches to citizenship education, the goals of active citizenship were to nurture young citizens to be "critical, enquiring, engaged, questioning, reflective and even challenging in their understanding of society and through their actions, both within and outside school". On the other hand, in Singapore and Japan, for example, the aim of citizenship education was to nurture young people to be "loyal to their country, to contribute to its future wellbeing, to be essentially compliant and to conform to the established order of things" (Nelson & Kerr, 2006, p. 56). Further, while participants in that study agreed that

the idea of active citizenship involves ‘participation’ and ‘engagement’, the theoretical assumptions underlying these ideas varied significantly, ranging across liberal, civic republican and communitarian conceptions of participation that also included both minimal and maximal forms of participation (Nelson & Kerr, 2006).

In another collection of international case-studies of civic and citizenship education across many countries, Reid et al. (2010) presented similar findings that the conception of citizens and citizenship education remains a work in progress and that it differs according to the respective society and is influenced by its historical and political contexts. Such a state of ambiguity in conceptions of citizenship provides an important reason for an in-depth exploration of how active citizenship is conceived in Singapore, how it is nurtured in young Singaporeans through the national citizenship education curriculum and how young Singaporeans understand and enact it in their everyday lives.

Active citizenship in this thesis

The contested nature of citizenship and multiple interpretations of ‘active’ as discussed thus far provided the impetus for me to further investigate how young people might understand and enact this in their everyday lives. In spite of the at times conflicting definitions, in this thesis I have taken active citizenship to mean more than merely being a ‘good’ and law-abiding citizen who performs one’s duties and responsibilities that are associated with their citizenship status and membership. Instead, I view active citizenship as involving a critical disposition that embodies a justice orientation and seeks to identify and address inequalities in society for the sake of one’s own well-being, that of others and of society. Such a conception of active citizenship might lean towards the maximal or justice-oriented citizenship end of the continuum in the framework of citizenship in Table 2.1. That said, because active citizenship may take many forms of democratic ideals (Kennedy, 2019), its definition in this thesis is not limited to the democratic ideals that are underpinned by maximal or justice-oriented citizenship. In this light, this research aims to explore how this type of active citizenship has been conceived in policies and programmes in Singapore alongside young Singaporeans’ experiences with active citizenship in their everyday lives.

Having established how conceptions of citizenship have varied and having provided a definition of active citizenship for this thesis, it is crucial to explore the contextual factors that have influenced the conception of active citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore. To achieve this, I review literature on policies and programmes for citizenship education and active citizenship in Singapore, in a chronological timeline of educational

reforms, in the next sections. This then leads to my research problem, and my research questions, presented towards the end of this chapter.

The ‘Singapore Story’

The contextual focus of this research is Singapore. Singapore is a small nation-state that has transformed itself into a First World economy within the three decades since its independence (Sim, 2015). This unprecedented feat is widely attributed to a strong state governance (Sim et al., 2017). Singapore is founded on democratic ideals, but its political leadership has been critiqued as being authoritative, hegemonic and elitist in its approach to citizenship (Han, 2015; L. Lim, 2016; Sim, 2015). The ruling party in Singapore, the People’s Action Party (henceforth, ‘the government’), has been in power continuously since Singapore’s self-governance began in 1959, and has benefited from a remarkable political legitimacy resulting from a successful social and economic transformation within a short span, despite prevalent socio-political instability in the region. The government, through the strong hold of single-party rule, has been lauded for delivering economic success and material well-being to its citizen, who enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world (Sim et al., 2017; K. Tan, 2017). The ‘Singapore Story’ is a state-endorsed version of Singapore’s history that focuses on Singapore’s unique economic, social and political challenges, constraints and vulnerabilities in relation to global economic success and status (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018).

The government’s policies and decisions since independence have consistently prioritised a neoliberal agenda to ensure this enduring economic success (K. Tan, 2017). The government subscribes to a philosophy that citizens prefer “the right to a better life over political ideology” (Sim, 2011, p. 222). Thus, the government believes that limits to democracy are necessary to ensure the country’s survival and economic prosperity, and assumes that citizens can and should sacrifice certain socio-political freedoms in exchange for this (Sim & Krishnasamy, 2016). Consequently, Singapore is a delimited civil society and the ways that citizens can participate in it are constrained and controlled by the government. For example, political participation is largely limited to voting, volunteerism and voicing opinions through official channels (Han, 2015; Sim et al., 2017). The government has adopted an attitude that the economic ends justify the means in making political decisions, without much room for alternative forms of analysis (K. Tan, 2017). While Singaporeans may generally trust this approach, it has created the conditions for political obedience, acceptance of unpopular policies and political apathy (K. Tan, 2017). In essence, it has been argued that Singapore’s economic success in the past 20 years has been

built upon on a strong state but weak civil society, characterised by passive, responsible and rule-following citizens (Gopinathan & Sharpe, 2004).

Singapore's political ideology, although not declared as an official policy, is undergirded by a Confucian-influenced pragmatism, in which individuals, communities and the state share responsibilities and benefits (Gopinathan, 2015). This political ideology is manifested and communicated to Singaporean citizens, particularly through education, through what is commonly known as the Singapore Shared Values (T. S. Lim, 2015). The five values espoused are societal over individual rights, nation before community, community before family, family before self, family as the basic building block of society, consensus instead of contention as a way of resolving issues, and racial and religious tolerance and harmony (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). Sim and Chow (2019) argued that although not explicitly Confucian, the Singapore Shared Values framework has stark similarities with Confucian ideals, which are focused on a communitarian ethic. The Shared Values emphasise discipline, importance of family, consensus, respect for authority and sacrifice for the collective good.

The Singapore Shared Values were first tabled in Singapore's parliament in 1991, as a result of concerns over an erosion of traditional 'Asian values' of morality, duty and society because of rapid industrialisation (Sim & Chow, 2019). The political leadership took the view that a set of values at the national level was needed because Singaporeans were beginning to become more 'westernised', individualistic and self-centred, and that such a trend would compromise Singapore's social cohesion, survival and economic growth (T. S. Lim, 2015). At that time, Singaporean politicians' ideas of Asian values were undergirded by a Confucian communitarian ideology. However, more important was the need to build a strong national identity in the face of the cultural differences among the ethnically diverse citizens, using a broader definition of 'Asian' values, rather than making explicit reference to Chinese-origin Confucian values. The Singapore Shared Values framework was, however, widely critiqued as a means of political control that served to maintain Chinese cultural hegemony among Singaporeans (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

Despite these critiques, Confucian-influenced pragmatism continues to underpin social and educational policies as mechanisms to propagate a vision of a strong national identity, including attention to how Singaporeans learn their roles and responsibilities within the nation and global community (L. Lim, 2016). Thus, by drawing from the ideals of Confucian values and Asian culture, the government has justified the delimiting of democracy and the maintenance of a dominant, one-party rule as the philosophical origin of

the country's economic success, and applauds itself as having constructed a unique model of an Asian democracy (K. Tan, 2017). The government's paternalistic attitude of governance through which it takes responsibility for 'taking care of its people' is characteristic of a Confucian ideology. It extends the metaphor of the ideal Confucian family for the state (L. Lim, 2016, p. 716). However, these pragmatic policies have also been credited for an increasingly disengaged citizenship characterised as "self-centred" and "materialistic", who generally tend to uncritically agree with the government (Sim, 2011, p. 225).

This outline of the Singaporean political ideology provides an important context for the conceptualisation of citizenship education in Singapore. In keeping with the strong hold of the government, education, including citizenship education, in Singapore is highly centralised, with a strong emphasis on academic achievement (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Han, 2015). At the same time, the structures, processes and outcomes of education are intended to serve the economy (Gopinathan, 2007). The Ministry of Education provides a prescribed curriculum, controls curricular material, administers national exams, employs and deploys teachers, and fully funds all public schools. Pre-service and in-service teacher education is also largely centralised through one institution, the National Institute of Education (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Sim, 2011). Gopinathan (2007) argued that the government has effectively utilised education policies to legitimise its neoliberal outlook and has played an interventionist role in the school curriculum by endorsing the government's 'soft authoritarianism' and its vision of a meritocratic, multicultural and loyal citizenry (Han, 2015). Singapore's citizenship education has been critiqued as a 'state-craft' that propagates the central message of the 'Singapore Story', particularly about Singapore's modernisation and economic success under the dominant single-party rule (Gopinathan, 2012; Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

Citizenship education in Singapore largely comprises prescriptive and didactic approaches to teaching values and moral conduct, such as loyalty to the state and prioritising the 'common good' (Han, 2015). Through such approaches, the government has used citizenship education to foster a common Singaporean identity in tension with the need to respect racial, religious and cultural differences. This is particularly notable in a unique multi-ethnic, postcolonial nation-state that does not have the long history, shared traditions and common language that are characteristic of other nations (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). Studies have shown that students demonstrate strong affiliation to nationalistic values, and that teachers generally do not deviate from the prescribed national curriculum, predominantly relying on curricular material provided by the government (Gopinathan &

Chiong, 2018). The theoretical underpinning of Singapore's citizenship education is primarily communitarian, and active citizenship has been associated with contribution to Singapore society through volunteerism, rather than deep engagement with political processes (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). Active political participation and student activism are strictly discouraged by the government (Han, 2015). This is an important contextual understanding that is critical to this research.

Following this overview of Singapore's political ideology and its influence on citizenship education in Singapore, the next sections detail the specifics of what has shaped the conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore. This then leads to an identification of gaps in the literature and research, which this thesis sought to address.

Evolution of citizenship education

Citizenship education has featured in various forms in Singapore's education since its self-governance began in 1959 (see Table 2.2), with a primary purpose of contributing to nation-building, and has evolved in response to changing national priorities and the demands of globalisation (Deng et al., 2013; Han, 2000; W.-O. Lee, 2015). The first, 'survival-driven' phase followed the establishment of self-governance in 1959, independence from Malaya in 1965, and a period of marked political, economic and social challenges. The aim was to rapidly build political legitimacy, foster economic growth and strengthen social cohesion against a backdrop of a multi-ethnic, divided and impoverished nation-state (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013). Referencing the nation's vulnerabilities, the government constructed a state-citizen compact that promised economic success and security in return for citizens' productivity, social cohesion and support for the government. The ideal citizen envisioned in this phase was one who was hard-working, disciplined and submissive to the government. Citizenship education in this phase fostered identity, loyalty and civic consciousness. At the same time, it balanced Western and Asian ideals, particularly because English-educated Singaporean political elites were increasingly gaining access to Western knowledge and economy (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

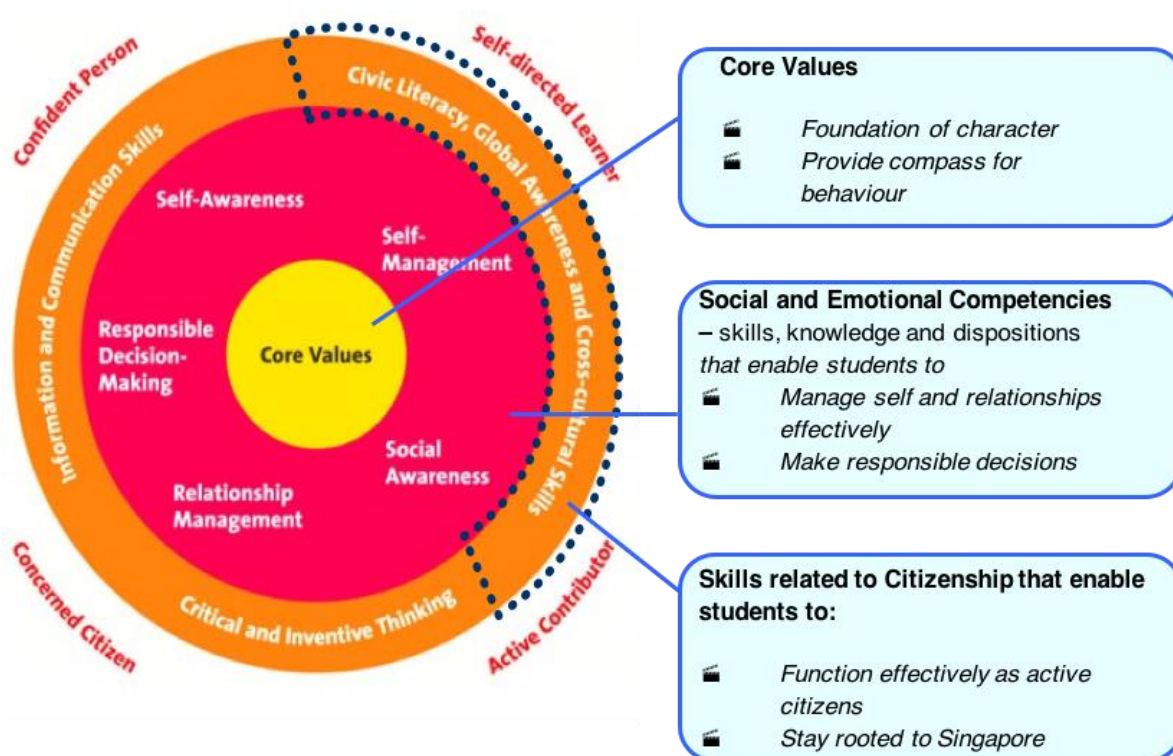
The second, 'efficiency-driven' phase was concerned with the rapid modernisation of Singapore, increasing interactions with Western economies and educational reforms that would meet the needs of globally linked industrialisation. Yet, at the same time, the government became concerned about the 'westernisation' of young and affluent Singaporeans, who were seen as increasingly individualistic and materialistic. During this phase, the government developed a communitarian framework for citizenship education that was based on Asian values (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). The idea was to continue

espousing the importance of society and country over individualistic mindsets as Singapore was increasingly opening up to the Western economies.

The subsequent, ‘ability-based, aspiration-driven’ phase was primarily concerned with a transition to a ‘knowledge-based’ economy. Education reforms in this period were concerned with developing skills for young Singaporeans to thrive in the global knowledge economy, particularly in the areas of critical thinking and information technology skills. Citizenship education in this phase aimed to develop a strong national identity and confidence in Singapore. The idea of ‘being rooted, living global’ was introduced through the new social studies curriculum, which was constructed around the idea of instilling the Singaporean identity among the young yet at the same time promoting a spirit of venturing out to seek out opportunities in a paradoxical global-local identity (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

The most recent, ‘student-centric, values-driven’ phase marked a response to a changing political landscape in which the ruling party was losing its grip and at the same time more young Singaporeans seemed to be more interested in politics. It was in this phase that the Ministry of Education introduced the *Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes* (Ministry of Education, 2009) (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes



Source: Ministry of Education (2009)

The *Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes* sought to develop skills and competencies that would prepare young Singaporeans to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of globalisation (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). This framework was envisioned to be implemented in more student-centric ways, away from traditional and didactic forms of education, and at the same time not deviating from the core values that had been enshrined in Singapore’s education. Table 2.2 summarises the changes in policy and programmes in citizenship education in Singapore over time, and provides a context for the discussion that follows about the demands and changing needs brought on by Singapore’s economic success.

Table 2.2. Evolution of citizenship education in Singapore

| Citizenship Education Initiatives | Year | Phases of Singapore's Education | Characteristics |
|--|--------------|--|---|
| Ethics | 1959 | Survival-Driven | The two decades since independence were characterised by social cohesion and nation-building |
| Moral Education and Civics Training | 1966 | | |
| Education for Living (interdisciplinary) | 1974 | Efficiency-Driven | The late 1970s and 1980s were focused on improving the system, with the introduction of standardised curriculum and industry-relevant skills |
| Review of Moral Education | 1978 | | |
| Good Citizens (Primary) | 1981 | | |
| Being and Becoming (Secondary) | 1981 | | |
| Social Studies (Primary) | 1981 | | |
| Religious Knowledge | 1984 | | |
| Civics and Moral Education | 1995 | Ability-Based, Aspiration-Driven | With Singapore transitioning into a knowledge-based economy in the late 1990s, there was a shift in focus to developing a broader range of skills, e.g., critical thinking and creativity, and providing for a wider variety of students' interests and aptitudes |
| National Education | 1997 | | |
| Social Studies (Upper Secondary) | 2001 | | |
| Character and Citizenship Education | 2011 onwards | Student-Centric, Values-Driven | The aim was to equip students with values, character and competencies to meet the challenges of the future |

References: Kanagaratnam (2015); W.-O. Lee (2015); Ministry of Education (2012d)

Throughout Singapore's history, citizenship education has been used as an important instrument for social cohesion and economic reform (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013). Successive curricula have been concerned with preparing students for a democratic future, developing civic responsibility and moral values, and using the rich resources of ethnic diversity that make up Singaporean society (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013). Curricular uniformity fosters social cohesion and is concerned with what it means to be Singaporean and how the Singapore Story should be understood (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). Highly standardised national curricula have been infused with rhetoric of nationalism that aims to bind citizens within a national space and collective identity (L. Lim, 2016). Importantly, in such a diverse multicultural country, one can be Singaporean and at the same time identify

with one's ethnicity (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014).

According to Gopinathan (2015), the aims of nurturing young Singaporeans to “build an inclusive Singaporean society”, “develop a sense of national identity” and “instil a sense of rootedness” (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 11) are driven by three factors. First, since the 1990s, younger Singaporeans have successfully sought higher education and career opportunities in the growing global economy. Second, the government's global city economic strategy to make Singapore a cosmopolitan state encouraged Singaporean entrepreneurs to expand regionally. Third, and more recently, the urgency for social cohesion and a Singaporean identity has been driven by increasing immigration and problems of integrating new citizens into Singapore's society. These factors made identification with, and rootedness in, Singapore a challenge.

Together with Singapore's phenomenal rise to a successful global economy, these three factors have contributed to the government's anxiety about developing civic skills and values, which in turn have led to rapid educational reforms (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). The conception of citizenship within these reforms is built on the tension between the global orientation of preparing its young citizens for the global knowledge economy and at the same time ensuring they are strongly rooted in a nationalistic orientation of instilling national identity, rootedness and sense of belonging to Singapore; to be a Singaporean is to be located both in the nation and in a global setting (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Thian, 2019).

Economic and educational reforms

Economic reform and the government's concern about young people's civic deficit and apathy became major drivers for a changing priority for citizenship education in Singapore in the late 1990s (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013; J. Tan, 2013). An economic downturn and Singapore's induction into the ‘first league’ of developed nations provided the push for the government to venture into what was called a knowledge-based economy, where creativity, technology and innovation became of paramount importance for economic growth (J. Tan, 2013). Education institutions were called on to respond to the knowledge-based economy by using, creating, critiquing and applying knowledge rather than focusing on content mastery (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013).

The shift from an industrial economy to a globalising economy led to policies that placed greater emphasis on forms of citizenship in Singapore that focused not only on nurturing a sense of belonging but also on a moral obligation to actively contribute to the

building of the nation’s social and economic future (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013; Nelson & Kerr, 2006). This was an indication of an increasing neoliberal focus in the conception of citizenship in Singapore. Particularly in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, preparing young people for the twenty-first century workplace became a pressing concern for Singapore, yet at the same time the growing economic unpredictability and widening income inequalities, and managing an influx of new immigrants in Singapore challenged the Singaporean identity (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). These changing social and economic conditions led to a wave of educational reforms in Singapore and other Asian countries (see Table 2.3). A common feature of these reforms across Asia was a focus on developing the skills and competencies needed for the imminent knowledge-based economy (Kennedy, 2008, p. 18; W.-O. Lee, 2015, p. 99).

Table 2.3. Education reforms in Asia 1997–2002

| Country | Policy | Year |
|---------------|---|------|
| China | Curriculum Reform of Basic Education | 2001 |
| Hong Kong SAR | Learning for Life – Learning through Life | 2000 |
| | Learning to Learn – The Way Forward in Curriculum Development | 2001 |
| Indonesia | Competency Based Curriculum | 2002 |
| Japan | The Education Reform Plan for 21st Century | 2001 |
| Korea | Adapting Education to the Information Age | 1998 |
| Malaysia | Smart School Curriculum | 1999 |
| Philippines | Restructured Basic Education Curriculum | 2002 |
| Taiwan | Moving Towards a Learning Society | 1998 |
| | Action Plan for Educational Reform | 1998 |
| Thailand | National Education Act, 1999 | 1999 |

Source: Kennedy (2008, p. 18)

Among these reforms, a search for more active forms of citizenship gained greater momentum on the back of the *Singapore 21* report in 1997, which resulted from consultations with 6,000 Singaporeans from diverse backgrounds. This report outlined a vision for Singapore in the twenty-first century, and focused particularly on active citizenry, social cohesion and national belonging (Gopinathan & Sharpe, 2004; National Library Board, 1999). A key problem identified was that only 15% of survey respondents indicated that they were willing to be active in society (Gopinathan & Sharpe, 2004). As a result, one of the five key recommendations of the report was to nurture active citizens, especially among the young, who would contribute to shaping the future of the country (Han, 2000). At the same time, the government was also getting increasingly active in combating young

people's ignorance about Singapore's national history, civic apathy, and concern for their individual and family welfare and success rather than community or societal well-being (Sim, 2013; J. Tan, 2013). An immediate response was the launch of two key citizenship education initiatives – National Education and the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) (Ministry of Education, 1997; National Library Board, 1997).

National Education was a cross-curricular initiative that aimed to foster Singaporean identity, pride and self-respect, to teach the rationale for and success of Singapore's socio-economic development strategy, and appreciation of Singapore's unique developmental challenges, constraints and vulnerabilities – the Singapore Story (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013; Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018). It propagated six key national messages about responsibilities that were crucial for Singapore's future (Han, 2015; Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018). These six messages were:

1. Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong.
(We treasure our heritage and take pride in shaping our own unique way of life.)
2. We must preserve racial and religious harmony.
(We value our diversity and are determined to stay a united people.)
3. We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility.
(We provide opportunities for all, according to their ability and effort.)
4. No one owes Singapore a living.
(We find our own way to survive and prosper, turning challenge into opportunity.)
5. We must ourselves defend Singapore.
(We are proud to defend Singapore ourselves; no one else is responsible for our security and well-being.)
6. We have confidence in our future.
(United, determined, and well-prepared, we have what it takes to build a bright future for ourselves and to progress together as one nation.)

(Ministry of Education, 1997)

While National Education signalled a more structured, comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, it was premised on a deficit model that young Singaporeans lacked civic knowledge and were apathetic towards Singapore's history and nation-building issues, and that they took Singapore's peace and prosperity for granted (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018).

The second initiative, the CIP, was seen as an integral part of National Education, and had the purpose of building social cohesion and inculcating civic responsibility through

community service. It required every student from Primary 1 (age 7) to junior college and the centralised institute (pre-university)² (age 17) to fulfil a minimum of six hours of community service each year (Ministry of Education, 1997; National Library Board, 1997). Students in primary schools were involved in volunteering activities such as peer tutoring, maintaining school facilities and making handicrafts. Secondary school students volunteered at public libraries, taught senior computer skills, or maintained a section of a beach or a park. Older students at junior colleges and the centralised institute (pre-university) assumed leadership roles in working with younger ones from other schools with their CIP, or organising camps for them or helping out at community events (National Library Board, 1997). The aim was to develop good citizens in action who would contribute to the community with a sense of duty, belonging and commitment to the nation (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018).

However, both National Education and the CIP came under fire for being inadequate for nurturing students to be critical and “democratically active” citizens (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018, pp. 8–10). National Education was critiqued for being didactic and an uncritical form of citizenship education through which students were taught the country’s history and were encouraged to develop loyalty and patriotism to the country. Han (2000), for example, argued that it was questionable whether National Education served to develop critical citizens who are able to think rationally and independently about national issues, and act effectively in the social and political arenas. Sim (2013) contended that calling the programme ‘National’ rather than ‘citizenship education’ also downplayed individual agency and focused too much on nationalism. Another important concern about the National Education programme was that it did not contribute to sustaining young people’s civic participation in their post-education years (Wong, 2016). Sim and Lee-Tat (2018) have also argued that the CIP did not nurture democratic citizens. Citing Westheimer (2015), Sim and Lee-Tat (2018) argued that the programme focused on volunteerism and kindness to avoid political critique and therefore fell short of nurturing more maximal forms of citizens.

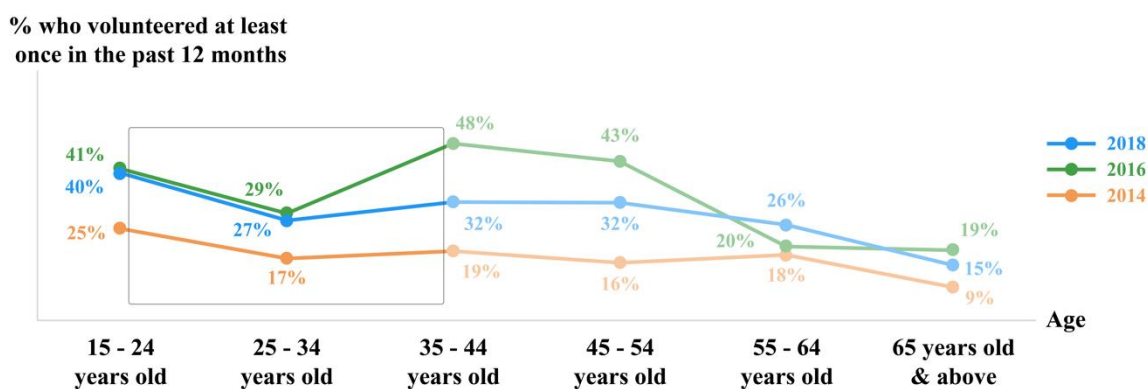
Singapore introduced major educational reforms in 2008, entitled Curriculum 2015 (C2015). This proposed a curriculum, pedagogies and assessment for the twenty-first century in response to shifts in the global economy (J. Tan, 2013). C2015 imagined that the central purpose of schooling is to nurture a confident person, a self-directed learner, an active contributor and a concerned citizen, with a focus on developing the skills and

² Students can opt for pre-university education at the junior colleges (two-year course) or the centralised institute, Millennia Institute (three-year course), leading to the Cambridge GEC A-Level examinations.

competencies required to live and work in a globalised twenty-first century world (Deng et al., 2013). This aspiration was presented as the Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes. Discussed earlier (see Figure 2.1). W.-O. Lee (2013) contended that C2015 was a ‘future-oriented’ approach to citizenship education because it envisioned young citizens as active agents in society – “active with a sense of belonging, active in the sense of being concerned about the society, and active in participating in the co-constructing of a better society together with the state” (p. 256). These educational reforms were indicative of the government’s close attention and commitment to the evolving conceptions of young people’s citizenship and appropriate responses that were needed.

Despite the government’s heightened focus on young Singaporeans’ citizenship, the concerns about their civic deficit and apathy, particularly about them being self-centred and individualistic, have persisted over the years and into the recent past 10 years (Han, 2015). This has been further exacerbated by the declining rate of volunteerism and civic participation beyond the formal schooling years (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014). At a parliamentary debate in March 2014, it was reported that volunteerism rates were high among young people aged 15 to 19, that is, while they were in school. However, these declined sharply in their post-secondary years, in their mid-20s, as they entered the workforce, and only picked up when they were in their early thirties but never at the same rate as before (Kok, 2015; Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014; National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, 2014; Wong, 2016) (see Figure 2.2). This was described as the ‘bathtub effect’ and gave rise to efforts to engage young people in social participation while they are in school and beyond their post-secondary years (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014).

Figure 2.2. Bathtub effect



Source: National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (2018)

Pursuit of more active forms of citizenship

In order to understand the context for the government's desire to pursue more active forms of citizenship, we need to understand the political context of Singapore in the year 2011. The year 2011 was a landmark year for the government's increasing interest in pursuing more active forms of citizenship for young people (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). The Prime Minister called on Singaporeans to take up larger and positive roles in shaping the country's future and to effect change in the community as active citizens (Prime Minister's Office, 2011). This call to action has to be considered in the context of the aftermath of the 2011 general election in Singapore, which was regarded as a watershed because it was the worst performance for the ruling party since independence (K. Tan, 2017), reflecting a weakened mandate and a party seen by many as out of touch with citizens' needs and aspirations (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013). There were clear indications that young Singaporeans had a greater desire for and expectation of political participation, with many using social media to be politically active. This changing political landscape prompted the government to intensify its efforts to engage its citizens, particularly young Singaporeans (Gopinathan, 2012). In this context, a new approach from government was necessary.

The post 2011 election period was also characterised as the "big bang period" of education reform in Singapore (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013, p. 26). A series of large-scale and systematic educational reforms aimed at promoting a more active citizenry were swiftly implemented (J. Tan, 2013). The Ministry of Education (2011b) announced a transition of Singapore's education to the "student-centric, values-driven" phase, discussed in a previous section. This reflected the government's desire for a more holistic approach to education, placing greater focus on aspects of children's physical, social and aesthetic development, beyond academic achievements. Additionally, while values education had always featured in Singapore's education system (Han, 2000), Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) was given prominence and made central to Singapore's education system. The then Minister for Education, Mr Heng Swee Keat, announced these commitments at his inaugural work plan seminar for education officers. The following excerpt from his speech highlights this:

We want to make our education system even more student-centric and sharpen our focus in holistic education – centred on values and character development. We could call this Student-Centric, Values-Driven education. (Ministry of Education, 2011b)

A range of policy and organisational changes represented the government's commitment to advancing CCE. Importantly, the Minister for Education included these commitments in his

speeches from 2011 to 2015. In addition, a new Character and Citizenship Education Branch within the Ministry of Education was established in 2012. This aimed to unify the ministry's various values and citizenship education initiatives, such as Civics and Moral Education and National Education, and to provide a more coherent, current and responsive CCE curriculum in consultation with schools (Ministry of Education, 2011a, 2011b).

Despite its lofty vision and unprecedented attention, the new CCE curriculum remained largely content-oriented, didactic and textbook-driven. Lessons focused on the teaching of values, social-emotional competencies and twenty-first century skills (see Figure 2.1), with little room for student-centric learning (Sim et al., 2017). The CCE curriculum was complemented by other subjects such as social studies, history, vernacular language subjects of Chinese, Malay and Tamil, co-curricular activities, and special commemorative events such as Total Defence Day, Racial Harmony Day, International Friendship Day and National Day. National Education was still seen as an integral part of CCE, but remained as a didactic teaching of national values as before (Han, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b). CCE also represented a heavy focus on the inculcation of character, evident from its goal to 'nurture Singaporean citizens of good character', and there was also an enduring emphasis on the core values from the previous curriculum – respect, responsibility, integrity, care, resilience and harmony – which formed the basis of good character (Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a). Citizenship-related skills were limited to community life, national and cultural identity, sociocultural sensitivity and awareness, and global awareness (Han, 2015). All of these signalled that while the government had intended to move towards a more student-centric citizenship education, older orientations of didactic teaching of citizenship still persisted.

CCE also continued to be centralised, under the control of the Ministry of Education, and provided the government with an important ideological tool to continue to promote nationalistic values such as loyalty, patriotism, a sense of belonging, and a duty to contribute actively to national development (Han, 2015; Sim & Krishnasamy, 2016). Such an approach to citizenship education focused on nurturing Singaporean citizens of good character who contribute to nation-building in accordance with the government's vision, as opposed to nurturing young citizens for active citizenship and political participation in changing democracy (Han, 2015).

Two other significant initiatives that were launched in the post 2011 election period that are intended to foster active citizenship among young Singaporeans are the Values in Action programme and Youth Corps Singapore (see Table 2.4), spearheaded by the Ministry

of Education and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth in 2012 and 2013 respectively. These initiatives signalled the government's desire to engage its young citizens from their schooling years to post formal education as a means of addressing concerns about young Singaporeans' civic apathy and the bathtub effect already discussed. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth who were in charge of these initiatives pledged to work together to provide continuity and shared experiences for young Singaporeans' citizenship education (National Youth Council, 2016a).

Values in Action was formed as part of the new CCE curriculum. It aimed at reframing the former CIP to place a greater emphasis on values education through young people's formal and mandatory volunteerism (Sim et al., 2017). It involves all students in Singapore public schools (ages 7–18), from primary to junior colleges and the centralised institute (pre-university). Values in Action aims to develop responsible citizens who can contribute meaningfully to the community (Ministry of Education, 2014e). Students are encouraged to choose community matters that concern them, understand the issues in greater depth, and then decide how they can make a difference in a sustained way and see themselves as part of the larger community (Ministry of Education, 2012a, 2014e). Students therefore 'put into practice' the values learned in CCE.

Youth Corps Singapore became the first formal and national programme to provide continuity for young people's citizenship participation in their post-secondary years (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014). Highlighting the importance of this national initiative, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong himself announced this at his annual National Day Rally Speech in 2013, which was broadcast live on national television. In his speech, the Prime Minister rallied young Singaporeans: "You are our future. You are idealistic, full of energy and passion. Go forth, change Singapore, change the world, for the better. To help you do that, we will set up a youth volunteer corps." (Prime Minister's Office, 2013).

Table 2.4. Summary of Values in Action and Youth Corps Singapore initiatives

| Initiatives | Owner | Ages | Aims |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Values in Action (VIA) | Ministry of Education | 7 years (Primary 1) to 17 years (Pre-university) | <p>Values in Action (VIA) is learning experiences that support students' development as socially responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the community, through the learning and application of values, knowledge and skills. VIA fosters student ownership over how they contribute to the community. As part of VIA, students reflect on their experiences, the values they have put into practice, and how they can continue to contribute meaningfully.</p> <p>Source: Ministry of Education (2014e)</p> |
| Youth Corps Singapore (YCS) | Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth | 16–35 years (Post-secondary) | <p>Youth Corps Singapore promotes volunteerism among young people through organising volunteering opportunities and service projects as well as a structured youth leadership programme. This structured programme includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a structured residential training programme; • an overseas community project in one of the regional countries; and • a community project in Singapore, undertaken in partnership with an existing non-profit organisation or community group <p>Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2014)</p> |

Despite their intents, Values in Action and Youth Corps Singapore were arguably a knee-jerk response to the election outcomes by introducing more citizenship education programmes in order to promote young people being active in the community, and to 'fix' the perceived civic deficit in them (Bessant et al., 2016; Biesta, 2011). While they differ in name from similar previous programmes, each iteration appears to be focused on getting young people involved in formal and public participation akin to the personally responsible and social-participatory citizenship in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) framework of citizenship participation. It remains unclear whether Values in Action and Youth Corps Singapore, and the new CCE curriculum, aim to nurture more active forms of citizenship, moving towards the maximal or justice-oriented citizenship in the frameworks of citizenship shown in Table 2.1. This requires further exploration.

Research problem

This chapter has discussed historical conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education, and has traced their national evolution in tandem with global forces. The literature review has also highlighted a pursuit of more active forms of citizenship in recent years, and the types of education that are preferred by many governments around the world in order to nurture more active citizens. However, the conceptions of citizenship, including more active

forms of it, remain contested and unclear. A similar lack of clarity and a profound confusion about the type of education needed to nurture more active forms of citizens have also emerged in the international literature. After contextualising this global phenomenon to Singapore, similar problems have appeared. This thesis is an in-depth exploration of these issues associated with conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education, using Singapore as a contextual study, as is further elaborated in the following sections.

What kind of Singaporean citizens?

The previous sections outlined the Singapore government's intense attention and efforts to promote active citizenship among its young citizens from their schooling until post formal education years. These efforts are highly contextualised in the changing global and local economic and political backgrounds. However, as the framework for citizenship participation in Table 2.1 demonstrates, what counts as active can be interpreted in different ways and that also applies to the case of Singapore. Importantly, little is known about the kinds of citizens that policies and programmes for citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore aim to nurture. For example, have CCE, Values in Action and Youth Corps Singapore promoted largely personally responsible citizens or more community-focused and participatory citizens, or have they set out to nurture more maximal forms of justice-oriented citizens? Such questions are important impetus for this research because, despite Singapore's long-standing and intense efforts in implementing values and citizenship education since the country's self-governance began in 1959, which all young Singaporean undergo in public schools, not much is known about how these policies and programmes actually influence their citizenship perceptions and practices in their everyday lives.

The exploration into the kind of Singapore citizens that is pursued by the Singapore government is much needed for three reasons. First, this is important particularly because of scholarly critique that education policies in Singapore aim to serve the country's agenda of preparing its citizenship to contribute to its nation-building project of social cohesion and ensure the continuity of its economic success, as we have seen in this literature review. It remains unclear if such critique is true from a policy analysis perspective. Second, while Singapore's education is supposed to be in a student-centric, values-driven phase, it is questionable how much of this has been translated into actual citizenship education experiences for young people. The literature review suggests an enduring emphasis on didactic forms of teaching in the recent incarnations of citizenship education, as well as a continued focus on public and formal volunteerism. Such approaches are not student-centric as professed by policy and remain an important area of exploration. Third, it is unclear how

young Singaporeans have understood the citizenship education experiences that all Singaporeans will have to undergo in their schooling years, and how they enact this learning in their everyday lives.

Young people's experiences with citizenship education and the enactment of their active citizenship are inseparably connected. Chong et al. (2016) contended that educating for active citizenship could extend beyond volunteerism or community service to include other forms of active engagements such as lobbying, advocacy and participation in demonstrations. Furthermore, Westheimer and Kahne (2000) have argued that to become truly effective citizens, young people should learn to "create, evaluate, criticize, and change public norms, institutions, and programs" (p. 3). Citizenship education that aims to foster maximal forms of justice-oriented citizens requires critical engagement with social and political issues, and involvement in social movements, social transformation and systemic changes (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a). This could be problematic for Singapore, because Singapore has been characterised as a hegemonic state in which the government demarcates social and political participation of its citizens with clear 'out-of-bounds markers' that limit citizens' democratic participation (Sim, 2011; Sim & Krishnasamy, 2016). Nevertheless, what kind of citizens education policies and programmes in Singapore aim to nurture and what actually shapes young Singaporeans' citizenship perceptions and practices requires a much more detailed policy analysis, informed by an appropriate theoretical foundation. These issues are explored through the first and second research questions of this research, presented in the next section.

Public–private divide

Another problem that arises from the literature review is that little is known about how young people perceive themselves as active citizens, how they live their citizenship in their everyday lives and what actually shapes their citizenship perceptions and practices. Research on Singaporean young people's citizenship has primarily focused on formal volunteerism rates (National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, 2016; National Youth Council, 2016b). Arguably, this reports only a narrow and partial form of young people's active citizenship when viewed against the framework for citizenship participation in Table 2.1. In addition, the focus on young people's volunteerism rates continues to reflect a worrying trend of overemphasis on young people's citizenship that is narrowly confined to public and formal participation. Such a narrow focus tends to overlook young people's diverse forms of citizenship perceptions and practices in their personal and private worlds. At the same time, such a narrow focus does not fully capture young people's diverse forms

of citizenship, and it particularly overlooks the richness of their private, domestic and ordinary forms of active citizenship in their everyday lives (Wood, 2014). Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011), for example, discovered through empirical studies that young people were becoming involved in the politics in their lived worlds through unconventional means and modes, from crowdsourcing to online social movements, but current definitions of active citizenship overlooked the varied ways in which young people were increasingly engaging in contemporary social and political participation because such contemporary forms diverged from how active citizenship is defined in theory. This consideration raised the need to further explore the tensions in the conceptions of citizenship in the public and the private lives of young Singaporeans.

An in-depth exploration of the public–private divide in conceptions of young Singaporeans’ citizenship is crucial. A myopic conception of citizenship that is focused only on public expressions of citizenship has the potential of leading to a false perception that young people are apolitical, apathetic and disengaged (Bessant et al., 2016; Wood, 2014), resulting in a perception of a “crisis in democracy” surrounding young people (Bessant et al., 2016, p. 271). Such thinking might also wrongly imply deficiencies in citizenship education, possibly resulting in a knee-jerk response to introduce more civic learning in order to ‘fix’ the perceived civic deficit in young people (Bessant et al., 2016; Biesta, 2011). This is problematic because such thinking will continue to focus too much on the teaching of citizenship, and places less emphasis on how young people actually learn in and through the everyday practices in their lived worlds (Biesta, 2011). Moreover, Jerome (2012), for example, argued that an over-focus on formal and public forms of political actions may lead to a narrower definition of active citizenship that might not recognise that democracy is also lived in the acts of coming together to discuss, resolve and take action. This could lead to a significantly different agenda for school-based citizenship education. I provide further critique of the over-focus on young people’s public and formal forms of citizenship practices in Chapter 3.

Lived and relational forms of citizenship

Looking beyond public expressions of citizenship and into young people’s experiences with citizenship in their lived worlds is particularly important in Singapore. Citizenship education in Singapore, and Asia, has been characterised as one that has traditionally prioritised a relational focus of cultivating harmonious relationships with the “self, others, the state and nature” (W.-O. Lee, 2004a, pp. 280–281). This self-cultivation is meant to serve an important and active role in the “collectivity of the society and nation” (W.-O. Lee,

2004b, pp. 27–28). Therefore, it has been argued that the Asian conception of citizenship draws a direct connection between a good person and good citizenship, and as a result, citizenship education in Asia foregrounds morality over politics (Sim et al., 2017). This is said to contrast with a Western conception of citizenship in general, which has a long-standing focus on “individualism as rights and responsibilities in a political context” (W.-O. Lee, 2004b, p. 31). In reflecting that, the values of care and harmony have featured in Singapore’s former and reformed values and citizenship education curricula as two of the six core values (Han, 2015).

Sim and Chow (2019) argued that the Singapore government has propagated Asian values, undergirded by Confucian ideals of relationality, harmony and criticality, to its younger generation. In light of their research involving Singaporean teachers’ ($n = 7$) discourses on citizenship, Sim and Chow (2019) contended that the Confucian-inspired conception of Singapore’s citizenship is a more nuanced version of an Asian conception of citizenship in two important ways. First, Sim and Chow (2019) argue that Asian citizenship is characterised as ‘relational citizenship’ in which actors enact their citizenship in a continuum between the private and the public. The relational focus within this conception is on intangible contexts, particularly on familial relationships, and it extends out to the community in the forms of volunteerism and helping the less privileged. Family thus serve as a starting point to being a good person in society. Responsibility to family in the private worlds and public participation are seen as equally important, and not mutually exclusive. This is a stark contrast to the public–private dichotomy of citizenship participation that often features in Western citizenship discourse, where the ideal active citizen is seen as a public actor.

