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GENDER, LEGITIMACY
AND THE LOCAL:
A STUDY OF
ELECTED AND UNELECTED
POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

S F REGAN

PhD

2019

Gender, Legitimacy and The Local:
A Study of Elected and Unelected
Political Representation

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of the requirements of the
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with gender and legitimacy in political representation.

This work contributes to the field of politics and gender, through an in-depth examination of political representation at the local level which is under-researched. The study focuses on elected and unelected local representatives, in a study site where elected women have achieved 'gender balance', as in equal numerical representation (50% of the seats) at council level. It analyses their experiences and perspectives, and those of their peers (elected men, and unelected women) in order to identify gender dimensions and explore the concept of legitimacy .

It is based on original qualitative data collected using semi-structured interviews with elected and unelected representatives, at the local level. Secondary data collection has been used to supplement the interview data.

The research finds that the legitimacy of unelected and elected women in representative positions at the local level is contested; that gender is a factor in the relationships between the representatives and the represented; and that there are gender dimensions which affect the representational work of both elected and unelected women. It also finds that there are dynamic inter-connections between elected and unelected women which enable the representatives to better navigate the complex 'geometry of representation' at the local level.

The research is important because it contributes to current debates regarding the legitimacy of women as both elected and non-elected representatives, and because it sheds light on gendered dimensions of local level political representation, at a time when 'gender balance' and the legitimacy of women in public life, are of contemporary interest.

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I dedicate this work to my mum Coral Grace,
to Angie (1953-2018), and to AJ (1939-2018).

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee (7th February 2011)

I declare that the Word Count of this thesis is 83,643 words

Name: Susan Fleur (Sue) Regan

Signature:

Date: 18th July 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores political representation, through the lens of gender, and is concerned with notions of legitimacy. Data from original research conducted with both elected and unelected women, at the local level of political activity, provides the empirical basis for new conceptualisations of the gendered nature of representation.

In this chapter, the research study is introduced, commencing with a statement of the identified research problem, an exploration of relevant literature and the research questions which the study seeks to answer. Next, the focus and rationale for the study are outlined and discussed, highlighting its contemporary relevance. The following section describes how the study originated and the author's personal engagement with the research problem, specifically considering women as political representatives.

The final section outlines the content of the rest of the thesis, with each chapter briefly described, and this is followed by a summary of this chapter.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in attention paid to questions of gender in relation to political representation. Anne Phillips has made considerable contributions to the field, for example, her theoretical explorations of difference (1993) and presence (1995). Amongst the many texts which remain fundamental for students of this field, there are certain key journal articles which flag up critical junctures (Dahlerup, 1988; Dovi, 2002; Mansbridge, 1999; Sapiro, 1981) while monographs (e.g. Lovenduski 2005; Mackay 2001; Randall 1987) and collections continue to provide evidence of both the breadth and depth of studies (Dahlerup 2006; Krook and Childs 2010; Lovenduski and Randall 1993; Phillips 1998a) and increasingly foreground international perspectives (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014). For a comprehensive overview of the field, see Georgina Waylen et al (eds., 2013).

However, as with other fields in political science, interest is primarily focussed at the national level (examples include Lovenduski 1986; Mateo Diaz 2005; Wängnerud 2000), and research in the UK has often focussed on the institutions, processes and people in national politics, such as the House of Commons, Members of Parliament, or political parties, candidates and elections (Childs 2004, 2008; Krook 2010; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Less attention has been paid to the local level of politics (Rao 1998 is one example; Mackay 2001 is another) and that is the site of this study.

In relation to gender and local elected representatives, there have been infrequent scholarly publications which address the role of women as councillors (examples are Hills 1983; Hollis 1987; Barry 1991; Stokes 2011). Further, the application of a gender analysis to political institutions at the local level is uncommon (Bochel and Bochel 2000; Charles 2014; Mackay 2001). Thus this study of women as political representatives at the local level, analysed through a gender critical lens, will make an important contribution to addressing this gap in knowledge. In addition, studying the relatively under-researched area of *unelected* political representatives, specifically unelected women, provides an opportunity to consider and compare the experiences of these two groups of women. Like Brownill and Halford (1990), it is intended to “provide some important insights into the processes of women’s involvement in politics at the local level” (p.411), while also exploring and expanding knowledge of the gendered dimensions of political representation more broadly.

1.3 Conceptualising Representation

Although this study is primarily concerned with gendered analyses of representation, it also draws on some of the more general theoretical literature about political representation. In particular, definitional work on the concept of political representation has been studied, in order to clarify and develop thinking about “that most precious of political commodities: legitimacy” (Taylor, 2010, p.170), in relation to gender and with regard to both unelected and elected political representatives. In this section, the scholarship on political representation is introduced, with particular reference to gender, while the concept of legitimacy (in relation to political representation) is explored in more detail in the following section.

Hanna Pitkin’s (1967) conceptualisation of representation with its “inescapable paradox: not present yet somehow present” (2004, p.336) is a prime reference point, and particularly as her descriptive, substantive and symbolic categories of political representation have provided a foundation, and jumping-off point, for much

scholarly work concerned with women as political representatives and the political representation of women's interests (e.g. Bochel and Briggs 2000; Campbell, Childs and Lovenduski 2010; Celis et al 2008; Childs and Krook 2009; Tremblay 1998) and the gendered analysis of political representation more broadly. In addition, her discussion regarding mandate/independence (the contested delegate/ trustee distinction) offers a lens through which this study may explore and compare the roles of unelected and elected women – concerned as it is with the relationship and responsiveness between the representative and their constituents.

Jane Mansbridge (2003) has expanded these ideas with her gyroscopic and surrogate, promissory and anticipatory categories of representation; and Rehfeld (2009) has examined her reconceptualization (gyroscopic is “so helpful”) but claims that she “shifted the complexity rather than isolated and clarified the component parts” (p.221). He offers further distinctions regarding the “aims, source of judgement and responsiveness” (p.215), reframing the authority/autonomy discussion to pinpoint the *decision-making* focus of political representation. In this, he asserts that

“all decision-makers whose decisions affect others will face trade-offs between following justice and following the preferences of those their decision affects, regardless of whether they are political representatives, democratic, or elected at all” (Rehfeld 2009, p.216).

In this reference to non-elected political representation, Rehfeld is signalling a wider theoretical shift away from electoral politics as the only site of legitimate political representation, as presented in his “general theory of political representation which explains representation simply by reference to a relevant audience accepting a person as such” (2006 p.1).

This discussion of non-elected representation has been gaining wider attention, with some contention about its legitimacy, particularly in the field of international relations, as illustrated by the ‘*Who Elected Oxfam?*’ debate (The Economist, 2000; Rubenstein 2014).