Second, harmony is seen as an important aspect of relational citizenship and it does not refer to conformity or a homogeneous identity but involves embracing difference and even opposition through assuming multiple perspectives and dialogue. However, by prioritising this conception of harmony, and in fear of risking harmony in society, criticality is limited to merely developing an awareness of the needs and diversity in the community, rather than more critical forms such as acting to question, or challenge, established norms. If any action is needed at all, it has to be done graciously, with sensitivity and with restraint in dialogue. This presents a tension between criticality and harmony. While Sim and Chow’s (2019) research provides snapshots of how a small group of teachers made sense of citizenship in Singapore by using a Confucian lens, little is known about how young Singaporeans perceive and enact their citizenship. Specifically, not much exploration has

been done into how relationality features in young Singaporeans' citizenship perceptions and practices.

Changing contexts of young Singaporeans

Another reason why it is important to study young Singaporeans' lived citizenship is the observation that in recent years they have been increasingly engaged in various forms of active citizenship that defy traditional conceptions of it. Han (2015) studied groups of young Singaporeans working collectively in small communities who were using new technology to push the boundaries of free speech and critical thinking, questioning the status quo and, in some cases, openly opposing government policies. It was observed that they were exploring and developing social and political values and were debating current issues, while also discovering the boundaries of what was acceptable in their society. They were seen to have developed the skills and knowledge required to engage in civic and political activism (Han, 2015).

More clear evidence of young Singaporeans' changing appetite for political participation, from the previously perceived civic apathy, emerged from national-level focus-group-style dialogues, entitled *Our Singapore Conversations* in 2012. This engaged over 10,000 Singaporeans of diverse ages, but with a particular focus on young people, to understand their challenges and aspirations for the country (Ministry of Education, 2013a; Wong, 2016). In a recent online newspaper article in Singapore, it was reported that young Singaporean's civic participation saw a new pattern of engagement (Kwek, 2019). Young people were going beyond volunteerism and were starting non-profit groups to support the underserved communities, advocacy groups to push for policy changes and public campaigns to challenge national narratives in social issues they care for. The most remarkable of these initiatives was a social media channel, Telegram, that served as a network of ground-up initiatives in the country and was subscribed by over 1,800 young people (Kwek, 2019).

However, despite these emerging trends in how young Singaporeans are increasingly enacting their citizenships in diverse ways in their lived worlds, and a budding interest in and research on the lived and everyday citizenship of young people internationally, there has been little exploration into young people's private and personal forms of lived citizenship in Singapore.

Research questions

The research problem, explored in the previous section, has highlighted several gaps in the literature and research on conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education for young people in Singapore. These gaps in turn highlight the need to explore what kind of citizens the policies and programmes for citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore aim to nurture, and the need to look beyond young people's formal expressions of citizenship and into their experiences with citizenship in their private lives, particularly their relational forms. To explore these gaps, this research critically analysed policies for citizenship education and active citizenship in Singapore, examining their influence on young people's citizenship perceptions and practices, and conducting a deeper exploration of the relationship between these and young people's lived citizenship. The overall goal of this research was to investigate young Singaporeans' active citizenship and how they have been shaped by formal policies and programmes, as well as their lived experiences.

This was explored through the following sub-questions:

1. What kind of citizens do education policies and programmes in Singapore aim to nurture?
2. What shapes Singaporean young people's citizenship?
3. How do Singaporean young people live and imagine their citizenship?

These ideas were explored in this research, guided by critical and feminist theories, which are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical framework

The previous chapter highlighted a number of oversights in the traditional conceptions of young people's citizenship. In particular, such frameworks have tended to prioritise formal and public participation over more informal and personal practices of citizenship. For example, a prevalent approach to researching young people's citizenship has been to focus on public expressions such as voting, joining groups and voluntary work. However, such approaches potentially exclude the less formal, private and everyday practices of young people's citizenship (Wood, 2014). This thesis advances calls to recognise young people's citizenship experiences beyond this public-private divide, and in particular, it responds to a lack of attention to young people's everyday ways of citizenship in their lived worlds (Biesta et al., 2009; Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Lister, 2007b; Wood, 2014).

Philosophical assumptions

Although some may see citizenship as an objective fact and something that can be easily defined and measured, particularly if it is linked to status and membership, I view citizenship as an experience, both lived and relational. As such, I approached this research with a subjectivist ontological assumption because I believe that citizenship is a lived reality that encompasses beliefs, emotions, motivations and is influenced by various other personal, social, cultural, political and economic conditions that affects people's naturally evolving lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It follows that citizenship is a way of being, a lived reality, a series of everyday feelings, relationships, and consequent actions which are dynamic constructs. What counts as knowledge in this view of citizenship, particularly for this thesis, are the experiences with citizenship of young Singaporeans. My epistemological belief is that a critical theory focusing on an in-depth analysis, and critique of the historical, social, cultural, political and economic contexts within which young people are situated as citizens was needed. In a critical paradigm, I am concerned with not just describing what I am observing, but to attempt to transform unjust or oppressive socio-political structures (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). In particular, the narrowly defined and constrained conceptions of young people's citizenship in Singapore required me to position myself in a critical paradigm in order to critique the forces and power relations that influence conceptions of young people's citizenship. From these assumptions, I attempted to gain access to, and insights into, the unquantifiable knowledge of how young people make sense of their citizenship experiences

in their daily lives through everyday relationships and socio-political structures. This also requires consideration of their multiple perspectives and lived experiences (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This inquiry into young people's experiences with citizenship then requires a qualitative approach to inquiry and a methodology for inquiry and collection of data that is sensitive to young people and their lived experiences (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This 'net' of my philosophical assumptions sets the positionality of my approach to this research (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, pp. 14–15).

To develop a theoretical approach that could draw greater attention to lived and everyday experiences of citizenship, I positioned myself within a critical paradigm in this research, drawing particularly on critical and feminist theories. These theories were needed because of the complexities involved in theorising young people's citizenship, particularly those that could examine the connection between personal and public life, and allowed me to address the intersection of young people's citizenship identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender and class (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical and feminist citizenship theories proved to be particularly useful because they have critiqued narrow conceptions of citizenship that have centred on the status as well as the rights and responsibilities of citizens (Wood, 2015). Both critical and feminist theories have advanced an argument for alternative ethical and political theory that includes a much deeper interrogation of power and representations of whom and what is valued. My research expands on and contributes to this critique, and I discuss this in detail in the following sections.

A critical lens to explore young people citizenship

Research that is informed by critical theory can be understood best as research that attempts to create conditions for empowerment and social justice as well as confront structures of oppression (Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, & Monzó, 2018, p. 421). Critical research is concerned not just with explaining or understanding social reality; it also has an emancipatory intent of changing it (R. Smith, 1993). Kincheloe et al. (2018) defined those working in a critical paradigm as:

a researcher, teacher or a theorist who attempts to use his or her work as a form of social criticism and who accepts [...] all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constructed. (p. 420)

The goal of critical research and inquiry then is to “critique and challenge” as well as “transform and empower” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 10). In other words, critical

research is committed to both critique and praxis, and one without the other is not meaningful. Accordingly, like any other interpretive tradition, it allows exploration of subjective lived worlds, but with critical and ethical dimensions to it (Prasad, 2015). Prasad (2015) argued that research using critical theory involves a five-step process that guides the design, implementation and analysis. The first step is to forge an interpretive understanding of individuals and groups in their lived and natural settings, through genuine dialogue between the researcher and those being studied. The second step is to develop an understanding of sociocultural structures and processes that either facilitate or limit people's subjective understandings. The third step involves combining the first two steps into one analysis that leads to an "ideology-critique" that looks for "inconsistencies, contradictions, distortions and asymmetries" (Prasad, 2015, p. 149). The fourth step, known as awareness, is a participatory one in which the sharing of the researcher's scholarly interpretations is aimed at empowering various actors to develop alternative practices and social arrangements. The last step is praxis, during which the researcher works together with the actors to develop critically grounded programmes in order for them to take action to liberate themselves from their own immediate conditions, with the purpose of ensuring social justice.

Adopting a critical approach in this research helped me in several ways in exploring my research questions. First, critical theorists recognise and are concerned with the remarkable richness of ordinary life and action (Prasad, 2015). This was of paramount importance to this research, which sought to investigate how young Singaporeans understand and enact policies and programmes for active citizenship in their everyday lives, what has shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices, and differences in their lived citizenship. Second, a critical approach to this research helped me achieve my aim to 'critique and challenge' the contradictions and barriers in society and politics in order to recognise young people as "de facto citizens", even if not complete "de jure citizens" (Lister, 2008b, p. 18). At the same time, as a result of this research, I hope young people will be transformed and empowered to be able to critique society and politics that marginalise them as "citizens of the future", at times as merely "citizen-workers of the future", instead of recognising them as "differently equal" citizens (Lister, 2007a, p. 54). Finally, one further goal is that scholarly interpretations from this research might lead to genuine praxis whereby young people will be able to identify and address power relations that constrain their citizenship participation, and that the findings might contribute to the

reimagination of policy formulation, curriculum design and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore.

Although critical theory has its roots in Karl Marx's philosophy (Prasad, 2015), critical research in its current form involves several approaches and draws from several theoretical traditions, such as feminist theories, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory and critical ethnography (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Grant and Giddings (2002), however, argued that a critical research paradigm is primarily underpinned by two main bodies of theories – critical theory and feminist theory. Both of these share an understanding that critical research is concerned with empowering individuals to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class and gender (Fay, 1987). Similarly, a focus on empowerment is central to feminist theories that aim to proliferate the personal, interpersonal and collective power of oppressed and marginalised people so that they can work together for individual and collective transformation (J. Lee, 2001). The fundamental assumptions of these two bodies of theories are that change must occur at the societal level (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Feminist theory, as a form of critical theory, arose as a result of historical political struggles for women's empowerment and is concerned with highlighting the limitations of traditional conceptions of sex, race, sexuality and gender. Feminist theory provides insights into complex power structures that are socially produced as a result of these differences, as well as the barriers and constraints that limit women's lives (Heberle, 2015).

While there are many forms of critical and feminist theories, I sought the theorists within these traditions that best support my exploration into young people's lived citizenship. In that regard, this research employed ideas of critical theorist Paulo Freire and feminist theorists Joan Tronto and Ruth Lister to inform the underpinning theoretical framework. My intention was to draw upon theories that would allow me to gain deeper insights into young people's critical and relational forms of their lived citizenship. The following sections provide details of how I applied ideas from these theories to develop a theoretical framework for this study.

Critical theory inspired by Paulo Freire

The work and ideas of Brazilian educator and critical theorist Paulo Freire (1970) provide useful insights into imagining a better world (Kincheloe et al., 2018). As the founder of critical pedagogy, Freire was concerned about promoting the critical consciousness of citizens, particularly those oppressed by dominant groups, and empowering them to take action to improve and transform their worlds. In his seminal writing, *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, Freire (1970) introduced ideas for human emancipation (humanisation) such as, among others, *praxis* and *conscientização*, commonly referred to as ‘conscientisation’, that have been used widely by critical theorists and educators. Freire defined *praxis* as reflection and action in a continuous cycle that is directed at transforming social and political structures. Freire argued that it is through praxis that oppressed people can acquire a critical consciousness about their own condition and be able to then struggle for liberation collectively with others. He referred to the process of raising one’s critical consciousness as conscientisation, whereby an individual moves towards a critical consciousness by “learning to identify social, political and economic contradictions that act as oppressive forces” (p. 19). Freire defined contradiction as “the dialectical conflict between opposing social forces” (p. 30). The use of the term contradictions in the definition of *citizenship imaginations* and throughout this thesis takes up this Freirean meaning.

Freire (1970) argued that the oppressors create a *culture of silence* (p. 10) that instils a negative, silenced and suppressed self-image in the oppressed, which limits their ability to respond critically against the dominant forces that oppress them. In Freire’s (1970) view, as long as the oppressed remain in that *limit-situation* (p. 51) where they are unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically accept their oppression and are unable to imagine beyond themselves. Freire contended that only conscientisation, as a result of collective and critical dialogue that presupposes action, is capable of breaking the culture of silence and moving the oppressed out of limit-situations, thus leading to praxis. According to Freire (1970):

the awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontents precisely because these discontents are real components of an oppressive situation. (p. 20)

According to Freire (2000), the culture of silence permeates all aspects of life, and therefore conscientisation, in tandem with praxis, is necessary to alter the reality of oppression brought about by social, political and economic conditions. Conscientisation, therefore, brings about a deep awareness of the forces that shapes one’s life, and improves one’s ability to transform that reality.

Freire’s ideas of conscientisation have also been applied to education. In another essay titled *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974), Freire asserts that conscientisation, and the consequent social transformation, can be achieved through liberatory pedagogy such as *dialogic pedagogy*, where the role of the educator is to enable a quality of mind when critically analysing the world, and to allow learners to see themselves

as being able to transform it. In this essay, Freire characterised education as dialogic, critical, participatory, and transformative. In a separate essay titled *The Politics of Education* (1985), Freire criticised traditional forms of education such as the *banking model*, where the learner is a passive recipient of knowledge. Freire was of the opinion that education is not neutral but political in nature, and that liberatory education “is an act of knowledge and a process of transforming action that should be exercised on reality” (p. 102). In Freire’s views, education should promote critical thinking so that learners can identify social, political, and economic contradictions, and act collectively to transform those. In a collection of essays that were targeted at educators titled *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those who Dare Teach*, Freire (2005) provides clear instructions for educators in raising the critical consciousness of learners; that is to encourage learners’ imaginations and to uphold the rigour of praxis – to continuously act and reflect. Together, these ideas of conscientisation, praxis, and liberatory education were fundamental in theorising the concept of *citizenship imaginations* in this thesis which is discussed in detail in a later section.

Freire’s (1970) idea of conscientisation was useful for this thesis in three important ways. First, his idea of conscientisation was used as a process to investigate and explore young people’s experiences with citizenship in this research for the data collection. The photovoice activity was designed to heighten participants’ awareness and critique of society and politics through images. The focus groups and the debrief sessions for the photovoice activity took on a dialogic approach in the same spirit as Freire’s dialogic pedagogy, which was meant to raise the critical consciousness of the participants. Chapter 4 provides details of my research methodology, which was underpinned by Freirean-inspired critical theory. Second, conscientisation became an outcome of this research. The aim of this research was for participants to critically inquire into how they saw themselves as citizens in their everyday lives. Such a process resulted in a raised awareness that certain practices in their personal, private and everyday lives could be considered active citizenship. At the same time, this research served to raise awareness in participants of social and political issues in Singapore as they went about taking photos, reflecting on them and critically analysing them during the debrief sessions. Such a heightened awareness of society and politics through action and reflection is what Freire referred to as conscientisation. Lastly, Freire’s idea of conscientisation was foundational in conceptualising the notion of imaginations as one form of young people’s citizenship expression and enactment in this thesis. I discuss this further in a later section in this thesis.

The central focus of investigating young Singaporeans experiences with citizenship in this study required an exploration through a feminist perspective. This is because feminist perspective would allow a critique of how young people are marginalised by not being recognised as full citizens, similarly to women’s experiences (Lister, 2003). In particular, this study was concerned with seeing beyond young people’s experiences with citizenship in the public domain and looking deeper into their private lives. Further, this research aimed to explore the relational aspects of their lived citizenship. Relationality is considered a key feature of the Asian conception of citizenship, yet it remains an under-researched field in Singapore (see Chapter 2). The following sections explore young people’s citizenship from a feminist perspective to achieve this goal.

Feminist perspectives

A starting point of the feminist critique of citizenship was to highlight that traditional conceptions of citizenship were drawn from a male template despite its claims of universalism (Lister, 2003). In particular, feminist critiques challenged such narrow conceptions of citizenship because they ignored the difference that race, disability, sexuality and age make to citizenship participation (Lister, 2003, 2007a). One other key focus of a feminist critique of the traditional conception of citizenship was to contest the public–private divide that contributes to exclusion, particularly of women and young people, within traditional conceptions of citizenship (Lister, 2007a). Feminist critiques of citizenship have contributed to reworking conceptions of citizenship in order to work towards achieving citizenship’s egalitarian ideals of inclusion. In turn, a parallel critique of the conception of young people’s citizenship has led to broader and more inclusive recognition of politics in young people’s everyday thoughts and actions (Lister, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2008b). Adopting a feminist perspective shed light on the inclusionary and exclusionary conditions of young people’s citizenship and enabled a focus on their agency within the realms of their private and everyday lives rather than dismissing them as “passive victims of structural forces and other people’s agency” (Lister, 2007a, p. 52).

Feminist political theorists, in particular, have exposed the long-standing exclusion of women from the theories and practices of citizenship, in both the liberal and the republican traditions (Lister, 2003). This historical exclusion of women occurred through slavery, unequal rights and recognition in marriage, exclusion from voting and civil law, and even denial of the right to education in some cultural contexts (Lister, 2003). In addition to highlighting the historical exclusion of women, feminist theorists have highlighted the gendered male bias in a seemingly gender-neutral concept of citizenship. The qualities that

are prioritised in such a conception – impartiality (concerned with public interest), rationality, independence and political agency – are male qualities in a traditional conception of citizenship that is undergirded by binary thinking (Lister, 2003). Therefore, women have been marginalised as incapable of developing these qualities because they have been considered emotional, irrational, partial (preoccupied with private, domestic concerns), dependent and lacking in political interests. This runs contrary to citizenship’s promise of inclusion and universalism, serving as a force for exclusion instead (Lister, 2007a).

The dichotomised thinking of citizenship has shed light on a deeply engendered “public–private divide” through which women have been exiled from the public sphere and banished to the realms of the private and the domestic, where they are seen as merely “reproducers” and “carers” (Lister, 2003, p. 73). However, feminist care theorists such as Joan Tronto (1993), have used a feminist lens to argue that feminine qualities of care and relationality, which have been traditionally linked to women’s morality in the private and domestic realms, can be considered political if viewed as a practice and process to “maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Tronto, 1993, p. 61). Such an argument has helped to shed new light on recognising the ‘political in the personal’ in women’s lived worlds. This lens can be a useful way to view young people’s lived citizenship as similar to the historical struggles and marginalisation of women in that young people’s citizenship practices in their private and worlds have been side-lined as not political, and hence they have not been recognised as citizens-now but as citizens-in-waiting (Lister, 2003). In short, feminist theory provides an important lens to (1) critique the exclusion of marginalised groups, especially women, children and young people; (2) see beyond the public–private dichotomy; and (3) recognise relational acts of care as political.

Young people’s citizenship

Ruth Lister was one of the first scholars to link feminist theory to citizenship, and particularly to the contexts of children and young people. Lister (2003) highlighted the importance of recognising not only women within citizenship processes but also children and young people, by arguing that the period of youth represented “a time of negotiation of transitions to the rights and responsibilities of adult citizenship with structural constraints” (p. 77). She provided a critique of children and young people’s exclusion from citizenship, drawing parallels with feminist critiques of women’s historical exclusion from citizenship status and rights. Lister (2008b) argued that young people’s citizenship, like women’s citizenship, has been measured against an adult-male-citizen template, which ignores the

uniqueness of young people's relationship with citizenship. Such a conception runs contrary to citizenship's promise of inclusion and universalism (Lister, 2007a). She argued that, until recently, young people were largely invisible in citizenship studies, and citizenship was indirectly connected to adults only. Young people were, at best, considered "citizens of the future" and, in some cases, were represented in economic terms as "citizen-workers of the future" (Lister, 2007a, p. 54).

Lister (2003, 2007b) highlighted three reasons that have been commonly used to justify children's exclusion from citizenship, which are similar to those used to justify women's earlier exclusion. First, young people's skills and capacities to participate as citizens have been consistently underestimated by adults, and they have been deemed incompetent to hold the rationality required of citizens. Second, young people's dependence on adults for protection and finance has led to their exclusion from citizenship participation. As long as they are required to attend school and do not have significant income to be self-sufficient, they are considered economically dependent on adults, who are also responsible for their protection. The third reason is that young people have been naively perceived to be "citizens in the making" (Marshall, 1950, p. 25) because of their young age and lower status in public life, which excludes them from many public forms of participation, such as voting, and overlooks their actions in their private life. These factors combined have led to an unequal power relationship and status between adults and young people, and a consequent failure to recognise their limited access to resources and places for their citizenship participation, and a perception that they are citizens-in-the-making rather than citizens-now.

As a counterproposal, Lister (2003) suggested a 'differentiated universalism' approach to citizenship that aims to transcend the factors that exclude young people by recognising that they are differently equal, and by capturing their unique relationship to citizenship. A differentiated universalism approach also recognises young people's citizenship responsibilities, which are exercised differently from those of adults alongside their citizenship rights; their right to be themselves, which often can be associated with playfulness, lightness and child-likeness; and their right not to participate (Lister, 2007b, 2008b). A heightened understanding that young people live their citizenship through a multitude of ways, different from that of adults, and that the fluidity of their citizenship identity is constantly negotiated throughout their life course helps to bridge the gap in understanding young people's citizenship (Lister, 2007a; N. Smith, Lister, Middleton, & Cox, 2005). The concept of differentiated universalism provides an opportunity to theorise young people's citizenship through a broader understanding of their citizenship practices in

their lived worlds, which goes beyond the limited notions of their public participation and recognises the politics in their social, cultural and political practices in their everyday lives (Lister, 2007a).

Lived citizenship

The feminist critique of the public–private dichotomy in conceptions of citizenship has drawn attention to the concept of lived citizenship which focuses on the significance of everyday expressions and experiences of citizenship (Lister, 2003). Lister (2007b) defined lived citizenship as the meaning that citizenship actually has in people’s lives, and the ways in which their social and cultural backgrounds and economic situations affect their lives as citizens. She argued that understanding people’s lived citizenship is one way of achieving citizenship’s inclusive potential since it shifts the focus from citizenship practices in public spaces to those in private spheres. There are two starting points in approaching young people’s lived citizenship. The first is that they are to be recognised as active “beings”, and not as future “becomings” (Kallio & Häkli, 2013, p. 4). Specifically, this requires broader conceptions of their citizenship than considering them merely as “citizens of the future”, and in some neoliberal political discourse, “citizen-workers of the future” (Lister, 2007a, p. 54). The second is the recognition that everyday lived experience must be understood as situated in unique social and cultural contexts that are influenced by power relations at multiple levels. Therefore, there is no normativity to young people’s lived citizenship (Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Lister, 2007a); instead, they need to be recognised as “differently equal” citizens (Lister, 2007a, p. 54). Young people’s lived citizenship is heterogeneous, complex and unpredictable, and is best explored in the various everyday contexts where they lead their lives, for example, their homes, schools and communities (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2007; Kallio & Häkli, 2013). Studying young people’s experiences and expressions of citizenship has significant implications, especially during this transitional period of their lives when their citizenship is in a state of flux (Wood, 2015, 2017).

In response to this critique, contemporary citizenship theory has attempted to reconceptualise citizenship not just in terms of “legal rights” but also as “a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding, or losing rights” (Isin & Turner, 2002, p. 4). This, according to Isin and Turner (2002), has led to “a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the emphasis is less on legal rules and more on norms, practices, meanings, and identities” (p. 4). In a similar argument, Yuval-Davis and Werbner (1999) contended that citizenship is no longer merely conceptualised as “the formal relationship between an individual and the state” but “as a

more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging” (p. 3). Lister (2007b) suggested that this idea of a ‘total relationship’ involves relationships between individual citizens as well as responsibilities towards the wider community, and that these broader conceptions of citizenship lend themselves to the idea of “lived citizenship” (p. 695).

A growing body of recent research has attempted to study young people’s lived citizenship to gain insights into what citizenship actually means to them and how they live their citizenship in their everyday lives, thus possibly leading to new and expanded perspectives of young people as citizens (Biesta et al., 2009; Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010; Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Wood, 2014, 2015). For example, Harris et al. (2007) found political significance in young people’s personal and private spaces such as at school, with peers and in the family household. In another study, an exploration by Biesta et al. (2009) of young people’s everyday contexts, relationships and dispositions revealed they were more concerned about local and personal issues that directly affected them and over which they had control. Research by Ann Bartos (2012) with children in rural New Zealand provided insights into children’s political agency that was linked to their care for family and the environment. In another study with young people in New Zealand, Wood (2014) found that the politics in their lived citizenship were shaped by their social interactions and by significant day-to-day places. The findings from these empirical studies provided the impetus for my own research on young Singaporeans’ lived and relational citizenship.

Ethics of care

One key aspect of lived citizenship that is central to this thesis is a focus on young people’s caring actions and relationships in their everyday lives. Care, as a value and a disposition, can transform the ethical basis upon which citizenship is practised (Bartos, 2012). A feminist ethic of care argues that people need each other to achieve better quality of life, and they can only develop as individuals through caring relationships with others (Tronto, 1993). Therefore, an ethic of care recognises how actions of care develop a network of relationships and interdependence with others, which is seen as a form of solidarity and connection that can also be considered political (Gilligan, 1982). Such a conception of care includes the acts of care, places of care, the gender of care (race, class and age) and the results of care (Tronto, 1993).

To understand care as an aspect of citizenship, I explored the concept of ethics of care. The term ethic of care was first coined by Carol Gilligan (1982) in her pioneering book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*, in which she

provided an argument about the relationship between gender and an orientation of care. In her empirical research, Gilligan highlighted the male bias in psychology, and critiqued Lawrence Kolberg's stages of moral development, which, she argued, were male-centric and not appropriate to generalise for women. She argued that women's moral reasoning should be heard in a different voice altogether, and in doing so, proposed two different types of moral voices – a feminine and a masculine one. Gilligan distinguished feminine and masculine voices as ethic of care and ethic of justice respectively. She argued that the moral reasoning associated with the feminist conception of an ethic of care emphasised responsibility that is characterised as relational and involves addressing the needs of others through empathy and activity of care (Gilligan, 1982). In contrast, she claimed, the masculine ethic of justice emphasises rights, characterised by upholding universal justice, fairness and impartiality. The key characteristics of the ethic of care that set it apart from the ethic of justice are that, first, it focuses on responsibilities linked to interpersonal relationships, and second, it involves caring actions of attending to specific needs of others, particularly those who are vulnerable. Therefore, empathy and care become essential in that process, and from this perspective, an ethic of care can be seen to be facilitating and providing the motivation for citizenship participation (Mingol, 2013).

Nel Noddings is another prominent care theorist whose early work titled *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* (1984), followed soon after Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982). Like Gilligan, Noddings promoted care ethics as an alternative to ethics that were traditionally linked to more masculine forms of ethics that centred on justice-oriented approaches. In a similar voice as Gilligan, Noddings also argued that caring relationships are fundamental to human existence and consciousness. However, in theorising care ethics, Noddings' (2013) focus was primarily on the "reciprocity" (p. 86) of the relationality between the "one-caring" (p. 3) and the one being "cared-for" (p. 9), and identified two stages of caring – "caring for" which referred to acts of care and "caring about" which she referred to as ideas and intentions of caring (p. 18). For the purpose of this thesis, particularly when arguing for a broader definition of citizenship that could possibly consider certain everyday acts of care as political, I deferred to Gilligan's ideas of ethics of care. More specifically, Gilligan's ideas were helpful for my argument for the need to see beyond the traditional boundaries of morality and politics, and to focus on interpersonal relationships and caring actions of attending to specific needs of others, particularly those for young people.

While Gilligan's conception of the ethic of care has been widely used by feminist theorists, it has also been subjected to multiple interpretations and critiques. In particular, representing women as a generic, homogeneous group with a single voice, particularly when referring to white middle-class women, has been critiqued because she did not consider the historical and cultural differences of women. One prominent critic, Tronto (1993), has critiqued Gilligan's gendered view of morality. In her pioneering book *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (1993), Tronto identified traditional moral boundaries that marginalise ethics of care and argued against an ethic of care that is linked to "women's morality", advocating instead for a more nuanced conception that includes "values traditionally associated with women" (p. 3). Central to Tronto's (1993) argument is that a liberal, democratic and plural society is not sufficient for humans to flourish unless the members of these societies provide care for each other. She argued that the traditional boundaries between morality and politics as well as the public and private have to be reframed in order for them not to be seen as separate fields, and to overcome power relationships that strive to maintain these differences. With that in mind, Tronto proposed that instead of viewing care as a biological disposition particularly side-lined within one's private realm, it should be recognised as a social practice that is set in concrete contexts that provides a moral base guided by a set of universal principles.

Care and citizenship

Tronto (1993) developed her idea of care by exploring the relationship between feminist theory, ethics of care and politics. To understand care as a political idea, Tronto (1993) contended that one needs to recognise power relationships as well as the intersections of gender, race and class involved in caregiving and care receiving. Through this analysis, caring actions can be seen as a political strategy for social transformation. Specifically, Tronto argued that an ethic of care involves the recognition that the daily caring of people for each other is a fundamental value of human existence. Moreover, she asserted that the creation and sustenance of an ethic of care requires a political commitment to value care and to reshape institutions to reflect such a reformed perspective of care. In Tronto's conception of care as a practice and a process, there are four phases to the activity of caring: (1) caring about or noticing the need for care, (2) taking care of or assuming responsibility for care, (3) caregiving and (4) care receiving. From these four phases, Tronto (1993) outlined four ethical elements of an ethic of care: "attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness" (p. 127). Tronto (1993) argued that such a conception of care can "serve as both a moral value and as a basis for the political achievement of a good society" (p. 9).

This provides a framework for identifying caring relationships and actions in everyday life as citizenship practices.

Tronto (1993) argued that care can be seen as a political concept when viewed through the lens of a feminist ethic of care. Such a perspective begins with the understanding that political subjects are shaped by various social relationships and in different special and temporal contexts. A feminist ethic of care challenges liberal political theory, which conceives of the subject as individual and autonomous, and instead highlights webs of caring relationships, which usually start in private spheres, such as in homes, and makes flourishing in the public sphere possible. This critique of liberal political theory then highlights the acts of care, the places of care, the nature of identity (gender, race, class, age) of care and the results of care, which Bartos (2012) applied in her study and are not often featured in liberal political theory. This framework then offers an opportunity to theorise politics differently by viewing care as a political concept that prioritises social relationships, highlights power relationships involved in these caring relationships, and focuses on people's needs, responses and responsibilities of caring and being cared for (Bartos, 2012; Tronto, 1993).

To understand how these ideas of care can be applied in citizenship research, we return to Lister, who drew these links. Lister (2003) supported and further developed Tronto's ideas by proposing the idea of a "critical synthesis" (p. 34) that unites ethics of care and ethics of justice by considering them potentially complementary instead of mutually exclusive ethics. Lister's central argument in her feminist perspective of citizenship is her rejection of the public-private divide, which she extended further to the dichotomy of ethics of care and ethics of justice. Lister (2003) suggested that these two forms of ethics produce two different images of an ideal citizen – one is the "independent citizen of traditional political theory" and the other is the citizen situated within the "valued bonds of human interdependence" (p. 115). She advocated for a more balanced approach towards citizenship by understanding the "dynamic and dialectical relationship" between the two (p. 116).

This approach also formed the basis of Lister's case for a "critical synthesis" of the two major traditions of citizenship – civic republicanism and liberalism (Lister, 2003, p. 196). Guided by a central principle of inclusiveness, this synthesis reconceptualises citizenship as a *status* that includes social and reproductive rights as well as a *practice* that involves a broad definition of political participation that includes informal and everyday politics. The relationship between these two is dynamic and is motivated by human agency

with a goal of strengthening the inclusive principles of citizenship, but at the same time highlighting and challenging its exclusionary practices. Lister's (2003) ideas of differentiated universalism, discussed earlier, and critical synthesis consequently provide a new perspective to view the tension between difference and universalism as a creative tension, rather than a destructive one. This notion leads to a more inclusive understanding of citizenship as both a status and a practice – both of which are central tenets of Lister's conception of citizenship.

A key focus of this re-envisioning is the value placed on “care for citizenship” and the recognition of “care as a political ideal and practice that transcends the public–private divide” (Lister, 2003, p. 200). Lister argued that the synthesis of the ethic of care and ethic of justice at a theoretical level has to be complemented at a policy level. She advocates for a policy framework that is able to “incorporate care as an expression of difference into the citizenship standard itself” and to create the conditions in society for both “citizen-the earner” and “citizen-the carer” to flourish (Lister, 2003, p. 201). This was an important consideration for my analysis of citizenship policies, presented in Chapter 5.

Although there has been recent interest in researching relational aspects of citizenship in the field of political geographies of children and young people, care remains largely under-researched in citizenship studies, particularly that of young people (Bartos, 2012; Kallio & Bartos, 2016). Researching this relational aspect of citizenship is particularly important for Singapore for two reasons. First, a focus on relationships between the self, others, the state and nature has been found to be a key feature of Asian citizenship (W.-O. Lee, 2004a) and relational citizenship has been cited as characteristic of a Confucian-inspired conception of Singaporean citizenship (Sim & Chow, 2019). Yet care has not been researched in relation to citizenship in Singapore. Second, values of care and harmony are considered to be central to CCE (Han, 2015). It remains unclear how these feature in young Singaporeans' everyday experiences with citizenship. This research, then, has provided an opportunity to gain insights into the politics of young Singaporeans' lived and relational forms of citizenship.

In summary, Lister's (2003) and Tronto's (1993) ideas formed the foundation for theorising young people's citizenship in this thesis, using critical theory with a feminist ethic of care lens. This presented a potential to see young people's everyday forms of citizenship in a political light, a matter explored further in the next section.

Care as political

Building on the ideas of Lister and others, a number of recent citizenship scholars have applied these ideas to develop a theory of lived citizenship for children and young people (see Biesta et al., 2009; Kallio & Häkli 2013; Bartos 2012; Wood, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). I employed many of the ideas from these scholars and researchers to theorise how care can also be considered political in young people's lived citizenship in this research.

Kallio et al. (2015) have extensively investigated what can be considered citizenship practice in young people's everyday action. In a paper written with Bäcklund, Kallio and Häkli (2015) drew on Arendt's (1958) idea of political life as an active life (*vita activa*) to argue that it is a fundamental individual and collective human capacity to take action and to manage individual uniqueness as well as interpersonal differences in order to live together in a democratic and plural society (Kallio et al., 2015). They argued that human plurality is an inevitable and essential human condition because no one person is ever the same as anyone else who lived, lives or will live. In a similar vein to Lister and others, Kallio and Häkli (2013, 2017) have argued that young people should be viewed from the perspective of human plurality, and set out two fundamental propositions in researching young people's citizenship. The first is that building a case for a more inclusionary form of citizenship is particularly important for those who occupy a minority position in their society, legally or otherwise, because this impedes their citizenship participation in various ways. The second proposition is that young people live and practise their citizenship in diverse sociocultural, economic and political contexts, and this may take multiple forms and occurs in both their private and public political spheres, such as with friends and family, and in formal institutions, local communities and wider society (Kallio & Häkli, 2013). Kallio and Häkli (2013) contended that studying young people's citizenship thus requires a fresh perspective that departs from the conventional public–private divide, which narrowly pigeonholes the social and private life to the family and home, and the political and public to the community and the state.

In addition, young people's citizenship practice can be viewed from the perspective of their relational existence in their lived worlds, where they are recognised as “meaningful, active, and influential community members”, which they define as “political presence” (Kallio, 2015, p. 2). Kallio and Häkli (2017) suggested that young people's actions that can be considered as citizenship practice are usually prompted by situations in their everyday lives that have personal significance for them. This gives rise to a possibility to consider the seemingly mundane in their everyday lives as possible forms of their citizenship practice,

instead of side-lining them as insignificant. This idea is what Kallio and Häkli (2017) defined as the “political ordinary” (p. 8), which is premised upon an inclusionary feminist conception of citizenship. They proposed that to recognise the mundane as citizenship practice, it is necessary to focus on people’s experiences of events, situations and issues that are important to them in their everyday lives. The political ordinary comes alive as a result of young people’s heightened awareness of power relations between the individual and society, particularly in a social and relational setting of personal importance to young people. This then gives rise to one’s citizenship practice of acceptance, aversion or transformation in that particular situation (Kallio & Häkli, 2017). Of particular interest in employing Kallio and Häkli’s ideas in this research is the focus on young people’s relational existence in their everyday lives that can be considered their citizenship practices.

The previously outlined ideas were important for my research because they highlighted a focus on young people’s networks of relationships and everyday practices of care within these networks. As discussed in an earlier section, this was particularly important for this research because in Singapore, care has always been conceived as a virtue of good character, but not as an aspect of citizenship. My focus on researching young people’s caring relationships and actions was also informed by Ann Bartos’s (2012) long-standing empirical study on ways children express their citizenship through acts of caring. Drawing on Tronto’s ethic of care framework, Bartos explored children’s citizenship practices by studying their everyday acts of caring through a photojournal project, set in rural New Zealand. Her study that used a framework of feminist care ethics was pioneering and provided a useful model for my study of young people’s citizenship practices. Bartos (2012) explored children’s political agency by examining the “personal-political” (p. 158) contexts of everyday life through the framework of politics of care. As a result of an extensive ethnographic study, she proposed that a framework of care as a political concept should be extended to study the lives of children. She argued that care is political, and that young people’s expression of care can be one way to understand their citizenship practice because it illustrates their expression of what matters in their world. Viewing young people’s citizenship using care as a political construct can lead to insights into their values and concerns they have for the world, and the political landscape they are willing to maintain, continue or repair. It can also reveal specific ways in which they are developing their political identities, practising their politics and preparing for future political actions (Bartos, 2012).

A focus on young people's care as a form of their political practice provides insights into their needs and what they truly care about in society (Bartos, 2012). While young people might seem to be apathetic when held up against adult-templated ideas of politics, Bartos (2012) argued that they do think deeply about issues that concern them when they are given the opportunity to define what being a citizen means to them. However, often these everyday issues have been omitted from the conceptions of politics in mainstream citizenship discourse. Looking at young people's citizenship from this perspective has the potential to lead to a new paradigm of citizenship to understand their citizenship practices beyond the public-private dichotomy because a politics of care focuses on how an ethic of care is incorporated into the lived citizenship discourse, away from the private and towards the public sphere. By learning more about children's daily citizenship practice through their acts of care, we can learn more about how children understand their responsibilities in a globalised world, the value they place on personal and familial relationships, how they resolve conflicts, and how they develop relationships of trust, mutuality, respect and love (Bartos, 2012). The photojournal project in Bartos's (2012) research provided a powerful way for children to highlight their abilities and efforts to care for their worlds. A similar visual methodology, photovoice, was employed in this research, and it is discussed in the next chapter.

In keeping with the Freirean spirit of social transformation, I also focused on emancipatory elements in considering care as a citizenship practice. Kallio and Bartos (2016) argued that care can also be seen as political when it leads to relationships that are political and can result in social change. They asserted that caring activities have the potential to create and change the realities around people, regardless of their age, gender or citizenship status (Bartos, 2012; Kallio & Bartos, 2016). Caring practices, according to Kallio and Bartos (2016), can have constructive outcomes, such as binding together people with little else in common than the shared experience where caring took place. That spatial sense might involve transnational social and spatial relations, binding together past, present and future communities. With that as the backdrop, Kallio and Bartos (2016) considered care to be a form of political agency that can be understood as an attitude and a practice that occurs throughout everyday lives involving "personal matters" or "shared concerns" and that can take place in local communities or faraway places (p. 148). When young people's caring actions are seen as political, a variety of political outcomes can result, for example, a shift in adults' worldview about young people's politics when working together and

incorporating these political actions into formal and political decision-making (Bartos, 2012).

However, one of the challenges, as highlighted by Kallio and other citizenship scholars, is identifying what can be considered political in young people's everyday caring practices because not all of young people's acts can be considered citizenship practices (Kallio & Häkli, 2013). This challenge is further complicated by young people's own uncertainty and ambiguity in what they consider political, beyond the formal and adult-templated definitions (Kallio & Häkli, 2011; Wood, 2014, 2015). In that same sense, then, the challenge for this study was identifying which caring relationships or actions can be considered political in young people's everyday practices. In that regard, I return to Tronto's (1993) framework to identify what is care, and what is not, in the context of political agency. Tronto proposed that the range of care is broad and that care constitutes a large part of human activity, and yet not all human activity can be considered care. While care refers to some form of engagement at a basic level, this engagement, first, should involve something other than self and, second, should also lead to some form of action. With that as a foundation, Tronto (1993) defined care as:

everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (p. 61)

According to Tronto (1993), care viewed from this perspective has the "potential to transform social and political thinking" (p. 124). In addition to providing the above definition for what constitutes care, Tronto illustrated what is not considered care – activities with solely personal interests, for example, playing, fulfilling one's desire, marketing a new product or creating a work of art. Of course, Tronto acknowledged the complexities that come along with such a simplistic definition, but this provided a starting point for deliberation of what caring relationships or actions can be considered political practices.