However it is Michael Saward (2006) who has offered an alternative conceptualisation of representation -which has engaged the minds of political theorists – as constituted through *the representative claim*, with the dynamic relationship between those making the claims and those on whose behalf the claims are made, as a core feature, and through which representatives are constructed. He exhorts us to “explore what is going on in representation - its dynamics, if you like -

rather than what its (old or new) forms might be” (ibid, p.298). This conceptualisation opens the door to a variety of actors being recognised as representatives, including those outside the electoral processes. For Saward, Hanna Pitkin’s (1967) work on representation remains influential, but for him, she made assumptions that delimit the scope of political representation, in that it was “only real if it was democratic, that it was only democratic if it was electoral and that it could only be electoral within the nation-state” (2012, p.124). Saward (2010) has considered how claims might be judged in the absence of a democratic mandate, whilst noting the gaps in the democratic argument (for instance, representation of those who did not or cannot vote; representing interests beyond one’s territorial mandate; powerful representatives within political institutions who are not elected). Taylor has suggested forms of social accountability, in addition to conventional electoral mechanisms, in order to capture the more nuanced notion of representation as a “dynamic and ongoing power relationship” (2010, p.170) between representatives and the represented. And Suzanne Dovi’s work on ‘good representation’ (2012) offers an assessment framework comprising three virtues: fair-mindedness, critical trust building, and good gatekeeping which she presents as the basis for selecting both formal and informal democratic representatives.

Other scholars continue to explore ethical issues in political representation, such as Laura Montanaro (2012), who marshals Goodin’s (2007) ‘all affected interests’ principle’ to propose that “actors whose claims to represent rely on self-appointment may play an important role in democracy ... where electoral constituencies fail to coincide with those affected by collective decisions” (p.1094). She effectively brings the discussion back to Iris Marion Young’s work on justice in political representation, whereby Young asserts that “a democratic public should provide mechanisms for the effective recognition and representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of those of its constituent groups that are oppressed or disadvantaged” (1990, p.184). The question of justifying women as political representatives through an appeal to reasons of justice, as contrasted with utility arguments, will be examined in further chapters, as part of an analysis addressing legitimacy and gender. Anne Phillips argued for ‘presence’ (1995) for women and other discriminated-against groups, on justice grounds, but acknowledged that it would produce “an enabling condition” rather than a guarantee that their particular “needs or interests will then be addressed” (pp.82-83).

This acknowledgement that increased descriptive representation of women might not necessarily lead to the increased substantive representation of women, has

piqued further interest by gender scholars to investigate the landscape of political representation from a gendered perspective in order to understand ‘what is going on’ (Mackay 2008). Much of this work has built on new institutionalism’s conception of institutional rules and norms which structure political representation within institutions (March and Olsen 1989, cited in Krook and Mackay 2011). In particular, the “informal rules of the game” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.57) have been identified by feminist institutionalists as having gendered dimensions, or gendered effects in how they enable or constrain political actors (for example, Kenny 2007; *Politics and Gender* special edition 2009; Mackay, Kenny and Chappell 2010). As part of these debates, Mackay (2008) has proposed a “thick contextual framework” to examine “critical actors, sites and dynamics over time and in context” (p.125), and this study is intended to contribute to that through its fine grained appraisal of the views and experiences of elected and unelected women as political representatives at the local level.

This juxtaposition of those who focus on the democratic arena of political representation and those who are expanding representation beyond ‘presence’ in conventional political institutions, to validate representation as a constituted process which occurs in a range of spaces, and can be enacted by non- or unelected representatives, is the theoretical landscape in which this study explores the political representation of women’s interests.

1.3.1 A Note about ‘Women’s Interests’

Since Virginia Sapiro asked ‘*When are Interests Interesting?*’ (1981), the question of whether women have interests which are distinct from those of men, and whether there are interests which are common to all women, has been a key debate linked to women’s political representation. Sapiro asserted that “women do have a distinct position and a shared set of problems that characterize a special interest” (p.703) and she recognised that it was women’s shared experience of subordination and their exclusion from areas of public life, which gave rise to a common set of interests, even though women are differentiated by race, class and other “cross-cutting cleavages” (p.705).

The term ‘women’s interests’ is used throughout this study, and refers to that range of issues and priorities that approximate to feminist or pro-women concerns. It is a deliberately broad term, in order not to exclude the neighbourhood micro-level issues raised by local women with their elected councillors (such as children’s play, nursery provision, street safety, local community facilities) but also to encompass

the more thematic issues such as sexual and domestic violence, or women's health matters. The diversity of women's experiences and characteristics, and their differing intersections of oppression (Crenshaw 1991) have been suggested as grounds for denying that women can have interests in common, and Phillips (1995) has noted that "if interests are understood in terms of what women express as their priorities and goals, there is considerable disagreement among women" (p.68). However, she points out that just because women have a variety of interests, including different experiences and positions on topics such as pregnancy and abortion, for example, that does not mean that interests are not gendered. In a similar vein, Karen Beckwith (2014) suggests that because women's lives are shaped by "similar political, economic and social forces", and even though their experiences are not identical, the "similarities of women's experiences, deriving from socially constructed gendered constraints and exclusions, provide the foundation for the emergence of similar interests among women" (p.20). Beckwith then goes on to distinguish between interests, issues and preferences, and cites Htun (2005) to define interests as "more fundamental, related to major gendered cleavages, social structures, and institutions" (Beckwith 2014, p.23). She also claims that "women's movements' activism locates women's interests in women's lived circumstances" (ibid) and this observation (which draws on Diamond and Hartsock 'Beyond Interests', 1981) connects this study's concern to include women community leaders as representatives of women's interests, with the wider conceptual debates about the nature and provenance of women's interests.

1.4 Conceptualising Legitimacy

Is there a gendered dimension to political legitimacy? As with political representation, both theorists and political scientists have been able to present political legitimacy within a purportedly gender-neutral landscape, as if the political institutions and actors were untouched by gender norms or expectations, nor by issues of sex-based subjugation.

But as with political representation, once a critical feminist analysis was applied to theoretical and empirical investigations, it became apparent that there are gender dimensions embedded within both. Ackerly and True have claimed that "gender analysis forces us to think about the way in which all social and political categories are constructed in relation to gender" (2013, p. 145) and the legitimacy of political representatives is no exception. Before discussing the existing literature and its

attention to gender, it is useful to examine the concepts at the heart of these discussions and clarify terms.