Bartos (2012) employed Tronto's definition of caring practices in her research, and further unpacked each of the elements of 'maintain', 'continue' and 'repair', using *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions:

Maintain: to support, assist, and related uses; to uphold, back up, stand by, support the cause of (a person, a party, etc.); to defend, protect, assist; to support or uphold in an action. (p. 160)

Continue: to carry on, keep up, maintain, go on with, persist in (an action, usage, etc.); to cause to last or endure; to prolong, keep up (something external to the agent). (p. 161)

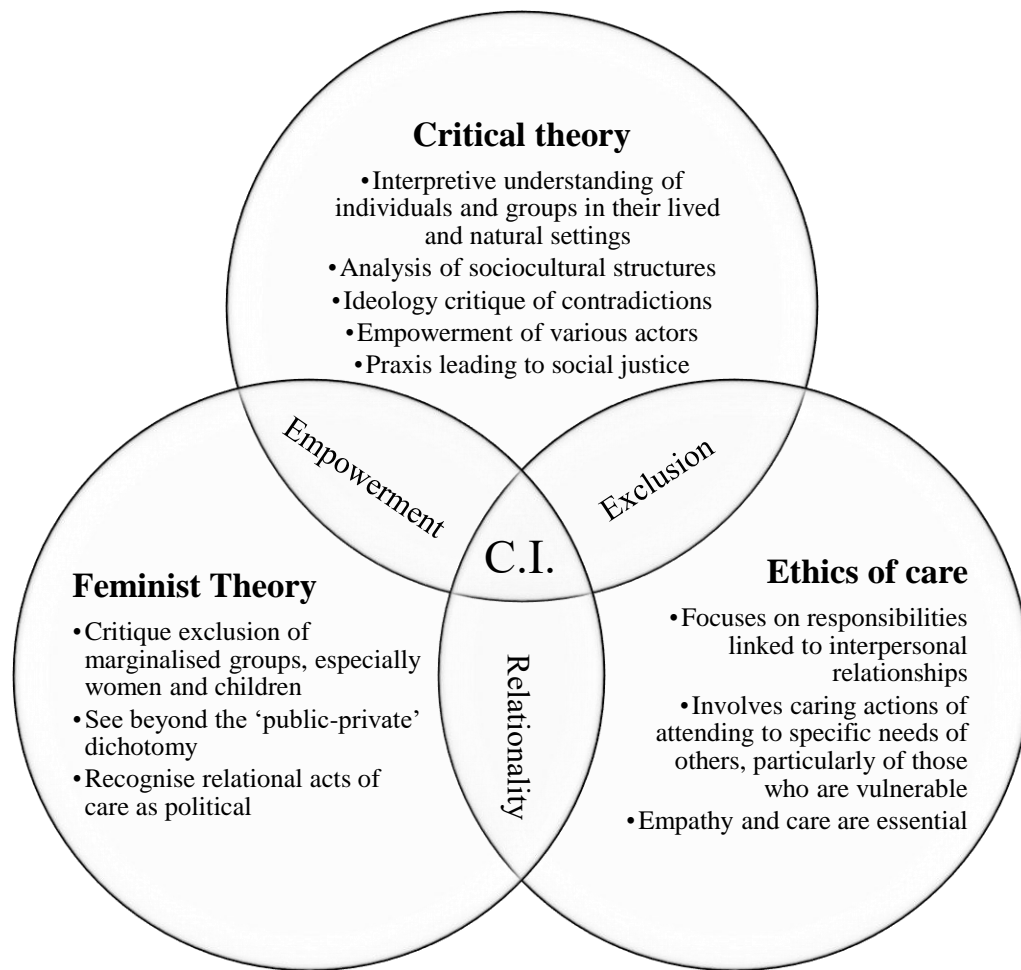
Repair: to restore (a damaged, worn, or faulty object or structure) to good or proper condition by replacing or fixing parts; to mend, fix. (p. 163)

While these definitions are useful, they are also problematic in two ways. First, there seems to be an overlap between ‘maintain’ and ‘continue’, which might lead to confusion. Secondly and more importantly, these definitions do not encapsulate the transformative spirit of citizenship in the sense of a Freirean-inspired critical theory employed in this research. Despite these concerns, Tronto’s (1993) ideas of defining caring practices as citizenship actions formed an important underpinning for the theoretical framework espoused in this thesis.

Citizenship imaginations

Inspired by a different and broader conceptualisation of citizenship, as developed in this chapter, I have theorised how young people’s experiences with citizenship can be viewed from a different lens by bringing together all of the ideas that were discussed in this chapter into one unifying theoretical framework. In doing so, I propose the idea of *citizenship imaginations*, presented in Figure 3.1, and elaborate on this in this section.

Figure 3.1. Conception of citizenship imaginations (C.I.)



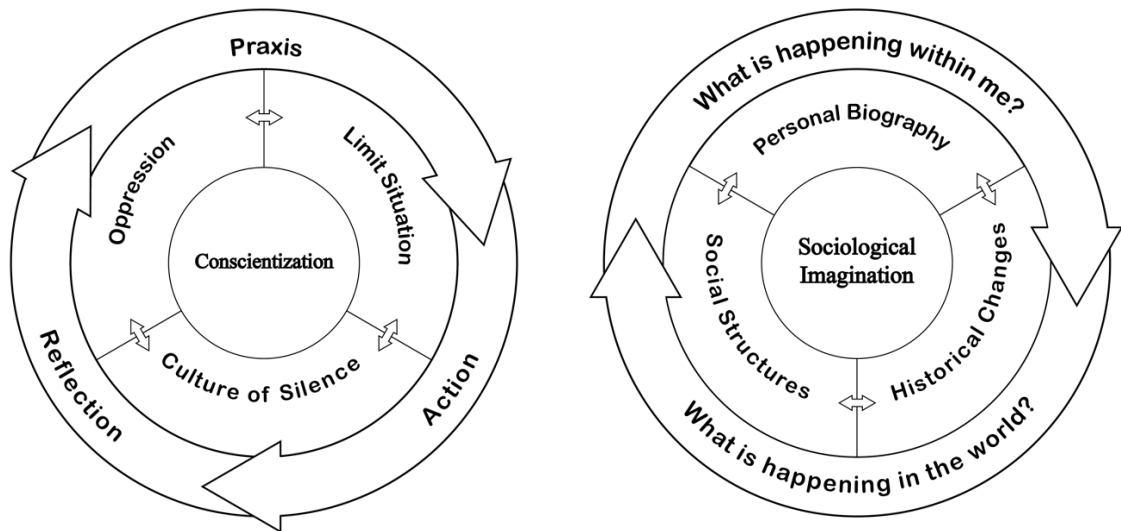
In conceptualising citizenship imaginations, I first used Freire’s (1970) idea of raising critical consciousness in identifying “problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world” (p. 62) as a form of imagination. This conception is central to this thesis and it hinges on critical theory because it focuses on how young people work towards social transformation through analysing and addressing systemic injustice, exclusion and social inequalities (Wood et al., 2018). Wood et al. (2018) referred to this form of citizenship as “critical, transformative and active citizenship”, comparing it to “maximal and justice-oriented citizenship” (p. 260).

In addition to linking Freire’s idea to imagination, I leveraged on the concept of sociological imagination by C. Wright Mills (1959) to further strengthen my conception of imaginations associated with citizenship. Mills, a sociologist, defined sociological imagination as a quality of mind that helps individuals to use information and to develop reason to imagine what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves. According to Mills, this quality of mind leads to the ability to imagine the

interplay between one's personal biography and public issues that are often caused by society and politics over the course of historical changes. He emphasised that this happens at "minute points at the intersections of biography and history in society" (p. 14). Mills argued that if individuals are unable to understand how their personal troubles, such as unemployment, domestic disputes and poor housing, are connected to broader socio-historical structures, they often end up naively thinking that their problems require a personal response, rather than societal and structural ones. In Mills' interpretation, the personal and social has the potential to be political, and the ability to connect personal troubles to broader public issues forms the starting point of sociological imagination. He argued that sociological imagination was the "most fruitful form of self-consciousness" where an individual experiences a deep realisation "of social relativity and of the transformative power of history" (p. 7). For Mills, the role of the educator and the researcher in society is to raise the consciousness of the everyday person about the interconnection between the individual and social-historical structures and to find ways to make "modifications of the structure of groups in which he [sic] lives and sometimes the structure of the entire society" (p. 187).

Freire (1970) and Mills (1959) have important commonalities in their definitions of conscientisation and sociological imaginations. Both used the term consciousness to illustrate a state of mind that is able to identify and critique contradictions in society and politics. This quality of mind is triggered by situations and events that are linked to one's personal life. The subtle difference in their conceptions was that Freire's use of conscientisation focused on oppressed individuals and communities, whereas Mills had a focus on the ordinary everyday person in his conception of sociological imagination. However, both emphasised the importance of critiquing the interplay between personal problems and social and political contradictions in everyday lives. The ideas of conscientisation and sociological imaginations of Freire (1970) and Mills (1959) are summarised in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2. Summary of conscientisation and sociological imaginations



References: Freire (1970); Mills (1959)

I used the ideas of Freire (1970) and Mills (1959) about a heightened quality of mind that gives one the ability to recognise and critique society and politics as a form of imagination. Imagination, if defined as such, can be considered a form of citizenship practice because it is concerned with maintaining, continuing and repairing our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible (Tronto, 1993). When conceived this way, citizenship imagination falls within the intersection of critical theory, feminist theory and ethics of care in three ways. First, it embodies critical theory because citizenship imagination is concerned with forming an interpretive understanding of individuals and groups in their lived and natural setting; it involves forming an in-depth understanding about society and politics, and then critiquing inconsistencies and contradictions that might be present; and finally, it leads to praxis, where those concerned might be empowered to take action in order to establish social justice (Prasad, 2015). Second, citizenship imagination intersects with feminist theory because it is concerned with marginalised groups, in this case young people, in the same way women have been historically marginalised; it provides a lens to see beyond the public–private dichotomy of traditional conceptions of citizenship; and it presents a potential to recognise relational acts of care as acts of citizenship (Lister, 2003; Tronto, 1993). Finally, citizenship imagination intersects with an ethic of care because it is associated with caring actions relating to interpersonal relationships in order to achieve a

better quality of life and to make this world a better place for all, which includes ourselves, others and the natural environment (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993). Drawing on the theory discussed in this chapter and making reference to the theoretical framework I have developed, as presented in Figure 3.1, I define the theoretical concept of *citizenship imaginations* as a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and repair the world in order to live in it as well as possible.

The definition of citizenship imagination in this thesis reflects other similar definitions and conceptions of imaginations that have sought to make our world a better place for all. For example, American educator and philosopher Maxine Greene (1995) defined ‘social imagination’ as “the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficit society, in the streets where we live and our schools” (p. 5). She was of the opinion that “social imagination not only suggests but also requires that one take action to repair or renew” (M. Greene, 1995, p. 5). Greene associated her definition of social imagination with Freire’s (1970) ideas of conscientisation and praxis, and argued that both of these ideas are an inspiration to imagine how society could be otherwise and to take actions to make this world a better place (M. Greene, 2010). In the same spirit, while the definition of citizenship imagination focuses on a state of mind, it is implicit that this will lead to praxis. However, my definition of citizenship imagination does not prioritise action over imagination as do most conceptions of citizenship that focus on public forms of citizenship actions, for example, voting and volunteering. Because praxis and imagination are inseparable from each other (M. Greene, 2010), this is an important consideration for this research, particularly so because this thesis is concerned with young people’s experiences with citizenship in their personal and private realms, and not public actions. These private experiences with citizenship in young people’s everyday lives might include actions and imaginations, and the aim of citizenship imaginations is to provide a broader conception that includes both.

The concept of imagination has also been used in other different ways in the scholarly literature. For example, the idea of *moral imagination*, by philosopher Mark Johnson (1993), focuses on empathy and awareness to discern what is morally relevant in a given situation in order to solve an ethical challenge. In another example that is more closely relevant to environmental citizenship, Bronwyn Hayward (2012) espoused the idea of *democratic imagination*, which aims to encourage young citizens to critically question, challenge and actively protest against injustice and damage to natural spaces. While

Johnson and Hayward had a specific focus on morality and environment respectively, they, along with Freire and Mills, were fundamentally concerned with a critique of the human condition within a network of social relations and power structures through imagination. An example of an early usage of the term ‘citizenship imagination’ was that of Wood (2011), who defined it as “an extension of Mills’ sociological imagination to specifically focus on aspects of personal experiences (issues, people and places) that young people wish to protect, preserve or transform” (p. xii). My re-envisioning of Wood’s definition in this thesis is an attempt to place a greater emphasis on Freire’s (1970) ideas of conscientisation and praxis by making explicit the idea of the ability to reflect upon and critique the social, political and economic contradictions.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

Chapter 3 outlined the paradigm that underpins this research, informed by critical and feminist theories, which provided a framework to explore young Singaporeans' citizenship perception and practices. This chapter describes the methodology employed to answer my research questions, guided by my theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3. This research is a qualitative case study that used verbal and visual data, collected from a focus group dialogue and photovoice activity respectively. Critical and feminist theoretical approaches supported deep insights into young people's lived worlds and helped explore the various diverse forms of their everyday experiences with their citizenship. In particular, an in-depth, qualitative case study examined the young people's experiences with citizenship as well as their *citizenship imaginations* – a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and repair the world in order to live in it as well as possible (see Chapter 3).

A qualitative study

Exploring young people's perceptions of citizenship and their everyday participation as citizens is a complex task that cannot be achieved by merely counting incidences or prevalence in a quantitative manner. Instead, a qualitative approach offered access to deeper, perceptual insights and potentially multiple perspectives of young people's lived realities. These insights are required to make sense of their citizenship experiences in the natural settings of their everyday lives and to allow an interpretation of what these might mean (Cahill, 2004; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Rather than hypothesis testing, I was interested in exploring the emotions, motivations, values and relationships young people associate with their lived citizenship, none of which may be directly quantifiable (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009). A rich data set using multiple sources, for example, group dialogues, interviews and photographs, had the potential to illustrate a more holistic account of young Singaporeans' lived worlds. To create this complex data source, a multiple case study approach that elicited multiple perspectives and richer data for comparison was utilised (Merriam, 1991; Yin, 2014).

A multiple case study

To explore the three research questions, the methodology employed multiple qualitative data collection methods: first, an analytical reading of citizenship and citizenship education

policies for young people in Singapore; second, the collection of focus group dialogues with young people; and third, a photovoice project – a visual source. The participants involved in this third data collection method opted-in by themselves following their involvement in the focus group. The research followed a sequential approach in which one phase influences the next in turn. The aim of the analytical reading of policy was to investigate how active citizenship was defined in educational policies in Singapore and to study exactly what kinds of citizens these policies and programmes aim to nurture. This understanding was a crucial first step before the exploration with young people because the methodology allowed for a comparison of this data set with the ones that followed. Thus, the focus group dialogues and photovoice output allowed for a comparison of how young Singaporeans understand and enact government policies. This comparison involved establishing who or what shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices, and how they live their citizenship in their everyday lives, and then triangulating the young Singaporeans' responses with officially propagated ideas and definitions of citizenship.

My data collection methods also aligned with research in the critical tradition that favours engagement with texts and archival material or the studying of ongoing situations and events to create data sets (Prasad, 2015). Details of the thematic analysis of government policies, along with its underpinning analytical framework, are discussed further in Chapter 5. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the approach to data collection and the data collection methods of focus group dialogues with young people and photovoice.

Participatory research

A further characteristic of the methodology is the participatory approach, in keeping with the Freirean-inspired critical paradigm discussed in Chapter 3. Freire modelled a participatory approach in his work with marginalised communities by developing critical consciousness through processes of investigation, examination, critique and reinvestigation which he termed 'conscientisation' and 'praxis' (Freire, 1970). This led the people in those communities to be able to see and think more critically about social and political forces of oppression, and to recognise how distant forces subtly shape their lives (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). These ideas are particularly appropriate for investigating young Singaporeans' citizenship perceptions and practices because of the way reflection may raise critical consciousness about social, political and economic contradictions through participation in research (Cahill, 2007; Gallagher, 2008).

A qualitative case study approach allowed dialogue throughout the research process and provided opportunities for the young people to have a voice and co-create knowledge

(Gallagher, 2008), embodying a Freirean-inspired participatory orientation. I developed dialogical ways to research with young people in a way that encouraged them to engage in critical dialogue, in an attempt to model Freire's (1970) ideas of raising critical consciousness. In the focus group dialogues, I played the role of facilitator and encouraged the participants to assume control of the proliferation of the meanings and perspectives they produced, as well as the interactions among participants (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). In the photovoice data collection, the nature of the method was such that participants took ownership of the photos they took. I was not present so that researcher interference was minimised (Prosser, 2011). Thus, the process was intended to reduce formality and thus the power and control of the researcher through encouraging a participatory spirit embodied in aspects of the methods described above.

Every methodology is a compromise. In this case, while I envisioned my data collection methods to be participatory by reducing the formality of the research encounter and the control of the researcher, it would be naive to assume that my actions completely displaced the power imbalance between myself and the young people involved (Wood, 2014). Further, I was aware that being informed by critical theory or adopting a critical approach does not guarantee an outcome that is "empowering in a way we recognise as significant", or indeed empowering at all (R. Smith, 1993, p. 75). The term participation has been used too broadly to refer to a wide variety of practices, often disguises tokenism and can lead to an illusion of a consultative approach with young people (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hart, 1997). There is also the danger that participatory research can use the language of collaboration and community but serve the interests of those in political, economic and academic spheres of power (Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, 2011).

Another concern with participatory research is that it may not necessarily redistribute power or be completely free from tyranny if the researcher as expert takes over, exercises authority over the participants or uses data collection methods that overlook broader contexts in the pursuit of knowledge (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Keeping these critiques in mind, I used the strategies discussed above to advance the young people's participatory involvement in the research as far as possible, clearly defining the type of collaborative roles they could be involved in and the degree of their participation in the research. I also constantly analysed and reflected on the power dynamics between myself and the participants throughout my research process using a reflective research journal (Cahill, 2007).

Multiple case study approach

To fulfil the methodological imperative for a complex data set capable of revealing multiple perspectives, I applied a multiple case study approach. This allowed me to draw on the multiple and varied socially constructed realities surrounding the young people's lived citizenship experiences, and construct knowledge about these realities from multiple sources of information that were analysed in-depth across the rich data set (Creswell, 2014b; Merriam, 2010). In particular, a multiple case study design allowed the study of the complex phenomena of young people's lived citizenship within the context of their own unique everyday lives, over which a researcher has little or no control (Yin, 2014). This was important to counter any assumption that every young Singaporean has the same experiences with citizenship despite the unity implied in the Singapore Story.

In this case study research, the *case* studied is post-secondary Singaporean young people who were currently involved in any form of formal citizenship education programmes at post-secondary institutions in Singapore. The *unit of analysis* is young people's lived experiences (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). I used a purposeful maximal sampling method to select three case sites (see Table 4.1) that held the potential to reveal rich information and in-depth study of post-secondary young people's citizenship experiences in Singapore (Creswell, 2014a; Merriam, 2009). My selection criteria case sites, the National Institute of Education (NIE), SIM University–Singapore University of Social Sciences (UniSIM-SUSS) and Youth Corps Singapore, are considered the leading institutions in Singapore with exemplary active citizenship programmes for post-secondary young people. All three institutions utilise service-learning and volunteerism as approaches to achieving their active citizenship outcomes. At NIE and UniSIM-SUSS, all students are required to participate in mandatory service-learning projects, and these are graduation requirements. In contrast, Youth Corps Singapore is a national-level, voluntary and opt-in programme for young Singaporeans. The selection of these institutions with this kind of citizenship education profile was important for this research because they mirror the government's ideas of active citizenship, which are associated with formal and public volunteerism and community service.

Table 4.1. Details of case sites

| Names | Description | Details of citizenship initiatives |
|--|--|---|
| National Institute of Education (NIE) | NIE is the only government-funded teacher training institute in Singapore. | Group Endeavours in Service-Learning is mandatory for all first-year students and requires them to work in groups, to develop and implement service-learning projects to <i>reach out to the Singapore community</i> over one academic year. Source: National Institute of Education (2016) |
| UniSIM University (UniSIM) – Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) ³ | UniSIM is the newest government-funded undergraduate college of the six universities in Singapore. | UniSIM provides a unique curriculum and pedagogy that places a strong emphasis on <i>fostering civic engagement and active citizenship</i> through service-learning and social research for all first-year students. Source: UniSIM (2016) |
| Youth Corps Singapore (YCS) | YCS is a government agency of the National Youth Council in Singapore that aims to ignite transformation in society, by catalysing collaboration between youth, community service organisations and society. | Youth Corps Singapore promotes <i>volunteerism among young people</i> through organising volunteering opportunities and service projects as well as a structured youth leadership programme. This structured programme includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a residential training programme; • an overseas community project in one of the regional countries; and • a community project in Singapore, undertaken in partnership with an existing non-profit organisation or community group. Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2014) |

Participant selection

This research was focused on post-secondary young people aged 17–25 years. As discussed in Chapter 2, this group was a cause of concern to the Singaporean government because they were considered to be less active citizens in Singapore (Kok, 2015; Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014; National Youth Council, 2014). In order to investigate this, I relied on Flyvbjerg’s (2001) logical deduction in case studies that if the

³ Before my data collection, this university was known as UniSIM. After my data collection in 2017, it was restructured into the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) and brought under the ambit of the Ministry of Education, Singapore. While the university requested I refer to them as SUSS, the participants referred to this institution as UniSIM throughout the data collection. Therefore, I have used the abbreviation UniSIM-SUSS throughout this thesis to indicate this situation.

studied phenomenon can be found in the least likely case, then it can be found in all cases. The two criteria used for the selection of these post-secondary young people were that they:

1. had completed their entire primary and secondary education at a government-run, public school in Singapore; and
2. were currently engaged in formal active citizenship programmes at the post-secondary institutions (case sites) they were affiliated to.

The first criterion ensured that all participants had participated in the formal and mandatory citizenship education programmes in their primary and secondary education. This fact is essential to this study because the study sought to understand how these formal citizenship learning experiences have shaped young Singaporeans' understanding and enactment of citizenship in their everyday lives. The second criterion targeted young people who were currently engaged in any form of formal active citizenship programmes in their post-secondary institutions. This is important because it ensured that the idea of active citizenship was not new and was still in their mind space, and therefore would yield more credible data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These two criteria helped me select participants who were likely to provide answers to my research questions and allow me to explore how they understood and enacted citizenship policy intent and the extent to which they conformed to policy or lived their citizenship differently. To reiterate, by comparing the policy perspective with young people's experiences with citizenship, I aimed to develop insights to inform policies and address gaps in the fostering of active citizenship among young people.

Participant recruitment

After selecting the three institutions that matched my selection criteria, I first obtained in-principle approval from the leaders of the three institutions to participate in this research. All three leaders provided valuable local knowledge about how best to recruit and engage the young people in their institutions. Upon gaining human ethics approval (#23673, see Appendix 5) from Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), I proceeded to provide full details of my proposed research to senior administrators at the three institutions via email. All three institutions assigned coordinators who supported me in recruiting participants and facilitated the administrative work and logistics throughout the data collection phase, including booking meeting rooms and coordinating with participants on dates and times. The participant recruitment for this research was primarily facilitated by activities of these coordinators. The coordinators first sent recruitment emails to eligible students and provided

them with the research brief I had given to them. Participants received information about the research, including details of the two data collection activities. Interested participants then signed up directly through the coordinators before meeting with me at their respective institutions on the arranged date and time for the focus group dialogue. All three institutions agreed to be named in the research.

I attended to administrative and ethical matters at the start of each focus group dialogue. For example, I elaborated on the details of the research again, in particular, clearly defining the research activities, participants' roles and their commitments. I answered questions and gave them time to decide whether they wanted to opt in or not. If they did not, they were told that they were welcome to excuse themselves without question. During this process, none of the administrators were present so the participants were not obliged or pressured to participate. At all three case sites, all participants who turned up for the briefing chose to participate in the focus group dialogues, and informed consent paperwork was collected before proceeding. This was an indication that those who came for the focus group dialogue had read the research brief carefully and were informed and willing participants. In total, 40 participants were recruited for the focus group dialogue from the three institutions. These 40 participants were organised into seven focus group dialogues as shown in Table 4.2. These small focus groups allowed for an optimal comparison of results between the cases (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Table 4.2. Breakdown of participants in focus group dialogue

| Institution | Session | | | Total |
|---|---------|---|---|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| National Institute of Education (NIE) | 4 | 7 | 7 | 18 |
| UniSIM University (UniSIM) – Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) | 7 | 8 | – | 15 |
| Youth Corps Singapore (YCS) | 4 | 3 | – | 7 |
| Total no. of participants | | | | 40 |

After every focus group dialogue, I invited the young people to consider opting in to my second data collection activity, photovoice. I provided details of the photovoice activity and also demonstrated the use of the relevant mobile app. Participants who opted in stayed on for a question-and-answer session. They also signed and returned a second informed consent, and subsequently we scheduled tentative dates for the one-on-one photovoice debrief session. A week was given for participants to take photos that best captured their

citizenship imaginations; the option for extension was offered to them so that they might not feel pressured to complete the task within a week.

We made arrangements to meet for one-on-one debrief sessions after the photographs were taken. During these debrief sessions, participants analysed their images and co-created interpretations with me. There were marginally fewer participants for the photovoice activity because this required a greater time investment: of the 40 participants in the focus group dialogue, 30 opted in for the photovoice activity. Details on the number of participants for the photovoice activity are provided in Table 4.3, and a more detailed profile of participants, using their self-selected pseudonyms, is provided in Appendix 1. Copies of information sheets and consent forms that were provided to the institutions and participants are presented in Appendix 4.

Table 4.3. Breakdown of participants in photovoice activity

| Institution | Total |
|---|--------------|
| National Institute of Education (NIE) | 18 |
| UniSIM University (UniSIM) – Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) | 7 |
| Youth Corps Singapore (YCS) | 5 |
| Total no. of participants | 30 |

Data collection

This section provides details of the two data collection methods – focus group dialogue and photovoice – that I used to explore young people’s citizenship perceptions and practices. While the analysis of policies and programmes for citizenship education (see Chapter 5) provided valuable insights into the kind of citizen that was prioritised by policies and programmes for citizenship education in Singapore, the rich data from the focus group dialogue and photovoice offered insights into young people’s lived citizenship. The focus group dialogues facilitated discussion and debate among young people about what active citizenship meant to them and who or what shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices. The discussions led to the development of new definitions for the previously ambiguous notion of active citizenship among young people (Vromen et al., 2015). Photovoice allowed the young people to illustrate, through visual images, the diverse ways they understood and lived their citizenship in their everyday lives, which might not have been captured in mainstream narratives of citizenship (Bragg, 2011). Together, the rich data from the policy analysis, focus group dialogue and photovoice provided a deeper insight

into young Singaporeans' experiences with citizenship. I elaborate further on the focus group dialogue and photovoice data collection methods in the following sections.

Focus group dialogues

The first data collection activity, focus group dialogues, was underpinned by Freire's (1970) idea of dialogical pedagogy. Freire defined dialogue as collective reflection and action, and argued that only dialogue is capable of producing critical consciousness and praxis (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). In relation to dialogue, one particular contribution by Freire that is linked to a dialogic pedagogy is the idea of *generative words* (Freire, 1970). In using generative words, Freire was interested in eliciting words and ideas that were fundamentally important in the lives of the people for whom he designed educational activities and spent long periods in communities trying to understand their interests, investments and concerns. Freire encouraged people to explore the meanings and effects of these words in their lives and to explore how they changed in different social and political contexts. His goal was to raise people's critical consciousness and to encourage them to engage in praxis (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011).

This Freire-inspired idea of dialogue informed the way I organised and facilitated my focus group dialogues because I was interested in drawing out the participants' deeper insights about generative terms such as 'active citizenship' and how the meaning of these words played out in the different contexts of their lives, for example, at school, with their family and friends, and in their wider communities. Therefore, my focus groups were designed to induce social interactions similar to those that occur in everyday life but with greater intensity (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). In a related idea, which is also linked to the work of Mills (1959), A. Johnson (1996) suggested that group dialogue has the power to foster the collective creation of sociological imagination by making mutual connections between personal troubles and social structures. These ideas provided a link between my theoretical framework, informed by Freire and Mills, and my data collection methods.

I conducted a total of seven focus group sessions (NIE = 3, UniSIM-SUSS = 2, YCS = 2) with no more than seven participants in each session (see Table 4.2). My aim was to keep the structure of the focus groups small and informal yet engaging, and allow participants to dialogue freely (Berg & Lune, 2012). It was not a structured interview but more of a dialogic approach that lead to rich, nuanced and even contradictory discussions and debates during the sessions (Berg & Lune, 2012; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). I provided pizza and soft drinks before the start of the dialogue to facilitate informal conversations and to build trust among participants prior to the actual dialogue (Krueger &

Casey, 2009). Making participants more comfortable in groups was a priority for me, intended to lower the possibility of personal vulnerability and risk (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011).

To move away from the predominantly verbal questioning techniques employed in a traditional focus group session, I worked to engage the imaginations of the young people by asking them to first create posters with words and phrases that might serve as symbols and metaphors of their active citizenship (Krueger & Casey, 2009). These served to elicit words and ideas from the participants, and to explore how these meanings affected them in the various contexts of their lived experiences (Freire, 1970). They were provided with poster paper and coloured markers for this activity. Participants first worked independently and then shared their posters and their interpretations with the rest of the group. This activity was conducted in rooms that were spacious enough for independent work in personal spaces away from one another, as well as for display and a gallery walk of the posters. This activity was framed by the following guiding questions:

1. What does active citizenship mean to you?
2. How has formal citizenship education shaped your active citizenship?
3. Who or what shaped your active citizenship?
4. How are you an active citizen in your everyday life?

Participants responded to these questions in a recursive manner, going back and forth between the questions as they explored their perceptions of active citizenship. The conversations were lively and engaging because everyone participated enthusiastically, across the seven sessions at the three institutions. A trend was that even the initially silent participants progressively joined the discussion once they had heard what others said and had a chance to reflect on the discussions.

The focus groups sessions served as opportunities to explore the multiple meanings and perspectives of citizenship that participants held. The sessions became sites where participants expressed their experiences with citizenship through collective and critical dialogues (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). I witnessed participants speaking freely and completely about their own behaviours and attitudes, and giving their opinions about their citizenship experiences in their own lives without holding back (Berg & Lune, 2012). I also observed the complex ways my participants positioned themselves in relation to each other as they processed the questions and interacted with each other (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Such expressions highlighted and consolidated the diverse understandings and expressions of active citizenship amongst the young people while they were also attempting

to arrive at a collective identity. These understandings and identities were underpinned by a set of diverse meanings and values that each held as a result of their lived experiences which also emerged during the discussions (Lister, 2007b).

Aside from exploring the understandings and identities of citizenship, one other aim of the focus group was, as far as possible, to provide an environment that was more democratic by providing participants with more free interaction and less direction by me as a researcher, which was at a minimum (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). I endeavoured to be adept in moderating respectful and uninterrupted discussions while capturing the rich information, deliberately avoiding influencing or imposing my views as far as possible (Creswell, 2014a). Each focus group dialogue was audio recorded with informed consent. Data from the recording, as well as the posters, were included in data analysis and interpretation. Each focus group session took about one and a half to two hours. At the end of each of these focus group dialogues, I invited participants to consider participating in the second data collection activity – photovoice.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a contemporary participatory visual method that has the potential to help view young people's everyday world from their viewpoint (Berg & Lune, 2012). It addresses the issue of invisibility and marginalisation because the young people were encouraged to take ownership of their participation in the study by taking photographs where and when they decided and by creatively expressing their lived world through images suitable for this research (Berg & Lune, 2012; Wang, 2006; Wood, 2014). In this way, photovoice provided the potential to achieve my aim to engage and highlight young peoples' citizenship imaginations, in particular, the potential to enable people to record and represent their everyday realities, promote critical dialogue about personal and community strengths and concerns, and reach policymakers (Wang, 2006). In addition, in keeping with a participatory orientation in this research, the photovoice project provided the young people with the freedom to capture their everyday experiences with citizenship through photographs and to discuss these freely with me during the one-on-one debrief sessions. This participatory approach to researching with the young people using photovoice also involved co-creating knowledge with them when analysing and interpreting their photographs.

This photovoice project drew inspiration from a similar photojournal research project by Bartos (2012) in which children highlighted their care and concerns in their daily lives and in the larger world around them through photographs. Bartos (2012) contended that children and young people have diverse ways of seeing the world and that a

photography project is an empowering way for them to best express themselves. Freire's (1970) idea of *problem-posing education* was also helpful in envisioning this photovoice project. In problem-posing education, Freire used a technique of decoding images and language with groups to generate questions and solutions, with a goal of helping people to understand the problems and contradictions they faced and to use these understandings to change their worlds (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Informed by these ideas, I carefully crafted nine prompts to guide participants in the photovoice activity. These prompts were an expansion on the three prompts that Bartos (2012) used in her photojournal project with children. The nine prompts were:

1. Places – Where is a special place in your everyday life?
2. Relationships – Which relationships matter to you?
3. Emotions – What evokes your emotions?
4. Memories – What is memorable to you?
5. Wonder – What makes you wonder?
6. Missing – What is missing in your neighbourhood?
7. Preserve – What must be preserved?
8. Care – What do you care most about?
9. Change – What needs to be changed?

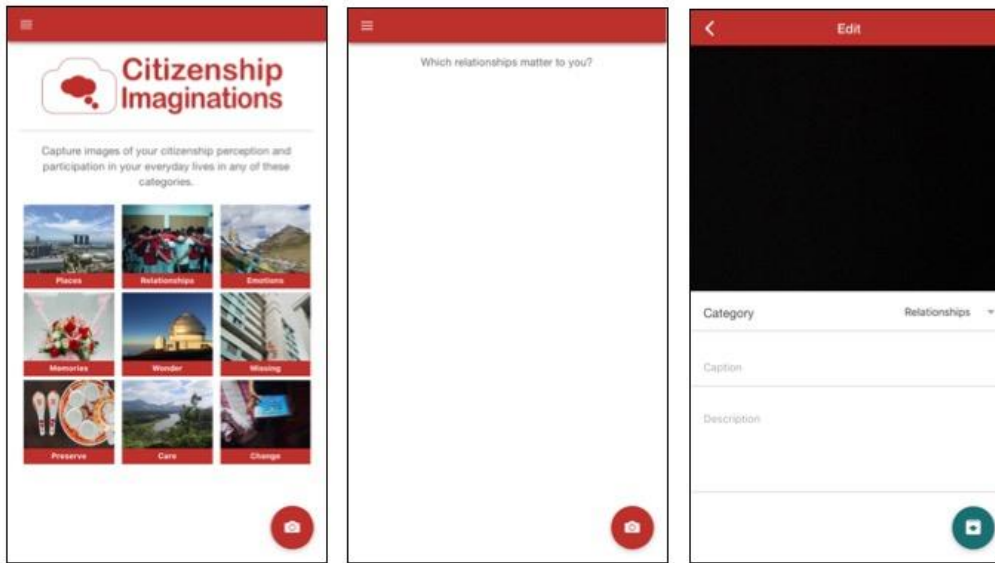
Studying the lived citizenship of young people requires exploring their relationship to places, and to emotions and imagination. Considering these aspects of everyday life can provide deeper insights into citizenship in the form of its practices, meanings and identities (Isin & Turner, 2002). These considerations informed the creation of the prompts which aimed to create opportunities to explore the young people's criticality in the form of their everyday politics (Hankins, 2017). I hoped that, as a result, the young people would be able to critique social, political and economic contradictions in their lives and the everyday decisions they were making that had the potential to gradually effect social change (Freire, 1970; Hankins, 2017). As it turned out, the prompts also provided insights into the young people's relationality in the form of what they were doing to maintain, continue and repair their worlds (Tronto, 1993). Together, these nine prompts was an attempt to study as much as possible of the "total relationship" that young people had with their lived citizenship (Lister, 2007b, p. 695).

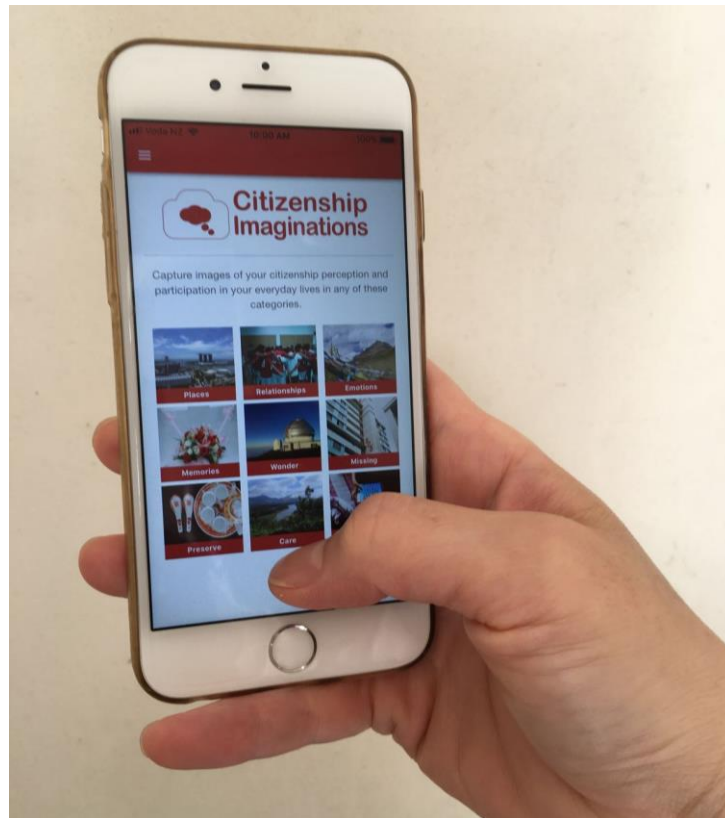
A mobile app specifically developed for this photovoice activity

Photographs have the potential to provide rich details of people's everyday lives through a visual rather than a verbal or textual culture (Prosser, 2011; Wood, 2014). Using a free mobile application (app) that I designed specifically for this research, the young people individually took photographs of people, places and things to represent their experiences with citizenship. The app served as a tool for my participants, and subsequently for me as a researcher, to be able to see more and to see differently (Prosser, 2011). This photovoice project facilitated the young people to critique society and politics, and connect the minutiae of their ordinary, local and personal lives with broader historical, social and political contexts and structures, thus enabling them to record and demonstrate their citizenship imaginations (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Wang, 2006; Wood, 2014) (see Chapter 7). Singapore was a suitable place to conduct photovoice research in this way because it boasts one of the highest rates of mobile phone ownership in the world among young people. In Singapore, 81% of 'trailing millennials', or those aged 14–25 years, either own or have access to smartphones (Deloitte, 2016). Beyond this research, I hope to make this app available for teachers and youth workers to aid their work in exploring young people's citizenship imaginations.

Participants were given the option to use any or all of these prompts through the free app on their mobile phone, which I specially developed for this photovoice research project. Participants logged on to the app using an alias selected by themselves. The app prompted the participants to caption their photographs, with an option to record their field notes. These captioned photos were saved in the mobile phones and then used in the debrief and for interpretation later during the one-on-one sessions. Images of the app are provided in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1. The Citizenship Imaginations mobile app





I also provided a printout of the nine prompts on a card, in case the app did not work, and participants were told to simply use the camera function in their personal mobile phones to take photos and save them in their phones if such a scenario occurred. I offered to loan compact cameras to participants who did not have a phone or had a phone without a camera function. However, no one was in this situation.

Participants were given a week for the photovoice activity, and this was followed by a one-on-one debrief. They were encouraged to take more time for the photography activity if needed, without having to worry about ‘completing’ this task within a specified time. In the interest of scheduling the one-on-one debrief session for all 30 participants within my timeframe for data collection in Singapore, I pre-booked their preferred time slot after the focus group sessions. However, we also agreed that they could change those dates and times if they needed to and they could also contact me if they needed any clarification or further support. We communicated via the WhatsApp instant messaging service, which is how most young people in Singapore communicate with each other – most participants highlighted that they did not prefer communication using emails. All participants reported that they did not have any problems with the app or the prompts and that they enjoyed the process of taking photos as part of their everyday activities, for example, while commuting to school, meeting friends, on outings with family, jogging in the park or reading an article. Their

reporting of the usage of photovoice, and the app, in this research drew me to consider how this had acted as what I have termed as *mirror*, *lens* and *shutter*. I reflect upon this in a later section (p. 99).

Most participants were able to meet me for the one-on-one debrief to analyse and interpret their photographs on the date and time we had agreed upon; only a couple of them changed the meeting time because of a clash with their university schedule. This indicated their commitment to and interest in the project and its accompanying debrief. The debrief was conducted at the venue provided by the respective institutions they were affiliated to (NIE, UniSIM-SUSS or YCS), and at a time that participants selected. Such an arrangement suited their schedule and minimised the hassle for the participants. Each debrief session lasted somewhere between one and one and a half hours, and was also audio recorded. I typically started by asking participants to share with me their thoughts about the process and feedback on the app and then moved on to talking about the photos they took. The debrief was guided by a series of questions with the acronym 'SHOWeD', which was developed by photovoice researchers (Wang, 2006; Wilson et al., 2007). The five debrief guiding questions are as follows:

1. What do you **S**ee here?
2. What's really **H**appening here?
3. How does this affect **O**ur lives?
4. **W**hy does this situation, concern or strength exist?
5. What can we **D**o about it?

With the aim of keeping this research as participatory as possible, I used this framework loosely, allowing the participants to take the lead in how and what they wanted to share. The captioned photos and the recordings of the debrief sessions were used for data analysis. I briefly reviewed all the photos that participants took in order to form an overall impression of the young people's imaginations of and experiences with citizenship. I asked participants to select one or two photos that they wished to discuss in further depth with me. This was done primarily in consideration of the short duration of an hour for the debrief that we had agreed on in the consent form. At the end of the debrief, participants shared with me the photos that we debriefed in detail (one or two per participant) via WhatsApp text messaging service. By sharing the photos with me, they agreed for me to use them in my thesis and subsequent print and digital publications. A total of 52 photos were shared by the 30 participants in this photovoice, a summary of which is presented in Appendix 2. The

photovoice debrief was recorded, and the verbal (voice recordings) as well as the visual (posters and photographs) data were used in my data analysis.

Process of app development

As highlighted before, one of the challenges in researching young people's lived citizenship is a methodological one of capturing their experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives, away from classrooms and other organised activities (Kallio & Häkli, 2011; Wood, 2014, 2015). However, the use of this mobile and digital technology opened up new methodological possibilities for visual methodology by allowing young people to capture what they considered as their citizenship actions and imaginations (Prosser, 2011). The mobile app was co-created with third-year undergraduate students at VUW taking the Software Engineering module (SWEN302) over five months in the second academic trimester in 2016 as part of their course requirements. I had to pitch my project to students who had a choice over the projects they wanted to work on. There was a wider range of interesting projects, for example, an interactive website for the Wellington Zoo, a mobile application for a public transport concession card (Snapper) and an online archival system for the New Zealand School of Music based at VUW. Among the groups of students, a few voted to work on the app for my project, and one group was finally assigned to me by their instructor. When questioned why they chose my projects over the others, which might have been better for their curriculum vitae, the project team working on my app said that they believed in the emancipatory potential of this project and they wanted to contribute towards that. It was interesting to note that these young people saw the importance of more empowering approaches to citizenship education and that they are not apathetic towards issues related to citizenship.

The young people who co-created this app took leadership in designing the functionality and user experience of the app. Because they were in the same age group as my research participants, they provided valuable youth-centric insights into how young people might respond to the app. This was helpful for designing the app in a way that would encourage and facilitate the young people to use their phones to take photos for this project, instead of limiting them. I met with the young designers once a week for 12 weeks in 2017 at VUW and provided inputs for the app's design and functionality. The young app designers also served as a valuable field-testing exercise before the actual data collection in Singapore. The consultative process of co-creating this app included deep discussions on design considerations, one of which was choosing a user interface that represented most users. For example, the app designers initially developed an app more suited for Android

phones because there are more Android phone users in New Zealand. However, since there are more iPhone users in Singapore, the app designers had to later tweak the design to suit the Singapore context. In addition, in choosing the thumbnail photos for the nine prompts, instead of using generic stock images, the young designers asked me to provide images that best represent Singapore in a way that young users in Singapore could relate to. The whole process of co-creating this app was empowering for the young designers and me as we engaged in deep dialogue for weeks about developing a tool that would allow me to have the best possible insights into young Singaporeans lived citizenship. At the same time, the young designers seemed to be raising their own awareness of ideas about active and lived citizenship, and in that process, were also reflecting on their own experiences with citizenship.