Legitimacy is discussed here in relation to *authority*, particularly political authority. It has been said that “authority stands for a right to rule – a right to issue commands and, possibly, to enforce these commands using coercive power” (Peters 2017, para. 1) and thus it is apparent that ‘the right’ referred to here is what distinguishes the notion of authority from more general ideas of domination, and having ‘the right to rule’ as opposed to simply having the means (such as force, or manipulation) to rule over others, is the distinction. And it is legitimacy that provides authority with this ‘right to rule’, so that “stable authority is power plus legitimacy” (Lipset 1963, p.39).

Establishing that legitimacy is integral to concepts of authority, questions remain regarding the source of this legitimacy, and what forms it might take. These questions form the basis for exploring different perspectives on legitimacy, in particular political legitimacy. As Hanna Pitkin observed, “terms like ‘legitimate’, ‘authority’, ‘obligation’ may be parts of an elaborate social swindle, used to clothe those highway robbers who have the approval of society with a deceptive mantle” (1965, p.991). For Pitkin, being authorised and being accountable were “two sides of the same coin” (Dovi 2012, p.66). Authority for Pitkin is “the right to give orders, to command” (1967, p.53) and elections operate to grant authority to political representatives. Accountability is the obverse – “to be held responsible”, as a political representative “who is to be held to account, who will have to answer to another for what he does” (ibid, p.56). In this formulation, elections have the function of ‘holding-to-account’. She thought these formalistic views of representation too narrow, focussed as they are on the moment of election and failing to address “the activity of representing” (p.59), therefore moved the discussion on to consider what a representative is, and what a representative does – descriptive and substantive forms of representation. Saward (2012) has criticised this view as being too limiting with its focus on actors and acts rather than the process, and confining the concept of representation within the narrow domains of electoral politics. Saward’s (2010) work on representation as a dynamic process of claims-making is discussed further below.

Different scholars will view such legitimacy in different ways, depending on first, whether they are political philosophers or political scientists, working within normative or empirical traditions; and second, how their differing perspectives within

each of those traditions will contextualise the debate. Some refer to 'political legitimacy' (Buchanan 2002; Horton 2012), others to 'legitimate authority' (Weber 1964, cited in Matheson 1987) while others specify 'democratic legitimacy' (Montanaro 2012; Rehfeld 2005; Vabo and Aars 2013). These differences may appear too fine but in fact reflect deep and continuing debates about legitimacy, authority and political power, as well as illustrating divergences between political theory and political science.

The perspectives are examined further below, but here it may be useful to consider the distinction between *legitimacy*, generally framed as a resource or value which a political authority or institution ought to have (e.g. Uphoff 1989), as compared with *legitimation* as a process which is part of the inter-relationships between political actors, in particular but not exclusively, political representatives and those who are being represented. Saward (2010) has put forward that legitimation is "an open-ended process" rather than a "timeless quality" or "set of universal standards" (p.144), but feels it is "reasonable to use the term" (ibid), referencing Weber who identified "the activity of legitimation, as distinct from the ascribed quality of legitimacy" (p.184). Therefore, Saward suggests, asking if a specific body or representative claim is legitimate, is the same as asking if it is legitimated (ibid, citing Barker, 2001). This indicates that the process of legitimation is the route to achieving a state of legitimacy (or acquiring the valuable resource of legitimacy) which itself focuses attention on the legitimating source – who provides legitimation, and how is this undertaken, maintained or overturned? These questions of legitimacy as a quality and legitimation as an activity or process, are relevant to this research study.

As the thesis is concerned with political representation, legitimacy and gender, the legitimacy of political representatives rather than political institutions, is the focus of interest. However their legitimacy is nested within the institutions that the representatives are part of, and from which they derive their representative status, therefore literature on the legitimacy of political institutions is discussed. As the thesis is also concerned with questions of gender in relation to the legitimacy of political representatives, an examination of what scholars have to say about legitimacy in relation to gender is also of interest. It is anticipated that gender may be embedded in ideas of legitimation which are tied to justice arguments, especially those concerned with the representation of women as marginalised or disadvantaged groups (e.g. Williams 1998; Young 1990) or overlooked interests (Phillips 1995), and thus the literature which explores this connection is included.

This section continues in three parts: first, the key approaches to political legitimacy are set out; then, the legitimacy of unelected as well as elected representation is examined; and in the third part, the relationship between legitimacy and gender in political representation is discussed and the analytical framework for the thesis is presented.

1.4.1 Political Legitimacy: conventional approaches

In conventional political scholarship, the different approaches to determining political legitimacy can be broadly categorised as normative; Weberian; and sociological. In addition, a distinctive branch of organisational, or institutional, legitimacy (Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Scott 2001) has been developed, derived from Weber's and later Parsons' work, which may also offer useful insights.

Normative philosophical approaches offer a prescriptive moral framework through which all political institutions may be judged as legitimate or not. They divide into those advocating a set of 'independent' criteria and those which specify the ideal conditions for a political institution to comply with in order to be recognised as legitimate. Peter (2017) has provided a comprehensive exposition of these. A strongly contested feature of these approaches hinges on the source of legitimation, with the most significant of these being notions of consent (from Locke and the 'social contract'); utility or benefit (from Bentham and JS Mill's ideas about happiness and liberty); and public reason (Rawls' legitimating justification for political coercion), or the general will (Rousseau's conception), with each of these having its proponents and critics. Notwithstanding these conceptual distinctions, they share a theoretical assumption that there is a 'universal' human viewpoint which transcends differences and offers a 'higher' moral perspective than those of partisan interests. Described by Carver as "the paradoxical construction of the 'universal subject' in politics and political theory as both masculine and de-gendered" (1998, p.18), it appears that when these early theorists spoke of 'man' and 'mankind', even 'brotherhood' (then, commonly used terms to denote the whole breadth of humanity), they may have inadvertently given the game away. Carole Pateman's (1989) analysis of political philosophy texts has evidenced how "Enlightenment universalism was modelled on men (and) its very concepts and categories exclude women's specificity as women" (cited in Nash 2003, p.311, emphasis in original). For feminist political theorists, this universalist 'gender-neutral' basis is problematic, in that it seriously overlooks the extent to which a 'gender-neutral' presentation is in fact a 'male' presentation of the world and how it ought to

be, as well as noting that the exclusion of gendered perspectives from these philosophical debates has ignored the gender-differentiated experiences of both women and men, and the inter-related histories of female subjugation and male dominance.

As normative accounts of political legitimacy offer a benchmark or criteria by which political authority is to be assessed, these develop an 'ideal' conception of legitimate authority which justifies it beyond merely effective authority, as its legitimacy also creates obligations to obey. For Rawls (1993), legitimacy alone is insufficient to create obligations, since justice as fairness is also a critical factor, in that while a state may be legitimate but unjust, it is not possible for a state to be just and illegitimate.