Mobile apps present potential for empowerment of young people for active citizenship. One recent example emerged recently in Hong Kong where young people were reported to have started and enacted an entire public protest using a popular mobile app called Telegram (Vincent, 2019). My intention of co-creating this citizenship imaginations app was not to start a protest or demonstration, but certainly to tell the stories of young people's experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives.

Reflection on photovoice as a participatory process

During the one-on-one debrief sessions, some participants indicated that photovoice was participatory, empowering and transformative, while others felt constrained to a certain degree. I categorised their comments using metaphors of photography – photovoice as a *mirror, lens and shutter*. For some young people, the activity was a mirror because it allowed them to intentionally reflect on what active citizenship actually meant to them and how they were active citizens in their everyday lives – which otherwise, they said, they would not have done. It also allowed them to see themselves as active citizens just as they are, and not trivialised as citizens-in-waiting. At the same time, the activity served as a lens through which they were able to zoom in to the minutiae of personal biographies and then zoom out to consider how the personal connected to the macro of social and political structures. For others, the activity was also a shutter because it obstructed them from realising the full potential of the stories they could have told. They described 'shutter' in two ways. First, many found it culturally inappropriate to randomly take photos of people and public places and they feared being told off or chided. Although I had discussed the possibility of this issue with participants during the briefing prior to the activity, it appeared to be of particular concern to my Singaporean participants. This was a very important

consideration for future work with photovoice because it needs to be culturally nuanced, considering the historical context of photovoice, originally developed to improve healthcare outcomes in communities in the US. Second, while most participants found the nine prompts generative, some felt it was also limiting. Participants found it generative because said they would not have known what to photograph if not for the prompts, and yet, they also said that somehow these nine options limited their imagination somewhat, although I had given clear instructions that they need not be limited by these prompts. Photovoice as a *mirror, lens and shutter* then provided a framework for me as a researcher to reflect on this photovoice methodology.

Aside from the idea of *mirror, lens and shutter*, many participants found this photovoice activity to be liberating in two ways. First, they discovered certain everyday actions that they started to recognise as their citizenship actions, although they were not often captured in the mainstream citizenship narratives. Second, some participants began to demonstrate their ability to imagine the link between personal troubles in society and social and political structures, hence gradually awakening their citizenship imagination. In some cases, these participants demonstrated their ability to critique what active citizenship actually meant to them, as opposed to previously, when they were ‘told’ what citizenship is and how to be good citizens in school and by society and politics. This photovoice activity also allowed many participants to bring attention to social problems that may not have been visible to adults (S. Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2018). Some participants reported that the focus group dialogues also helped them to critique and reflect on the meaning and values linked to active citizenship in a way that had an emancipatory effect on them, and new knowledge was co-created with the researcher (me) and the other participants. I elaborate on these responses from participants in further detail in Chapter 6.

One particular example of an attempt to enable a richer participatory approach in this research is the participant-led photovoice exhibition held after the data collection. After each one-on-one photovoice debrief session, I asked participants if they would like to share their citizenship imaginations with others beyond the boundaries of this research. All of the participants who opted in to the photovoice activity expressed interest in this idea, and following the end of the data collection phase, I arranged for this photovoice exhibition. All of the photovoice participants shared one of their captioned photos to be displayed which I printed for them, and four of these participants volunteered to share deeper insights on their citizenship imaginations captured in their photographs. All 40 participants in this research were invited to attend the session and some of them invited their friends and others. The

session was moderated by two young people who did not participate in the research, and the senior administrators from the three institutions to which the participants were affiliated were also present at the session. The participants themselves led the sharing, the question-and-answer session and the subsequent gallery walk of the photo exhibits. The exhibition was a showcase of the thoughtful and insightful citizenship perceptions and practices of the young people in the research, much of which was new learning and discovery for themselves as well as for their peers and administrators. Some young people later said that the session was very empowering for them and that they wished for more of such insightful discussion in order to continue to explore their citizenship experiences. As a result, I set up a Facebook page so that these participants could continue their citizenship conversations amongst themselves.

While it was a rather small-scale event, the photovoice exhibition was one small way to ‘give back’ to the participants and the three institutions in my research (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018), by showcasing the young people’s insightful and thoughtful photographs, critique of the present and imagination of the future. It was also an attempt to raise the participants’ critical consciousness so that they might be able to analyse and transform their own lives, and to contribute to social change beyond participating in this research (Cahill, 2007). Photographs of the photovoice exhibition are presented in Appendix 3.

Data analysis

The methodological process described in the previous sections led to visual (posters and photos) and verbal (recordings) data from the focus groups and photovoice, and my data analysis involved all these data sources. To facilitate the process of storing, analysing, sorting and visualising the data, I used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo⁴ from QSR International (Creswell, 2014a). I adopted Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis (see Table 4.4), first, to organise and describe the data; second, to identify, analyse and report patterns and themes within the data; and finally, to interpret various aspects of my research topic.

⁴ <http://www.qsrinternational.com/product>

Table 4.4. Phases of thematic analysis

| Phase | | Description of the process |
|-------|--|--|
| 1. | Familiarizing yourself with your data: | Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. |
| 2. | Generating initial codes: | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. |
| 3. | Searching for themes: | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |
| 4. | Reviewing themes: | Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis. |
| 5. | Defining and naming themes: | Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |
| 6. | Producing the report: | The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. |

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87)

Even while using a computer program, it was me as the researcher, not the computer program, who did the coding and analysis; the computer program simply provided a means for storing the data and easily accessing the codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My data analysis began with the process of 'immersion' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 204) in the data, which first involved me transcribing over 40 hours of voice recordings so that I became familiar with the data, and then reading and re-reading the transcribed data in an iterative manner. I then coded the transcribed raw data to make them more readily accessible and understandable, and to draw out various themes and patterns (Berg & Lune, 2012). In coding the data, I first converted my main interview questions for focus group dialogues into four initial codes.

1. What does active citizenship mean to you?
2. How has formal citizenship education shaped your active citizenship?
3. Who or what shaped your active citizenship?
4. How are you an active citizen in your everyday life?

After this, I included other codes that emerged across the focus group and photovoice.

Examples of these are:

1. relational forms of citizenship
2. critical forms of citizenship

3. barriers to maximal forms of citizenship
4. a vision of an ideal Singapore and what kind of citizen it takes to live in that society.

From these codes, I developed sub codes, for example, 'care for family', 'care for community' and 'care for the natural environment' under the main code of 'relational forms of citizenship'. I coded the data against these initial codes and then organised the data into possible themes.

Using NVivo, I was able to place the transcribed text side-by-side with the posters that participants created at the start of the focus group sessions, as well as the photographs from the photovoice project. This allowed to me to explore the intricate relationship between the visual and the verbal data; therefore, the text was not analysed separately from the visual (Pink, 2013). By analysing the text and the visual data side-by-side, I was able to examine participants' ideologies, worldviews, histories and identities (Pink, 2013), and at the same time, I was able to gain insights into the cultural significance, social practices and power relations that were embedded within these data (Rose, 2016). My analysis involved a constant moving backward and forward between the entire data set, looking for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest. I wrote notes from the start of the coding process, with short paragraphs on what I assessed to be possible themes. This then led to the creation of an extensive thematic map of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

My data analysis was not only an iterative process but also an inductive one (Merriam, 2010). Throughout the entire coding and analysis process, I kept constant engagement with my theory to enhance analysis by sensitising myself to more subtle features of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After generating the thematic map, I attempted to make sense of my findings by writing these themes into arguments using my theoretical framework, and also integrating selected extracts from the data that were relevant, vivid and compelling (Creswell, 2014a, 2014b). This sense-making was the process of answering my research questions (Merriam, 2009). During this process, I was concurrently omitting data that did not fall within my theoretical framework and did not answer my research questions. An example of this was a couple of male participants saying that the conscripted National Service for young men in Singapore influenced their nationalistic identity and patriotism for the country. While this was important information, it fell outside of my theoretical framework and, hence, out of the scope of my study.

The multiple case study design of my approach required two levels of analysis – first within each case and then a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009). I looked for similarities and differences between the cases and made carefully considered judgements on what were

meaningful and substantively significant in the data (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). In keeping with Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework of thematic analysis, my analysis was a recursive process and not a linear one that involved simply moving from one phase to the next as I moved back and forth through the phases throughout the process of analysis. Finally, I wrote my findings into a coherent argument and organised them into chapters in a way that best addressed my research questions. This process helped build my arguments towards a theory of action, which is presented in Chapter 8 and 9 (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical considerations

In dealing with human participants in my research, particularly with young people, I was aware of the ethical issues in collecting, analysing and reporting the data and was fully committed to protecting the confidentiality of the participants in my research (Creswell, 2014a). Ethical permission for the research was sought through the VUW Human Ethics Committee and was approved on 3 December 2016 (#23673, see Appendix 5). The research was conducted under the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the research at any stage. To uphold the confidentiality of the participants, I ensured that all participants chose a pseudonym for themselves and only these pseudonyms were used during analysis and in reporting data (Prosser, 2011). I was extremely mindful of safeguarding the identities of the participants throughout all stages of my research (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The photovoice activity, in particular, posed a unique ethical issue regarding confidentiality and copyright in taking and using photographs (Creswell, 2014a). I clearly detailed the participants' responsibilities in capturing and sharing photographs, and specifically instructed them not to take direct photographs of identifiable faces, and not to upload these images to any form of social media. The participants were made aware that no identifiable images would be used in the final presentation of data. They also provided signed consent to use their images for this research and in subsequent digital or print publications, and for dissemination in other forms (Wang, 2006).

Because visual methods can reveal important information that text or word-based methods cannot, I was also careful to accurately represent the participants' interpretations of their photographs (Prosser, 2011). In the writing and presentation of my final report, I ensured integrity of authorship and proper disclosure in my reporting, and that the report would not disclose information that had the potential to harm participants at present or in the future (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also honoured reciprocity by 'giving back' to participants and the three institutions they were affiliated to, for their time and efforts in my

research, first through the photovoice exhibition that we co-organised, and secondly with a summary report of my findings (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

In discussing credibility in qualitative research, I am aware that the concept is named differently by different authors; for example, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability have been substituted with internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this case, in referring to credibility, I specifically refer to the trustworthiness of the research and in that I was concerned with the ‘internal validity’ of dealing with the question of how my findings were answering my research questions; I was not concerned with ‘external validity’, which is the generalisability and transferability of results to be applied in other contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To ensure credibility of my findings, I adhered to a few strategies suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), namely, (1) triangulation, (2) respondent validation, (3) adequate engagement in data collection, (4) researcher’s reflexivity, (5) peer review, (6) audit trail and (7) rich and thick description of data. First, the use of multiple data collection methods, multiple sources of data and multiple theories (critical theory and feminist theory) yielded a powerful strategy that increased the credibility of this research, in what is called a triangulation method. In using the strategy of respondent validation, at the end of every focus group session and one-on-one photovoice debrief, I summarised the discussions and allowed participants to validate the accuracy or highlight any discrepancies. The photovoice exhibition that I organised after the data collection phase was another form of participant validation, which allowed participants to once again hear a summary of what they had contributed and to view the captioned photographs they had submitted to me. In addition, the extensive hours of the focus group sessions, and the one-on-one photovoice debrief sessions that lasted between one and one and a half hours each meant that I had spent over 40 hours immersed in data collection. This ensured that I spent relatively adequate time on data collection, and this contributed to the credibility of my findings.

One other approach that I used to ensure greater credibility to the research process was an intentional attempt to be more explicit about my own reflexivity as a researcher. I kept a record of my research decisions throughout the research process that included decisions that led me to my literature review, theory, methodology, analysis, findings and discussion. This was complemented with the notes of meetings that I had typed and sent to my supervisors after every research meeting. Discussing my research helped me be aware of

my biases, blind spots, dispositions and assumptions. All of this contributed to my greater reflexivity as a researcher.

I was also fortunate to have a couple of peer review processes built into my research process. First, I had regular research meetings with my two research supervisors from Victoria University of Wellington, who read a few iterations of all of my chapters and engaged me in critical discussions about my ideas, decisions, beliefs and assumptions. The fact that we had over 30 such formal meetings, with all three of us together, in a span of three years is a testament to the rigour of these discussions. Second, I had the privilege of sharing parts of my thesis with a citizenship education reading group for postgraduate students that meet once a month at the university, and I presented at a conference prior to finalising my findings. The questions and comments from my meetings with my supervisors and from my presentations strengthened my reflexivity. These two processes also served as a valuable peer review process that contributed to ensuring credibility of my research. Some of the processes discussed above, such as my research journal, the notes of the meetings and the candidate development plan, served as an audit trail with a detailed account of my methods, procedures and decisions in carrying out this research. Finally, in writing this thesis, I was deliberate in providing rich descriptions of what my participants said, showed and shared with me and I was intentional in keeping true to my data in my reporting in order to maintain the trustworthiness of my data and my findings.

These strategies were useful in maintaining the credibility of my research, and together with my own decorum as a researcher and commitment to conducting this research in an ethical manner, as outlined earlier in this chapter, helped to ensure the overall trustworthiness of my research.

Research limitations

There are limitations to this study. First, this research was a small study of young people ($n = 40$) for the focus group dialogues, and slightly fewer participants ($n = 30$) for the photovoice activity and the results might not be generalisable. However, as mentioned earlier, I wanted an in-depth analysis of young people's lived citizenship in their natural settings of their lived worlds (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, applying a purposeful sampling method for the case sites meant that I had to intentionally select sites where possible participants would be able to provide useful information, and help me gain a better understanding of the phenomenon I was seeking to research – in this case, young Singaporeans' lived citizenship (Creswell, 2014a). To achieve that, a small group of 30 or more participants across the three case sites was an ideal number for this qualitative case

study research (Berg & Lune, 2012). This is because I was not concerned with generalisation in a statistical or quantitative sense that garners data from a random sample; it was more important to this research to make sense of young people's lived citizenship and to use that learning to guide future thinking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In particular, researching lived citizenship meant that I had to study young people's specific contextual social, cultural and economic situations that affected their lives as citizens (Lister, 2007b).

A second limitation was the possibility of a self-selected bias in the participant selection (Lavrakas, 2011). Although I employed a purposeful sampling method to intentionally select the case sites, I had no control over the selection of individual participants at any of the three sites. The invitation to participate in the research was sent to participants directly by the coordinators at each of the institutions, and participants were allowed to decide entirely for themselves whether or not they wanted to participate in this study. A possible problem with this is that the participants' propensity to participate might have correlated with the topic of my research, and hence would not be representative of the target population (Lavrakas, 2011); in other words, for the same reason that the case sites were selected – because they offered exemplary active citizenship programmes for post-secondary young people – the participants themselves might have had more dispositions of the maximal forms of critical and justice-oriented citizens. Thus, the participants might not accurately represent the general population of post-secondary young Singaporeans aged 17–25. The profile of participants who signed up were indicative of this bias. For example, the participants from NIE were active volunteers and had recently embarked on student-led international service-learning projects in India. Most UniSIM-SUSS participants were from the social work degree programme. As for Youth Corps Singapore, by virtue of it being a voluntary programme, it was highly likely that the participants were motivated to be involved in community service and volunteerism. However, as mentioned in relation to the first limitation in the preceding paragraph, my aim in this qualitative study was not to report a generalisable trend but to provide an observation in a specific context that can help build towards a theory of action (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Chapter 5 – The ideal Singaporean citizen

The previous chapter dealt with the methodology employed in this research. It argued how a qualitative and multiple case study approach, informed by critical theory and feminist theory, was appropriate to investigate young Singaporeans' experiences with citizenship and elaborated on the research methods employed in this research. This argument is built further in this chapter by presenting a case for analysing policies and programmes for young Singaporeans' citizenship and citizenship education. This chapter critically analyses official policies about the kind of Singaporean citizen that are communicated through official speeches, press releases and curricula. It addresses my first research question: What kind of citizens does Singapore aim to nurture? This chapter begins by describing the analytical framework of Sim, Chua, and Krishnasamy (2017), which was employed for the policy analysis, and subsequently provides details of the text selection and approach to analysis. In making reference to Sim et al.'s (2017) framework, the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the official policies and programmes. In summary, the analysis reveals an overriding emphasis on 'character-driven' citizenship, with a preference for citizens of good character and high morals, and, to a lesser extent, on social-participatory citizenship, which involves active participation in society. There is very little evidence of a desire for critically reflexive citizenship, that is, the ability to critique social and political structures in society. This absence suggests that a more critical form of citizenship has not been valued in the conceptions of citizenship education policies and programmes in Singapore.

Three further themes that augment the analytical framework were identified through a process of inductive analysis: citizenship for social cohesion, a term that values social unity and harmony in a multiracial, multicultural society; a focus on citizen-workers of the future who contribute to the Singapore government's agenda of continued economic success; and the pursuit of a holistic citizen, a term that recognises young people's life experiences as part of their citizenship. Later in the chapter, I argue why these themes could provide a useful expansion to typologies of citizenship education in the Asian-Singaporean context.

Analytical framework

As discussed in Chapter 2, Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) provided a widely cited framework that broadly categorised citizenship into three kinds of citizens: the personally

responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen. In this conception, personally responsible citizens are those who act responsibly in their community, for example, by volunteering or participating in recycling programmes. Participatory citizens lead and organise community efforts to care for those in need within established systems and community structures. Justice-oriented citizens are associated with questioning, debating and changing established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time. Although this framework has been acknowledged as “research-based, policy-related and professionally useful” (I. Davies, 2017, p. 81), I argue in this chapter that it is insufficiently culturally nuanced for the Asian-Singaporean context. Sim et al.’s (2017) framework, which arose from a more recent qualitative study involving social studies teachers in Singapore, is a more culturally and contextually appropriate conceptual framework for this policy analysis and also provided some insight into the conceptions of citizenship that may be missing from Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004b) framework.

Sim et al.’s (2017) ‘typology of citizenship’ was conceived as a result of an in-depth literature review of conceptions of citizenship in the Asia-Pacific regions mapped with interviews with 14 social studies teachers in Singapore. From this, they developed a framework that is contextualised to studying conceptions of citizenship in Singapore. Three types of citizenship were proposed by these authors:

- character-driven citizenship, which refers to citizens of good character and high morals;
- social-participatory citizenship, which refers to active participation in the social life of the community; and
- critically reflexive citizenship, which refers to deep political awareness, a strong belief in fairness and justice, and a critical examination of the self, the systematic structures and relational aspects of the society, and the relationship between the self and the society. (pp. 96–97)

The conceptual frames of Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) and Sim et al. (2017) have much in common. For example, both reflect a civic republican tradition that emphasises civic responsibility and citizens’ involvement in civil society (Heater, 1999). This similarity is salient when analysing citizenship education policies in Singapore; Sim et al. (2017) argued that citizenship in Singapore is essentially undergirded by communitarian thinking associated with “civic republicanism that favours loyal, dutiful and law-abiding citizens” (Sim et al., 2017, p. 94). In addition, the “justice-oriented citizen” in Westheimer and

Kahne's framework and the "critically-reflexive citizen" in Sim et al.'s typology share similar traits of maximal forms of citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992). Both of these refer to an awareness of and the ability to critically analyse social, political and economic structures and for citizens to see themselves as part of this same system.

However, there are also differences in emphases across the frameworks, and recognising these was crucial for selecting the most appropriate framework for this study. Sim et al.'s (2017) framework is arguably more appropriate for this policy analysis for at least four reasons. First, Sim et al.'s (2017) "character-driven citizenship" is explicitly focused on moral values and dispositions that are seen as essential for citizenship. This is useful for researching citizenship in Singapore because of the long-standing focus on teaching values and moral conduct in Singapore's education since its independence (Han, 2015). In comparison, Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) conception of a "personally responsible citizen" is concerned with responsible actions, not morality as a disposition. In another similar study of Singapore social studies teachers' understanding of citizenship by Sim and Chow (2019), it emerged that Singaporean teachers understand 'participatory citizenship' as volunteerism, underpinned by relationality in the context of the wider community. This is a different conception of volunteerism than the one in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) framework, which is linked to a character trait of personally responsible citizenship, disconnected from the wider social context. Sim and Chow pointed out that volunteerism, as conceived in Singapore citizenship, is a relational understanding that is particularly rooted in familial relationships. This involves individuals cultivating personal dispositions that allow them to relate with sensitivity and reciprocity to others, a pattern of behaviour expanding out towards shaping humane relationships in wider community relations.

A second reason for selecting Sim et al.'s (2017) framework was that the idea of a "participatory citizen" in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) framework envisions a more active form of citizenship than the "social-participatory" citizenship in Sim et al.'s (2017) framework. Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) suggested a progression from the "personally responsible citizen" to the "participatory citizen", as evident from the emphasis on actions such as "active participation", "organise community efforts" and "taking leadership positions within established systems and community structures" (p. 240). In contrast, Sim et al. (2017) were not concerned with such details with their "social-participatory citizen" but had a broader conception of social participation as "active participation in the social life of the community" that is concerned with "doing" and "making a difference", rather than

taking leadership roles (p. 96). Sim et al.'s (2017) framework, which has a broader conception of active participation in the community, rather than a focus on 'leadership' as in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) framework, fits well with Singapore citizenship education, which focuses on 'concerned citizens' and 'active contributors', as seen in the Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes discussed in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.1).

A third significant difference involves the conception of "critically-reflexive citizenship" in Sim et al.'s (2017) framework. This typology focuses on the relational aspect of citizenship, defined as "a critical examination of the self, the systematic structures and relational aspects of the society, and the relationship between the self and the society", as well as a focus on a "deep political awareness, a strong belief in fairness and justness" (p. 97). Westheimer and Kahne (2004b) did not focus on relational aspects as explicitly as Sim et al. (2017). For example, "justice-oriented citizenship" is focused on seeking to address injustices and to "effect systemic changes" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b, p. 96), unlike Sim et al.'s (2017) focus on relationships. As discussed in Chapter 3, this thesis is concerned with relationality and thus Sim et al.'s typology was more appropriate to analyse the conception of citizenship in Singapore, which has been characterised as a relational citizenship rather than a critical one (Sim & Chow, 2019).

The final consideration was the extent of maximal forms of citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992) in the frameworks. Ideas such as involvement in 'democratic social movements' as described in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) "justice-oriented citizenship" has not been a common feature in Singapore. This is because limits to democracy are held to be necessary for Singapore's survival and prosperity, citizens' participation in civil society has been constrained and controlled, and dissent and activism are discouraged (Sim et al., 2017). Sim et al. (2017) and Han (2015) have argued that this is consistent with how active participation is promoted, understood and accepted in Singapore. They argued that, unlike other democratic nations, there are clear out-of-bounds markers as to what is legal and permissible social action and political participation. Further, the term 'justice' is also not a common feature in the Singaporean citizenship narrative, and therefore it might not yield credible results if citizenship education policies in Singapore were to be analysed against the 'justice-oriented citizenship' typology.

In view of such subtlety in the two conceptions, Sim et al.'s typology provides important nuances to culturally appropriate and contextual analysis, and therefore it was assessed that to be a more suitable framework to analyse for Singaporean data. Despite that,

there are two important limitations to both frameworks. First, neither was developed specifically to analyse citizenship policies. Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) framework was developed to analyse the content of citizenship education programmes in the US. Sim et al.'s (2017) framework, on the other hand, emerged from a study of Singaporean social studies teachers' conceptions of citizenship. Second, the focus on formal and public participation as citizenship expressions in both frameworks arguably represents a narrow conception of citizenship that overlooks the potential for less formal and diverse everyday ways of citizenship among young people (Wood, 2014). Together, these two factors made it imperative that I become alert to alternative conceptions of citizenship that might emerge from the inductive process of my policy analysis that are not represented in Sim et al.'s (2017) typology. Those that emerged are presented in the later sections of this chapter.

Text selection

The analysis presented in this chapter focused on 20 sources from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (see Table 5.1). Citizenship education in Singapore schools is centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education (Han, 2015), and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth is responsible for "encouraging youth contributions to the community" (Ministry of Culture Community and Youth, 2017). A total of 18 sources with a focus on citizenship and citizenship education were selected, comprising political speeches, press releases and curriculum documents from these two ministries. Additionally, two speeches by the Singapore Prime Minister that highlighted the government's desire to promote more active forms of citizenship within the same period were included. Sources that did not contain any reference to citizenship or citizenship education were omitted.

It is important to note three points in relation to my text selection. First, the reliance on sources from official ministry web portals comes from this being the only means for the public to gain access to policy texts such as political speeches, press releases and curriculum documents. In particular, in referencing the speeches and press releases in this thesis, I was not able to cite page numbers for direct quotes as no page numbers were indicated in these original sources. Second, the majority of my sources are political speeches because in Singapore a political speech is often read as if it were a policy document; policies are often literally spoken into existence (Sim, 2013). Third, the text selection started from 2011 because, as discussed in Chapter 2, that year marked a significant policy reform towards more active forms of citizenship in Singapore (Gopinathan & Mardiana, 2013).

Table 5.1. Summary of sources for analysis

| S/No | Source type | Description | Year |
|------|--------------------|--|------|
| 1. | Speech | Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally Speech | 2011 |
| 2. | Speech | Opening Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the Ministry of Education (MOE) Work Plan Seminar | 2011 |
| 3. | Speech | Opening Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the 1st NIE-MOE Character and Citizenship Education Conference | 2011 |
| 4. | Speech | Keynote Speech by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, "Education for Competitiveness and Growth", at the Singapore Conference in Washington, DC, US, 8 February 2012 | 2012 |
| 5. | Speech | 1st Reply by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, "Student-Centric, Values-Driven Education: Nurturing an Inclusive and Stronger Singapore", at the Financial Year 2012 Committee of Supply Debate | 2012 |
| 6. | Speech | Keynote Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the Ministry of Education Work Plan Seminar | 2012 |
| 7. | Press release | "New Syllabus and Textbook Titles for Character and Citizenship Education" | 2012 |
| 8. | Speech | 1st Reply by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, "Hope – Opportunities for All", at the Financial Year 2013 Committee of Supply Debate | 2013 |
| 9. | Speech | Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally Speech | 2013 |
| 10. | Speech | Keynote Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the Ministry of Education Work Plan Seminar | 2013 |
| 11. | Press release | "Updated Leaps 2.0 to Better Support Students' Holistic Development" | 2014 |
| 12. | Curricula document | "A Holistic Education for Secondary School Students – LEAPS 2.0" | 2014 |
| 13. | Curricula document | Character and Citizenship Education (Primary) Syllabus | 2014 |
| 14. | Curricula document | Character and Citizenship Education (Secondary) Syllabus | 2014 |
| 15. | Speech | Speech by Mr Lawrence Wong, Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, "Promoting the Spirit of Giving, Boosting Youth Volunteerism and Strengthening Social Harmony", at the 2014 Committee of Supply debate | 2014 |
| 16. | Speech | Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the 7th Teachers' Conference 2014 | 2014 |
| 17. | Speech | Keynote Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the Ministry of Education Work Plan Seminar | 2014 |
| 18. | Speech | Keynote Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, at the Ministry of Education Work Plan Seminar | 2015 |
| 19. | Curricula document | Social Studies Syllabus for Upper Secondary, Express & Normal (Academic) | 2016 |
| 20. | Curricula document | Character and Citizenship Education (Pre-University) Syllabus | 2016 |

Approach to analysis

Using Sim et al.'s (2017) typology as an analytic framework, I initially used a deductive, thematic approach to analyse the kinds of citizens that policies and programmes aim to nurture. The intention was to provide a detailed analysis of the kinds of citizens espoused, both implicitly and explicitly, across the data set to directly address the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process of analysis adhered to the thematic analysis outlined in Chapter 4. The policy documents were first coded against Sim et al.'s (2017) typology – character-driven, social-participatory and critically reflexive citizens. This involved reading the sources thoroughly and highlighting the texts to be coded. Sentences and phrases that contained references to citizenship and citizenship education were coded against the typology. These were then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet categorised under the respective codes. As a result of an iterative process of review and analysis, these data were collated into possible themes and a thematic map of analysis was created. I assigned names and developed definitions for each of these themes, as a means to identify the underlying ideology, assumptions and patterns across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Examples of themes within the code of citizenship were 'care and harmony' and 'identity, belonging and rootedness'. As a result of a further inductive analysis, three new areas emerged that are not represented in Sim's et al.'s (2017) schema: citizenship for social cohesion, citizen-workers of the future and holistic citizens. The next sections discuss these conceptions of citizenship and their relative emphases within the selected policy texts.

What kind of Singaporean citizens?

Across the selected policy texts, the citizenship discussion seemed predominantly dominated by character-driven citizenship, with a less significant but still notable focus on social-participatory citizenship. Critically reflexive citizenship emerged as a minor theme. An example of how these different emphases appeared can be seen in the four intended outcomes for CCE, as outlined in a speech by the Minister for Education (Ministry of Education, 2011a):

- Firstly, our pupils should grow up to be loyal citizens, with a strong sense of belonging to Singapore and a strong sense of national identity, committed to the well-being, defence and security of our nation.
- Secondly, they should show care and concern for others, and be willing to contribute actively to improve the lives of others.

- Thirdly, in our multi-racial society, our pupils need to be socio-culturally sensitive and do their part to promote social cohesion and harmony.
- Finally, our pupils must have the ability to reflect on and respond to community, national and global issues, and to make informed and responsible decisions.

In this speech, the first three outcomes signal a pursuit of character-driven and socially participatory citizenship, but only the fourth alludes to critically reflexive citizenship. This imbalance is reflected across the texts as a whole.

Character-driven citizenship

Character-driven citizenship features in almost all the speeches and curriculum documents that were analysed. This idea of citizenship is presented through three related concepts across the texts: ‘values’, ‘social and emotional competencies’ and ‘character development’. These are examined in turn.

First, the Ministry of Education’s ‘core values’ – respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony – appear explicitly in the CCE curriculum documents and speeches (Ministry of Education, 2011a, 2011b, 2014b). These values are linked to Singapore’s “shared values” and “family values” (Ministry of Education, 2014b, pp. 31–32). Of these, three values – responsibility, care and harmony – feature more prominently. Often, responsibility is linked to loyalty in the contexts of community and nation, while care and harmony are discussed together as though they were complementary to each other.

A second key category within character-driven citizenship is social and emotional competencies, integrally linked to the third category, dispositions. In many texts, character development is presented as a process of “making the values come alive, by developing social and emotional competencies, as well as the habits and inner dispositions to act in a consistent way based on sound values” (Ministry of Education, 2011b). For example, in the following speech by the Minister for Education, social and emotional competencies involve:

1. ‘knowing thyself’ – building self-awareness and self-management, to enable the individual to achieve his or her full potential.
2. ‘knowing others’ – to be socially aware and to interact well with others, and nurture positive relationships.
3. ‘doing the right things’ in dealing with others – to apply moral reasoning and take responsibility in decision making, and have the integrity to stand by our values.

(Ministry of Education, 2011a)

Together, the teaching of “right values”, social and emotional competencies and dispositions are presented as central to Singapore education’s purpose of nurturing citizens of good character. The explicit message is that teachers need to have the “belief and passion to instil” these three aspects of character-driven citizenship in Singaporean pupils (Ministry of Education, 2011a).

The three interconnected concepts of values, competencies and dispositions, as elements in official ideas of citizenship, are also visible in documents that address the way the government sees citizenship being developed in schools. The *Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes* (see Figure 2.1) that “comprised values, and character and social emotional competencies, and enabled one to strive for success and to interact with others meaningfully” (Ministry of Education, 2012d) is an example. Citizenship skills within this framework are intended to enable “students to function effectively as concerned citizens who would stay rooted to Singapore”. The framework also aligns “with the goal of CCE to nurture students to be citizens of good character” (Ministry of Education, 2014b). The obscuring use of these interchangeable concepts within citizenship education signals the government’s desire for an ‘all-encompassing’ citizen but does not reveal a direct and clear vision of the desired citizen.

A conception of character-driven citizenship is emphasised in all of the Minister for Education’s speeches and is positioned as core to Singapore’s education (Ministry of Education, 2011b). The curriculum documents from the period since 2011 also have a notable emphasis on character-driven citizenship. For example, the CCE syllabus document states that the main goal of CCE is to “inculcate values and build competencies in students to develop them to be good individuals and useful citizens” (Ministry of Education, 2014b). Character-driven citizenship is particularly expressed in the following three ways at the curriculum level:

- a caring citizen who will contribute to a cohesive and harmonious society;
- a loyal citizen with a strong sense of identity, belonging and rootedness to Singapore; and
- a resilient citizen who will be able to face uncertainty and vulnerability in a changing society.

These three forms of character-driven citizenship are discussed in further detail in the following sections.

The caring citizen

There is compelling evidence from across the policy texts that harmony and care are considered important attributes of the ideal Singaporean citizen. These two values are often used together in ways that suggest that they are seen as complementary to each other. For instance, the caring citizen is envisioned as one who will contribute to a cohesive and harmonious society. This is highlighted in the Minister for Education's speech: "we want them [our children] to have the values and character to do well in life, to live in harmony, and to care for one another" (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The pursuit of a caring citizen in Singapore society is portrayed as crucial on two levels: the familial and the societal. This is consistent with the government's message that caring for one's family is a fundamental value in a context where family is seen as the "basic unit of the Singapore society" (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 31). At the same time, the caring citizen is also expected to embody an attitude of "nation before community, and society above self" (Ministry of Education, 2014b, pp. 31–32).

The conception of a caring citizen in the citizenship education curriculum is linked to relational aspects of citizenship, for example, "to develop care and concern for others" (Ministry of Education, 2014a; 2014b, p. 3). Such a conception is also linked to social and emotional competencies, such as 'social awareness' and 'relationship management' in order to be 'socially aware and to interact well with others, and nurture positive relationships' in order to achieve the relational goals of a caring citizen (Ministry of Education, 2014a; 2014b, p. 3). There are classroom-based lessons on how to be a caring person within the CCE programme. In addition, the Values in Action programme is an opportunity for students to practise care, for example, "taking care of family members" for primary pupils (Ministry of Education, 2014a, p. 19) and "caring for the environment and animals" for secondary school students (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 23). While there seems to be an interest in leveraging young people's lived experiences for practising care, there is a paradoxical absence of attention young people's imagination and enactment of care in their everyday lives. This is one of the gaps that this research aimed to address.

The loyal citizen

Besides a desire for a caring citizen, a desire for a loyal citizen features prominently across the texts. Young Singaporeans are expected to "grow up loyal citizens, with a strong sense of belonging to Singapore and a strong sense of national identity, committed to the well-being, defence and security of Singapore" (Ministry of Education, 2011a). A sense of

commitment and loyalty to Singapore and to fellow Singaporeans is presented in these texts as important in order for citizens to contribute to taking Singapore forward (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The notion of a loyal citizen is inextricably linked to other concepts such as care, national identity and rootedness to Singapore. For example, Singaporean children are expected “to care for each other, to forge a community united by a common national identity” (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Citizenship education is instrumental in nurturing “concerned citizens” (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 4) and for young Singaporeans to remain rooted to Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2011a). This is an important feature of Singapore’s paradoxical orientation towards citizenship, understood as preparing young Singaporeans for the future workforce in a global economy, constantly balanced with a strong emphasis on instilling in them strong national interests and developing a national identity (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

The resilient citizen

Nurturing a resilient citizen is another key feature of character-driven citizenship, particularly in the face of individual, community or national challenges, and uncertainty and vulnerability in a changing society (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Because Singapore is a young nation, has a small economy and is combating the effects of globalisation (Ministry of Education, 2012d), this is understandable. The texts show a clear pursuit of “informed, rugged and resilient citizens who can stay united to overcome crisis and adversities” (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Particularly evident in speeches and curricular documents is a constant fear linked to threats to survival, vulnerability and an uncertain future in the face of socio-economic constraints, as well as to local, regional and global challenges and threats. The following extracts from the Minister for Education’s speech highlight extensively the perceived threats:

The most far-reaching global development is likely to be the shift in the centre of gravity of the world economy from the US and Europe towards Asia. [...] Singaporeans will have to compete with the 10 million graduates and [...] many jobs today [will be] obsolete tomorrow. [...] Technology will create new pressure and disrupt businesses [...] Advancements in ICT [...] may also fragment society in new and unpredictable ways. (Ministry of Education, 2011b)

The language of this speech suggests the presence of a deep fear in the face of threat that drives Singaporean discourses of citizenship. Indeed, citizenship education seems crucial so that Singaporean citizens of good character with the moral resolve to withstand an uncertain future are nurtured in preparation for threats and challenges (Ministry of Education, 2011b).

The CCE curriculum highlights young Singaporeans' roles and responsibilities in Singapore amid threatening societal changes brought about by "globalisation and technological advancements" (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 1). Similarly, National Education, "a cornerstone of the CCE curriculum", constantly reiterates Singapore's vulnerabilities and constraints (Ministry of Education, 2011b). The anxiety about nurturing resilient citizens is so intense that Singaporeans are expected "to step forward to risk their lives" in times of crisis and difficulties (Ministry of Education, 2011b). There is a perceived need to equip Singaporeans with "both values and competencies" to face threats that "will test our resolve, our cohesiveness, and our sense of belonging in an uncertain world" (Ministry of Education, 2011b).

Social-participatory citizenship

While there is an overwhelming focus on character-driven citizenship across the policies, there is also a slightly less significant but notable focus on social-participatory citizenship. Nurturing students with "empathy for others, a regard for the common good, and a shared sense of responsibility for Singapore's well-being and future" is another common feature across the policy texts (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The role of citizenship education in achieving this goal is primarily manifested in the forms of volunteerism and community service projects.

The emphasis on social-participatory citizenship was reinforced by the Singapore Prime Minister himself as he rallied young Singaporeans to be "active citizens" and to go forth to "change the community for the better" (Prime Minister's Office, 2011). This call sits in a context where the government depicts community involvement as an integral part of citizenship education in Singapore, crucial to building a "spirit of volunteerism so that students become active contributors and concerned citizens, with empathy for fellow Singaporeans" (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The conception of social-participatory citizenship is closely connected to character-driven citizenship, through which citizens "show care and concern for others, and [are] willing to contribute actively to improve the lives of others" (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Here, values meet actions through participation.

The Values in Action programme (see Chapter 2) is presented as an important conduit for achieving the goal of social-participatory citizenship. In Values in Action, young people are encouraged to "take ownership and have meaningful experiences in serving the community" (Ministry of Education, 2012a). This goal aligns with one of the intended outcomes of CCE, that young Singaporeans learn to "care for others and contribute actively

to the progress of the community and nation” (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 5), and that the programme seeks to nurture “socially responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the community” (Ministry of Education, 2014c). Although Values in Action is presented as another opportunity for the “inculcation of values through community involvement”, it also indicates a desire for more critically reflexive forms of citizenship in two ways. First, Values in Action requires “students to identify and understand community issues, initiate action among their peers to make a difference and improve the lives of others” (Ministry of Education, 2014d). Second, as part of Values in Action, students undertake personal and group thinking as part of the programme to “reflect on the values they have put into practice and how they can continue to contribute meaningfully” (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Similarly, the Youth Corps Singapore programme, which is a follow-up to Values in Action in young people’s post formal education years, provides opportunities for young Singaporeans to “contribute in a sustained and meaningful way” (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014). Together, Values in Action and Youth Corps Singapore signal an important policy shift towards a more social-participatory citizenship. And, in the case of Values in Action, it is a sign of wanting a shift towards a more critically reflexive citizenship to augment the long-standing Singaporean government focus on character-driven citizenship.

Critically reflexive citizenship

Sim et al. (2017) defined a critically reflexive citizen as one who has a “deep political awareness, a strong belief in fairness and justness, and is able to critically examine oneself, the systematic structures and relational aspects of the society, and the relationship between the self and the society” (p. 97). There are fewer references to critically reflexive citizenship than character-driven and social-participatory citizenship in the texts reviewed here. Only five references across the 20 policy texts strongly correlate to this notion of citizenship.

Chronologically, the first reference occurs in the Minister for Education’s speech announcing the new CCE curriculum. Here he stated that “pupils must have the ability to reflect on and respond to community, national and global issues, and to make informed and responsible decisions” (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The second reference can be found in one of the intended outcomes of the CCE curriculum – for young Singaporeans to be globally aware, that is, to be able to “evaluate and *analyse* global patterns and their impact on Singapore” (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 4). A third but rather thin interpretation of critically reflexive citizenship is in the social studies curricula document, which emphasises developing “critical and reflective thinking, and tak[ing] multiple perspectives to inquire

into real-world issues that concerned students' lives" (Ministry of Education, 2016b). A fourth reference is the Values in Action programme. Here, students in primary and secondary schools are encouraged "to choose community issues that they are concerned about, understand the issues better, and then decide how they can make a difference in a sustained way" (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Younger children in primary school might take responsibility for their own spaces in class and at home, whereas older students can "initiate collective action among their peers to improve the lives of others in school and the community" (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Lastly, in citing one example from a school, the Minister for Education described how students were able to adopt multiple perspectives and respond with appropriate decisions for their Values in Action projects based on real-life situation and consequences:

In one school [...] teachers planned lessons to enable students to put their Values in Action (VIA) in real-life situations. Students progress through different levels in situations involving the school, the larger community, the nation, and the world. Secondary 4 and 5 students mentor younger students. Because these were real situations with real people and real consequences, students learnt how to see from different perspectives and make responsible decisions. (Ministry of Education, 2012b)

In the texts, there is evidence of the way achieving critically reflexive forms of citizenship is compromised by other aspects of how citizenship is imagined. First, some texts reveal that citizenship education is prescriptive and didactic with a preference for pre-prepared, well-structured and textbook-based curricula. For example, it was stated in the press release announcing the new syllabus and textbook titles for CCE in 2012 that:

Students will learn values [...] CCE textbooks will be produced for the new syllabus [...] schools will be provided curriculum time to deliver school-based CCE. School-based CCE could include activities or lessons on school values or assembly programmes related to CCE [...] resources provided by community partners will be used to support the teaching and learning of CCE (Ministry of Education, 2012c).

Second, ideas of assessment that are associated with CCE devalue it to a minimal form of active citizenship. For example, in Values in Action, the outcomes are measured in the form of counting the number of projects students initiate or participate in (Ministry of Education, 2014c), rather than focusing on young people's critical thinking in those experiences or the critique of society and politics they develop. In another case, a new 'Character Award' was introduced in 2012 as part of CCE as a form of proxy indicator for character and citizenship that aimed "to recognise students who exhibit exemplary values, such as resilience and

tenacity, integrity, care and respect, as well as civic responsibility” (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The focus of an ‘exemplar’ citizen here is character-driven, made clear by the correspondence between the language of the award and the elements of character-driven citizenship it carries with it. In this award, no consideration is given to more critical forms of citizenship. These two examples show that the conception of citizenship education is a far departure from critically reflexive citizenship.

In summary, the most commonly articulated vision for the kind of Singaporean citizens in the texts reviewed in this chapter is based on a carefully constructed notion of character-driven citizenship (Sim et al., 2017) underpinned by centrally proposed core values (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 2). This focus on character-driven citizenship is evident across this policy analysis and is concerned with nurturing a caring citizen who will contribute to a cohesive and harmonious society, is loyal and rooted to Singapore and is resilient in difficult times. Such citizens are considered to be of paramount importance to ensure the enduring economic success of the country.

Cross-cutting themes

An inductive process of analysis yielded three cross-cutting themes further to Sim et al.’s (2017) tripartite model. These are ‘citizenship for social cohesion’, ‘citizen-workers of the future’ and ‘holistic citizenship’. These additional conceptions of citizenship reflect the government’s social and political agenda to be achieved through citizenship education.

Citizenship for social cohesion

The idea of social cohesion was a cross-cutting one across the analysis and undergirded the purpose of citizenship education. Its main goal is to nurture young Singaporeans to live cohesively and harmoniously in a multiracial, multicultural and young, migrant Singapore society, with a sense of shared values and respect that allows appreciation and celebration of Singapore’s diversity (Ministry of Education, 2011b, 2012d). In almost all of the speeches and policy documents, references are made to social cohesion. Public schools in Singapore are seen in policy to play a crucial role in forging social cohesion and a common national identity (Ministry of Education, 2012a); citizenship education is an important means to achieving these goals (Ministry of Education, 2011a). For example, the Minister for Education said, “In our multi-racial society, our pupils need to be socio-culturally sensitive and do their part to promote social cohesion and harmony” (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The importance of social cohesion was, again, juxtaposed against Singapore’s challenges and vulnerabilities, particularly for “a young immigrant nation with a multi-racial, multi-

religious make-up that must stay cohesive” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). This sense of cohesiveness is locally known as the ‘kampong spirit’,⁵ and was also referenced by the Minister for Education in his speech (Ministry of Education, 2013a), thus indicating the importance of recognising this sense of cohesion that is needed for Singapore because of the unique challenges it faces. My inductive analysis of citizenship for social cohesion revealed that the key consideration for social cohesion is to ensure the continuity of the economic success of the nation (Ministry of Education, 2013b). This leads into the next typology that emerged from the inductive analysis, citizen-workers of the future, which is discussed in further detail in the next section. Because these messages of social cohesion for economic pursuits are repeatedly the same, I have avoided listing them here but have captured them in the next section.

Citizen-workers of the future

The government’s pursuit of character-driven citizenship, and social-participatory citizenship to a slightly less significant extent, is featured in a wider concern about ensuring the continuity of Singapore’s economic success. Education in Singapore is inextricably linked to its economy and is seen as an important mechanism to drive the competitiveness of the Singapore economy, and as evident from the following quote:

education is an important pillar for a competitive economy [...] education can create a virtuous circle that supports and drives a country’s competitiveness. (Ministry of Education, 2012d)

The government is of the opinion that “education must be adapted to our local context, but it must also have an eye firmly on the global driving forces and the future we expect” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). In particular, it is concerned with equipping young Singaporeans “to be adaptable and willing to learn [...] to have the confidence to deal with problems that have no clear-cut solutions [...] to be able to work effectively with others, across races and nationalities, and to communicate clearly” in a global economy that is characterised as “VUCA, which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity” (Ministry of Education, 2013b). The government has claimed that it has been forced to “take education very seriously because it is critical to Singapore’s survival and success” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). It is seen as critical to equip young Singaporeans with “fundamental values and skills that will last them for a lifetime” in preparation for a

⁵ Refers to a sense of social cohesion and community in Malay, which is one of Singapore’s official languages.

future that is predicted to be “more volatile, with change more rapid than ever”, and “to access a new economic future” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). It is clear that one of the key goals of Singapore’s education is to prepare young Singaporeans to be “citizen-workers of the future” (Lister, 2007a, p. 54). In particular, Singapore’s education endeavours to tailor the right skillsets for each individual (Ministry of Education, 2012d).

While the government recognises the “intrinsic values of education beyond the economics”, it is invested in creating a “vibrant and sophisticated economy” so that more people will have the opportunities to have “a productive and meaningful career [...] created in the economy” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). The government justifies this success discourse as a response to societal expectations, believing that every parent has critical concerns about whether education will prepare their child for the future and to be able to make a living. CCE is regarded as a response to these concerns (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The transition to a ‘values-driven, student-centric’ phase in Singapore’s education was intended to prepare young Singaporeans to “acquire 21st century competencies [...] to meet the challenges of the future”, in particular, the “faster changes brought by globalisation, technological advances and disruptive innovation” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). There are several references to the idea that building “strong values and the right competencies” will ensure “the success of Singapore” (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Singapore’s economic success in the past few decades has been attributed to “building skills, knowledge and values”, and hence it is seen as crucial to “be on the right side building new competencies that are anchored on strong values and character” (Ministry of Education, 2011b). The government has affirmed its “commitment to provide opportunities for all our children to excel” by enabling students and young people “to seize opportunities and access high quality jobs”, as Singapore restructures its economy (Ministry of Education, 2013a). There is a crucial “need to create multiple pathways and peaks of excellence, relevant to industry needs” (Ministry of Education, 2012d).

The various components of citizenship education are designed to serve the government’s agenda of developing citizen-workers of the future. For example, citizenship lessons are seen as crucial in instilling in young Singaporeans an “appreciation of Singapore’s history and heritage while providing them with opportunities to understand the Singapore society today and their role as active citizens” (Ministry of Education, 2011a), hence leading to a better understanding of their role in contributing to Singapore’s success. National Education, which is a part of CCE, is important to educate young people to appreciate the fundamentals that enable Singapore to succeed (Ministry of Education,

2011a). Similarly, social studies is crucial for the preparation of students to be citizens of tomorrow by helping them to better “understand the interconnectedness of Singapore and the world they live in” (Ministry of Education, 2016b). In the bigger schema of things, the *Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes* (Ministry of Education, 2012d, 2014b) is the government’s response to equipping the citizen-workers of the future with the necessary skills and competencies, in the face of local and global economic needs. Such a focus is clearly presented in the following quote:

At the core, the first two rings of what we call our “Swiss Roll” of 21st Century Competencies comprise values, and character and social emotional competencies. These values enable one to strive for success and to interact with others meaningfully. In an increasingly interconnected, information-rich world, our students need information and communication skills; critical and inventive thinking, and civic literacy, global awareness and cross cultural skills. Ultimately, we hope that each child grows up as a confident person, a concerned citizen, an active contributor and a self-directed learner. (Ministry of Education, 2012d)

The *Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes* is essential in building:

a strong foundation, especially in self-confidence, literacy and numeracy, analytical and inventive thinking, communication skills and other 21st century competencies, so as to prepare Singaporeans to be lifelong learners, and succeed in a more globally competitive environment [...] and have a fulfilling career. (Ministry of Education, 2013a)

W.-O. Lee (2015) asserted that the *Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes* is in itself a ‘future-oriented citizenship’ framework, because it prepares Singaporeans for the knowledge economy (p. 102), thus validating its neoliberal focus. Citizenship education is the government’s blueprint for its agenda of nurturing citizen-workers of the future to succeed in the twenty-first century global marketplace.

Despite this heightened focus on citizen-workers of the future, the government considers that a “future-ready” Singapore citizen will also be a “whole person” with an “enduring core of competencies, values and character, [...] the resilience to succeed [...] critical and inventive thinking, civic literacy, and information and communication skills” (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The pursuit of a more ‘holistic citizenship’ is discussed in the next section.

Holistic citizenship

A desire for a 'holistic' citizenship is evident across the texts, but it is unclear what exactly this is envisioned to be. The government's push for a more "holistic education, and on values and character development" was noted to have arisen from Singapore society's desire, particularly among parents, to look beyond a "paper qualification" and into "developing deep skills and acquiring the right personal qualities and values" (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Yet this broader vision for a holistic citizen still conflicts with the society's unwavering focus on economic success, as described by the Minister for Education:

Many Singaporeans have surfaced the desire for broader definitions of success in our society, and that our students must acquire the skills and competencies to benefit from the quality economic growth that we are pursuing. We will continue to emphasise holistic development of our students. (Ministry of Education, 2013a)

The government has felt constrained in fostering more holistic forms of citizenship because Singapore society has the same conflicted focus. The Minister for Education has argued that the "education system reflects societal norms and expectations" and urged society to "accept broader definitions of success in life" beyond just "getting ahead of others, and achieving the 5Cs (Cash, Condominium, Cars, Credit Card, and Country Club)" (Ministry of Education, 2013a). In the context of education, there are some signals that holistic refers to all aspects of child development (e.g. moral, cognitive, physical, social and aesthetic), yet often this is linked to values, socio-emotional skills and twenty-first century competencies to prepare citizens for the future.

The conception of a holistic citizen is rather unclear; there are some references to aspects of development, for example, "moral, cognitive, physical, social and aesthetic" but also to "21st Century Competencies" and to enable our students to be "ready for the future" (Ministry of Education, 2011b). There are, however, some strong signals of a desire for a holistic citizenship linked to students' "life and school [...] to pupils' current experiences and environment" (Ministry of Education, 2011a). CCE is presented as a whole-school approach, not sporadic or episodic programmes (Ministry of Education, 2011a). There is an awareness that "CCE is lived authentically" as part of the school experience of our students; it cannot be taught "in a didactic way" and "it has to be experienced deeply and internalised by students" (Ministry of Education, 2011a). There is also attention to the idea that "values are not just taught; they are often caught", and that "it is experiences, especially those that are demanding and challenging, that build character and enable students to develop the

feelings for and to act on their values, through real life experiences in various contexts” (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Aside from these, there are two signals of the government’s commitment to more holistic forms of citizenship. First, the recognition that holistic forms of citizenship education will require efforts beyond school, for example, by parents “reinforcing the lessons learnt in school and inculcating life skills” and community partners welcoming “students to take part in meaningful activities in the community and learn useful life skills” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). CCE lessons also recognise that “parents were the first care-givers in developing good character of their children”. For example, these CCE lessons feature a segment on ‘Family Time’, which provides suggestions for activities that allow parents to bond with their children and support CCE (Ministry of Education, 2012c).

Secondly, the government’s recognition that the outcomes of citizenship education are not easily measurable and that citizenship education is a long-term project, has been highlighted by the Minister for Education:

outcomes (are) even harder to measure, but we must do it [...] nothing is going to change overnight [...] we have to keep working on it, even if we do not see visible results immediately. Let us keep the vision of CCE alive as we persevere, day-in, day-out. (Ministry of Education, 2011a)

The Minister went on to use a metaphor of planting a bamboo tree to highlight that developing holistic citizens requires time to see fruition, and that it should be left undisturbed for the time it is taking root (Ministry of Education, 2011a), thus acknowledging the complexity and uncertainty involved in educating a holistic citizen. This is a vast contrast to the air of certainty around the pursuit of a character-driven and social-participatory citizenship.

In summary, there are some signals of a desire for a more holistic form of citizenship that acknowledges and includes young people’s everyday life experiences, although this is not clearly articulated and conflicts with the government’s heightened focus on nurturing citizen-workers of the future.

Summary

The citizenship discourse in Singapore is dominated by character-driven citizenship, with a slightly less significant but notable focus on social-participatory citizenship; critically reflexive citizenship has essentially been overlooked. These discourses feature within a wider concern about ensuring the continuity of Singapore’s economic success; citizens are

expected to contribute to social cohesion and economic prosperity. The purpose of citizenship education is to transition Singaporean young people from a state of “citizens-in-waiting” (Lister, 2007b, p. 696) and “not-yet-being-a-citizen” (Biesta, 2011, p. 86) to “citizen-workers of the future” (Lister, 2007a, p. 54) who will participate in the government’s agenda of nation-building and ensuring economic prosperity. Yet, there are glimpses of a desire for a more holistic interpretation of young people’s citizenship, which might include their everyday lived citizenship. However, there was an overriding emphasis on citizen-workers of the future who are character-driven and contribute to the social cohesion and the continued economic success of the country, but not necessarily critically reflexive citizens who act on systemic injustice in society and politics. Such conceptions of policies and programmes for citizenship education are problematic because they focus on didactic teaching of citizenship, prioritise formal and public participation, and are designed to serve the government’s social and political agenda. Most importantly, they do not consider young people’s lived experiences with citizenship (Biesta, 2011). These issues are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, after discussing the data from the young people in the following two chapters.

Chapter 6 – Young people’s experiences and expressions of citizenship

Chapter 5 provided an analysis of the kind of citizens that policies and programmes for citizenship education in Singapore seek to nurture. This chapter shifts from a policy focus to young Singaporean citizens, and addresses my second and third research questions which pertain to young people’s experiences and expressions of citizenship. In order to answer these research questions, this study explored 40 young Singaporeans’ perceptions of active citizenship, what shaped their active citizenship and how they enact this in their everyday lives.

Studies on young people’s citizenship have largely been confined to their active participation in public life, such as volunteering in the community (Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Wood, 2014). Active participation in society is seen to be an important form of citizenship practice that helps to maintain a healthy democratic society (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the definition of active participation in the literature and in practice across the world remains unclear and contested (I. Davies, 2010). The root cause of this lack of clarity has been linked to the dichotomised thinking of classifying participation as either political or non-political (Youniss & Levine, 2009). Political participation has been characterised in the form of justice-oriented types of citizens who can critique and address structural inequalities and effect systemic change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b). Everything else, including volunteering and providing care and concern towards the community and others, is often classified as non-political active participation because they are only concerned with personal lives and local communities while deliberately avoiding attention to critiquing or challenging social and political power structures (Boyte, 1991; Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018). Such conceptions are problematic because they could potentially overlook certain everyday actions and imaginations that might be political, and thus possibly marginalise young people as apolitical (Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Wood, 2014). This is a significant consideration for studying young people’s experiences and expressions of citizenship because often young people’s participation is viewed from a lens that was conceived for adults; yet young people do not have the same citizenship status or access to resources as adults (Lister, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2008b).

Understandings of citizenship need to be broadened to open up new sites and possibilities. Kallio (2015) proposes that young people’s political forms of citizenship expressions and practices could possibly occur in three distinct yet interrelated contexts.

Firstly, these might occur in formal and public institutions such as schools, non-profit organisations and youth-serving organisations, and often takes the form of volunteering and other civic engagement activities. In order to gain access to these realms, young people still need assistance from adults or similar formal power structures. The second context is in the realm of less formal but organised and activist forms of political participation such as protests, demonstrations, occupy movements and social media activism. This is what Isin (2008) calls ‘activist citizens’ who “engage in writing scripts and creating the scene” (p. 38), and political actions in these worlds which are often mediated by family, friends and interests groups. Lastly, the everyday worlds of home, school, peer groups and local communities are environments where young people’s political actions are less overt, but can be seen through seemingly mundane activities, and where power relations are constantly “realized, reimagined, reworked” (Kallio, 2015, p. 2). Of importance to this chapter is the exploration of such experiences with citizenship in young people’s everyday lives. This includes an understanding of what citizenship actually means to them (Lister, 2007b) and their relational forms of citizenship that is aimed at maintaining, continuing, and repairing their everyday worlds (Tronto, 1993).

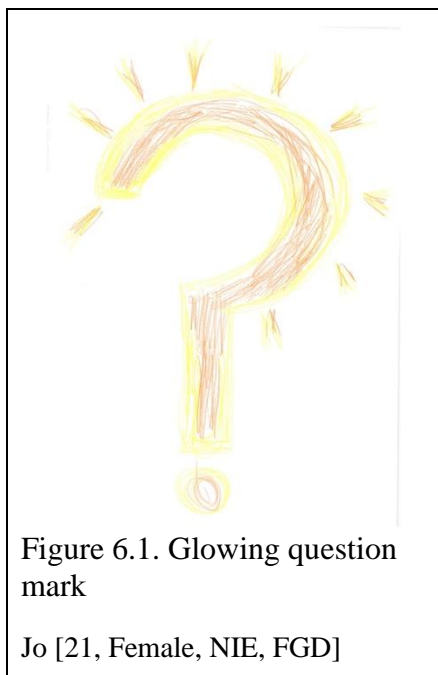
This chapter presents findings from a thematic analysis of two data sources, namely focus group dialogues (40 participants from the three institutions), and photovoice data (from 30 out of the 40 focus group participants). Using the critical and feminist lens outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter considers young people’s perceptions and practices of citizenship in their everyday lives, and how they navigated policy expectations of them to be a certain kind of citizen, particularly citizen-workers of the future. An ethics of care lens was useful in exploring these lived and relational aspects of young peoples’ citizenship as it is concerned with caring actions of attending to specific needs of others as well as responsibilities linked to interpersonal relationships (Mingol, 2013). This chapter is organised into three main sections. The first explores young people’s perceptions of active citizenship, the second highlights what shaped their active citizenship, and the third focuses on their everyday citizenship practices.

As mentioned earlier, this chapter presents the analysis of data from both the focus groups and photovoice activity. During the focus group dialogues, I invited participants to first draw pictures or doodle with words and phrases that might serve as symbols and metaphors associated with their active citizenship. These served to elicit words and ideas from participants, and functioned as generative themes that became helpful to explore how the meaning of these words and ideas affected young people in various social and political

contexts of their everyday lives (Freire, 1970). These drawings were analysed alongside the voice recordings from the focus groups, yielding rich data about young people's citizenship perceptions and practices in their everyday worlds. Some of the more significant drawings and photos from the photovoice activities are presented in this chapter. Henceforth, for ease of reference, participants' codenames are also tagged to their identifiers, for example their age, gender and institution, as well as whether that data source was *FGD* (from the focus group dialogues) or *PV* (from photovoice). The three institutions are abbreviated as *NIE* for the National Institute of Education, *UniSIM-SUSS* for UniSIM University–Singapore University of Social Sciences and *YCS* for Youth Corps Singapore. An example of an abbreviated format is *Jo [21, Female, NIE, FGD]*, with the number representing participants' age and their gender indicated after their age. This format is used throughout the findings Chapters 6 and 7.

Young people's perceptions of active citizenship

The focus group dialogues served as an opportunity for participants to explore and clarify what active citizenship meant to them, and they deliberated at length about their perceptions of active citizenship. The drawings that they created prior to the start of the discussion presented a visual representation of some of their ideas or questions, which was helpful for deeper elicitation of the diverse meanings of active citizenship participants held.



For example, Jo [21, Female, NIE, FGD] began her sharing with her poster that depicted a 'glowing question mark' (see Figure 6.1) and said, "I don't know what active citizenship is. I would also say I don't really know what an active citizen is". But she went on to explain that her conception of active citizenship was having greater awareness of social issues. Such an approach allowed for deeper and more critical conversations among participants, who leveraged on each other's confidence and criticality. This in turn provided a strong foundation for an in-depth exploration of their lived citizenship.

Three key ideas were linked to the young people's perceptions of active citizenship. First, they were linked to social-participatory form of citizenship, which is concerned with 'doing something' for the community. Second, for some, their conceptions of active citizenship took the form of loyalty to Singapore, which

included conceptions of “being rooted, living global” (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018, p. 5). Third, a few others articulated their conception of active citizenship through an economic sense, highlighting the importance of contributing to the country’s continued economic success and their role in this as citizen-workers of the future. In comparing these with the analysis of policies and programmes for citizenship education in Chapter 5, it seemed at first sight that these young people were conforming to the policy expectations of them to be community-focused social-participatory citizens, character-driven loyal Singaporean citizens and economic-focused citizen-workers of the future. However, at a deeper level, the young people’s conception of citizenship was undergirded by a relational disposition that was rooted in care for others and the community. These conceptions of active citizenship are discussed in further detail in the following sections. However, a closer examination reveals that participants prioritised more relational and critical forms of citizenship in their everyday lives. This is discussed in the later sections of this chapter, and in more depth in Chapter 7.

Community participation

Many participants’ perceptions of active citizenship were linked to the social-participatory forms of citizenship, which are concerned with ‘doing something for the community’ [Brinjal, 21, Male, NIE, PV]. For example, Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, FGD] said “everything I do is linked to the community. So active citizenship will always link me to the community”. Similarly, Bob [21, Male, YCS, FGD] was of the opinion that everything he did “actually does impact the community in a way”. Being active then meant “intentionally doing something, instead of just sitting around and not doing anything” [Watson, 19, Female, NIE, FGD]. Similarly, Emmy [25, Female, NIE, FGD] had initially thought that being an active citizen was about “actively doing something, not like passively you just sit at home”. However, as the discussions unfolded during the focus group dialogue, she began to view active citizenship in a slightly difference sense – that even doing something for the community has to arise from her own disposition, and not from being coerced:

Now that I am here, I realise that active citizen to me now is more like I do it out of my own willingness, rather than the government asks me to do so, the school asks me to do so. To me now it feels as if that [previous understanding] was actually also quite a passive kind of action.

Expanding on the idea of active citizenship as doing something for the community, Lightbulb [19, Female, YCS, FGD] linked that to the idea of investment, which indicated an undertone of economic conceptions linked to helping others. She used the two metaphors of

environment (tree) and economy (investment) to illustrate her view. Lightbulb viewed active citizenship as not just doing something for the community but as “investing in something the society will benefit from”. Her use of ‘investment’ may have been influenced by her own experience of investing in starting up a social enterprise on her own, which she elaborated during the course of the discussion. Lightbulb also used a tree as a metaphor to emphasise that such investment required time and commitment to flourish, and that it “happens whether rain or shine [...] even when we are sleeping”. In saying this, she emphasised the long-term and sustained efforts required, beyond one-off ‘projects’. Lightbulb felt such efforts would grow “social capital”, resulting in a “two-way relationship [...] in a sense that, when we invest into it and there is a greater social capital, we also feel more motivated to continue serving”. While Lightbulb’s conception of active citizenship reflected a social-participatory approach, her discussion about social capital signalled a more relational form of citizenship that was concerned with long-term and reciprocal citizenship. Lightbulb’s conception was one particular example of this, but it also illustrated what many other participants expressed through these discussions – that while participants were seemingly enacting policy expectations, for example, of social-participatory citizenship, they were also critical and thoughtful about it and were committed to more meaningful forms of citizenship than such an approach.

Loyalty to Singapore

While many young people associated active citizenship with community, others linked it to their loyalty to Singapore. One participant felt that she should care about people around her because that was indicative of her being a “rooted and a concerned citizen”, and she needed to do that because she was “born in Singapore” [Kickcat, 25, Female, NIE, FGD]. Others expressed their loyalty to Singapore as their form of active citizenship, which meant “to be proud of who we are, to be proud of our country and our achievements” [Annie, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. Singapore’s history was seen as “very unique compared to other countries” because of the “people from many different races coming to Singapore and most of the population is made up of immigrants” [Jo, 21, Female, NIE, PV]. This theme of a multicultural Singapore was echoed by many others. Amid such diversity, Annie felt it was important to “be friendly to each other, to protect the bonds between different races [...] to protect the racial harmony in Singapore” [Annie, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. “Protecting, sustaining, maintaining” this harmony, amid the diversity, was seen as a priority [Lester, 22, Male, NIE, PV]. One participant expressed her emotional rootedness and loyalty to the country as the “bedrock of active citizenship is our love, how we feel towards Singapore”

[Mona, 24, Female, NIE, FGD], and Ashley [19, Female, YCS, FGD] felt that her active citizenship involved “actively thinking about Singapore”. She said:

I feel like a lot of people don't really think about issues that are facing our country and are affecting them directly [...] so you actively think about something and then you try to solve the problem but the problem doesn't have to be something huge, it can be something small.

Such statements indicate a perception of active citizenship that highlighted participants' commitment towards character-driven citizenship and was particularly concerned with loyalty to the country and maintaining social cohesion. At the same time, these participants demonstrated criticality, which was evident from their desire to think more deeply about social issues. They also prioritised a relational form of citizenship in their quest to ‘maintain, continue or repair’ (Tronto, 1993) social cohesion and harmony in the country.

Some participants' conceptions of their active citizenship as loyal Singaporean citizens also featured conceptions of “being rooted, living global” (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018, p. 5). Mona [24, Female, NIE, FGD], for example, emphasised that the conception of active citizenship had to be broadened beyond “local-centric and a strong Singaporean core”, to include “the ideals of how the world ought to be”. Being “concerned in a global perspective” was seen as important because it was a “necessary skill for us for now” [Kickcat, 25, Female, NIE, FGD]. Active citizens need to “know more about global politics” to “help Singapore as a citizen” because Singapore cannot “operate alone as a nation” and is “dependent on other countries in this globalisation age” [Emmy, 25, Female, NIE, FGD]. This indicates that some participants' nation-centric perception of active citizenship was also underscored by a desire for global-centric citizenship. This desire was conceived in an economic sense with particular attention paid to the perceived vulnerabilities and challenges faced by Singapore's economy (as discussed in Chapter 5).

Economic focus

In keeping with the economic focus, some participants associated their active citizenship with self-regulated and economic conceptions of citizen-workers of the future. This largely involved seeing their roles as students and workers as contributing to Singapore's economy. Lion [19, Female, YCS, FGD] said, “First of all, being a student is sort of like an active citizenship because whatever knowledge you are taking in is for your jobs in the future”. Chrysanthemum echoed this idea: “I am studying, so you learn something and, in the future, you will use the knowledge to contribute back to society, community. At the same time, I am doing part-time work also. So being part of the work force, helping the economy also is

active citizenship”. Bobby [UniSIM-SUSS, PV] had a similar conception about active citizenship being linked to the worker-citizen: “I guess when you start working, you are contributing to the economy, at least then you can say you are a functional member of society. In that sense, active”. Lightbulb [19, Female, YCS, PV], however, had a broader conception; she said, “I think a very big part of my role as a citizen today is to be a student”. Her conception of such form of citizenship had a relational undertone of caring for others that was intricately interwoven with an economic focus: “the degree that I’m pursuing, occupational therapy, is part of a larger picture that serves the people eventually in the healthcare industry. If I’m a really good occupational therapist, I can add value to the health care industry that serves the people in Singapore”. Participants demonstrated that their conceptions of active citizenship strongly featured their roles as citizen-workers of the future. Yet, as Lightbulb expressed, some of these conceptions were undergirded with relational forms of citizenship containing a sense of care towards others.

These findings indicate that, at one level, the young people’s conceptions of active citizenship seemed to conform to the government’s policy intended for young Singaporeans to be community-focused, social-participatory, character-driven loyal Singaporean citizens, and economic-focused citizen-workers of the future, as discussed in Chapter 5. However, a deeper analysis revealed that some of these conceptions were undergirded by a relational disposition that was rooted in care for others. This finding on the young people’s conceptions of active citizenship are indicative of the complexities involved in how they were navigating all their relationships with citizenship – relationships between individual citizens as well as responsibilities towards the wider community (Lister, 2007b). The next section explores what shaped the participants’ conceptions of active citizenship.

What shaped young people’s active citizenship?

Many participants reported that their conceptions of active citizenship were undergirded by relational forms of care for others and the community while seemingly conforming to policy intents; however, further dialogue afforded insights into what shaped their citizenship perceptions and practices. Most participants mentioned that formal citizenship education did not shape their conceptions of active citizenship. In fact, many reported negative experiences with their citizenship education because they considered their formal citizenship education didactic, not engaging and lacking in criticality, and that these did not significantly shape their citizenship identity. Instead, most reported that their citizenship perceptions and practices were primarily shaped by their family and friends, who

emphasised and modelled relational forms of care in their everyday lives. The following sections provide further details on these two points.

Formal citizenship education programmes

There was a strong consensus across the seven focus group dialogues that formal citizenship education programmes in their schooling years did not have a significant impact on their active citizenship. Bobby [23, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said, “Everyone I know doesn’t give a shit about CIP and stuff [...] I know this is supposed to open the floodgates to something greater, but it doesn’t”. Emmy [25, Female, NIE, FGD] expressed a similar sentiment: “I felt that it did not impact the way it wanted to be [...] it didn’t really plant the seeds as it wanted to”. Further, most young people referred particularly to the CIP and Values in Action (see Chapter 2) as programmes that did not affect them much. Participants perceived these programmes to be largely “top-down”, that they had little say in them, and that it was “all decided” by the school and teachers [Mona, 24, Female, NIE, FGD]. The programmes were seen as being “shoved down the throats” of young people [Hotgeek17, 25, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Participants reported that they did not see the point in doing all these because they were usually “told what to do” [Lion, 19, Female, YCS, FGD] and “the school just makes you report there on this day and do everything” [Olaf, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Participants felt that the activities were “very contrived” because they were “forced to do” them and “there wasn’t anything to learn from it” because they were merely told to “go there and do this” [Jo, 21, Female, NIE, FGD]. Further, the activities in these programmes were not “appealing”, did not cater to young people’s interests and were not something they were “too passionate about” [Yan Dao, 21, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. This provided the insight that formal citizenship education does not engage or inspire young people to be active citizens.

Participants elaborated further on the nature of the activities for the CIP and Values in Action that illustrated their discontentment with these programmes. For example, these activities were usually centred around issues related to “elderly, kids and cleaning up the beach and it was always about these three things” [Jo, 21, Female, NIE, FGD]. Grim Reaper [21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] stated that “schools will bring us to pick up rubbish [...] I don’t see a need for it”. Instead, there were “many other invisible groups to work with” but these were not considered because “it is so much easier to just work with like traditional all the kids and clean up the beach” [Jo, 21, Female, NIE, FGD]. Another significant activity that young people mentioned several times and that they deemed not meaningful was raising funds for charitable organisations, known as selling ‘flags’. This involved donors dropping

their donations into sealed tin cans and receiving a sticker in return, which indicated their support for the organisation. Lester [22, Male, NIE, FGD] elaborated on how this did not engage him meaningfully:

I was very against the idea of flag day. The flag day, by definition is, you carry the tin can, with the little slit at the top, so you go around populated areas to ask for donations, and then the person that donates gets a sticker. I was very against the idea because I thought it is not a good way to spend my time.

These critiques of the programmes revealed participants' critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) of deeper social issues that needed attention as well as their desire for more critical, transformative and active forms of citizenship rather than minimal ones (Wood et al., 2018).

Aside from critiquing the nature of the programmes, many participants critiqued the programmes for being mandatory, merely counting hours and usually a one-off experience. Participants felt that they “had to do it” because there were “minimum hours” they “had to clock in” [Sunflower, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. They “did not see a point in it” because of the “minimum hours” they had to meet [Ashley, 19, Female, YCS, FGD]. Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, FGD] expressed his displeasure about the CIP because of its mandatory requirements:

Personally, I hate CIP hours [...] I don't believe in it [...] I feel like it's like a job [...] like you are being paid CIP hours to do something [...] you still need to clock a few hours in a year to finish school.

Participants felt that the programmes were also “contrived” because they were often told that these were a mandatory “requirement by MOE” [Mona, 24, Female, NIE, FGD]. In contrast, participants felt that “active citizenship comes from within, and is not something that is requested of you to do” [Joy, 22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS]. In that light, some participants felt that they benefited and learned most from programmes that they embarked on as their own choice instead:

I feel that all the CIP stuff hasn't really shaped me a lot, not so significant, but then those CIP or service-learning that I have embarked on by my own choice, and I have a passion for, and I can relate to, are those that have impacted me, and I have learnt most from. Because when you are passionate about something, you'll think more about it, you'll do more, you'll put more effort into it. You naturally will learn more. [Valencia, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]

Many participants did not “really like the idea how it's always a one-off event” and “doing it for the sake of clocking in the hours” and they did not “learn anything much” from such

one-off experiences [Curry, 25, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Instead, they preferred to be informed about the “problem” and what was going on prior to embarking on the activities, and they also wanted to know the impact they were making. In addition, participants were critical that there were no follow-up debriefs after the service to talk about how they were feeling and what could have been done better [Olaf, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Participants’ critiques of the mandatory and uncritical nature of these programmes also signalled a desire for more dialogical and critical pedagogy for citizenship education. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 7 as part of their imaginations of a different form of citizenship education.

Despite the government’s intention since 2011 to evolve Singaporean education into a student-centric, values-driven phase, many young people felt that citizenship education programmes in their schooling years were not student-centric. For example, Brenda [20, Female, NIE, PV] said, “I don’t recall being taught values. It can’t be taught, and I don’t remember learning values”. None of the participants referenced the core values taught through the CCE curriculum, or the Confucian-inspired Singapore Shared Values or the Asian Values. This showed that despite the enduring focus on didactically instilling values at different levels, none of these had had any significant influence on participants.

Participants’ also raised a few ethical concerns regarding the programmes, such as whether they were self-serving at the expense of the people they were serving. Referring to the beneficiaries they had to care for during their volunteering projects for the CIP and Values in Action, one participant, L [19, Female, YCS, FGD], said “a lot of people just do it for the sake of just getting hours” and they just “leave” after “getting their hours”. Barney [21, Male, YCS, FGD] was not sure if that “actually makes them [beneficiaries] more sad than happy” because “the moment you leave after we are done with our hours, the connection you have established with them is just lost”. Barney felt “that is not the right thing to do because for our own hours, we actually impose on them”. Bobby [23, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] agreed and echoed similar sentiments that these activities were “self-serving” because it was seen as “doing it more for yourself than for other people”. It was also seen as self-serving because “you might cause more hassle than help” [Hotgeek17, 25, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. These comments indicate how several participants were able to empathise with and be considerate of the emotions of the people they were caring for, and that their relationship with them was at a much deeper level, thus demonstrating their relationality within coerced acts of care.

Aside from critiquing the programmes, a few other young people had concerns about the teachers' efficacy in these programmes. Lion [19, Female, YCS, FGD] felt that "teachers themselves may not believe in what they are doing, and they are doing because it is part of their job". She questioned "when teachers don't believe in it, how can the students believe in what they are doing?" She was of the opinion that "we have to change the teachers first before the students are changed". There were others who were concerned that "teachers might have gotten too bogged down by the activity itself, that they also don't see the purpose behind it" [Houzi, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. The young people expected teachers to provide a "channel and support" for them to "do something more [...] to solve a problem" [Olaf, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. But despite their critiques, some participants understood that teachers were "doing things for the sake of doing because they are very busy" [Annie, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. These comments signalled young people's heightened sense of critical consciousness that enabled them to connect the micro problems related to the programmes to the more macro issues in the education system, particularly around teacher efficacy and motivation. Yet, Annie also demonstrated her relationality by being empathetic towards the limit-situations of teachers themselves.

However, it is noteworthy that despite their criticism of these programmes, a few participants felt that it was indeed necessary to have some form of mandatory and active citizenship education because they saw that as important for awakening their awareness of society, and thus their citizenship imaginations. For example, though many thought these programmes were seemingly "superficial", participation in such programmes gave Joy [22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] insights into issues they could possibly "delve into deeper". Joy said that she learned about the "environment" as a result of her beach clean-up project and chose to major in social work when she learned about the plight of a community in Singapore "while collecting newspapers from the rental flat" during one of her school programmes. Making these programmes compulsory was seen as providing a good "foundation or exposure to social situations" [Curry 25, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. These programmes were an important "stepping stone [...] to experience the real needs for themselves in order to reach out to do more" [Lion, 19, Female, YCS, FGD]. It helped to be "exposed to realities" beyond their "privileged bubble" [Lightbulb, 19, Female, YCS, PV].

Participants also believed that if such programmes were not mandated, there would be "fewer people doing" social participation activities [Yan Dao, 21, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] because "there are too many things on hand" for young people "to juggle" [Curry 25, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. In that regard, Curry believed that the decision to make such

programmes mandatory or not depended on the “maturity” of learners and felt that it was “OK to make such programmes compulsory” for younger learners, but as they became “older”, it should be a choice if they were “willing to sacrifice their own time and make it a priority”. This highlighted that while many others were not in favour of civic learning being mandatory, uncritical and unengaging, they were also of the opinion that some form of volunteering and social-participatory types of experiences were important because they seemed to have raised their consciousness about social issues in Singapore. They also desired for such experiences to be designed according to the maturity of learners, instead of being a cookie-cutter type of programme for everyone.

In summary, most of the young people felt that formal citizenship education did not shape their active citizenship because it was didactic, not student-centred and represented minimal forms of citizenship. Some also highlighted their prioritisation of relationality through their deep concerns about the people they were serving in such programmes when the programmes were one-off and not meaningful. Instead, many participants desired more critical and dialogic forms of citizenship education, more sustained involvement and more choices and autonomy over their citizenship experiences. At the same time, they were of the opinion that education for citizenship should include volunteering or community engagement types of experiences for learners because they saw these as opportunities to awaken their imaginations about society and social issues. These in turn appeared to have triggered a more active stance towards their citizenship perceptions and practices. The next section explores relational acts of care by family members and friends, which most participants reported as shaping their citizenship.

Care emphasised and modelled by family and friends

More than half of the participants in the study expressed that how their families emphasised and modelled care had influenced the way they interpreted and enacted care for others. It was perceived that “building empathy started from homes” [Lion, 19, Female, YCS, FGD], and that these values emphasised and modelled by their families “actually shaped” the participants [Brinjal, 21, Male, NIE, FGD]. Families were seen as “big stakeholders in inculcating habits and values” [Bhadshah, 24, Male, NIE, FGD] because if “parents don’t care, then you don’t care” [Brenda, 20, Female, NIE, PV]. Some participants felt that a lot of values that they “live out” were modelled after their parents [Lightbulb, 19, Female, YCS, PV], and these values were “moulded” by “watching” their parents as they were growing up [Kickcat, 25, Female, NIE, FGD]. Brinjal [21, Male, NIE, FGD] elaborated on how his parents brought him up to “do good even when no one is looking”, and to look to

help others even it was to “just ease the burden of someone”. In another example, Yan Dao [21, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] elaborated on details that highlighted how his family modelled care, which in turned shaped how he cared for others. Yan Dao discovered in 2004 that he had been experiencing Guillain–Barré syndrome, an autoimmune illness, from the age of nine, and at the time of this research, he was still recovering. He described how the care shown to him by both his parents and grandparents during those difficult times had influenced him to care for others in the same way:

Because of the help they [family] gave me [while being hospitalised], I feel that I should be giving help to everyone [...]. So, when I see someone in need of help, I will just help them and I won't do it for the sake of helping; [...] So I try to reflect the same level of care that they showed me to any other person that I know who is in need of help.

A few participants said that they “looked up” to their parents because they displayed “selflessness” in ways such as “donating money, time and effort” for community causes [Giraffe, 21, Male, NIE, PV]. Their “community spirit” also involved “burning” away their weekends [Bhadshah, 24, Male, NIE, FGD]. Participants also reported that they were constantly reminded that they had to do their part to “give back to the community” because they were “fortunate to have grown up in Singapore” [Potato, 21, Male, NIE, FGD]. This emphasis on and modelling of care by family members had a significant influence on the young people’s perception of caring for others as a form of active citizenship. This was important in shaping the young people’s prioritisation of more relational acts in the interest of the wider community.

In addition to family members, a few participants claimed that friends were key influences who significantly shaped their citizenship. For these few, “the very basis of active citizenship is friendship” [Houzi, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. For example, Houzi was influenced by her friend who “had a heart for everybody” because she demonstrated “love” in “the way she talks to the people, the dishwashers, the cleaners, the aunty, uncle”⁶. This “rubbed off” on Houzi, influencing him to be a caring citizen in a similar way. In another example, Sherman [20, Female, NIE, PV] said that as a student, one “can also be an active citizen” through everyday acts of care for one’s peers, such as “helping in their studies or whatsoever”, and that active citizenship need not be “so big an initiative”. Brenda [20,

⁶ ‘Aunty’ and ‘Uncle’ are colloquial references for any senior males or females in Singapore society, usually when addressed by younger people.

Female, NIE, PV] described how being surrounded by such “active citizens” gave young people the “motivation” to be similarly active.

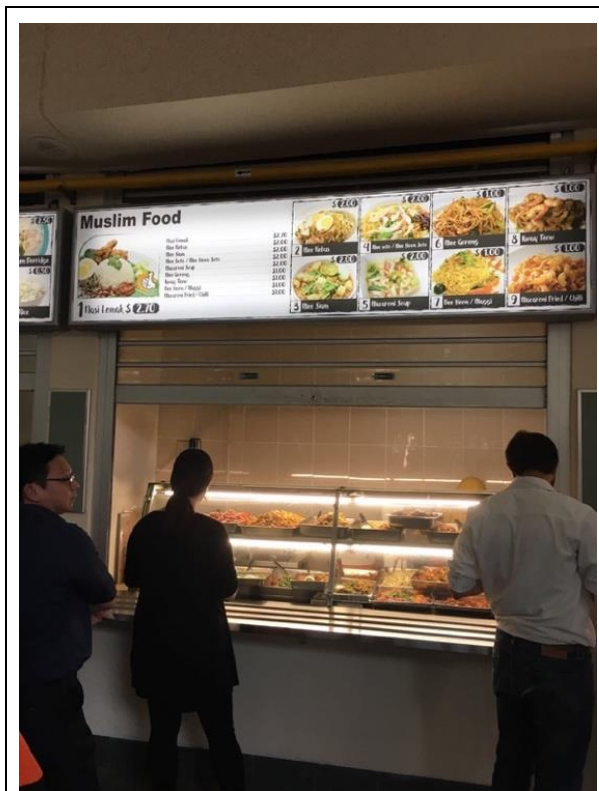


Figure 6.2. Muslim food stall@NIE

Lester [22, Male, NIE, PV]

In another case, Lester [22, Male, NIE, PV], a Chinese Singaporean, shared an example of his relational actions with his Muslim friend, which he used as an example of active citizenship. During the photovoice debrief, Lester referred to a photo of a Muslim food stall at his university (see Figure 6.2), and he described how he was “loyal” and always ate the food from there, although there was “always a long queue” there. He said he ate from the same stall every day, “not because it tasted the best”, but because he appreciated “the time just chit-chatting while queueing and sitting at the same table and enjoying the same meal” with his “good friend” who was a Muslim (who

also participated in this research). Lester’s conception of citizenship comprised a form of relationality that showed his commitment to care and harmony. Harmony, in this sense, was about embracing difference as conceived in Asian conceptions of citizenship such as building a more harmonious society (Sim & Chow, 2019).