In foregrounding justice in his work on legitimacy (1993, 2001), Rawls develops his thesis that the legitimate use of political power, requiring all citizens to be bound by the universal law which subsumes their different interests, can only be achieved because a 'reasonable pluralism' exists – citizens are reasonable, they accept liberal democracies in which all are free and equal, and they are reciprocal, tolerant and co-operative. They may disagree about fundamental beliefs but are willing to live under a shared constitution where each does not impose their beliefs on others. The basis of this, for Rawls, is 'justice as fairness' in a society of fair co-operation where all citizens are free and equal, and thus "the use of coercive political power, guided by the principles of a political conception of justice, will therefore be legitimate" (Wenar 2017, para.3.4).

However, Rawls has been challenged for his failure to address issues of unequal power in gender relations, leaving a large woman-shaped gap in his theorisation. Among others, Susan Moller Okin (1987) has questioned his use of masculine language including his elision of free and equal citizens with 'heads of families', and his exclusion of families (as private, not public spaces) from the realm of justice, leaving much of women's lives and responsibilities hidden and outwith the public realm of politics. She states "he perceived no injustice in traditional, gendered family arrangements" (2004, p.1550). In addition, Rawls' concept of the veil of ignorance (in the 'original position'), hiding those characteristics he determined to be irrelevant to principles of justice (Wenar 2017, para.4.6), is problematized by many, for it includes gender, along with race, class, and other characteristics. These are central to conceptions of justice for many theorists, such that Okin states that "much feminist political theory has been critical of liberal political theory in general and of

Rawls' theory *in its entirety*" (2004, p.1542, my emphasis). However she defends his liberalism "with its radical refusal to accept hierarchy and its focus on the freedom and equality of individuals" (2004, p.1546) as having "great potential for feminism" (ibid). A handful of scholars agree, finding that his liberalism, justice and original position, offer a satisfactory space for women and in which sex and gender-based differences can be into account (Brake, 2014; Cordeiro-Rodrigues, 2016).

This highlights a core feminist theoretical debate, often presented in the binary terms of equality or difference. Judith Squires (1999) has described how the perspectives that perceive "gender difference as synonymous with inferiority" (p.117), have for instance, defined women as emotional, in contrast with men who are rational, the latter being a quality required for involvement in politics. Women's exclusion is therefore explained by reference to their purported deviance from the universal rational (but inherently male) archetype, but this is countered by those who advocate for equality. They base their claims on asserting that women and men are more similar than different, and they are confident that the gender-neutrality of truly liberal democracies can be inclusive of women, as women are as likely as men to be for example, rational. This equality perspective does not require any significant change to the classic liberal position but promotes "women's integration into the existing social order" (Squires 1999, p.118) and Brake (2014) extends this to claiming that "the liberal aspiration to neutrality supports feminist goals" (p.295).

Those who argue for the difference position, according to Squires "see the idea of neutrality itself as partial ... that what appears neutral is actually androcentric or male-defined" (ibid p.119), and that the distinctive contribution that women could bring to politics is missing. Carol Gilligan's work (1982) proposing an ethic of care and responsibilities (reflecting the experiences and perspectives of women) to challenge the masculinist ethic of justice and rights, is one example. Redefining the public/private division - which demarcates the spheres of interest deemed to be within the political realm - is another (Pateman 1989).

However the "dilemma of difference" (Scott 1997, cited in Squires 1999, p.122) is that the latter perspective might, by highlighting women's difference from men, and seeking to elevate the value of such differences, result in reducing equality further. And the difficulty for the former - equality -perspective is that women's specific and distinctive contributions are lost in endeavours to demonstrate equal validity with men in the institutions they have constructed. Squires describes ambivalence among feminist theorists about this, and refers to Carol Pateman labelling "the

simultaneous demand for both gender-neutral and gender-differentiated citizenship” as ‘Wollstonecraft’s dilemma’ (1989, cited 1999, p.121). Anne Phillips (1993) among others, has argued against “a polar opposition between what is abstract, impartial, gender-neutral, and what is specific, relational, engendered” (p.58) and for feminist theorists to find a middle ground. Some have addressed the question through advocating both for ‘equality’, for women to be present in political representation (Mackay 2001; Mansbridge 1999; Norris 1996; Phillips 1998), as their absence symbolises a legitimacy deficit; and for ‘difference’, that is also recognising the transformative and substantive representation that is more likely to occur through women’s presence (Araujo and Tejedo-Romero 2016; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Gains and Lowndes 2017). Cognisant that not all women are feminist or promote women’s interests, one study has concluded that if “the aim is to respond to democratic, symbolic, or political equality considerations”, then electing more women is important, while “the best strategy for meeting the needs, demands, and interests of women ... is probably to elect feminists - mostly women, but also men” (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000, p.397).

Notwithstanding these important questions of diversity in women themselves and women’s interests, the question of political legitimacy lies at the heart of these feminist debates, for without the equal involvement of women as well as men, how can the political institutions claim to be legitimate? And difference perspectives also query the legitimacy of political institutions which do not recognise the distinctive interests and contributions of women.

Rawlsian ideas of justice as fairness have also been challenged by theorists from another broader perspective, seeking to denote justice as encompassing the representation of marginalised groups (such as women). In this view, political institutions are lacking in legitimacy if these minority interests are not included as part of the polity:

“Many criticize actually existing democracies for being dominated by groups or élites that have unequal influence over decisions, while others are excluded or marginalized from any significant influence over the policy-making process and its outcomes. Strong and normatively legitimate democracy ... includes all equally in the process, that leads to decisions, who will be affected by them” (Young 2002)

The absence of marginalised group interests is seen to indicate a legitimacy gap, and to result in a strengthening of the already powerful (such as white wealthy men), whose interests are being well represented.

As such, that normative universalist position, presented as gender-neutral, has been described as “male preferentialism” (Phillips 1999a, p.23) and can be viewed as at best insufficient, and for some political theorists and scientists, seriously deficient in terms of taking account of women’s interests in an asymmetrically gendered society.

1.4.2 Weberian and Sociological approaches

Moving the discussion then, from idealist to more realist positions, brings in sociological perspectives about political legitimacy. These have been at the forefront of developing theories which are more concerned to comprehend legitimacy in ‘real world’ situations.

The foremost of these to address questions of legitimacy was Weber, who defined legitimacy as “the acceptance both of authority and of the need to obey its commands” (1964, cited in Peter 2017, para.1). Weberian approaches following his original conception of legitimate authority as a typology of three forms – traditional, charismatic and legal-rational (cited in Matheson 1987, p.206). Each of these provides a basis for authority to be legitimate because those subject to it *believe* that form of authority to be legitimate. As Uphoff phrased it, “He defined legitimacy as a conviction on the part of persons subject to authority that it is right and proper and that they have some obligation to obey, regardless of the basis on which this belief rests” (1989, p. 301). Further scholarship has expanded these three types, adding more or breaking down these into further types, e.g. Matheson’s eight-part classification (1987); while others have further examined Weberian ideas of authority and bureaucracy to clarify the “analytical distinction” between the principles and structures which define legitimation (Blau 1963). This has been characterised as a top-down perspective, because the claim to legitimacy is predicated on some specified aspect of the authority, which those subject to it believe to be legitimate and as a result, they are compliant. As Weber stated “the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a *belief*, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige” (cited in Barker 2001, p.45, emphasis in original). There is a recognition that not all of those subject to the authority have to recognise it as legitimate in order for it to be so, and Uphoff (1989) acknowledges that “the legitimacy of authority and therefore the authority itself is best seen as a matter of degree and as always liable to some

denial or refusal” (p.302). This point, that there need not be unanimous acceptance for legitimacy to be established, relates to questions about the source of legitimation, and the acknowledgement that some level of dispute regarding legitimacy will not necessarily negate it.

Beyond Weber, the development of sociological perspectives on legitimacy can be characterised as more pluralist, with an over-arching complexity compared with the preceding approaches. Their proponents refute or incorporate notions of universal ‘ideal’ characteristics of legitimacy, noting that across both time and space, different political institutions are judged legitimate or not by differing criteria and by a range of audiences. And the source of legitimation need not be purely a top-down nor a bottom-up determination, but may involve both. Being social or political scientists rather than political philosophers (although Beetham describes himself as both, cf. 2013, p.7), there is an imperative to make any conception ‘realist’ and fit for empirical testing – both valid in ‘real life’ and evaluated for usefulness in real world politics.

Regarding the source of legitimation, these approaches do not rely on people’s belief in the legitimacy of the ruler, but provide for judgement to be exercised, in context, based on criteria for consent, and related to norms, values and principles. Thus ‘the ruled’ are active not passive (using judgement, not mere consent) and this is contextualised, relating to the conventions of the particular society. Horton (2012) for instance, has summarised the approach as follows:

“we should locate political legitimacy in relation to the criteria that are operative in particular social, cultural and conceptual contexts, and which inform people’s judgements about the legitimacy of their state (thus allowing for) greater pluralism about political legitimacy” (p.145).

An analytical framework which encompasses both philosophical and sociological perspectives on legitimacy, has been developed by Beetham (2013). It integrates normative and empirical notions, whereby power is legitimate if it accords with a “threefold discursive structure” of legality, justifiability and legitimation, all three being required and inter-dependent. He sets out his three different dimensions or levels of legitimacy (2013, p.16) as:

- i. Conforms to established rules
- ii. Rules can be justified by shared beliefs
- iii. Evidence of consent

In considering political representation, Beetham's legitimation framework offers a means to determine whether or not the representatives are legitimate, or legitimised, as "positions of power and their holders are acknowledged through actions by relevant subordinates which confirm their acceptance or recognition of it (legitimation)" (ibid p.20). In this analysis, representatives are legitimated by their constituents (the represented) through certain actions of those constituents which signal their acceptance of the representatives to hold and enact their positions of power. This has to be within a context, a "structure or system of legitimate power" comprising a "distinctive form of rules or law, distinctive societal beliefs about the rightful source of authority and purposes of power, and distinctive institutional means for binding in key subordinates through public acts of affirmation or recognition" (ibid p.21). According to Beetham, these criteria for legitimacy are "universally applicable", but their assessment is contextualised in terms of the norms and conventions of each particular society, providing the "combination of a general category, with variable and historically specific forms" (ibid p.21).

Thus, within a contemporary liberal-democracy, the electoral processes meet Beetham's three criteria for legitimation, which is conferred not only on the political body but also on its representatives: accordingly, gaining the majority vote in an election confirms that political representative as legitimate; and those who fail to win the vote in such an election are not legitimated by the constituents to speak or act as the political representative of that constituency. These processes of democratic election conform to the three dimensions (ibid p.21): one, the 'legal validity' of accepted rules and laws which determine the electoral process; two, 'justifiability of beliefs' in that the positions of elected politicians (members of parliament or local councillors) are socially understood to have rightful authority to govern (nationally or locally); and three, 'legitimation through expressed consent' whereby the franchise (the opportunity to vote in the elections) serves to 'bind in' the constituents as their active involvement in the legitimation.

In this way, it is suggested that Beetham's conception moves the debate about sources of legitimation on from Weberian ideas (that the people's belief in the status of the authority holder determines their legitimacy) to the idea of justification. However, even this conception of legitimation is questioned, as Barker (1993) is sceptical whether Beetham has substantially challenged Weberian views, and suggests that his (Beetham's) "definition of *justification* in terms of people's beliefs rephrases rather than replaces the view to which he objects" (p.361, my emphasis).

What a sociological approach does introduce is the notion that the source of legitimation might be from below (bottom up rather than top down) and that this is contextualised by time and place, and each society's conventions, rather than there being one ideal standard to evaluate all legitimacy claims – “legitimacy for social scientists is always legitimacy-in-context” (Beetham 2013, p.14). As Horton advocates “an adequate understanding of political legitimacy should take much more account than most philosophical theories tend to do of the attitudes and beliefs of citizens and their social and political context” (2012, p.130).

1.4.3 Gender

For the purposes of this study, interest in the social and political context focuses on the gender positions of those citizens, and whether there is a gendered dimension to these notions of legitimacy. Beetham (2013) has referenced gender relations in his exploration of legitimacy (pp.78-80). Central to his approach is the element of justification, and he acknowledges that ideas of legitimate authority may be justified, in terms of beliefs about the unequal power relationship between the sexes, by recourse to “the principle of differentiation” (p.77), presented as ideas of ‘natural difference’ between women and men. As a social scientist, he outlines how “supposedly innate characteristics” (p.78) are in fact socially constructed, but the assignment of the resultant “hierarchically ordered” (p.79) gender roles is seen as justified. Beetham’s assessment of the cumulative influences which contribute to this “construction of a social identity by a complex set of often unconscious processes” (p.78) is interesting but limited, for in a discussion about legitimacy and power, he fails to mention how male authority is underpinned by force, and the threat of force. For feminist social scientists, the prevalence of violence against women and girls is unquestionably significant in women’s subordinate position to men (for example, Brownmiller 1975; Crenshaw 1991; Htun and Weldon 2010; MacKinnon 1979, all cited in Waylen et al, 2013), rather than a mutual recognition of legitimacy based on a failure to distinguish between “naturally determined and socially acquired attributes and capacities” (Beetham 2013, p.79).