These findings show that the young people were paying careful attention to relational forms of care that were emphasised and modelled by family and friends in their everyday lives. Participants viewed these as examples of active citizenship and they reported these as having in turn shaped their own citizenship perceptions and actions. These findings support Tronto’s (1993) notions of care and how care can be viewed not just as a biological disposition but also as a social practice in the contexts of family, friends and community, thus presenting a potential to consider such relational acts as political acts of citizenship (Tronto, 1993). The next section explores how the young people lived and practised their citizenship.

What were young people's citizenship practices?

In the previous sections, I highlighted participants' conceptions of citizenship, many of which were rooted in relational forms of active citizenship and were shaped by significant family members and friends who emphasised and modelled such relational forms of caring actions and relationships. In this section, I highlight how the young people enacted their citizenship in their everyday lives. Among the many diverse and interesting forms of everyday citizenship practices that they reported throughout the two phases of data collection, it emerged that most participants prioritised relational forms of everyday acts of care with family, friends and others in the community, as well as care for their natural environment. Such relational forms of citizenship aligned with Tronto's definition of acts of care: "everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment" (Tronto, 1993, p. 61). This section highlights these relational acts in further detail and is organised in a way that starts with family and friends, then moves to the wider community and ends with the natural environment.

Many participants considered that to "care for other people" was an important form of being "active citizens", but that it had to "start from home" [Joy, 22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, PV]. There was "no point in ignoring our own family but instead going to some old folk's home and helping people, and feeling good about it" [Bhadshah, 24, Male, NIE, FGD]. Some participants saw their families as the starting point of learning to practise their acts of citizenship. For example, "forging and building caring relationships and connections with family" was an important part of learning to be an "active citizen" because the "feelings of care developed from these relationships with family" could be extended and "applied to the society" [Giraffe, 21, Male, NIE, PV]. For some other young people, their acts of care extended beyond their families, to others in the community. This practice of care for the community was linked to doing something for others and was consistent with their perception of active citizenship as discussed in an earlier section. For example, Watson [19, Female, NIE, FGD] said that caring for others was also part of being active because it involved showing "concern for someone else who is not like your family or your loved one but basically another citizen". Being a "good citizen" was "to be someone who cares for others" [Kickcat 25, Female, NIE, FGD] and "do something for those around you" [Bhadshah, 24, Male, NIE, FGD]. Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, FGD] echoed that "being an active citizen" meant "you do what you can for the community". These findings conformed with Sim and Chow's (2019) ideas that Asian conceptions of relational

citizenship, which are underpinned by Confucian ideals, focus on tangible familial relationships and extend out to the community and others. Here, family serves as a starting point to being a good person in society.

Many participants expressed that their relational acts of care were usually small, random and seemingly mundane in their everyday lives. In the context of the family, these acts took the form of “bonding over” meals on the weekends with their families [Annie, 20, Female, NIE, PV] or helping out and “performing” their “duties” for their siblings [Valencia, 20, Female, NIE, PV]. In one case, it was as simple as “saying I love you” to family members [Doraemon, 20, Female, NIE, PV]. This was also the case in the context of caring for others. For example, Joy [22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said, “If you ask me about my active citizen[ship] now, I would say it is doing these small acts of helping the elderly or giving up the seat or opening the door for people”.

Contrary to the expectation placed on them to initiate projects in Values in Action, for example, participants felt that, in life, they did not have to “initiate very big things” [Valencia, 20, Female, NIE, FGD] or “volunteer to help someone” [Watson 19, Female, NIE, PV]. In their opinion, acts of care should be done “every single day” and be a “norm” in everyday lives [Ezekiel, 22, Male, NIE, FGD], and this did not “require a lot of effort to do” [Barney, 21, Male, YCS, FGD]. Other examples of simple and everyday acts that were frequently cited include giving up seats on public transport to “people who need the seats more” [Doraemon, 20, Female, NIE, PV] without “being told to do so” [Mona, 24, Female, NIE, PV], picking up litter because “everyone thinks that someone else would do it” [Watson, 19, Female, NIE, PV] and “always being on the lookout to help” [Jo, 21, Female, NIE, FGD].

Participants repeatedly highlighted that these acts of care need not be “big things” but “the little compassionate things that make a difference” [Bovaryser, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. The focus of these “little things” was always on “people around” them [Valencia 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. These acts of care were seen to arrive “instinctively” rather than being a matter of seeing someone “struggling” [Brinjal, 21, Male, NIE, FGD]. Bovaryser [21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] and Watson [19, Female, NIE, PV] said that such everyday acts of care create a “chain reaction” and “influence others” [Ezekiel, 22, Male, NIE, FGD] – it was perceived that in being an active citizen, one should not “impose on other people” [Barney, 21, Male, YCS, FGD]. These examples highlight that the young people considered relationality to family in their private worlds and public participation equally important and not mutually exclusive (Sim & Chow, 2019). Through

such small, random and mundane acts, young people were enacting gradual change in society, towards a the more caring and cohesive one. A caring and cohesive society was a goal that the government was also pursuing. However, the government focused on formal and public acts of care whereas young people were effecting it in their relational and everyday ways.

In focusing on their everyday relational acts, participants were concerned with the quality of the relationships in these acts, and they prioritised conversations, forging connections and forming community. To many, the “idea of connection” was “very valuable” because it provided a “platform to be an active citizen” [Lightbulb, 19, Female, YCS, FGD]. For example, “having conversations with people” was a platform for young people to “be able to empathise with how others feel” [Emma, 20, Female, NIE, FGD]. In that sense, “connecting with people around” was a way “to form communities” [Bob, 21, Male YCS, FGD].



Figure 6.3. Courtesy conversation
Curry [Male, 25, UniSIM-SUSS, PV]

In another example, Curry [Male, 25, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] referred to a photo he took (see Figure 6.3) to illustrate his concerns about this simple act of care of connection and conversation, which was important to him, but was gradually eroding away in Singapore’s society. Referring to a photo of two lions, he said:

When I saw this, I was thinking “oh, they must be talking to each other” cos [sic] it is very rare you see two Courtesy Lions⁷ facing each other. This is just something that’s missing cos nowadays you don’t really see it anymore.

Many participants felt that simply connecting with others was an important way of being a

citizen because they perceived that those on the receiving end of such acts of care were generally “grateful” even if was just “being there and just talking to them” since they knew “someone cared for them, someone wanted to listen to them” [Emmy, 25, Female, NIE,

⁷ Singa the Courtesy Lion was created in 1982 to educate the public on courtesy and graciousness through a campaign. On 15 May 2013, Singa wrote a letter of resignation stating that he was too tired to continue facing an increasingly angry and disagreeable society.

FGD]. In discussing connections and conversations, special attention was given to elderly citizens. This was reflective of a pertinent social issue, the rapidly ageing Singapore society, but it may also indicate that young people had internalised the excessive focus on issues related to seniors, children and the environment in their CIP and Values in Action experiences. Giraffe [21, Male, NIE, FGD] elaborated on this care for elderly citizens:

We talk about active citizenship, the elderly [citizens] generally feel very lonely, they feel that their descendants are not spending enough time with them. So they will be left alone at home. Or they will be pushed into an elderly home or something like that. So for me, spending time with them, making their day, cheering them up. Even a simple thing like letting them share their own stories, and things like that, it makes a difference to their day. To me that's active citizenship.

This focus on connections, conversations and community reflected how they were enacting their 'micropolitics' (Hankins, 2017) within their everyday relational acts of care. In some cases, participants saw formal opportunities such as volunteering as opportunities to extend their relationality. These were also linked to connections, conversations and community. For example, Cassie [20, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said "all these volunteering [sic]" was an important "step for active citizenship" because they allowed her to "show care and concern". Similarly, Lightbulb [19, Female, YCS, PV] said volunteering provided the opportunity for her to "cultivate" her "empathy and compassion". In keeping with the idea of connection, Lightbulb [FGD] said that through volunteering, she was able to "experiment with different forms of connections" and "to test the boundaries". In saying this, she explained that people have to constantly explore connections that best fit them because if they "felt more connected", there was a "greater sense of belonging in the community". Such connections provided the "motivation to continue being an active citizen" [Lightbulb, 19, Female, YCS, FGD]. Similarly, for Houzi [20, Female, NIE, FGD], what began as a "volunteering thing", over time, became friendship and consequently she did not see it as a volunteering activity but "just going there to visit friends". When viewing them as opportunities to extend their relationality, young people saw these as opportunities for active citizenship. This is in contrast to their pushback of similar sorts of activities in their formal citizenship education, such as the CIP and Values in Action.

It also emerged that the young people were not simply enacting their relationality without criticality. For example, despite some young people expressing that their parents' acts of giving were a form of active citizenship, other participants had differing views about donations as a form of active citizenship. For example, Lightbulb [19, Female, YCS, FGD] considered both "donating money to a certain cause or committing time to be there to do the

act of service for society” to be “forms of active citizenship”. Similarly, L [19, Female, YCS, FGD] said that “even if you are giving money, that’s also a form of your contribution to your community and your society”. However, Yan Dao [21, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] was of the opinion that “not all problems can be solved by money” and if “things could be solved by money then Bill Gates or maybe even Mark Zuckerberg could have saved the world by now”. For Yan Dao, “donating money” was the “laziest way of helping others” but he saw volunteering as an “act of kindness” that could not be replaced with giving money. Lightbulb [19, Female, YCS, FGD] said that “critical analysis” of society and politics was an “important basis” for “any activity in active citizenship”, including the acts of giving, and that such acts had to “co-exist” with “critically evaluating” what one does “in society”. In her opinion, whether it was voting or donations, it was only meaningful if it was done in such an informed manner. Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, FGD] furthered this argument with his vision of a tiered approach to “different levels of active citizenship”. In this vision, the “basic level will be voting, donations”, for example, the “next level of active citizenship” is “where the informed decisions and critical thinking comes in”. This involves thinking “deeper” and “greater” about the “why” and the “how” of Singapore. The above critiques highlighted that the young people’s relationality went beyond mere awareness of the needs of the community to involve more critical forms of challenging established norms.

Places of care also featured significantly in young people’s everyday lives and facilitated their relational acts of care (Tronto, 1993). This was consistent with previous studies that highlighted participants’ place-based acts of relational citizenship (Bartos, 2012; Wood, 2011). Some participants reported that they “saw society by physical spaces” and these physical spaces “facilitated relationships” [Ezukiel, 22, Male, NIE, PV]. They highlighted a number of illustrations of how these spaces facilitated relationality. For example, everyday places such as the elevator were seen as a “special place” because they provided the opportunity for “short conversations” and particularly for “people who stay in the same place to communicate and see each other every day” [Doraemon, 20, Female, NIE, PV]. “Simple things like holding the lift [...] created conversation” and it built “some sort of relationship”, which was “what citizenship was all about” [Hotgeek17, 25, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, PV]. Here, the interconnected ideas of acts of care, connection and everyday places come in to play as what young people saw as their everyday caring citizenship. Young people imagined a diverse range of places where they practised their caring citizenship. These included, for example, common areas at a church, where they “study together, help each other with their work and settle friendship or relationship

problems” [Watson, 19, Female, NIE, PV], or nightclubs, where they created their own “space”, which “facilitated” their relationship with their friends [Ezuekiel, 22, Male, NIE, PV].



Figure 6.4. Void deck is not void

Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, PV]

In another example, Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, PV] shared how the vacant space on the ground floor of the public housing where he lived, commonly referred to as a void deck, was not ‘void’ after all because it was a place where a variety of caring relationships happened every day, which then shaped Chrysanthemum’s view of community (see Figure 6.4). The void deck, which is a common feature throughout Singapore’s public housing, was a place where caring citizenship flourished. As he explained:

there is a shop that has been there [at the void deck] since I was born and it’s still running well. It’s a place where you go down in the middle of the night, and it is the same guy [running the shop]. It’s like you have this kind of relationship with the community space at the void deck. You have funerals there, you have weddings there, you have kids playing soccer, even though it’s illegal. So, the void deck is something very special to me because there’s so many things that can happen at the void deck. People fail to realise that the place is called a void deck like there should be nothing there but there’s so many things going on there. The main point I want to bring across is that I really treasure my void deck because there’s been a lot of thing that have happen there that shaped my view of my community. They are very specific occurrences like my aunt’s wedding, my uncle’s wedding, my cousin’s wedding, my neighbour’s funeral, a group of students from a nearby school got arrested because they set fire to a motorcycle at the void deck. All at the same void deck [...] to me the void deck has so many appearances... it just means something to me.

The above examples provide glimpses into how participants saw public places as opportunities for them to practise building their community and relationships. This draws

attention to the need to rethink traditional conceptions of citizenship, which were often confined to public and formal settings, whereas the young people’s citizenship flourished in diverse everyday places such as churches, parks, eateries, university and nightclubs.

In talking about places that facilitated their relational acts, participants also put a special focus on the natural environment in Singapore. To be a caring citizen, it was not enough to just “make other people’s lives better or to make them happy”; it also involved caring for “animals and the environment” because “a society is made up of not just humans, so there is a duty for us to actually care for them [animals and environment] as well and not neglect them” [Barney 21, Male, YCS, FGD]. A “good citizen” was seen as one who is “inclusive” of “even all these little small animals, even trees, even plants around us” and they “should all live together in one community” [Kickcat 25, Female, NIE, FGD]. Participants highlighted a variety of reasons for their care for the natural environment, which ranged from personal to public concerns.



Figure 6.5. Yishun neighbourhood park: My first and most favourite park ever

Kickcat [25, Female, NIE, PV]

In the case of Kickcat [25, Female, NIE, PV], because the park in her neighbourhood (see Figure 6.5) reminded her of her childhood, she was concerned about preserving it. On the other hand, Giraffe [21, Male, NIE, PV] was proud that these parks (see Figure 6.6) provided a “different side of Singapore” within what is otherwise commonly known as a highly urbanised country. With a

similar nationalistic sentiment, Barney [21, Male, YCS, FGD] was proud that these “greeneries” were “well integrated” within an urban Singapore that made the country “beautiful” (see Figure 6.7).



Figure 6.6. MacRitchie Reservoir Park:
Nature needs to be preserved

Giraffe [21, Male, NIE, PV]



Figure 6.7. Environment & us: It makes me wonder how everything seems so well integrated with one another in Singapore

Barney [21, Male, YCS, FGD]

In other examples involving the natural environment, participants expressed their critique of society and policies with regard to preserving these natural spaces. For example, some participants expressed that they felt “peaceful and calm” [Curry, 25, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] and felt “happy” [Bob, 21, YCS, PV] being in these green spaces. Yet they felt that, in general, other “Singaporeans do not care about the environment”; nor was there any “emphasis from the government policies” to protect and preserve these natural spaces, or policies were “not very impactful” [Kickcat 25, Female, NIE, FGD]. Citing the “new MRT⁸ line” that will cut across one of Singapore’s nature reserves, Barney [21, Male, YCS, FGD] felt that as Singapore was “progressing”, these natural “heritages” were being “neglected” and he was saddened by that. In a similar tone, Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, PV] expressed concerns that green spaces where he saw “people having fun, playing games, flying kites” were gradually being “changed into [apartment] flats”. In expressing their care for the natural environment in Singapore, it was evident that many participants were concerned about maintaining, continuing and repairing the natural environment (Tronto, 1993). This was especially important in the urban city-state of Singapore, where commitment to keeping the country ‘green’ was seen as important. At the same time, some

⁸ Mass Rapid Transit is the rail network in Singapore.

participants critiqued that, in some cases, society and policies were not concerned with preserving these natural spaces. In that regard, their relationality involved criticality where they were able to see the “problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 62).

Summary

In summary, it emerged that most participants prioritised relational forms of everyday acts of care with family, friends and others in the community, as well as care for their natural environment. Many participants expressed that their relational acts of care were usually small, random and seemingly mundane in their everyday lives but were reflective of their quiet politics of the everyday. These relational acts involved a prioritisation of conversations, forging connections and forming community. Moreover, their relationality reflected criticality because they went beyond mere awareness of the needs of the community to also involve more critical forms of challenging established norms. Places also featured significantly in the young people’s everyday lives, which facilitated their relational acts of care. Special attention was given to natural spaces, and participants highlighted critiques of society and policies that were not concerned with preserving these natural spaces. This highlighted that participants were practising their citizenship in private and personal spaces with family, friends and the natural environment, and these practices were relational and critical. This, again, underscores the need to rethink traditional conceptions of citizenship, which were often concerned with citizenship practices in the public and formal arena.

At the surface level, participants were seemingly conforming to policy intents for them to be community-focused social-participatory citizens, character-driven loyal Singaporean citizens and economic-focused citizen-workers of the future. Yet, a deeper analysis revealed that participants prioritised relational forms of citizenship that generally took the form of small, mundane and everyday acts of care with, and for, family, friends, others in the community and the natural environment. Many participants also reported that formal citizenship education did not shape their conceptions of citizenship because they considered their formal citizenship education didactic, not engaging and lacking in criticality, and it did not significantly shape their citizenship identity. Instead, they reported that their citizenship perceptions and practices were shaped primarily by relational forms of care that were emphasised and modelled by their family and friends. These findings provided the impetus for a further, in-depth exploration of criticality that was often triggered by their relationality.

The next chapter explores the young people's reflections and critiques of the social and political contradictions in their everyday lives, thus illustrating their citizenship imaginations.

Chapter 7 – Young people’s citizenship imaginations

Chapter 6 explored what shapes young people’s citizenship and how they enact and live their citizenship in their everyday lives. In Chapter 2, I highlighted that the government is concerned over the civic deficit and apathy of young Singaporeans because of a narrow conception of their active citizenship that is defined by formal and public participation. However, it emerged in Chapter 6 that participants in this study prioritised more relational forms of citizenship that centre around their family, friends, community and the natural world in their everyday lives. Participants also highlighted that their relational forms of citizenship actions were primarily shaped by their family and friends, rather than formal citizenship education programmes. This chapter aims to answer my last research question – how do Singaporean young people live and imagine their citizenship? In addition to their everyday relational actions, many participants expressed an ongoing, active and insightful critique of social and political contradictions in their everyday lives. These critiques were usually triggered by their care for the condition of a significant other in their everyday lives. This chapter delves deeper into those critiques, which I have termed *citizenship imaginations* – a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and repair the world to live in it as well as possible (see Chapter 3).

One of the main aims of this thesis was to explore young people’s experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives. Of importance was not just how they understand and enact the intents of citizenship policies and citizenship education programmes, but also how they imagine “what should be and what might be in our deficit society, in the streets where we live and our schools” (M. Greene, 1995, p. 5). Such an imagination is concerned with taking actions in order to repair or renew and make the world a better place (M. Greene, 1995, 2010). Of particular interest in this research is young people’s imaginations associated with their caring actions and interpersonal relationships that aim to achieve a better quality of life and make this a better place for all, which includes the individuals, others and the natural environment (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993). These ideas together encompass what I have theorised as *citizenship imaginations*. In studying young people’s citizenship imaginations in their everyday lives, this thesis draws particular attention to the “quiet politics of the everyday” (Hankins, 2017, p. 503). Unlike acts of citizenship in the form of activist citizens as imagined by Isin (2008), the quiet politics of the everyday focuses on the inaudible and often overlooked everyday ways individuals think and make decisions that

have the potential to gradually change dominant norms and ways of society, which in turn provides possibilities for social change over time (Hankins, 2017). It involves everyday action and imaginations within whatever power one has, even the marginalised, that has potential to enact social change. This is known as “micro politics” (p. 503). Such an imagination is in fact engagement in a process of creative democracy (Hankins, 2017).

The exploration of young people’s citizenship imaginations is of central importance to this thesis. As discussed in Chapter 2, the government’s conception of active citizenship is narrow and limited to voting and volunteering, and active political participation and student activism are strictly discouraged by the government (Han, 2015; Sim, 2011). If young Singaporeans’ active forms of citizenship are seen through such narrow forms of civic and political participation, it might not provide an accurate representation of their citizenship practices. Instead, attempting to glean insights from their imaginations as defined in this thesis might provide valuable new understandings of their experiences of citizenship, and not marginalise them as apolitical, apathetic and disengaged (Bessant et al., 2016; Wood, 2014).

This chapter details the findings of the exploration of young people’s citizenship imaginations. This is explored primarily through analysing the data from young people’s photovoice activity alongside data from the focus group dialogues. The photovoice activity, in particular, yielded much more personal and valuable insights into participants’ citizenship imaginations. I have presented and discussed some examples of this data in this chapter in the interest of organising them in a coherent argument, guided by my theoretical framework. This chapter is organised into three sections; the first highlights young people’s critique of society and politics, the second focuses on what the young people thought were the barriers to a more critical and imaginative type of citizenship, and the third details their imaginations about possibilities for society and citizenship in Singapore.

Critique of social and political contradictions in everyday lives

This study drew attention to a range of diverse and insightful critiques of social, political and economic contradictions in society that participants encountered in their everyday lives. These critiques were aligned to what Freire (1970) and Mills (1959) referred to as a heightened state of mind that gives one the ability to recognise and critique society and politics as a form of imagination (see Figure 3.2). Participants’ critiques were usually triggered by an interplay of the contradictions they saw between how things were and how things should be in their personal experiences. Their imaginations were particularly awakened by care for their family members, friends and the natural environment around

them. This was a signal that the young people were beginning to express and embody more maximal forms of justice-oriented citizenship. Brinjal [21, Male, NIE, PV] defined this sort of active citizenship thus:

[Active citizenship] should have some form of thinking and some form of elevating a problem. That's how I differentiate a critical and a non-critical citizen because in both cases you are an active citizen; you are doing something for community. But are you doing it to change something? or are you doing it to understand something? This is what makes you active and critical.

The young people's citizenship imaginations became more apparent when viewed in light of the social, political and economic contradictions that they critiqued. The following sections highlight two significant and frequent critiques expressed by the participants. Through a closer examination of these two issues, I was able to better highlight the depth of their search for justice for issues that they cared about, and which were usually connected to their care for and their caring relationships with others. The two critiques were concerned with issues of 'poverty and inequality' and 'race, religion and culture' in Singapore.

Critique 1 – Poverty and inequality

In discussing a thriving First World economy such as Singapore (Sim et al., 2017), the issues of poverty and inequality can be easily glossed over. This is a particularly important issue since the government has been single-minded in ensuring Singapore's continued economic success, which is highly reflected in the policies for citizenship education, as demonstrated in Chapter 5. However, some participants strongly expressed an awareness of this contradictions between an economy that was glowing in success and the lives of some people within the Singaporean society. This is despite having gone through a citizenship education curriculum that propagated Singapore's success narrative through the Singapore Story (Ho, 2017). To illustrate a heightened awareness of poverty, I use the example of Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, FGD], a youth leader in Youth Corps Singapore.

Chrysanthemum was involved in a project to improve the living conditions of residents living in rental flats⁹ in a low-income neighbourhood, said to be the first public housing flats in Singapore. However, these flats did not have gates at the main door or peepholes, both of which are common safety features provided in Singapore's public housing (see Figure 7.1). Coupled with the fact that these low-income neighbourhoods were

⁹ According to 2017 data, 90.7% of Singaporeans own their own homes (<https://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/visualising-data/charts/home-ownership-rate-of-resident-households>).

perceived to be dangerous, these residents were fearful and thus they kept their doors shut. That meant that they were closed off from inter-personal interactions and were not approachable. Chrysanthemum said:

We thought it [no gates or peephole] is no big deal, but when you are there you realise that because there is no gate and there is no peephole, they are very socially excluded. They don't want to talk to anybody, they are so fearful of the outside. The negative connotation of rental flats is that it is the ghetto area [...] you'll be very scared of what is happening outside.

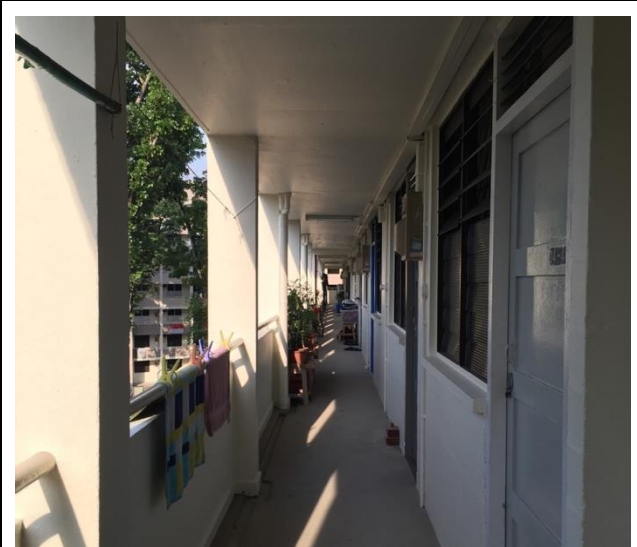


Figure 7.1. Social exclusion

Chrysanthemum [21, Male YCS, PV]

In such a situation, Chrysanthemum was concerned that the residents were caught in a “downward spiral” because they were in dire need of health and financial support but they were too fearful to seek help. Instead of simply attributing this to their immediate financial and health needs, he saw this as a systemic issue that the Housing and Development Board had to resolve. He therefore decided to lobby the government to have gates and peepholes installed for free.



Figure 7.2. Message from Chrysanthemum
Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS]

After the data collection phase of this research, Chrysanthemum kept in touch with me via social media, and a few months after, he shared that he and his team had been successful in lobbying for the door grills to be installed for all the residents. This level of lobbying with the government was a rare feat in Singapore, considering that many of the young people in this research mentioned that they did not think that the government would actually listen to them. In one of his communications, Chrysanthemum said that the first thing he thought of when he saw an article on

‘active citizenship’ was this study which he participated in (see Figure 7.2).

In the above example, Chrysanthemum’s critique of a contradiction in social and political structure was followed up with an action that changed power structures that were oppressing this group of people (Freire, 1970). However, not all critiques need to end up in actions for them to be considered political actions. Hankins (2017) proposed a different lens to view young people’s everyday acts of citizenship, which she called the “quiet politics of the everyday” (p. 503). In this conception, the focus is on the everyday decision-making that has the potential to change dominant ways over time and presents new opportunities for social change. Following are more examples of quiet politics of the everyday that were integrated in the participants’ citizenship imaginations.

Brenda [20, Female, NIE, PV] critiqued the absence of a minimum wage in Singapore’s labour legislation and was particularly concerned about low-wage citizens. In referring to a photo she took for the photovoice activity while standing in a queue to withdraw money at an ATM, Brenda said she was initially “impatient” and “annoyed” because she was in a rush but was held up by an elderly male person before her who was taking “a really long time at the machine” (see Figure 7.3).

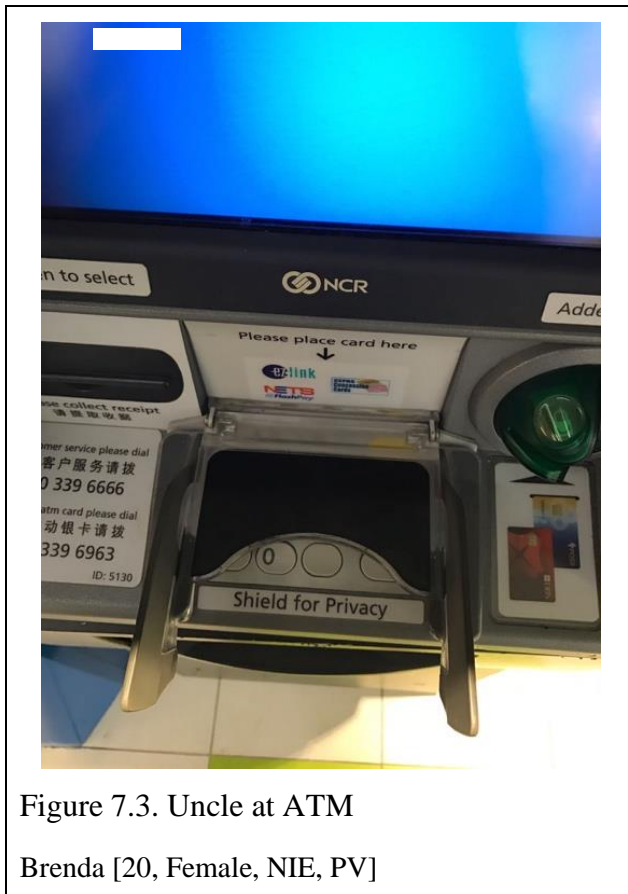


Figure 7.3. Uncle at ATM
Brenda [20, Female, NIE, PV]

She could tell that the person was a security guard because of the uniform he was wearing. However, the person turned to Brenda and asked her for help. She shared that “because it is a very private thing and you don’t really want people to see your bank account, I tried manoeuvring around but I accidentally clicked the ‘balance’ and I saw that he had only \$70”. Brenda said that her “heart sank” because as a teaching scholar, she was paid a monthly allowance and she did not need to “worry about money running out”. In contrast, this elderly person working as a security guard was probably not earning a “sustainable income” or did not “have

any savings”. This led to her thinking about “the whole idea of minimum wage, why Singapore doesn’t have it and is it really fair to people who are low income?” Brenda demonstrated a heightened sense of critical consciousness because she was able to identify the “limit-situation” (Freire, 1970, p. 51) that the person was facing, and connect his personal troubles to social and political contradictions. Brenda also demonstrated care because she was able to empathise with the situation by comparing herself to the ‘Uncle’ and recognised that while she herself was not in his position, she could imagine the troubles of having such limited funds.

In a similar critique, Sunflower [21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] was concerned about rising medical costs in Singapore and the impact on low-wage citizens, particularly seniors. During the photovoice debrief, Sunflower related a personal example involving her grandmother. She had to undergo surgery but was unable to utilise her own national provident funds for her medical expenses because the particular type of surgery was not covered under the policy. Sunflower said that policies should have “exceptions” and was concerned about others in similar situations having to “fork out the huge sum of money” – does that mean they “could not have the surgery?” While this example was a personal and emotional one for Sunflower, her caring relationship with her grandmother raised her

imagination about contradictions in healthcare policies for seniors, thus demonstrating her ability to connect her personal and private issue to public policies.

In the last example for this section, Emma [20, Female, NIE, PV] highlighted her concerns about wealth disparity in Singapore and its impact on young people. Emma's critique was triggered by a reading entitled "The Early Catastrophe" as part of her university coursework (see Figure 7.4).

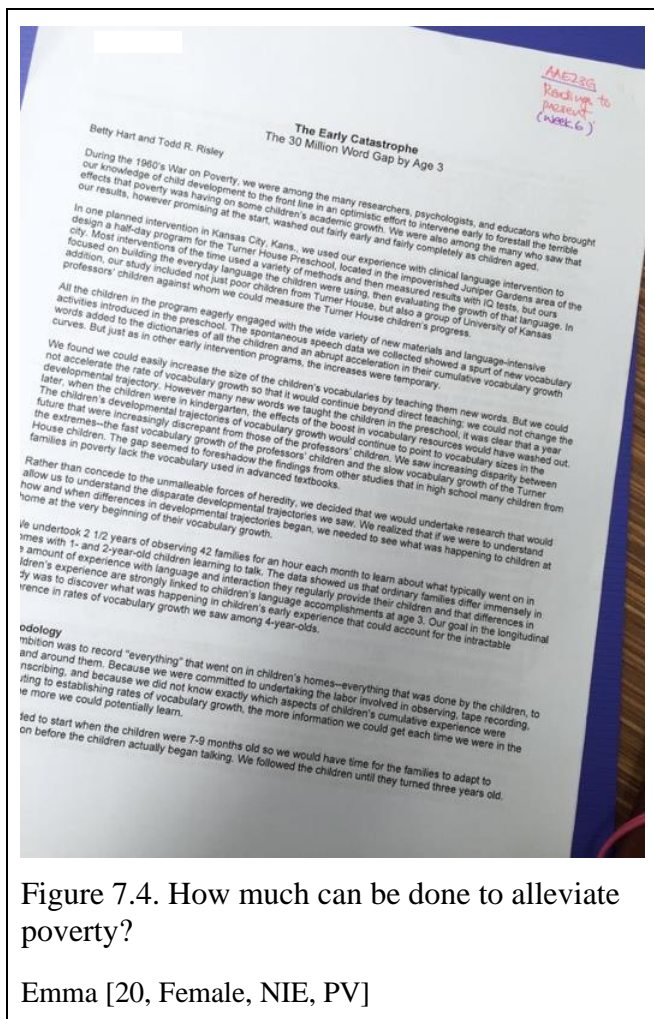


Figure 7.4. How much can be done to alleviate poverty?

Emma [20, Female, NIE, PV]

The article highlighted the link between poverty and language acquisition in early childhood, which she then related to her volunteering work at church, where she taught language to children. Emma related that there was a girl in her class who was from a higher social and economic status (SES) and was better than the others in her linguistics ability.

Another girl, however, "just struggled" to speak in proper sentences. Emma suspected this was the case because of a lack of support at home since this particular child's parents were separated and she was brought up by her grandmother.

Emma was "pained" by what she saw and connected the situation of

this child's situation to a particular section of her reading that talked about a "reading catastrophe". In that article, this meant children from higher SES knew more words than the lower SES children because of the "exposure and experiences" they receive that lead them to hearing more words each day. Emma said that "from the age of three, the trajectory of vocabulary growth can be predicted till a child is about 12 or beyond, and the income and wealth gap meant that would 'constantly be an increasing gap between those two kinds of children'". This made Emma "question actually what can policy do to alleviate this kind of issue of poverty?" Though not directly affecting her, Emma was able to empathise and care for these children who were presumably deprived of their rightful educational attainment

because of socio-economic barriers. She was also contemplating policies that could possibly alleviate this situation.

Chrysanthemum, Brenda, Sunflower and Emma all showed a concern about income inequalities and poverty, and demonstrated their heightened awareness about policies that serve to limit certain individuals and groups of people. This was a result of the care they showed towards these individuals and groups of people, which extended beyond family and friends, to another member of society. Although not directly affected by these issues, they were able to empathise with the personal troubles of these people and connect with the inconsistencies in the macro socio-political structure with regard to issues related to poverty and inequality. This is particularly noteworthy because while these participants themselves had undergone a citizenship education curriculum that aimed to nurture economy-focused citizen-workers of the future, they were still able to see beyond their own limit-situations. The next section highlights other participants' critiques of issues related to race, religion and culture in Singapore.

Critique 2 – Race, religion and culture

Issues related to race, religion and culture were another important area of contemplation for Singapore, especially since it is known for the multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural make-up of its population (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). This, along with the influx of immigrants, religious radicalisation and the rise of cultural and identity politics, has made it even more crucial for the government to step up the focus on social cohesion. Such a focus has also gained prominence in the citizenship education policies, as discussed in Chapter 5. Many participants were more openly critical of issues related to race, religion and culture in Singapore, and how these masked layers of exclusion in society. To illustrate this, I turn to narratives shared by Hotgeek, Houzi and Doreamon.

An example case of participants' critique of policies and practices of social cohesion in Singapore is that of Hotgeek17 [25, Female UniSIM-SUSS, PV], a Boyanese-Indian of Islamic faith; she felt that although Singapore seemed to have an "image of an inclusive society", it was "not necessarily that inclusive" in terms of being "multiracial and multicultural". She thought all that was "just a façade". She felt this way because she felt she had been a victim of "racism and discrimination". Although her ethnic identity was registered as Malay in the national records when she was a child, she later changed it to the more specific Boyanese-Indian because there was "a lot of stereotype and prejudice around the Malay community of being lazy and can never succeed" and therefore she "was ashamed to be considered a Malay".

While talking to me about this during the photovoice debrief, Hotgeek17 broke down and cried for a while. After some time, she composed herself and continued by saying that making it to university was a success for her, and since that milestone, she had started to “embrace this (Malay) identity”. In addition, since then, she had taken up volunteering at the self-help organisation for Malay-Muslims in Singapore. She was involved with young people, particularly in “cultivating this attitude to succeed” because she wanted “to be the person to encourage them to embrace their race, their culture, their ethnicity and not be ashamed of it” and for them to “push through this very subtle racism” that portrayed them as “naturally stupid or lazy”; she wanted to be a role model for these young people so they could see that there are also “Malays who are hardworking and are successful”. Hotgeek17 was aware that her personal troubles were caused by larger societal issues of racial exclusion and marginalisation. However, instead of developing resentment towards society, she turned to acts of care towards younger people who were in a similar situation and worked with them towards success. Hotgeek17’s actions demonstrated a commitment to social transformation through analysing and addressing systemic injustice, exclusion and social inequalities (Wood et al., 2018), which eventually led to a form of praxis (Freire, 1970).

In another example, Houzi [20, Female, NIE, PV] and Doreamon [20, Female, NIE, PV] both critiqued their cultural practice of burning joss paper as inconveniencing others in a multicultural society, as well as its impact on the environment. Houzi referred to a photo she took of burning joss papers in a public area (see Figure 7.5), just two days after the focus group dialogue, which she said had awakened her awareness of what active citizenship meant after the session. While “standing there and burning the paper”, Houzi started questioning “why are we doing this?” She said she had been “doing this burning practice” since she was born, but she never understood the rationale, and she never questioned why; she never questioned her faith. She was concerned that these “practices that are so ingrained in daily lives” might have an impact on people and the environment. She questioned whether there was a “better way of doing” this and “should such cultural practices continue [...] and be kept up to date as society progresses?”.



Figure 7.5. Is there a more environmentally friendly way of practising one's own religion?

Houzi [20, Female, NIE, PV]

Similarly to Houzi, Doreamon [20, Female, NIE, PV] was concerned about this cultural practice. Doreamon said that by “practising” her “Chinese culture” through the burning of joss paper, it might inconvenience others, particularly the “cleaners who will have a very hard time to cleaning up” afterwards. While she expressed a sense of helplessness when she said “I don’t know what can I do”, at the same time she demonstrated empathy and care towards others who might be affected by her actions. Both Houzi and Doreamon expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with their own cultural practices, and an ongoing struggle with not being able to reconcile whether these practices were “right” [Houzi] or

whether they were being “disrespectful” and “insensitive” [Doreamon] to their families and their faith by their critique. Although Houzi declared that she was not going to continue with this practice, both remained in a state of flux in navigating through this cultural practice that is “ingrained” in them. Both demonstrated a heightened sense of critical consciousness because they were able to identify “problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 62). Although both were not definitively clear as to what exactly to do about the situation, their ongoing reflections and decision-making had the potential to change dominant patterns over time and present new opportunities for social change, hence demonstrating their quiet politics.

Highlighting participants’ critiques of society and politics using the examples provided in the previous sections afforded rare insights into their more relational, critical and active citizenship in their lived worlds. In particular, this provided new understandings about their “quiet politics of the everyday” (Hankins, 2017, p. 503) in which they were making everyday decisions aimed at social change that might not happen immediately, but will over time. Yet their citizenship imaginations embody the ideals of Freire’s (1970)

praxis, as well as Tronto's (1993) acts of care, since they were aimed at maintaining, continuing and repairing their world so that they could live in it as well as possible (Tronto, 1993). In a further example of an emphasis on praxis, Mona [24, Female, NIE, FGD] cautioned that "a person who is thinking at the systemic level, might just be in his or her thoughts; it does not necessarily translate into action", underscoring the importance of a balance of imagination and action in being an active citizen. She said that "we are still part of the system we purport to change", hence alluding to the importance of the quiet politics of the everyday in making gradual and sustained changes in the little everyday ways from within the 'system'. The ideal of citizenship imaginations hence presents a possible new lens through which to view young people's personal and private lived citizenship, looking beyond formal and public participation.

Barriers to young people's active citizenship

Participants' citizenship imaginations included barriers to more active forms of their citizenship. They highlighted two significant limits to more active forms of citizenship: first, the demands of living as citizen-workers of the future in Singapore and, second, a lack of agency and empowerment.

Living as citizen-workers of the future in Singapore

Many participants highlighted the demands of living as citizen-workers of the future in Singapore as one major barrier preventing them from being involved in more active forms of citizenship. They felt that a culture of competitiveness – the need to excel in academic pursuits and careers – compelled them to be more focused on themselves and left little room for care for others. Cassie [20, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD], for example, felt the "competitive culture" was because Singaporeans were "pragmatic" and "chased" what mattered to them in their own lives. Similarly, Curry [UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said Singaporeans were "competitive" because they "must always be better" than others in everything, which leads to pressure to succeed in "academics" in order to be "employable". Such a focus resulted in a mentality in which one's "survival became a priority, compared to caring for others" [Curry, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Hotgeek17 [25, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] referred to this prioritisation and constant pursuit of success in education and employment as a "rat race". She gave this as the reason why young people were not "caring about others" but "cared only about their own well-being". In that sense, she considered Singaporeans to be "selfish" because they were not able to think about "the bigger picture;

the bigger community as a whole, Singapore as a whole”, but “were only focused on me and my family”.

In Barney’s [21, Male, YCS, FGD] opinion, young Singaporeans wanted to “do well for their studies, go to university, get a job and then they will worry about other things like the high cost of living”. He explained this was why they do not want to be “held back” by less important commitments such as social participation. This culture of “constant competition” had led many young people to “fight for their own survival” to such an extent that they would do “dirty things in order to be first all the time” Ezekiel [22, Male, NIE, PV]. Despite attributing to society the pressure on young people to “achieve success at the expense of anything or anyone” [Lester, 22, Male, NIE, PV], Brinjal [21, Male, NIE, PV] was critical of how other young people were not able to see how society had “engineered” them to be “so focused on achieving the goals that are templated by society”, that it had led to a sense of “selfishness in the heart” that will “hold one back from active citizenship”. Brinjal was concerned that the situation was so bad that if asked to do something, a young person’s first response might be “what’s in it for me?”. Singapore’s economic success was seen as a privilege, yet it has also become a barrier to relational forms of citizenship. This was encapsulated by Doraemon [20, Female, NIE, PV]:

In Singapore, we are very privileged; we rarely need other people’s assistance, we can do a lot of things on our own. That is why we don’t really like to experience a lot of things together, whether it is a very simple act of helping each other or talking to each other. That is why we are not that close to each other [...] there seems to be a lot of walls built inside everyone and it is very hard to get to know each other...