These sociological perspectives, despite disappointments regarding gender analyses, offer a framework for examining legitimacy which attends to its sources and context, as well as the relationship between those in authority (such as political representatives) and those subject to the authority (such as ‘the represented’). These questions of political legitimacy have primarily been considered in relation to electoral representation, but discussion has broadened in recent scholarship to

consider other, non-electoral forms of representation, such as informal (Dovi 2012), unelected (Saward 2010), non-elected (Peruzzotti 2009), or self-appointed (Montanaro 2012) political representation. Before considering these further, one other branch of sociological legitimacy is discussed – that of organisational, or institutional, legitimacy.

1.4.4 Organisational Approaches

Organisational or institutional legitimacy builds on debates about whether Weber's concept of legitimacy was addressing democracy or bureaucracy, and it can be seen that conceptualising the legitimacy of organisations (such as corporations and bureaucracies) has taken a distinctive turn from that of the political institutions of states. Elements of this branch of legitimacy study may be useful for this study, and thus they are introduced here.

Suchman (1995) has offered an "inclusive, broad-based definition" of legitimacy as "a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p.574).

For social scientists, legitimacy is treated in different ways depending on the underlying approach. For example, in resource-dependence or social exchange theories, legitimacy is regarded as one resource among others, but in an institutional approach it is not a commodity "but a condition reflecting perceived consonance with relevant rules and laws, normative support, or alignment with cultural-cognitive frameworks" (Scott 2001, p.59). While the regulative dimension is based on meeting legal and other rule-based conditions, and the normative dimension stresses moral obligations, the cultural-cognitive dimension is about how the condition of legitimacy is understood, as in contextualised meaning.

These dimensions have clear similarities with political legitimacy within political science approaches such as Beetham (2013) and his three dimensions of rules, beliefs and consent, although in organisational legitimacy, there is not the need for consent as the representative relationship is not a feature in corporations as it is in political bodies. However there is an acknowledgement that even where the legitimacy of an organisation is conferred by an external body, its legitimation is still dependant on a wider agreement (perhaps a public 'belief') in the organisation as legitimate. As Deephouse and Suchman (2008) have described, such a belief may be apparent because of a lack of questioning, and this *absence* of questioning, or "taken-for-grantedness" has been proposed as evidence that the organisation's

legitimacy is sufficiently well established that it does not require social scrutiny (pp.53-54).

The overlap between the three dimensions (regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive) can be illustrated with an example. For corporate bodies, and increasingly in public and voluntary sector organisations as well, there is a turn towards accreditation, which can be characterised as an external regulative form of legitimation. Accreditation may be voluntary but can become seen as a requirement in order to demonstrate the credibility of the organisation to some specific group of persons. For example, Athena SWAN awards for higher education institutions in recognition of their work on gender equality (Equality Challenge Unit, n.d.) may be viewed as a necessary 'badge' of values by prospective women employees. In this way, there is an element of public (or part-public) opinion about the legitimacy of organisations, shaped by their norms regarding gender equality and the meaning they attach to the commitment of organisations to address these matters. The accreditation by award may result in a taken-for-grantedness - that the organisation is seen as credible and active about addressing gender equality, and therefore public critique may be latent or absent (as legitimacy is strong); but can become vocal and potentially problematic for the organisation when legitimacy is weak or compromised – if for instance, the achievement of an Athena SWAN award appears to conflict with public knowledge of the organisation. In this way, “society-at-large” (Deeppure and Suchman 2008, p.55) or the public (or a partial, specific public) can be a source of the cultural-cognitive legitimation of organisations, interrelating with the regulative and normative dimensions, as a manifestation of “the role of the social audience in legitimation dynamics” (Suchman 1995, pp.573-574).

This demonstrates that the cultural-cognitive dimension, and its notion of taken-for-grantedness in particular, (Scott 2001) has potential for exploring the legitimacy of institutions in terms of a gender analysis, although it is clear that both regulative and normative dimensions can also be gendered in their application and effects. The question of sources of legitimation is also highlighted as an area for gendered analysis, given the unspecified nature of the 'society-at-large' (Deeppure and Suchman 2008).

To summarise, the different approaches to conceptualising legitimate authority are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Different Approaches to Conceptualising Legitimate Authority

Type	Defining characteristics	Source of legitimation	Evidence of legitimation	Purpose of legitimation	Examples of Advocates
Normative	Independent Ideal Philosophical Moral	Meeting criteria Matching conditions	Meets criteria Matches conditions	Provides an idealist moral benchmark for political institutions	Rawls Barker
Weberian	3 types of legitimate authority: Traditional, Charismatic, Legal-rational	Beliefs of 'the ruled'	The ruler/s correspond to one of the types	Authority of the ruler/s is accepted by 'the ruled' (passive consent)	Weber Uphoff
Sociological	Judgement In-context Norms, values, principles Criteria for consent	Judgement of 'the ruled'	Diffuse and varied Context-specific	Authority of the ruler/s is accepted by 'the ruled' (active consent)	Beetham Horton
Organisational (branch of Sociological)	Three pillars: Normative (norms), Regulative (rules), Cultural-cognitive (meanings)	Agents of the state or professional or trade bodies. Society-at-large. Media	Normative is internal. Regulative is external. Cultural-cognitive is 'taken-for-grantedness'	Certification Accreditation Reputation	Scott Deephouse & Suchman

1.4.5 Legitimacy and Authority

The concept of legitimate authority (including political representation) particularly the source of that legitimation, is closely related to ideas of authorisation and accountability, that is, how are political representatives authorised, and by whom? And how are they responsive, or accountable to 'the represented'? The focus on authorisation and authenticity (Saward 2009) and accountability have opened up (or perhaps reflect) a growing interest in exploring non-elected representation and its

legitimacy (e.g. Montanaro 2012; Rubenstein 2014; Slim 2002; Urbinati and Warren 2008).

Normative theorists are less concerned with the practicalities, but for social and political scientists, a realist examination of the legitimation process is important. For political authority, the convention of elections in liberal democracies is accepted as sufficient legitimating grounds for those representatives, and according to Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, “while the existence of free and fair elections are not a necessary condition for formal representation, in practice elections are considered critical” (2005, p.408). Through a system of equal and fair suffrage, people demonstrate their general consent to the authority of government, meaning that by being able to authorise the government (elect its representatives) and also by being able to hold the representatives to account (through a subsequent election) that serves to legitimise both the government and its elected representatives. However this idea of representation as simple events of authorisation and holding-to-account has been criticised and an alternative conceptualisation of representative claim-making proposed (Saward 2010), whereby the dynamic interaction of making claims on behalf of others constitutes representation. Severing the requirement for election as the legitimising element of political representation also opens up debates about the legitimacy of non-electoral representation, relevant to this study.