These examples highlight the contradiction the young people faced in living their citizenship, between their prioritisation of relational forms of citizenship and the expectations of them to be citizen-workers of the future in Singapore. However, it also highlighted how they were constantly negotiating and reimagining the possibilities of their citizenship. This in turn highlighted their constant desire and pursuit of being more active citizens, despite the limit-situation imposed on them.

Lack of empowerment

Aside from the pressure of living in a neoliberal society, a further barrier that some participants expressed was a perceived lack of agency or confidence to make any significant change to the policies in Singapore. For example, Doraemon [20, Female, NIE, PV] said, “I feel that I need to do some more things for the citizens in Singapore but I don’t have enough confidence to do this”. Grim Reaper [21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said that even if

young people had the “passion” to be more active, she felt that they did not have the “power” to “make, change or enforce policies”. Potato [21, Male, NIE, PV] perceived that as young people they could not “make a difference significant enough to change Singapore”. In another example, Houzi [20, Female, NIE, PV] said that “as a student” she was not in a “position to challenge authority [...] at a policy level to effect change”. She saw her role restricted to “ground level” and that she needed to “understand more about the situation [of society] first” and “to be equipped with more skills” so that she can “do something about it in the future”. Sunflower [21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] felt that it was the “nature” of young Singaporeans that “not many people will actually speak up”. These were some indications of participants’ perceived lack of empowerment, and their conception of themselves as citizens-in-waiting.

There were concerns among some participants that the government was not accessible and they would not ‘listen’ to young people. For example, Houzi [20, Female, NIE, PV] said, “I don’t think my voice would be heard and I don’t know where I should say it for my voice to be heard”. It was seen that the “ones on top” in the government were “hard to get to” [Tacocat, 22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD], and the young people were not certain whether these people would actually “hear” what they were saying or instead would be thinking about how to “defend their policy” [Sunflower, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, PV]. Doraemon [20, Female, NIE, FGD] said that with “the internet”, there were many more “platforms for people to share their ideas about different policies” but she too was not “sure whether the government will look through them and take them seriously”. In citing an example of a recent incident, the Bukit Brown Cemetery¹⁰ case, as a precedent, Mona [24, Female, NIE, FGD] said many “young people became disillusioned and more cynical at the extent to which they could seek out structural change”. Despite the intense efforts of many young people in lobbying the government to preserve the site, the “government made an executive decision to go on with their policies”. According to Mona, this “repeated pattern of rejection” sent a “wrong message to the young ones” that their citizenship participation was “limited to ideas”. In that regard, Chrysanthemum [21, Male, YCS, PV] felt strongly that to achieve a “midpoint” between the government and citizens, the government should “at least let the citizens feel that they had a say”.

¹⁰ The government proposed that this Chinese cemetery make way for a new road, which faced opposition from historians and nature lovers. The government went ahead with its decision despite intense lobbying from civil society.

A couple of participants expressed a fear of action by the government if they were to be more active citizens. Referring to the form of governance of Singapore's founding prime minister, Brinjal [21, Male, NIE, PV] said that the "regime did not want critical thinkers" because that was seen as "a threat to the government", which was "in pursuit of a safe, secure and a stable nation". If people asked "why" about policies, it was seen as "questioning" the "authority and the regiment". However, Brinjal felt that the "opportunity cost" of such a way of governance was that the country was "losing active citizens" who were supposedly more critical, and instead, the government was "creating robots" who were more interested in "higher GDP [...] and losing humanity in favour of GDP". Using the same critique of Singapore's governance, Mona [24, Female, NIE, FGD] said that she tended to "self-censor" and be "mindful" when she spoke critically about issues in class or with her friends because she had a feeling "that 'Big Brother' was watching". In saying 'Big Brother', she was referring to the government, which she said had "created fear" that "permeated" young people's "thoughts and actions" and "limited the kind of active citizenship" they enacted. She said that she was "careful" and knew that she did not have the "freedom to think beyond that kind of demarcated zone", but to her, "to be an active citizen starts with having that kind of courage to think freely". In discussing these barriers, participants demonstrated a heightened consciousness about the limit situation that acted as barriers to them enacting more active forms of citizenship.

(Re)imagining possibilities for society and citizenship in Singapore

In keeping with my aim for this research to be participatory and emancipatory, towards the end of both the focus group dialogues and the photovoice debrief sessions, I asked the young people to share their imaginations of the possibilities of an ideal Singapore society, and the kinds of citizens that would be required to live in such a society. In response, participants imagined a more caring and inclusive society and desired more reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education.

A more caring and inclusive Singapore society

Many participants imagined a Singapore society with more caring citizens, in keeping with their caring acts as a primary form of their citizenship. In direct contrast to the neoliberal barriers to their active citizenship, young people desired "a society where everyone grows a bigger heart for each other, and does not just get smarter" [Kickcat, 25, Female, NIE, PV]. Similarly, they described a society that did not need "many highfliers" but people who have the heart to care for people" [Annie, 20, Female, NIE, PV]. The young people's caring

citizenship included a wide range of elements, from being a good neighbour, who would “check their neighbour’s bowl to see they have enough” [Joy 22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD], to being someone who would “get to know” the many silent communities in Singapore and “try to do something with them, or for them” [Watson, 19, Female, NIE, FGD]. A “more inclusive society” that was “more open to helping others” was a priority over “thinking of longer term issues” [Yan Dao, 21, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Participants’ imaginations of an inclusive society included caring for a wide range of social issues. For example, Hotgeek17 [25, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, PV] said that the “ageing population was a big concern for Singapore” and that they can “be still part of the community” and “progress together”. On the other hand, for Yan Dao [21, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD], inclusiveness meant as a society “working on prejudices” against persons with disabilities. A person with a disability himself, he said:

I do have friends who are in a wheelchair and then every time they are on the train, people will just give us weird stares. There is still a social prejudice that you are not one of us, we can walk, we got a job, we are really seen as lower class.

Participants’ ideas of inclusiveness included diversity of personalities as well as diversity of ideas. For Brinjal [21, Male, NIE, PV], “an ideal Singapore would be one that embraces people for who they are and one that embraces people who might not fit into that perfect stereotype”. Mona’s [24, Female, NIE, PV] conception of a diverse society was one in which “people who may have unconventional ideas” are included. Such ideas included those that “the state deems dangerous”. According to Mona, this form of inclusiveness would lead young people “to actually believe in their own dreams”.

Despite participants’ imagination of a more caring and inclusive society, a few participants tempered this by questioning the extent to which this might be possible. For example, Elsa [22, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said that “ideally, everyone wants to be compassionate”, but she was cautious that “everyone is different” and not all should be compelled to be caring for others all the time. Bear [22, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] said that “in general, everyone would want a caring or considerate society, but having an entire society that is altruistic would be scary to envision as well”. Linking back to the earlier discussions about how a neoliberal Singapore society has shaped young people to be “practical” and “selfish”, Cassie [20, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD] was of the opinion that a “utopian society where everyone looks out for each other” was “impossible”, but she was heartened that “Singapore, and the world in general” were becoming “more progressive in terms of being inclusive, particularly to include disabled people, and ethnic minorities”.

More reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education

Another part of participants' (re)imaginings of the possibilities for Singapore was the desire for more reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education. This complemented their critique about the citizenship programmes they had experienced in their schooling years, as reported in Chapter 6. For example, Annie [20, Female, NIE, PV] said, "I think that teachers should facilitate some kind of small group discussion. Just talk freely, let ideas flow freely about what they thought, what they felt and what they have learnt in everyday life [...] some time needs to be allocated for that". In using "love" to refer to care, Emma [20, Female, NIE, PV] was of a similar opinion, that such discussion would allow young people to "talk about what they do in their everyday lives and how they go out to love people". This signalled that the young people were interested in dialoguing about their everyday ways of citizenship.

Their desire for a dialogic form of citizenship went beyond "scratching the surface" [Goblin, 21, Female, UniSIM-SUSS, FGD]. Goblin said that it was "very rare to have this kind of platform [referring to the focus group dialogues of this research] to talk about deeper stuff beyond surface". Goblin questioned whether without such critical conversations, "how do we even think about policies or possibilities of doing something that helps to tackle the root cause?" It was seen as necessary to "set aside time" for such critical conversations about social issues "to question 'why it's like that' and get them to think about how they can change it" [Brinjal, 21, Male, NIE, PV]. In that regard, it was necessary for "teachers to guide students [...] to find areas of the society that they are concerned about themselves and come out with things by themselves, which is what we are doing" [Annie, 20, Female, NIE, PV]. Annie acknowledged that this might not be "straightforward", was "complex" and required "high order thinking to be able to relate and see what was learnt, beyond what was seen". In saying this, she was well aware that implementing more dialogic, reflective and critical forms of citizenship education was not an easy task. That said, however, it was seen that if such "critical thinking" were "taught or inculcated" in young people, "it will actually go on to live after school" [Mona, 24, Female, NIE, PV].

This highlighted that the young people's critique that formal citizenship education did not shape them (see Chapter 6) did not just end there, but they were able to imagine possibilities of what it could be.

Research as an emancipatory experience for some participants

Some participants expressed that their participation in this research in itself was an emancipatory experience for them, and that it had awakened their citizenship imaginations. For example, Emmy [25, Female, NIE, PV] said, “I find this project is very interesting, in the way you ask us, ‘What is active citizen to you?’ So it sort of makes us think about what we care about, as Singaporeans”. She wondered if she could “pose the same question to children”, even though they may be “young, but get them to think about what is active citizenship to them”. Kickcat [25, Female, NIE, PV] was “happy to be in this survey [research]” because it got her “thinking much more about how to be a better citizen who cares for the people around” her. For Bear [22, Male, UniSIM-SUSS, PV], the questions posed throughout the research made him understand a bit more about himself, and also had him thinking more about what he wanted to do in the future as an active citizen. Houzi [20, Female, NIE, PV] was able to identify gaps in her own critical thinking about society as a result of her own reflections from her participation in this research:

After the session with you last Friday [focus group dialogue], I really went back to think. I thought about why I don’t question the ‘whys’ and the ‘hows’, ‘why is it happening’. I don’t think about the other social issues in Singapore. [...] I don’t actually think about the policies.

This demonstrated that participants were involved in a process of investigation, examination, critique and reinvestigation of Freirean ideals of conscientisation and praxis (1970) throughout the research and were not passive but active participants. This aligned with my pursuit of a participatory approach for this research, as discussed in Chapter 3. Although this research was not completely free from the tyranny of decision-making, power and authority, and methods (Cooke & Kothari, 2001), and significantly constrained by time, it did contribute to a certain extent to raising the critical consciousness of my participants to be more critical and imaginative citizens.

Summary

In summary, the participants demonstrated citizenship imaginations that were diverse, critical and relational, and comprised ongoing, active and insightful critiques of social and political contradictions in their everyday lives. These critiques were usually triggered by their care for the condition of a family, friends or people they encountered in their everyday lives, and they aimed to maintain, continue and repair their world so that they live in it as well as possible. It became evident that the young people were engaged in ‘quiet politics of

the everyday' through their relationality, making small and everyday decisions that had the potential to effect social change gradually over time. Their citizenship imaginations also comprised an ideal Singapore society that was more inclusive, with a reduced focus on economic success, and more reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education. These imaginations contradicted the perceptions and concerns that young Singaporeans are apathetic, apolitical and disengaged and, in fact, highlighted the heightened state of their critical consciousness and their quiet politics of the everyday aimed at gradual social change over time through critical and imaginative everyday decisions.

Chapter 8 – Discussion

In the three findings chapters, I presented data from my study that explored policies for active citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore (see Chapter 5), as well as insights into young Singaporeans' experiences with citizenship and their citizenship imaginations (see Chapters 6 and 7). In this chapter, I draw together the findings from Chapters 5–7, and discuss three key themes that emerged across the findings. First, I draw together a number of ideas which critique the current approach to education for active citizenship in Singapore. Second, I outline how a lived and relational citizenship emerged as a form of young people's active citizenship. And third, I consider how the theorisation of citizenship imaginations can be applied in conceptions of active citizenship. I discuss these themes in detail in the following sections.

Education for active citizenship

One of the key themes that arose from my data from the policy analysis and from participants related to the current approaches in education for active citizenship in Singapore. My focus on education for active citizenship is important because individuals require a set of knowledge, skills and competencies in order to function as active citizens and the responsibility of nurturing that usually falls on formal education (Reid et al., 2010). Recent studies around that world suggest that formal education is not doing enough to advance students' civic and political knowledge and to improve the quality of civic participation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). My discussion on education for active citizenship in Singapore centres around the limitations of the current conception of citizenship education in Singapore and at the same time highlights the possibilities of advancing a broader idea of education to promote active citizenship. To achieve that, the discussion around this theme is organised into three interrelated subthemes: 'depth and limits of civic knowledge', 'problems and possibilities of service-learning and volunteerism' and 'everyday lives as sites of civic learning'.

Depth and limits of citizenship education

All countries engage in some form of education for active citizenship in order to shape young citizens (Kennedy, 2019). Policies and programmes for citizenship education in Singapore, however, feature didactic teaching of citizenship, prioritise formal and public participation, are designed to serve the government's economic agenda, and most

importantly, do not consider young people's lived experiences with citizenship (Biesta, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 5, these policies and programmes were conceived in the government's wider concerns about ensuring the continuity of Singapore's economic success, in which citizens are expected to contribute to social cohesion, and economic prosperity. Young people are considered to be "citizens-in-waiting" (Lister, 2007b, p. 696) and "not-yet-being-a-citizen" (Biesta, 2011, p. 86), and the purpose of Singapore's citizenship education is to transition Singaporean young people to "citizen-workers of the future" (Lister, 2007a, p. 54) who will participate in the government's agenda of nation-building and ensuring economic prosperity. There are glimpses of a desire for a more holistic interpretation of young people's citizenship that hints at an interest in their everyday lived citizenship. However, this is glossed over by the overriding emphasis on citizen-workers of the future who are character-driven and contribute to the social cohesion and the continued economic success of the country, but are not necessarily critically reflexive citizens who act on systemic injustice in society and politics. Such a conception is problematic because it lacks the depth needed for meaningful citizenship education, and at the same time acts as a barrier to civic learning, particularly deep forms of civic learning.

Many participants in my study were aware of the importance of citizenship education but they critiqued that the forms that they experienced "did not impact the way it wanted to" [Emmy]. As Bobby said, "Everyone I know doesn't give a shit about CIP and stuff [...] I know this is supposed to open the floodgates to something greater, but it doesn't". In fact, despite the heavy emphasis on values, such as the core values taught through the CCE curriculum, the Confucian-inspired Singapore Shared Values or the Asian Values, none of the participants said that these values shaped them as citizens. As Brenda said, "I don't recall being taught values. It can't be taught, and I don't remember learning values". As discussed before, this was attributed to the didactic, uncritical and unengaging forms of citizenship education that these young people had experienced throughout their formal education in Singapore.

One of the important critiques by participants about such a didactic form of citizenship education was that it was problematic primarily because it did not equip them with the deeper knowledge required for them to be informed and critical, and to act as maximal, justice-oriented citizens. Some young people in my research expressed a desire for such forms of citizenship education. For example, Annie said:

I think that teachers should facilitate some kind of small group discussion. Just talk freely, let ideas flow freely about what they thought, what they felt and what they have learnt in everyday life [...] some time needs to be allocated for that.

Parallel with the emancipatory effect that some young people felt while participating in my research (see Chapter 7), they imagined a critical and dialogic pedagogy for citizenship education in Singapore. As Emmy said, “I find this [research] project is very interesting, in the way you ask us ‘What is active citizen to you?’ So it sort of makes us think about what we care about, as Singaporeans”. She wondered if she could “pose the same question to children”, even though they may be “young, but get them to think about what active citizenship is to them” (see Chapter 7).

Deep civic knowledge is necessary for young people to understand social issues, articulate their concerns to others, and defend and critique their stance towards issues and their actions; such informed and critical citizens are also able to provide counterarguments and perspectives (Wood et al., 2018). Many participants in this study expressed a desire for such citizenship education in Singapore. In one example in this study, Tacocat felt that the citizenship education was “just [the government’s] propaganda” and instead she wanted to “understand what social issues are” and not for these to be “shoved down” their throats. Citizenship education in Singapore appeared to be more concerned about uncritically imparting knowledge such as the “Singapore Story” (Sim & Lee-Tat, 2018). The Singapore Story was clearly perceived as government propaganda by many participants, rather than education for citizenship. Imparting the Singapore Story may be an important component of citizenship education because it provides a historical perspective of the country, and enables younger Singaporeans to appreciate the unique social, economic and political circumstances of Singapore (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018) and hence promotes the kinds of citizens that are required to live, work and thrive in such a context. However, it should not be limited to this, nor should it be taught in an uncritical manner.

Deepening civic knowledge involves developing critical thinking about social and political issues as well as exploring the multifarious perspectives of individuals and groups towards controversial and contested social issues (Wood et al., 2018). In my study, a number of participants demonstrated critical thinking about social and political issues but not many knew how to act to address them. In one example, Houzi said that she didn’t know what to do “once it [referring to social issues] touches the policy level” (see Chapter 6). As seen in Chapter 7, Houzi demonstrated criticality because she was able to critique her own cultural practice of burning joss paper, which she saw as being harmful for the environment, and inconveniencing others who had to clean up the place afterwards. Yet, Houzi did not know what to do next when it came to addressing issues at the policy level. This was probably because she lacked knowledge of democratic processes, which citizenship

education did not adequately prepare her for. This is a worrying finding for Singapore's citizenship education, especially because the policies for citizenship education were seemingly aimed at generating more 'active' forms of citizenship but they had not materialised in practice. This finding about the absence of deeper knowledge in Singapore's civic learning affirms similar findings from another study, by Sim and Krishnasamy (2016), that Singaporean students lacked knowledge of democracy, had superficial understanding of citizenship and uncritically accepted political hierarchy as well as acceded to authority. This also confirms a growing body of research that is trying to determine what it would mean to develop thinking citizens in the soft authoritarian nation-state of Singapore, which does not suggest an optimistic outlook (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

In addition to the absence of depth of civic knowledge in Singapore's citizenship education, my study highlights that there are many limits to civic learning. One of these limits is the lack of support for their political engagement. Again, Houzi is used as an example; she said, "As a student, I don't feel like I'm able to do anything. I don't think my voice would be heard and I don't know where should I say it for my voice to be heard" (see Chapter 6). Wood et al. (2018) argued that when students feel supported in their political engagements, they express higher levels of commitment to civic participation. In this study, however, participants did not feel supported or empowered, and they were not sure whether political actors would even listen to them. For example, Sunflower said, "They [the government] will hear but I think in their mind, they won't be processing what I'm saying [...] I got a lot of experience with this kind of things" (see Chapter 6). Research has highlighted that developing young people's interest in social and political issues can be useful to deepen their civic knowledge (Kennedy, 2019). However that is not the case in Singapore where young people's interest in political issues were not supported and are even ignored at times.

A number of examples that demonstrate limits to civic learning include how the government has not taken the voices of Singaporeans seriously, which has led young Singaporeans to despondency even before attempting to become involved. For example, many Singaporeans protested the demolition of the old National Library building, which was regarded as a source of national belonging. However, the government ignored these requests of ordinary Singaporeans, possibly in fear that it might set a new precedent that activists' pressure on the government actually works, thus challenging the government's authority (K. Tan, 2017). Such rigid and pragmatic governance appears to have worked against the government, and led to a sense of helplessness rather than empowerment in

young people in enacting their citizenship, which in turn can become a barrier to more active forms of their citizenship.

In other cases, young people's perception of the limits to their civic learning was heightened to an extent that they were fearful of discussing critical and controversial issues. In the case of Mona, for example, she said that she "self-censors" when discussing controversial and contested social issues because she feared that Big Brother (referring to the government) was watching and as a result it limited her discussing critical and controversial issues to more nuanced and subtle forms (see Chapter 6). This was not a healthy trend for deep civic learning because "an active, open, conversational, and non-biased classroom tone with levels of social trusts that welcomes disagreement, deliberation, and diversity has been found to promote current and future (civic) engagement" (Wood et al., 2018, p. 261). The government's inclination to limit citizenship education to passive forms of didactic civic learning is not surprising in light of the suggestion by L. Lim (2016) that the government is fearful that if Singaporeans were to be endowed with the ability to critique and act on forms of social injustice, it might jeopardise the government's authority and legitimacy. This also concurred with previous observations that while the government encourages critical thinking in education in general, it is limited to permissible political boundaries (Han, 2015). One of the major recurring themes of recent literature on citizenship education is that citizenship education is increasingly being used to nurture civic values and nationalist sentiments in order to ensure social order and control (Reid et al., 2010). Yet there will always be a possibility of finding room to manoeuvre within such tightly controlled conception (Reid et al., 2010). The challenge for citizenship education in Singapore is to find that wriggle room.

Lastly, many participants appeared to have internalised the policy expectation of them becoming citizen-workers of the future, which had been imposed on them throughout their civic learning experiences in their schooling years. This also acted as a limiting factor for their civic learning and participation. The vast majority of participants voiced that they were caught up with the pressures of Singapore society to excel in academic pursuits and generate income and wealth, and therefore they could not involve themselves in more active forms of citizenship participation. Barney summarised this:

In Singapore, everyone wants to do well for their studies, go to uni and then get a job and they will worry about other things like the high cost of living that they have to take on in the future so they wouldn't want to be held back by all these [social] issues.

While policies and programmes for active citizenship in Singapore overtly prioritise service to community, many participants in this research had also internalised the stronger message of citizen-workers of the future. As Chrysanthemum said, “Being part of the work force, helping the economy also is active citizenship”. This signalled that the young people were responding to the government’s neoliberal goal of nurturing young citizens to contribute to the country’s economic growth and prosperity. In another study of young people’s perceptions of citizenship, Baars (2017) found that young Singaporeans had internalised the government’s neoliberal ideals of citizenship where they prioritised individual competition, self-responsibility and duty to the nation rather than what was articulated as communitarian ideals of the Asian Values in the National Shared Values. My research yielded similar findings as of Baars (2017). Young Singaporeans’ neoliberal priorities were also evident in a recent survey which reported that contribution to society ranked amongst their priorities in life, as compared to financial security, employment and career progression which were the top few ones.

The government’s concern about a ‘civic deficit’ among young people was, in actual fact, one that was imposed on young people by civic learning programmes that lacked depth and were limiting. The analysis of the policies for citizenship education in Chapter 5 highlighted that they were verbiage and serve to limit young Singaporeans’ citizenship participation to uncritical forms of community service and volunteerism projects, and to restrict their citizenship status to a narrow neoliberal form of citizen-workers of the future. Sim et al. (2017) referred to this as a ‘minimal’ form of citizenship, since it promotes a particular exclusive and elitist interest, in this case, to contribute to the government’s agenda of ensuring economic prosperity. It is important that any form of civic learning should serve to prepare young citizens to thrive in the global economy and contribute to economic prosperity. However, that should not be the only goal of educating young citizens – ensuring young citizens are critical, informed and able to practise their democratic rights in their everyday lives, regardless of age, gender or status, is equally important. These two goals need not be mutually exclusive and indeed can co-exist.

Problems and possibilities of service-learning and volunteerism

Active participation in community life is an essential component of living in a democratic society (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Most participants in this study reported that organised and mandatory volunteerism and service-learning projects that they had to undergo through their schooling years were not meaningful for various reasons, such as that they were “top-down”, “all decided by the school and teachers” [Mona], students were “forced to do”,

“there wasn’t anything to learn from it” [Jo], there were “minimum hours” students “had to clock in” [Sunflower] and they were usually a “one-off event” [Curry] (see Chapter 7). These activities usually did not allow students to be critical or reflective about deeper social issues. Such forms of civic learning reflected a lack of depth and were limiting. Some participants critiqued that such a conception of civic learning could be “self-serving” and “unethical” because many “just do it for the sake of just getting hours” and they just “leave” after “getting their hours”, and “the moment you leave after we are done with our hours, the connection you have established with them is just lost” [Barney]. Others were able to point out that even some “teachers themselves might not believe in what they are doing, and they are doing because it is part of their job” [Lion]. Many young participants were in favour of more critical, reflective and dialogic forms of civic learning.

This finding aligned with those of similar studies on civic learning that have turned to service-learning and volunteerism as ways to foster active citizens. For example, in a study on civic programmes that focused on volunteerism and service-learning in the US, Westheimer and Kahne (2000) argued that acts of service are important but nurturing citizenship in a democratic society requires more than just acts of kindness. Westheimer and Kahne’s findings also highlighted that the programmes that they evaluated did not have clarity on how to achieve citizenship outcomes. Similarly, mandatory service-learning and volunteerism programmes that form part of Singapore’s citizenship education are thin versions of critical and reflective civic learning programmes. In particular, these programmes generally do not provide opportunities for learners to critique social and political issues or allow students to reflect on their citizenship formation. There are also limited opportunities for young people to further their participation or learning because the projects are usually one-off. In fact, the achievement goals for Values in Action at the national curriculum level, for example, count the number of projects students initiate or participate in. Such approaches do not promote criticality and fall short in comparison with the importance given to the depth of critical evaluation of young people’s social inquiry in the New Zealand social studies achievement standards for social action projects (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017). This was another of the participants’ major critiques of Singapore’s citizenship education.

Yet, despite their critique of the service-learning and volunteerism projects, many of the young people acknowledged that these experiences were, in fact, still critical to the formation of their citizenship identities because they helped to awaken their imaginations about social and political issues, although they deemed them to be “superficial” forms of

civic learning [Joy]. For example, Curry said it is “a form of a foundation or exposure to the activities one can participate in and being aware of what the social situation is like”. Such volunteering experiences served as important steps for later active participation because they allowed for the expression of care and concerns [Cassie], and cultivation of empathy and compassion [Lightbulb]. Such projects provided the opportunity for young people to be exposed to various social issues and to be “exposed to realities” beyond their “privileged bubble” [Lightbulb]. There was also a general agreement that if such programmes were not mandated, there would be “fewer people doing” them [Yan Dao]. These were a “stepping stone [...] in order to reach out to do more” [Lion]. It is noteworthy that almost all of the participants specifically mentioned the CIP, and in some cases its successor, Values in Action, when asked if formal, school-based citizenship education programmes had had any impact on their active citizenship; only one participant referred to the curricular subject social studies, saying it was not effective either (see Chapter 6).

Young people’s particular attention to the CIP and Values in Action possibly signalled the potential these held for more relational and critical forms of civic learning despite their various critiques of it. In most cases, the experiences that affected them during their service-learning and volunteerism projects were actually those that had some form of link to their own lived experiences. Such experiences allowed them to connect the micro of the personal and private to the macro of the formal and public. This provided insights into the young people’s citizenship formation, and sites of civic learning, which were more significant in the realms of their lived and relational forms of citizenship than formal and didactic forms of civic learning. The role of volunteering in awakening the imaginations of social issues was reported in a recent article in a Singapore online newspaper (Chan, 2019). In that article, the young Singaporean author wrote that volunteerism opened the door to empathy and resulted in her sustained and enduring civic participation journey. This is an important consideration for the re-imagination of policies for volunteering and service-learning types of programme – that they are important in awakening citizenship imaginations but at the same time they have to be thoughtfully designed to be critical and deep in civic learning.

Everyday lives as sites of civic learning

As discussed earlier, citizenship education policies and programmes demonstrate a strong focus on character-driven citizenship as well as formal and public participation. All of these have a single and clear goal of contributing towards maintaining a cohesive Singapore society to ensure Singapore’s continued economic success. However, an inductive analysis

of the policies also revealed a budding desire for a more holistic form of citizenship that could also acknowledge and include young people's everyday life experiences. This is not clearly articulated in the current citizenship education policy and conflicts with the government's and society's focus on citizen-workers of the future. In Chapter 6, we observed that most participants were seemingly enacting policy intents for them to be citizen-workers of the future, yet at the same time they were struggling to identify what citizenship actually meant to them (Han, 2015). This struggle provided insights that participants were not just simply conforming as citizen-workers of the future but seeking to define and live their citizenship in other diverse ways (see Chapters 6 and 7). In particular, they prioritised more relational forms of citizenship that were rooted in everyday acts of care with, and for, family, friends, others in the community and the natural environment. In many cases, participants also highlighted that everyday actions of care for others were important forms of their relational citizenship as well (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 7, it also emerged that the young people possessed the ability to critique social and political contradictions that they witnessed in their everyday lives. Such critiques were concerned with maintaining, continuing and repairing their worlds so that everyone can live in it as well as possible. This highlighted that participants' everyday lives became sites of their citizenship formation. Participants also highlighted a desire for civic learning that recognised and included their lived citizenship in a critical and dialogic way. For example, Annie stated (earlier) that she wanted opportunities for young people to "just talk freely, let ideas flow freely about what they thought, what they felt and what they have learnt in everyday life". Similarly, Emma said that young people should be given time to "talk about what they do in their everyday lives and how they go out to love people" (Chapter 6). Participants were of the opinion that without critical conversations that go deeper than just scratching the surface, it is not possible to talk about policies or tackle the root cause of social issues or to change them (see Chapter 6). All of these findings signalled that young people's everyday lives became sites of their civic learning.

While there were some indications that citizenship education policies and programmes were starting to recognise and include the participants' everyday lives as sites for citizenship formation, they were not fully capitalised for a deeper form of civic learning that would recognise and include the young people's lived experiences with citizenship. The attention to everyday life as a site of citizenship formation is a significantly different approach to civic learning and identity formation (Biesta, 2011; Wood, 2017). Gopinathan and Chiong (2018) observed that younger Singaporeans thought of themselves as acquiring

plural, overlapping and hybrid identities that cut across gender, class and race, and yet existing conceptions of citizenship did not make any consideration for such dynamic and multiple identities. As a possible response to such issues, Biesta (2011) provided a framework to view citizenship education in way that recognises and includes young people's lived experiences. Biesta argued that civic learning can be understood as non-linear, recursive and cumulative; it is a non-linear process because it recognises young people's ongoing positive and negative experiences with democracy and citizenship. Therefore, citizenship education has to recognise and include the diversity of these lived experiences. It is recursive because the everyday experiences also link back to their citizenship learning, and it is cumulative because past experiences, both positive and negative, will not be completely erased and will continue to shape their future action and learning.

Critiquing Singapore's conception of citizenship education through Biesta's (2011) lens provided insights that there is little room for the conceptualisation and implementation of a non-linear, recursive and cumulative form of civic learning. This is evident from the didactic instructions for citizenship education that are driven primarily by lessons accompanied by textbooks and commemorative events (Han, 2015; Sim et al., 2017). There is structured time set aside in the formal school schedule for CCE lessons for all students from primary until pre-university (Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a). While this highlights the importance that is placed on CCE, it also means that there is little space for a critical and dialogic pedagogy (Freire, 1970) that would allow for deep, critical and genuine conversations about young people's experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives – either positive or negative. Yet, at the same time, citizenship education policies indicate a nascent interest in lived experiences; for example, the social studies curriculum requires students to develop “critical and reflective thinking, and take multiple perspectives to inquire into real-world issues that concerned students' lives” (Ministry of Education, 2016b). Another example in the CCE curriculum is the pursuit of capitalising on students' life experiences to teach values and skills, which is best encapsulated by the following quote:

It is experiences, especially those that are demanding and challenging, that build character and enable students to develop the feelings for and to act on their values, through real life experiences in various contexts. (Ministry of Education, 2011b)

Some emerging attention to everyday lives as sites for citizenship formation is also evident in the Values in Action programme, which encourages young people to “see themselves as

part of the larger community” (Ministry of Education, 2012a, 2014e), and also in the CCE curriculum, which is guided by an “expanding domains from self to the world” approach whereby “students [...] put values into practice within the context of real-life situations in the family, school, community, nation and the world” (Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a). In the new CCE lessons for primary pupils, there is a component named Family Time that contains suggested activities for pupils to do with their families, which then become learning opportunities for the pupils to practise their values outside of the formal school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2012c). These, however, are still a thin representation of Biesta’s (2011) idea of civic learning that recognises and includes young people’s lived experiences with citizenship. There is much potential to reconceptualise Singapore’s citizenship education with a shift in its pedagogical approach – from a didactic one to a dialogic one.

Lived and relational citizenship

One major contribution of this study is that it sheds light on how private and personal forms of lived and relational citizenship practices can also be political and considered as acts of citizenship. My exploration into the relational aspects of young people’s lived citizenship through a feminist lens provided insights into young people’s private and personal lives, away from the traditional focus on their public participation. Using Lister’s (2003) conception of citizenship from a feminist lens, and Tronto’s (1993) definition of what could be considered relational forms of citizenship practices (see Chapter 3), I was able to explore, to some degree, the rare insights into participants’ lived worlds, away from their participation in formal and public arenas. Lister’s vision for citizenship goes beyond the public–private binary and advocates for a broadened conception of citizenship practices by recognising unconventional citizenship practices, without discounting conventional forms (see Chapter 3). Tronto’s (1993) definition of relational practices that could be considered political and acts of citizenship practices provides clarity in identifying and highlighting such acts:

everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.
(p. 61)

Such forms of acts of politics was expressed through words and photographs by participants in this study.

By using feminist theory and critical theory to explore and critique lived aspects of young people's citizenship, I was able to (1) perform a deeper analysis and interpretation of the data about young people's lived citizenship; (2) develop an understanding of policies and structures that limited their citizenship; (3) critique the generally accepted ideology of young people's citizenship; and (4) analyse the accompanying social, cultural and political power structures. The research process itself therefore became an opportunity for transformation for participants, and myself, through Freirean-inspired ideas of reflection and praxis. Feminist theory and critical theory allowed me to analyse and discuss the findings using an ethic of care lens that focused on lived, relational and contextual aspects, rather than the ways of viewing citizenship practices, particularly an ethic of justice lens, that tend to have a rational and masculine focus, as well as a strong attention on morality. The intersection of this critical, feminist and ethic of care then afforded an exploration of young people's citizenship imaginations. Another significant contribution to this theorisation was the idea of sociological imaginations of C. Wright Mills (1959). Though Mills was not a feminist or critical theorist, his idea about the ordinary person's ability to imagine the interplay between personal troubles and public structures provided the link to Freire's (1970) conception of conscientisation, and inspired the title and the central idea of this thesis – citizenship imaginations.

Feminist theory and critical theory were helpful for navigating the complexities and intricacies of the public–private divide of what can be considered political citizenship practice. For example, many young participants reported that they lived their citizenship in a more relational sense, often with their family and friends, as well as their concern for the natural environment – outside of formal and public settings, and in their everyday informal lives. As Bhadshah said, “If you want to be a good citizen, you want to do something for those around you” (see Chapter 6). These ideas came to light during the focus group dialogues, but more vividly through the photos and debrief of the photovoice activity. Many young people reported that their relational forms of citizenship were generally not shaped by formal citizenship education but instead were “moulded” by “watching” their parents as they were growing up [Kickcat]; they “looked up” to their parents because they displayed “selflessness” in ways such as “donating money, time and effort” to community causes [Giraffe]. Young people's caring actions and relationships seemed mundane and apolitical at the onset but their motivation to act as caring citizens and to maintain caring relationships in various capacities in their everyday lives highlights their roles as active providers of care,

not only as recipients, which then allows for them to be considered active citizens (Bartos, 2012).

Studying young people's lived citizenship from an ethic of care perspective provided deeper insights into their caring actions as a form of "relational citizenship" (Sim & Chow, 2019) in their lived world. This provided an important and useful alternative to studying and nurturing young people's lived citizenship – by acknowledging their relational forms of acts of care as political and legitimate citizenship practices. The findings of this study affirm Sim and Chow's (2019) argument that the Asian conception of citizenship prioritises relational citizenship, and that it is indeed political. Yet one important challenge in researching young people's relational citizenship was the ambiguity as to what could be considered political and what not – not all everyday acts can be considered acts of citizenship (Kallio & Häkli, 2011; Wood, 2014, 2015). In that regard, Tronto's definition, undergirded by feminist and critical theory, was useful in identifying and defining these caring actions that could be considered political and in avoiding the danger of classifying all everyday acts as political. However, this was not a straightforward task, but involved deep and iterative dialogue, particularly during the photovoice debrief sessions. This approach was underpinned by the Freirean (1970) idea of conscientisation, which came into play when participants were learning to identify social, political, and economical contradictions through deep and critical dialogue. For some, Chrysanthemum for example, it was not until after the photovoice activity that they began to see their everyday acts, and their critiques of society and politics, as their acts of citizenship as well (see Chapter 7). This could be attributed primarily to how their citizenship thinking was shaped by Singapore's citizenship education, which falsely glorifies public acts such as volunteering and formal civic learning as the gold standards for citizenship learning and citizenship formation. Appendix 2 provides a classification of the participants' photos from the photovoice projects that highlights the higher concentration of photographs that focused on relational aspects of their lived citizenship.

This study afforded deeper insights into the relational forms of participants' lived citizenship, particularly into how intricately the political was interwoven with their 'apolitical' and mundane everyday actions. However, unlike other studies, in which participants were uncertain about what could be considered 'political' in their mundane everyday acts (Kallio & Häkli, 2011; Wood, 2014, 2015), participants in this study were generally able to discern the mundane and apolitical from the political and identify relational forms of everyday actions that they thought were actually forms of active

citizenship. Many participants considered that to “care for other people” was an important form of being “active citizens” [Joy]. It was seen among many participants that “forging and building caring relationships and connections with family” was an important part of learning to be an “active citizen” because the “feelings of care developed from these relationships with family” could be extended and “applied to the society” [Giraffe]. Being a “good citizen” was “to be someone who cares for others” [Kickcat], “to do good even when no one is looking”, to look to help others even if it was to “just ease the burden of someone” [Brinjal], and to have “concern for someone else who is not like your family or your loved one but basically another citizen” [Watson]. For others, “the very basis of active citizenship is friendship” [Houzi]. Further to relational forms of citizenship with friends and peers, it was seen that one “can also be an active citizen” through everyday acts of care for one’s peers, such as “helping in their studies or whatsoever”, and that active citizenship need not be “so big an initiative” [Sherman].

There were three tenets to the participants’ conception of relational citizenship: first, that it did not have to be “big things” but “the little compassionate things that make a difference” [Bovaryser]; second, that it prioritised dialogic forms of relationality; and third, that it also involved others and the natural environment. As discussed in the previous section, many participants gave importance to day-to-day and mundane acts of care, for example, “doing these small acts of helping the elderly or giving up the seat or opening the door for people” [Joy]. Yet they gave a comparable importance to conversations, forging connections and forming community. For example, “having conversations with people” was seen as an important platform for young people to “be able to empathise with how others feel” [Emma]. At the same time, the “idea of connection” was “very valuable” because it provided a “platform to be an active citizen” [Lightbulb]. This was because “connecting with people around” was a way “to form communities” [Bob]. In some cases, participants saw formal opportunities such as volunteering as opportunities to extend their relationality. For example, volunteering was seen as an important “step for active citizenship” because it allowed them to “show care and concern” [Cassie]. This focus on connections, conversations and community, reflected how they were enacting their micropolitics (Hankins, 2017) within their everyday relational acts of care. These findings add to contributions of conceptions of lived and relational citizenship because relationality has been largely interpreted in the sense of acts of care, and less attention has been given to recognising the politics involved in conversation, connections and communities.

It also emerged that the young people were not simply enacting their relationality without criticality. For example, relating to acts of donations, some participants were of the opinion that “not all problems can be solved by money” and that donations were the “laziest way of helping others” [Yan Dao]. It was seen that whether it was voting or donations, it was only meaningful if it was done with a critical analysis [Lightbulb]. This highlights that the young people’s relationality went beyond mere awareness of the needs of the community to involve more critical forms. This finding is contrary to the arguments of Sim and Chow (2019) that Asian conceptions of citizenship do not feature such critical forms of questioning and challenging of established norms because of a fear of risking harmony in society.

Many participants were also able to identify places of care which allowed acts of care to flourish (Tronto, 1993). It was observed that most of the young people’s relational acts of care happened with and around their family and friends, and a diverse range of everyday places such as churches, parks, eateries, university and nightclubs. These places “facilitated” their relationships [Ezekiel] or allowed them to “study together, help each other with their work and settle friendship or relationship problems” [Watson]. Everyday places, as mundane as the elevator, were also seen as a “special place” because they provided the opportunity for “short conversations”, which in turn incubated relationality [Doraemon]. These examples provided glimpses into how participants saw public places as opportunities for them to practise their relationality. This also shed light on the need to rethink traditional conceptions of citizenship, which were often confined to public and formal settings, whereas the young people’s experiences with citizenship flourished in diverse everyday places such as churches, parks, eateries, university and nightclubs.

Associated with places of care, many participants highlighted their care for their natural environment and other life forms. A “good citizen” was seen as one who was “inclusive” of “even all these little small animals, even trees, even plants around us” and “should all live together in one community” [Kickcat]. Participants’ attention to caring for animals and the natural environment is noteworthy because very little attention has been given to Singaporean young people’s caring actions towards animals and the environment in the context of active citizenship. Such a focus is particularly significant for Singapore because it has a long-standing reputation of being a ‘City in a Garden’, where there are constant efforts to conserve the biodiversity and to continue to ‘green’ the city-state (Auger, 2013).

This exploration into young Singaporeans' lived and relational citizenship sheds new light on their diverse forms of citizenship formation in their everyday worlds and is an important breakthrough in moving beyond the public–private divide about young people's citizenship participation. Importantly, young people's everyday acts of care demonstrated a potential to be political and acts of citizenship. They also served to awaken young people's citizenship imaginations. This new perspective of young people's citizenship has the potential to prevent young people from being brushed aside as apathetic, apolitical and disengaged. It also helps to take the attention away from the narrow thinking that citizenship participation can only be political if it is formal and public. Instead, a focus on lived and relational citizenship, underpinned by Tronto's definition of care that is political, provided a more nuanced and complex vision of young citizens in which everyday relational acts have the potential to be political.

Yet, researching the lived and relational citizenship of young people will continue to be messy and muddled because of the challenge in capturing their private, spontaneous and everyday acts in their lived worlds. Therefore, the debate continues on how to recognise and include young people's lived and relational citizenship in a non-linear, recursive and cumulative form of civic learning (Biesta, 2011). For example, although the CCE curriculum in Singapore considers 'values' to be central to the curriculum framework, and care is featured as one of the six core values (see Chapter 5), values are conceived in the context of an ethic of justice, that is, referring to morality, rather than in the form of an ethic of care. Also, the idea of values is influenced by Aristotelian ethics¹¹ because it was concerned with the good–bad and virtues–deficiencies divide. In addition, the conception of 'care' supports the government's pursuit of nurturing caring citizens who will contribute to social cohesion and economic prosperity (see Chapter 5) but does not consider relational forms in the various and diverse lived contexts. The type of care that was expressed by participants in my study was different in the sense that it featured deeper and more intrinsic forms of relationality that were rooted primarily in familial relationships but also involved friends, community and others. The challenge is to bridge the taught and the lived curricula.

Citizenship imaginations

Central to this research was the exploration of young people's *citizenship imaginations* – a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and repair the world to live in

¹¹ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

it as well as possible. The potential of imagination has been underexplored in the conception of citizenship, which traditionally has prioritised action over imagination. Many participants demonstrated a lively and ongoing critique of social and political contradictions in their everyday lives. These critiques were personal, thoughtful and underpinned by ethics of care, and were typically triggered by their genuine care for their family, friends, others in their lives and the natural world around them. For example, Brenda said her critique of the minimum wage in Singapore was triggered when she accidentally saw the very low bank balance of an elderly person while trying to help him at an ATM machine. This led to her questioning the contradiction in employment policies because she cared about the person whom she had just met. In another example, Chrysanthemum's critique about poverty in Singapore was heightened while he was volunteering in the community (see Chapter 7), where he witnessed poverty as a result of social policies that marginalise a group of people.

The two issues – poverty and race, religion and culture – that were discussed in detail in Chapter 7 have provided insights into the criticality of young people's citizenship imaginations. These critical ideas are not seen in traditional forms of citizenship education and remain an uncharted territory in studying young people's active citizenship in Singapore. Some participants challenged societal norms, as seen in, for example, Yan Dao's critique about donations discussed in Chapter 6. While fundraising for charities was a typical activity of CIPs during his schooling years, he was averse to considering donations forms of active citizenship because he thought that “not all problems can be solved by money” and he thought that if “things could be solved by money then Bill Gates or maybe even Mark Zuckerberg could have save the world by now”.

The young people's critiques also included their imaginations of an education that fosters critical, reflective and active citizens as well as an ideal Singapore society that is more caring and inclusive, with a lighter focus on economic success. As Kickcat said, “We need a society where everyone grows a bigger heart for each other, and not just gets smarter” (see Chapter 7). Yet, more importantly, some participants desired a society that would nurture more critical and imaginative citizens. Brinjal said that “an ideal Singapore would be one that embraces people for who they are and one that embraces people who might not fit into that perfect stereotype”, and Mona said such a society should welcome “people who may have unconventional ideas”. This is sorely lacking in Singapore's conception of citizenship.

Participants' diverse expressions of their citizenship imaginations, primarily through the photovoice activity, served as viewfinders to zoom into how they were navigating the

expectations for them to be cookie-cutter-type citizen-workers of the future, all moulded the same way to serve the government's economic pursuits. Yet, at the same time, they were prioritising more relational, imaginative and critical forms of citizenship. Participants demonstrated that they were not outrightly rejecting social and political expectations for them to be citizen-workers of the future but in fact they were forming their citizenship identities in their own ways, for example, by developing relationality as a form of lived citizenship. Biesta (2011) referred to this as being 'ignorant citizens' because such citizens refuse to be domesticated and pinned down in a predetermined civic identity, but that does not mean that such an ignorant citizen is completely 'out of order'. However, at a deeper level, the young people were effecting what Hankins (2017) termed as "quiet politics of the everyday", which involves "ways in which everyday decision-making by individuals and communities can gradually, episodically, change dominant hegemonic norms and understandings, providing new opportunities for social change" (p. 503). Participants in my study were illustrating the quiet politics of the everyday in two ways. First, they were quietly widening traditional conceptions of citizenship that focus heavily on formal and public participation to one that focuses on private and personal forms of relational citizenship in their everyday lives. Second, participants were challenging the government's concerns and general perceptions that young people are apolitical, apathetic and disengaged by demonstrating that they were indeed political but in their everyday and 'quiet' ways.

Young people's quiet politics of the everyday was a useful lens to complement my conception of citizenship imaginations because it reinforced the three key ideas that formed the crux of citizenship imaginations: first, the idea of the ability to imagine the interplay between one's personal problems and public issues (Mills, 1959); second, the idea of developing critical consciousness to identify social, political and economic contradictions that act as oppressive forces, and taking action against these contradictions (Freire, 1970); and third, the idea of maintaining, continuing and repairing our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible (Tronto, 1993). The concept of 'quiet politics' complemented these three with the idea that everyday actions and decisions do not necessarily need to be big acts but can be 'quiet' ones that create new understandings, open up dialogues and have the ability to eliminate power differences (Hankins, 2017). This is a different approach to citizenship from those that focus on formal and public actions, overshadowing the power of imaginations and quiet politics.

In comparing other theorisations of citizenship actions, Engin Isin's (2008) conception of 'acts of citizenship' provides a case for an argument. Isin (2008) proposed

that an act of citizenship is a collective or individual deed through which subjects enact their role as citizens. These acts do not embody traditional forms of citizenship actions but by rupturing social-historical patterns, disrupting inherited ways of thinking and enacting, create new possibilities by claiming rights and imposing obligations (Isin & Nielsen, 2008, p. 10). Instead of focusing only on the subject's citizenship status or traditional forms of "one-sided" (p. 2) citizenship practices, such as voting or paying taxes, the focus in Isin's conception of acts of citizenship is shifted from the doer – the subject – to the deeds that produce such a subject. Isin provided three interrelated principles of identifying acts of citizenship. The first principle is to interpret them through the meanings, ideas and reasons that actors provide for their acts and how they understand the consequences of their actions. This includes subjects becoming 'activist citizens' as a result of their acts. The second principle recognises that acts produce actors who seek justice, which includes analysing how actors articulate their claims along an axis of justice and injustice to understand their orientation. The third principle is that acts of citizenship can be unlawful or illegal, and that is how law changes. Although Isin's conception of acts of citizenship has the emancipatory potential of Freirean ideals, and also comprises elements of Mills's imagination of the interplay between the personal and the political, it does not align with my Singaporean participants' form of citizenship practices. Participants in my study did not quite express themselves as the form of 'activist citizens' as imagined by Isin but were involved in quiet politics in their everyday ways that also had the potential to effect social change. This study provides some possibilities for recognising, identifying and awakening those quiet politics of the everyday that tend to be elusive and reclusive in the realms of private, personal and mundane everyday acts.

The work and ideas of Freire (1970) provided a theory that was useful in advancing the cause of awakening and capturing young people's citizenship imaginations, which I have characterised as relational and featuring a quiet "micro-politics" (Hankins, 2017, p. 503). Freire was committed to raising the critical consciousness of marginalised communities through a process of investigation, examination, critique and reinvestigation in what he called conscientisation and praxis (see Chapter 3). This led the people in those communities to be able to see and think more critically about social and political forces of oppression and to recognise how these forces subtly shaped their lives. Freire also pioneered dialogic pedagogy, which might also be useful for including young people's voices in citizenship education that considers their lived experiences. Freire defined dialogue as collective reflection and action, and argued that only dialogue is capable of producing

critical consciousness and praxis. Linked to a dialogic pedagogy is the idea of generative words. In using generative words, Freire was interested in eliciting words and ideas that are fundamentally important in the lives of the people for whom educational activities are designed. He spent long periods of time in communities trying to understand their interests, investments and concerns. Freire encouraged people to explore both the meanings and effects of these words on their lives and what the meanings and effects of the same words were in different social and political contexts. The goal was to raise people's critical consciousness and to encourage them to engage in praxis. These ideas might be useful in awakening and capturing young people's citizenship imaginations by advancing a more generative, dialogic and critical pedagogy that can be applied in formal, non-formal and informal civic learning. This approach also underpinned the first data collection method of this research, the focus groups, where young people were involved in deep and critical dialogue, attempting to create generative conceptions of active citizenship. Such an approach also helped to elicit words and ideas around the conception of citizenship, beyond what was taught to them in school. This elicitation of words then facilitated an exploration of the particular meaning of citizenship that each young person held and how that featured in different contexts of their everyday lives. This was a crucial step in awakening their citizenship imaginations, which had previously been oppressed and latent because of the rather passive and didactic form of civic learning they had experienced in their lives.

Another useful approach for awakening and capturing young people's citizenship was through photographic images of their acts of citizenship in their everyday lives. This was the second data collection method in this study, photovoice. Participants' images from the photovoice project provided insights into their lived worlds, particularly their relational forms of citizenship actions. This was a small but important step in overcoming the methodological challenge of researching young people's lived citizenship (Kallio & Häkli, 2011; Wood, 2014, 2015). The use of a mobile app that was specifically designed for this research further enhanced the possibilities of a visual methodology because it empowered participants to capture whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, in their everyday ways of life (Prosser, 2011). The only exception to this was that they were told not to take direct photographs of faces in consideration of research ethics. The process of participants themselves making individualised and contextualised decisions on what to capture as their citizenship actions, was in itself a demonstration of their "micro-politics" (Hankins, 2017, p. 503). Through the photographs and the accompanying debrief, it was evident that many participants experienced an elevated sense of critical consciousness about social, political

and economic contradictions that were linked to their everyday personal experience. At the same time, they reported that this research, the photovoice element in particular, was an emancipatory experience because it allowed them to acquire a new and heightened awareness of what active citizenship actually meant to them (see Chapter 7). As discussed in Chapter 4, the photovoice became a *mirror, lens, and shutter* in their exploration of their own experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives.

Summary

In summary, the main theme that emerged across the data was the exclusion of young people's critical, imaginative and relational forms of lived citizenship from the traditional conceptions of citizenship in Singapore's educational policies and programmes. The young people's imagination of their own active citizenship was a far departure from the citizen-workers of the future image that was imposed on them by socio-political power structures in Singapore. Drawing from these findings, it became apparent that conceptions of young Singaporeans' citizenship in policy, programmes and practice should comprise three key ideas that have emerged from my discussion: first, recognition and inclusion of young people's lived experiences in citizenship policies and education; second, a focus on relational forms of young people's everyday citizenship; and third, awakening of young people's citizenship imaginations through critical and dialogic forms of pedagogy. The discussion which I continue in the following chapter also suggests that politicians, policymakers and programme developers should involve young people in reconceptualising the idea of citizenship, citizenship education and Singapore's future, rather than treating them as passive recipients of citizenship education (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018).

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

Young Singaporeans' active citizenship

In this chapter, I conclude this thesis with a summary of the key findings in response to the research questions and detail my research contributions. In keeping with my intention to contribute to the reimagination of policy formulation, curriculum design and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore, I provide a possibility for the reimagination of citizenship education in Singapore by proposing the idea of a critical and caring citizenship. I conclude this chapter with a set of recommendations for further research arising from this study.

The central aim of this research was to explore young people's active citizenship and their *citizenship imaginations*, which I defined as a quality of mind that enables the ability to critique social, political and economic contradictions in everyday life in order to maintain, continue and repair the world to live in it as well as possible. I embarked on a critical analysis of policies for citizenship education and active citizenship in Singapore, examined their influence on young people's citizenship perceptions and practices, and conducted a deeper exploration of the relationship between these policies and young people's lived citizenship. The overall goal of this research was to explore young Singaporeans' active citizenship and how they have been shaped by formal policies and programmes, as well as their lived experiences. This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What kind of citizens do education policies and programmes in Singapore aim to nurture?
2. What shapes Singaporean young people's citizenship?
3. How do Singaporean young people live and imagine their citizenship?

The following sections provide a summary of the key ideas that emerged across the three chapters and respond to my research questions.

In response to my first research question, my findings revealed, first, that the conceptions of policies and programmes for young people's citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore prioritised character-driven and social-participatory types of citizens, and citizen-workers of the future who will contribute to the social cohesion and economic prosperity of Singapore. These policies were operationalised through didactic forms of citizenship education programmes and mandatory volunteerism and service-

learning projects but glossed over young people's lived experiences of their citizenship. Such policies and programmes represented a minimal interpretation of citizenship that focused primarily on nurturing personally responsible citizens and not on more maximal forms or social justice-oriented types of citizenship participation (McLaughlin, 1992; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b). At the same time, they overlooked the multiple and diverse ways that young people enact citizenship in their private and personal worlds, beyond formal and public ways.

On the surface, many participants' conceptions of active citizenship seemed to conform to the government's policy intent for young Singaporeans to be community-focused social-participatory, character-driven loyal Singaporean citizens and economic-focused citizen-workers of the future. However, a deeper analysis revealed that, for many participants, these conceptions were undergirded by a relational disposition that was rooted in care for others and the community. Many participants also reported that formal citizenship education did not shape their conceptions of citizenship because they considered these to be didactic, not engaging and lacking criticality and therefore not of significance in shaping their citizenship identities. Instead, they reported that their citizenship perceptions and practices were shaped primarily by relational forms of care that were emphasised and modelled by their family and friends. Most participants who critiqued the formal citizenship education as didactic, targeted the mandatory volunteerism programmes, in particular, CIP and Values in Action. However, some others regarded those experiences as critical in awakening their citizenship imaginations.

My second question asked what shaped young people's citizenship. In response to that, my findings suggest that while many participants appeared to conform to policy expectations of being character-driven, social-participatory and citizen-workers of the future, a closer examination of their citizenship imaginations in their everyday lives, particularly through the photovoice activity, afforded deeper insights into their lived citizenship that suggested otherwise. It emerged that young people prioritised relational forms of citizenship that were focused on small, mundane and everyday acts of care with, and for, family, friends and others in the community. It was also evident that the young people were engaged in quiet politics of the everyday through their relationality, making small and everyday decisions that had the potential for gradual social change over time. Their citizenship imaginations involved active critiques of society and politics, a search for social justice, and a prioritisation of relational forms of care as part of their citizenship practice in their everyday worlds. Their citizenship imaginations also comprised an ideal

Singapore society that is more inclusive, with less of a focus on economic success, and a desire for more reflective, dialogic and critical forms of education.

My third question was concerned with how young people live and imagine their citizenship. My findings suggest that the young people's lived citizenship and their citizenship imaginations were diverse, critical and relational. These contradicted perceptions and concerns that young Singaporeans are apathetic, apolitical and disengaged (see Chapter 2), and deepen our understanding about the ways young people shape their citizenship identities outside the formal and public arena. In particular, the Singaporean young people in my study prioritised more relational forms of citizenship in their lived worlds, and their citizenship imaginations were lively with critiques of society and politics in ways that were not captured in mainstream narratives. While this was a small-scale study, it nonetheless suggests the need to look deeper into how this translates on a larger scale as it holds potentially important implications for how policy formulation, curriculum design and engagement strategies might be reimagined in order to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore.

This research affirms findings from Han's (2015) exploration of young people's active citizenship in Singapore in non-formal settings in two key ways. First, young people were turned off by didactic forms of citizenship education because these "fail to respect, acknowledge or authentically relate to their own values and experiences" (Han, 2015, p. 258). They did not resonate with young people because they were not able to see their relevance to their lives, and therefore young people were seeking other sites of learning to understand and express their citizenship instead. Second, contrary to the government's belief that young people are apathetic, apolitical and disengaged, they were in fact concerned about social and political issues and were exploring ways to be more active citizens, but at the same time, they were struggling to define citizenship itself. Ruth Lister (2007b) defined lived citizenship as the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives, and the ways in which their social and cultural backgrounds, and economic situations affect their lives as citizens. This is a key consideration for reimagining the conception of young people's citizenship in Singapore, which might then pave the way to achieving citizenship's inclusive potential.

Research contributions

This empirically grounded research challenges conventional thinking about policies and programmes for active citizenship for young people and contributes to theory and practice in researching young people's active citizenship in several ways.

Firstly, this research has theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature that is concerned with young people's active citizenship. My theoretical framework, informed by critical theory, feminist theory and a feminist ethics of care, provides insights into new ways of viewing young people's citizenship. In particular, it provides the possibility for considering young people's critical but quiet politics of the everyday, and the small, mundane and personal relational acts of care in their everyday lives as potentially political acts of citizenship. Such a theoretical conception works towards fulfilling citizenship's promise of inclusivity and is guided by the ideal of a differentiated universalism approach to citizenship (Lister, 2003). This study has demonstrated the potential to contribute to the broader fields of young people's citizenship and citizenship education towards more democratic practice. In particular, the concept of *citizenship imaginations* offers the promise and possibility to be applied in other diverse social, cultural, political and educational contexts that seek to gain insights into young people's experiences with citizenship.

In addition, the use of photovoice using the custom-designed mobile app has opened up new methodological possibilities of researching young people's experiences with citizenship, hence enabling them to express their experiences with citizenship. As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the challenges of researching young people's lived experiences is associated with the methodological challenge of capturing these experiences in their everyday lives. The use of photovoice is helpful in mitigating this challenge as it provided a way for young people to explore ideas more visually and spatially (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Wang, 2006; Wood, 2014). While the photovoice provided some insights into young people's lived experiences with citizenship, it still remains but a small insight into the unexplored world of young people's citizenship imaginations. Nonetheless, this research contributes to the growing body of literature around theory and methodology that aims to better understand young people's diverse experiences with citizenship in their private and personal realms of their everyday lives, moving away from traditional study of citizenship participation in the formal and public realms. A further methodological contribution was the way that the research itself served to trigger the imagination of some participants. The reflective processes built into the methodology (through focus group dialogues and the photovoice debrief sessions), led a number of participants expressing that their participation in this research was an emancipatory experience. For example, during the photovoice debrief, Chrysanthemum was one of the participants who mentioned that their participation in this research was an emancipatory experience and as a result they were able to imagine

active citizenship in various possibilities, aside from the traditional conception of volunteering and doing more projects, for example, by addressing the concerns at policy level. This supported Chrysanthemum in expressing a critique of a housing policy that marginalised a group of low-income families and led him to act in a more public way (see Chapter 7). As indicated by a number of participants, the opportunity to be reflective and critical is a vital and missing component of citizenship education in Singapore, and their development as young citizens. Photovoice presents new methodological possibilities in researching young people's lived experiences with citizenship.

The second contribution of this research is the call to reimagine conceptions education for active citizenship towards more critical and transformative forms. Central to such critical and transformative active citizenship education is a pedagogical approach that involves deep and critical knowledge about society and politics, leading to meaningful forms of social action with a commitment to a more just, equal and inclusive society (Wood et al., 2018). At the same time, advancing critical and transformative forms of education for active citizenship should recognise and include young people's experiences with citizenship in their everyday lives. This is also associated with the priority to include young people themselves in the process of formulating policies and programmes for active citizenship. Such a co-creation process with young people would involve creating a "community of inquiry" in which educators, learners and policymakers work together and learn from each other in a "mutually beneficial partnership" (Bessant et al., 2016, p. 280). A co-creation approach could facilitate dialogue between policymakers, programme designers and young people in a way that could potentially result in authentic approaches to nurturing young people's active citizenship that are attuned to their lived realities, rather than replicating unhelpful stereotypes (Chou et al., 2017). More importantly, such conceptions should encapsulate Biesta's (2011) ideas of a non-linear, recursive and cumulative form of civic learning that recognises and includes young people's lived experiences with citizenship. Valuing and prioritising young people's lived citizenship and including their voices in their education for active citizenship, is a recognition that they are not 'blank slates' (Kennedy, 2019).

The third contribution of this research is the call to attention to young people's relational, imaginative and critical forms of everyday citizenship. This is also a theoretical contribution as it relied on critical and feminist theories to acknowledge and expand on earlier ideas of lived and everyday citizenship. The findings in this research have provided a possibility to view everyday acts of care as an important form of citizenship experience

(Gilligan, 1982). This research has also highlighted that young people's citizenship experiences in their everyday lives are interwoven with criticality and relationality. This was explored through the idea of citizenship imaginations in this research but remains an area for further exploration in the citizenship literature. This research has demonstrated that in the eyes of the young people, a liberal, democratic and plural society is not sufficient for human flourishing unless the members in these societies provide care for each other (Tronto, 1993). Instead of viewing citizenship from traditional conceptions (see Chapter 2), a care-focused citizenship conception that emphasises maintaining, continuing and repairing our world so that we can live in it as well as possible provides a potential to transform social and political thinking (Tronto, 1993). In line with that, this research has also suggested incorporating care as a political ideal in policies and programmes that are concerned with active citizenship. Here, Lister's (2003) idea of a critical synthesis would be helpful to conceptualise a policy framework that can balance the synthesis of the ethic of care and the ethic of justice. This would involve incorporating care as an expression of difference into the citizenship policies and creating the conditions in society for both "citizen-the earner" and "citizen-the carer" to flourish (Lister, 2003, p. 200). Such a conception of citizenship education policy would include "care for citizenship" (Lister, 2003, p. 200) and recognise care as a political ideal and practice that transcends the public-private divide. This is an important theoretical contribution in studying young people's lived citizenship.

Critical and caring citizenship: A possibility for Singapore

This research highlighted that young Singaporeans were adept in critiquing society and politics, and at the same time, prioritised more relational forms of citizenship in their everyday lives. Together, criticality and relationality provided a unique approach to young people's lived and active citizenship that was useful to maintain, continue and repair their world so that they could live in it as well as possible. Such a critical and caring form of citizenship offers the greatest possibility for transforming social and political thinking (Tronto, 1993). Yet, policies and programmes in Singaporeans could not imagine conceptions of active citizenship that would recognise and include young people's critical and relational forms of citizenship.

In keeping with my intention to contribute to the reimagination of policy formulation, curriculum design and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore, this empirical research suggests the possibility of recognising criticality and relationality as a complementary form of citizenship pattern as a new way to consider young Singaporeans' experiences with

citizenship. To develop this idea further, and in line with a Confucian-inspired ideal of harmony, a few contradictions that are inherent in the traditional conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education in Singapore need to be harmonised.

The first harmony is between didactic and dialogic pedagogy. The findings from this research suggest that young Singaporeans are ready for more critical, reflective and dialogic forms of civic learning that recognise and include their lived experiences with citizenship (see Chapter 7). However, Singapore's citizenship education is largely content-driven with didactic instructions and comprises lessons accompanied by textbooks that focus on nurturing values, social-emotional competencies and twenty-first century skills (Sim et al., 2017). In particular, citizenship education is concerned with propagating a singular narrative of the Singapore Story and what it means to be Singaporean through curricular uniformity (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). One way to harmonise this contradiction is to allow the flourishing of the multiple meanings of being a Singaporean and how every young person can be an active citizen in multiple and diverse ways in their everyday lives. This requires a closer connection between the Singapore Story and the lived realities of young Singaporeans in an authentic and engaging curriculum and pedagogy that is non-linear, recursive and cumulative, and that recognises young people as citizens-now, and not passive recipients of citizenship teaching, or worse, 'citizen-workers of the future' (Biesta, 2011; Lister, 2003). Another way of achieving harmony is to strive towards a mutually beneficial partnership with young people themselves in co-creating an authentic and meaningful citizenship learning experiences that would recognise and include their lived experiences with citizenship (Bessant et al., 2016; Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Hartung, 2017).

The second harmony is between formal-public participation and personal-private participation. It is evident from the findings from this research that some of the young people themselves found formal volunteerism projects, such as the CIP, Values in Action and service-learning, to be critical to the formation of their citizenship identities because they helped to awaken their criticality and imaginations about social and political issues (see Chapter 7). This raising of their critical consciousness led to the burgeoning of their relational forms of citizenship actions. This was despite some other young people's critique that such formal and public participation was uncritical and not meaningful. This highlights the multiple ways the curriculum is understood by young people. Singapore's communitarian approach to citizenship education has encouraged a focus on public participation in order to foster national identity, rootedness to Singapore and commitment to social cohesion – all of which serves to ensure Singapore's continued economic success

(Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). Yet this formal participation did serve as a conduit for some young Singaporeans to gain critical consciousness of social and political issues, which otherwise could have been easily glossed over by these young people living in an affluent society such as Singapore where most young people are pressured to achieve academic and career success. In order to enhance these experiences for more young people, one possibility is to imagine a civic learning process that connects learning and participation from the formal and public process promoted in schools into young people's everyday lives. Such a conception might lead to a continuum of praxis – sustained, critical and reflexive forms of citizenship actions and imaginations that move back and forth on the continuum of the formal-public and the private-personal. Citizenship actions and imaginations in this continuum of praxis might take the forms of both 'activist citizens' (Isin, 2008) and 'quiet politics of the everyday' (Hankins, 2017) which serve the same goal of developing critical consciousness, triggering the citizenship imaginations and promoting active responses.

The third and last harmony is between conformity and criticality. One of the biggest challenges for policies and programmes of citizenship education in Singapore is striking a balance between the perceived need for citizens to conform to social order and stability and the messiness and criticality that will inevitably be a characteristic of more active, informed and critical citizens that the same government is pursuing (Gopinathan, 2015). In the same vein, there is a real need for criticality to flourish in Singapore's citizenship education instead of instrumentalising critical thinking. For example, 'critical and inventive' thinking is one of the core competencies within the Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes, which underpins the vision for CCE in Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2009). Yet, significant studies in Singapore have signalled that critical thinking in Singapore is used only as an instrument for economic productivity in the global knowledge economy through education (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018). This is a far departure from the vision for critical thinking to actually develop critical citizens, likened to maximal and justice-oriented citizens. Participants in this research demonstrated that they are capable of critical actions and imaginations, but they expressed their concerns about having to curtail their criticality because the government generally limits criticality to permissible political boundaries (Han, 2015). Similarly, in his research of young Singaporeans' perceptions of citizenship, Baars (2017) found that nurturing critical thinking in young Singaporeans was not a priority of the government. He also found contradictions regarding what was articulated by the government as a desired citizen, who is a critical citizen, and what was experienced by young people in their everyday lives. These examples

suggest that more genuine efforts are required to authentically nurture critical Singaporean citizens, both in policies and in reality.

In summary, empirical data from this research provide a possibility of nurturing critical and caring Singapore citizens. This could be achieved by harmonising three contradictions in the conception of citizenship and citizenship education, namely, didactic versus dialogic pedagogy, formal-public participation versus personal-private participation and conformity versus criticality. Singapore's Minister for Education said:

A strong sense of citizenship will drive them to come together to write the next chapters of the Singapore Story. That is why we must sustain our efforts in Character and Citizenship Education [...] Let us work together to shape our education system for the future, to best equip our children to write a good next chapter of our Singapore Story. (Ministry of Education, 2012b)

However, in a truly empowering sense, writing the next chapter of the Singapore Story would mean co-creating it with young Singaporeans. That means politicians, policymakers and programme developers need a new and rather radical approach of recognising and including young people's critical and relational realities and their everyday experiences with citizenship in the policies and programmes that are meant to serve them. This is a possible pathway towards fostering critical and caring citizens who embody informed, engaged and transformative citizenship (Gopinathan & Chiong, 2018; Wood et al., 2018).

Further research

This research is undergirded by a Freirean-inspired critical theory that emphasises *praxis* where theory is formulated as a consequence of a continuous loop of action and reflection, and further refinement and development (Kincheloe et al., 2018). In that same spirit, this research also highlights the possibilities for further refinement and development in researching young people's active citizenship.

In Chapter 4, I highlighted that one of the limitations of this research is that this was small-scale qualitative study. The primary reason for this approach is that I had to apply a purposeful maximal sampling method in order to select participants and case sites that offered a potential for rich information and in-depth study of post-secondary young people's citizenship experiences in Singapore. One of the draw backs of such an approach was that the findings from this research are not generalisable. Another drawback is the possibility of self-selection bias in the selection of participants. A future research agenda could possibly include a larger sample size of young Singaporeans of wider and diverse profiles. This might yield a better representation of the phenomena of young people's lived citizenship.

Such data might be generalisable and that might be helpful for policy and programme planning and implementation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In addition to that, this research focused solely on young people aged 19–25 because they represented the group that the government was concerned about as being disengaged, apathetic and apolitical. As a follow-up to this study, this research could be extended to include young people in other age categories to determine whether the pattern holds for a wider group. There is limited research in Singapore that has studied young people's active citizenship, and within those limited studies there are none that have studied young Singaporeans' lived citizenship and have analysed them in relation to different age categories. An analysis of active citizenship by age category might yield valuable findings on young people's changing priorities and patterns of civic engagement over their lifespan.

Lastly, this research was carried out over a short time frame, limited by the requirements of this doctoral programme at Victoria University of Wellington. Instead, a longitudinal and ethnographic study might yield much richer data and provide deeper insights into the depth and significance of young people's active citizenship. Other longitudinal ethnographic studies on young people's active citizenship have allowed scholars and researchers to investigate into the deep insights of young people's perceptions, opinions, actions and behaviours; at the same time, such approaches have also allowed young people more control over their own narratives (Banaji, Mejias, & de la Pava Vélez, 2019). A longitudinal study on citizenship imaginations would be very beneficial for greater depth of understandings in this field.

These proposals for further research will be useful in advancing the increasing interest in researching young people's experiences with citizenship and will contribute towards the reimagination of policies and programmes for active citizenship across various contexts. As the young people's citizenship imaginations in this study demonstrate, they deserve this broader and more inclusive approach to citizenship studies.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Details of research participants

| Institutions | Code names | Age | Gender | Ethnicity |
|---|---------------|--------|---------|----------------|
| National Institute of Education (NIE) | Emmy | 25 | Female | Chinese |
| | Kickcat | 25 | Female | Chinese |
| | Mona | 24 | Female | Chinese |
| | Doraemon | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | Bhadshah | 24 | Male | Indian |
| | Giraffe | 21 | Male | Pakistani |
| | Potato | 21 | Male | Chinese |
| | Brinjal | 21 | Male | Indian |
| | Annie | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | Brenda | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | Houzi | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | Lester | 22 | Male | Chinese |
| | Ezukiel | 22 | Male | Malay |
| | Valencia | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | Emma | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | Jo | 21 | Female | Chinese |
| Watson | 19 | Female | Chinese | |
| Sherman | 20 | Female | Chinese | |
| UniSIM College (UniSIM)- Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) | Joy | 22 | Female | Chinese |
| | Curry | 25 | Male | Chinese |
| | Bear | 22 | Male | Chinese |
| | Yan Dao | 21 | Male | Chinese |
| | Sunflower | 21 | Female | Chinese |
| | Cassie | 20 | Female | Chinese |
| | G | 23 | Male | Chinese |
| | Tacocat | 22 | Female | Chinese |
| | Elsa | 22 | Female | Pakistani |
| | Olaf | 21 | Female | Chinese |
| | Goblin | 21 | Female | Chinese |
| | Grim Reaper | 21 | Female | Chinese |
| | Hotgeek17 | 25 | Female | Boyanes-Indian |
| Bobby | 23 | Male | Chinese | |
| Bovaryser | 21 | Female | Malay | |
| Youth Corps Singapore (YCS) | Lightbulb | 19 | Female | Chinese |
| | Bob | 21 | Male | Chinese |
| | Lion | 19 | Female | Chinese |
| | Chrysanthemum | 21 | Male | Malay |
| | L | 19 | Female | Chinese |
| | Ashley | 19 | Female | Indian |
| | Barney | 21 | Male | Chinese |

Appendix 2 – Photovoice focus and frequency across categories

| | Categories | Focus | NIE n = 18 | UniSI M- SUSS n=7 | YCS n=5 | Sub total | Tota l |
|----|--|--|---------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1. | Places Which is a special place in your everyday life? | Faith-based | 1 | - | - | 1 | 10 |
| | | Sports | 1 | - | - | 1 | |
| | | Nature | 1 | - | - | 1 | |
| | | School (in retrospect) | - | - | 1 | 1 | |
| | | University Hall of residence | 2 | - | - | 2 | |
| | | Public spaces | - | - | 2 | 2 | |
| | | Country (Singapore) | - | - | 2 | 2 | |
| 2. | Relationships Which relationships matter to you? | Self | - | - | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| | | Family | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | |
| | | Friends | 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 | |
| | | Care for others | 7 | 3 | 1 | 11 | |
| | | Mentoring other youths | 1 | - | - | 1 | |
| | | Pets | 1 | - | - | 1 | |
| 3. | Emotions What evokes your emotions? | Nature | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| 4. | Memories What is memorable to you? | Family | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| 5. | Wonder What makes you wonder? | Social policies | 2 | - | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Cultural practices- Impact on environment | 1 | - | - | 1 | |
| 6. | Missing What is missing in your neighbourhood? | Nature | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| 7. | Preserve What must be preserved? | Culture/Tradition | 2 | 2 | - | 4 | 7 |
| | | Nature | 3 | - | - | 3 | |
| 8. | Care What requires care? | Health → Nation | - | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| 9. | Change What needs to be changed? | Society | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | 52 |

Appendix 3 – Photovoice exhibition

Photos from the Photovoice exhibition co-organised with research participants

Citizenship Imaginations

A photovoice presentation & exhibition on young people's everyday ways of active citizenship in Singapore.

**25 March 2017, Saturday
2.00-5.00pm**

The Learning Hub@The Red Box, Level 2



Appendix 4 – Information sheets and consent forms

4.1 Information letter to directors of the three institutions



Exploring Young People's Active Citizenship in Singapore

To: Director, NIE / Director, UniSIM-SUSS / Director, Youth Corps Singapore

I am writing to request permission to undertake data-gathering at your institution as part of my doctoral research. My doctoral project explores how young people's citizenship perceptions and participation are shaped by formal policies and programs, and aims to provide fresh insights into how young people's lived, everyday experiences shape them as citizens in Singapore. I believe this might contribute to the re-imagining of policy, curriculum, and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee [#23673].

The research would involve young people who are currently engaged in the formal active citizenship program at your institution, and who completed their entire secondary education at a government-run, public school in Singapore. There are two parts to the research – a 'focus group dialogue', followed by a 'Photovoice' activity. Young people can opt-in to both, or just participate in the first focus group dialogue. I aim to conduct 2-3 focus group dialogues of up to two hours at your institution, involving 6-8 young people in each dialogue. To stimulate discussion, participants will visually represent symbols and metaphors of their active citizenship, and then share these with the rest in the group. The focus group dialogue will be recorded and I will use the recording and the participants' visual images for my data analysis.

At the end of this focus group dialogue, I will invite participants to consider participating in the second data collection activity – photovoice. Over one week, the young people will photograph their perceptions of, and participation as, active citizens in their everyday lives. Afterwards, I will meet each participant at your institution to analyse and interpret at least a couple of these photographs. The debrief will be recorded and, along with the captioned photos, will be used for data analysis. Participants will be informed not to take direct photos of faces, and no identifiable images will be used in the final presentation of data. I will get young people's signed consent to use their photographs for this research and in subsequent digital or print publications.

Participants can withdraw from the research before the start of the data collection activities. If they do withdraw, the information they have provided will be destroyed. Participants' identity in this research will be kept confidential. Participants will use aliases, or 'code'

names, which will be selected by themselves, for both activities. They will not be named in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, your institution will be named and other identifying characteristics, such as gender and year of study of the students might be used for reporting. Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 5 years after the research ends.

The information from this research will be used in my doctoral thesis, which will be made available at the university library and repositories. I will also use the information for publication in academic and professional journals, as well as for dissemination at conferences. You will receive a summary of my initial findings after I have completed my data collection.

I would be grateful if you could let me know by replying to this email whether you are willing for your institution to participate in this study. Should you be willing, potential participants will be informed that approval to conduct the study has been obtained from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me, my supervisor or the university's Ethics Committee for any clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Siva Gopal Thaiyalan
Doctoral Candidate,
Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
sivagopal.thaiyalan@vuw.ac.nz

Primary Supervisor: Dr Bronwyn Wood
Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington
Phone: +64-44639611
Bronwyn.wood@vuw.ac.nz

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee Convener:
Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

4.2 Focus group dialogue – Information and consent form for participants



Exploring Young People's Active Citizenship in Singapore

Information for Focus Group Dialogue Participants

Thank you for your interest in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to participate. I would be grateful if you decide to participate but otherwise, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Siva Gopal Thaiyalan and I am a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research project is work towards my doctoral thesis.

What is the aim of this research?

This project aims to explore how young people's citizenship perceptions and participation are shaped by formal policies and programs, and also to provide fresh insights into how young people's lived and everyday experiences shape them as citizens in Singapore. I believe this might contribute to the re-imagining of policy, curriculum, and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee [#23673].

How can you participate?

If you agree to participate, the research will involve:

Who?

6-8 young people, including you.

How long?

2 hours.

Where?

A meeting room at your institution.

What and how?

In this focus group dialogue, you will explore and express your citizenship perceptions and participation, with 5-7 of your peers. I will record the entire process and use that, together with any of your writings or drawings from the session, for analysis and reporting.

You can withdraw from this research before the start of the activity. If you do withdraw, the information you have provided will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information provided?

Your identity in this research will be kept confidential. You will use aliases, or 'code' names, which you will select by yourself. You will not be named in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, your institution will be named and other identifying characteristics, such as gender, year of study, etc might be used for reporting.

Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcripts, and review the recordings. The transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 5 years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my doctoral thesis, which will be made available at the university library and repositories. I will also use the information for publication in academic and professional journals, as well as for dissemination at conferences.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights?

If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- withdraw at any point before the start of the activity, with no questions asked;
- choose not to answer any questions;
- agree on an alias or 'code' name for us to use rather than your real name;
- be able to read the summary of the initial findings by indicating in the consent form.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Researcher:

Name: Siva Gopal Thaiyalan
University email address:
sivagopal.thaiyalan@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name: Dr Bronwyn Wood
Role: Primary Supervisor
School: School of Education, Victoria
University of Wellington
Phone: +64-44639611
Bronwyn.wood@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.



Exploring Young People's Active Citizenship in Singapore

Consent to Participate in Research – Focus group dialogue

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: **Siva Gopal Thaiyalan, Victoria University of Wellington.**

- I have read the Information sheet and the research has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this research before the start of the activity, without giving any reason, and any information provided prior to that will be destroyed.
- Any information provided will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisor.
- The information provided will be stored securely and destroyed 5 years after the research is completed.
- The results will be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis and may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I can select an alias or 'code' name, and my name will not be used in reports or any dissemination, nor will any information that would identify me.
- I would like to receive a summary of the initial findings via email after the data collection is completed. I have provided my email address below. Yes No

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____

Mobile number: _____

4.3 Photovoice – Information and consent form for participants



Exploring Young People's Active Citizenship in Singapore Information for Photovoice Participants

Thank you for your interest in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or participate. I would be grateful if you decide to participate but otherwise, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Siva Gopal Thaiyalan and I am a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This research project is work towards my doctoral thesis.

What is the aim of this research?

This project aims to explore how young people's citizenship perceptions and participation are shaped by formal policies and programs, and also to provide fresh insights into how young people's lived and everyday experiences shape them as citizens in Singapore. I believe this might contribute to the re-imagining of policy, curriculum, and engagement strategies that seek to foster active citizenship among young people in Singapore. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee [#23673].

How can you participate?

Who? If you have participated in the focus group dialogue of this research, will be invited to consider opting in to the Photovoice activity.

How long? You will work independently over one week to capture photographs in your everyday life, and will meet with me for a one-on-one debrief session thereafter, which will last for an hour.

Where? A meeting room or public meeting spaces at your institution.

What and how? In this Photovoice activity, you will be guided by prompts using a free mobile application (app), specifically designed for this research, to photograph your citizenship perceptions and participation in your everyday life. You will take 1-2 weeks to take photographs and caption them using the app, which will be saved privately in the photo folder of your mobile phone. I will meet you for a one-on-one debrief at your institution to analyse and interpret at least a couple of these photographs, and discuss your reflections on them. The debrief will be recorded and, along with the captioned photos, will be used for data analysis. While taking the photographs for this activity, you are encouraged not to take direct photos of faces. No identifiable images will not be used for data analysis or in the final report but we can discuss these images during the debrief. The

photos you take are all yours to keep and I will only take a copy of those you share with me during the debrief. If you wish to present your photos and reflections publicly, I would be happy to discuss this with you after the debrief session.

If you do not have a mobile phone, or are unable to take photos with your mobile phone, I will be happy to loan you a compact digital camera. In such a case, will I also provide you with a print-out of the prompts on a pocket-sized card.

You can withdraw from the research before the start of the activity. If you do withdraw, the information you have provided will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information provided?

Your identity in this research will be kept confidential. You will use aliases, or 'code' names, which you will select by yourself. You will not be named in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, your institution will be named and other identifying characteristics, such as gender, year of study, etc might be used for reporting.

Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcripts, and review the recordings. The transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 5 years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my doctoral thesis, which will be made available at the university library and repositories. I will also use the information for publication in academic and professional journals, as well as for dissemination at conferences.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights?

If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- withdraw at any point before the start of the activity, with no questions asked;
- choose not to answer any questions;
- agree on an alias or 'code' name for us to use rather than your real name;
- be able to read the summary of the initial findings by indicating in the consent form.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Researcher:

Name: Siva Gopal Thaiyalan
University email address:
sivagopal.thaiyalan@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name: Dr Bronwyn Wood
Role: Primary Supervisor
School: School of Education, Victoria
University of Wellington
Phone: +64-44639611
Bronwyn.wood@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.



Exploring Young People's Active Citizenship in Singapore

Consent to Participate in Research – Photovoice

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: **Siva Gopal Thaiyalan, Victoria University of Wellington.**

- I have read the Information sheet and the research has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this research before the start of the activity, without giving any reason, and any information provided prior to that will be destroyed.
- Any information provided will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisor.
- The information provided will be stored securely and destroyed 5 years after the research is completed.
- The results will be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis and may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I consent for my photographs to be used for this research and in subsequent digital and print publications.
- I can select an alias or 'code' name, and my name will not be used in reports or any dissemination, nor will any information that would identify me.
- I would like to receive a summary of the initial findings via email after the data collection is completed. I have provided my email address below. Yes No

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____

Mobile number: _____

Appendix 5 – Ethics approval



Phone 0-4-463 5480
Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

| | |
|---------|---|
| TO | Siva Gopal Thaiyalan |
| COPY TO | |
| FROM | AProf Susan Corbett, Convener, Human Ethics Committee |
| DATE | 3 December 2016 |
| PAGES | 1 |
| SUBJECT | Ethics Approval: 23673 Citizenship imaginations: Exploring young people's active citizenship in Singapore |

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 28 February 2019. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards

Susan Corbett
Convener, Victoria University Human Ethics Committee

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