1.5 Representative Claims and Legitimacy

Michael Saward (2010) has reframed representation in terms of claims-making and therefore as a constitutive iterative process. In doing so, Saward explains that representative claims “encompass and implicate many different groups and individuals; they show us that representation is dynamic, shifting and elusive” (2010 p.1).

Saward’s analysis brings together five elements: the maker, subject, object, referent and audience and their interconnections in order to highlight “what is going on in representation” (2010 p.5). The focus is not on *being* a representative, of one type or another – descriptive, substantive, symbolic, etc. – but on the acts and connections which constitute representation as the *making of claims*.

Saward states that he does not offer “an independent theory of legitimacy” (p.7) but he proposes a ‘perceived legitimacy’ through the “acceptance of claims over time by appropriate constituencies under certain conditions” (2010 p.84).

The legitimacy of a political representative is therefore not predicated on their electoral status but on their ability to meet the criteria which renders the claim-making acceptable to the appropriate constituency. Saward has provided a template of authorisation and accountability which draws on these concepts from classic representation theory (such as Pitkin 1967), but places them within his constitutive framework.

In terms of non-elective representatives he proposes three categories which are “indications of representative claims” (2010, p.95). He is clear that “each of these claims is a claim that someone represents the *interests of a specified group*” (ibid, emphasis in original) and they fall into three categories which Saward labels as expertise and special credentials; wider interests and new voices; and deeper roots. These are discussed in more detail below with six salient sub-categories illustrated with examples.

Expertise and Specialist Credentials

Claims are based on “the possession of authoritative knowledge arising from specialist expertise” because representatives have “distinctive insight into potentially neglected or underplayed interests of the group” (2010, p.98). Saward specifies that there would need to be an “appropriate interpretive community” (ibid, citing March and Olsen 1995) in order to substantiate such claims. An example of someone who might make this type of claim in the field of women’s interests would be Harriet Wistrich, a UK solicitor and founder member of the civil society organisation ‘Centre for Women’s Justice’. She has many years’ experience of representing women who have experienced domestic violence, and as such has both specialist credentials in addressing violence against women, and has legal expertise (Centre for Women’s Justice, n.d.). This example illustrates not only the ‘specialist expertise’ but also the recognition of that expertise as the basis for the authorisation of that representative claim, through the state agents – such as High Court judges - who have to accept her representational claims (whether or not they accept her legal arguments about a specific case). It demonstrates that “if they invoke directly a conception of people’s interests that is deemed accessible through the possession and exercise of specific forms of specialist expertise” (Saward 2009, pp. 11-12) then non-elected representation may be authorised by the state.

Wider Interests and New Voices: Surrogacy for Wider Interests

Claims are based on “an important perspective within a debate not being heard or even voiced, especially due to structural limitations ... of conventional

representative government” (Saward 2010, pp.98-99). It might be argued that the interests of women have been largely overlooked and under-prioritised and therefore those that speak ‘for women’s interests’ can claim representative status.

Of course, women are not a homogeneous constituency, and there have been criticisms that women representatives are drawn largely from a narrow segment of the women’s population (predominantly white, middle class and heterosexual) which has highlighted the exclusion of particularly minority and/or marginalised women. This has been part of debates raising the profile of minority groups and their specific interests, leading to wider questions of the representativeness of those in political roles.

This more nuanced conception of women’s representation, requiring diversity as integral to increasing legitimacy, recognises that democratic representatives are drawn from a narrow band of the population (older, whiter, better educated, more often male: Kettlewell and Phillips 2014; HoC 2009) and opens up a wider diversification argument. If, like Iris Marion Young (1990, 2000), representation has to be inclusive, to provide space for marginalised and oppressed groups and not to increase the representation of majority and elite interests, then the link between non-elected representatives and authority is in some part constituted through the state (elected and appointed) seeking out those unelected community leaders to provide representation from, of and for such marginalised interests, currently un- or under-represented.

An example could be Doreen Lawrence, mother of the murdered young man Stephen Lawrence. As a Black woman, and a mother of Black sons, as well as a bereaved parent victimised by a violent and racist crime, Doreen has been able to make representative claims as ‘surrogacy’ for these wider interests. Over the twenty six years since Stephen’s death, her claims have also been based around the structural racism of the police, which is of great importance and has clearly addressed issues with conventional institutions (BBC 2014).

A category of surrogate representation has also been advanced by Jane Mansbridge (2003), in which an elected representative may act for members of a particular group even when that group is not within the geography of the representative’s constituency. She provides the example of a USA Senator who (because he is known to be gay) is asked to represent other gay and lesbian citizens although they reside outside of his electoral territory. The role of unelected representatives however, may broaden the concept of ‘surrogacy’ beyond those

extra-constituency claims of elected representatives, as their constituency is unconstrained by electoral geography. Actors who foster 'surrogate accountability' in non-electoral situations have also been identified by Jennifer Rubenstein (2007).

Wider Interests and New Voices: Mirroring

Claims are based on descriptive similarity between the claimant and the constituency she claims to speak or stand for, as this is seen to "afford special insight into that group's interests" (ibid, p.99). In this case, an example is the British-Somalian activist Nimco Ali, who is a survivor of female genital mutilation (FGM) who campaigns to end the practice, particularly speaking out as a woman of African origin who has been subjected to it (Daughters of Eve, n.d.). She is not only 'speaking for' particular women's interests, she also shares characteristics with those women, and thus is able to "speak as" (Slim 2002). This is a strong feature of the women's voluntary sector and was a key principle in the feminist movement – when circumstances require someone to 'speak for' other women, it would be preferable that she could speak from similar experience. That authentic voice is highly valued, both by those being represented (on whose behalf the claims are made), and also adds value for the audience to whom the claims are made.

Wider Interests and New Voices: Stakeholding

In this criteria, claims are based on "speaking for a group that has a material or other 'stake' in a process or decision, and has a right to have its interests included in the process" (ibid, p.100) and an example is Gina Miller, who makes representative claims for those who wish to remain in the European Union and took the UK government to court over Article 50 (Cotton, 2019). There is a distinct group (people who wish to remain in the EU) that has a stake in a decision (the 2016 referendum to leave the EU) and Gina continues to make high profile representative claims.

Wider Interests and New Voices: The Word from the Street

This claim can be made by someone "leading or addressing" a "massive or tangible demonstration of popular support" as the basis of their claim is representing "a significant swathe of public opinion" (ibid p.99). The example given here is Greta Thunberg, the 16 year old Swedish schoolgirl who is also an international climate activist, who has led 'school strikes' and addressed crowds of thousands at climate crisis marches and demonstrations (BBC, 2019a).

Deeper Roots

These claims may be based on core aspects of a group's identity or attachments where the group has a profound interest in these deeper aspects of their having a 'voice'. Can a claim of 'deeper roots' be made for civil society, or democratically elected, feminist women as representatives of women?

In Saward's (2010) section on '*Deep Group Morality and Ties of Tradition*' (pp.95-96) he states that many religious representatives' claims take this form, and also monarchs. The representative claim here is based around the embeddedness of any political system in a set of historical or traditional structures of leadership and authority. There are two very different readings of 'deeper roots' – one is group moral depth and the other is about traditions of authority. The claim that a feminist perspective, if located within dense networks of accountability, is evidence of a 'deeper group morality', and therefore provides an authoritative claim as legitimate representation, is novel and will be explored further in the thesis.

These criteria correspond with Slim's (2002) contention that the non-elected can be legitimate representatives if they can demonstrate a "broader and deeper" notion of accountability than the merely electoral. According to his position, they achieve this with a range of sources which cumulatively justify their 'voice' claim, and are evidenced by their presence and effectiveness "on the ground". These mutually reinforcing sources create "veracity and authority", which in turn provides accountability. For Rubenstein, a "responsiveness to constituents' preferences and interests" (2014) forms part of the criteria, as with the "discursive power" that Montanaro (2012) highlights, along with membership accountability and authority. These non-electoral conceptions of authority and accountability evidence that non-elected or 'self-appointed' representation may be legitimate. Further, arguments of justice (Young 1990) for under-represented interests and Saward's (2016) contention that non-elected representation is necessary to supplement incomplete democratic representation, offer further substantiation of the claim that there are unelected representatives who have legitimacy.

Responses to Saward's idea of claims-making include Taylor (2010) who describes Saward's approach as "deliberately unsettling representation's frame of reference" and his view of representation as "a complex, contingent and lived relationship conditioned by a *claim to represent*" (p.170, emphasis in original). And in a piece called "*The representative claim and its limits*", Heffernan (2011) considers groups operating in 'the public square' (i.e. civil society) but states that "a group may claim to speak for (or represent) citizens ... but often they speak more for themselves"

(p.182). He also notes that “recognition empowers the organisation perhaps more than its cause ...” because “it grants both legitimacy and influence”, when groups are not always inclusive or representative (p.183). In short, Heffernan’s criticism seems to target the voluntary sector more than Saward’s theory.

Saward has discussed women in relation to his claims-making, and offers the view that “it serves to extend work that regards the representation of women as occurring beyond, as well as within, elected legislative bodies” (2010, p. 120). As such this conceptualisation forms part of the analytical framework for this research study, and the categories of claims above will be utilised. Saward has stated that unelected representatives may benefit from access to different resources, an image of being ‘untainted’ by electoral compromise, and the ability to make claims in a multiplicity of sites (specifically, beyond national parliaments), all of which demonstrate “potential to illuminate debates around the representation of women” (ibid p.126).

Other scholars have addressed the legitimacy of unelected representation. Suzanne Dovi’s recent conceptualisation of ‘the good representative’ (2012) offers a basis for evaluating those representatives (makers of claims) in ways which address their legitimacy (whether formal or informal) through value-based criteria. She has argued that theorisation of representation needs to be expanded beyond formal political institutions to include informal political actors (p.6) on the grounds that they make “vital contributions” (p.65) to democratic institutions; and also that their “multiple sources of authority” (ibid) offer varying degrees of legitimacy, both for elected (formal) and informal representatives.

Saward’s emphasis on representation as the acceptance of claims by the relevant constituency leads him to suggest that there is “no place for independent criteria of what might make for a ‘good’ representative” (2016, p.256), although he acknowledges that democratic legitimation “will have criteria which apply to the context” (ibid) where claims are presented for acceptance. This may include for example, a lack of coercion, so that any acceptance of claims is clearly voluntary. For Saward, as the making of claims is a dynamic process, involving a range of actors, relationships and manifested in “multiple guises and spaces” (ibid, p.246), the emphasis placed by normative scholars on the characteristics of the representative alone (a maker of claims in Saward’s theorisation), would fail to address the process in its entirety.

However, Jane Mansbridge (2003) offers a value-based perspective when discussing gyroscopic representation, in which the representatives “act only for

'internal' reasons. Their accountability is only to their own beliefs and principles" (2003, p.520), emphasising character, conscience and principles. Voters may choose a representative for their view on a specific policy issue, or they may select for integrity and 'the common good', but she notes that according to Fearon (1999), voters try to choose a 'good type' of representative, who has the three characteristics of "(1) having similar policy preferences to the voter, (2) being honest and principled, and (3) being sufficiently skilled" (Mansbridge 2003, p.521).

In combination with Saward's focus on three categories of claim-making, Dovi's normative approach offers a framework with which to analyse the data about representation from the research study respondents. Dovi's criteria for selecting democratic representatives, both formal and informal, is based on three virtues of a good representative: fairmindedness, critical trust building, and good gatekeeping. These virtues are required (according to Dovi's normative perspective) for democratic representatives to be able to undertake their "characteristic activity" which is "democratic advocacy" (2012 p.7). For Dovi, a democratic polity comprising "all political actors who advance public policies in democratic institutions" (p.7, emphasis in original), and meaning both formal and informal representatives, will have the three core values of civic equality, self-governance and inclusion. Returning to the question of legitimacy, and the link with authorisation, Dovi presents four sources of authority (as in, being authorised) for good democratic representatives, which are institutional affiliation, intangible goods, social location, and formative experience (2012, p.62). These four sources are understood as follows:

With *institutional affiliation*, a representative can derive their legitimacy from "their affiliation with particular interest groups, associations or organisations" (2012 p.63) and this is reliant on the reputation or good name of that organisation. In the second category, of *intangible goods*, representatives derive their legitimacy from "what other people consider to be worthwhile and good ends" (ibid). Therefore it is to some extent dependent on what constituents regard as being in their genuine interest (such as, human rights), and their perception of the groups and individuals who advocate for this. The third source of authority is *social location*, which is described as including memberships of "different socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups" (2012 p.64) as well as having certain first-hand experiences. Based on "having a certain position within a community, a distinctive set of experiences, and particular social connections, a representative may enjoy the authority to serve as the voice of that community" (ibid), and in fact, their

representations will be judged on that basis by those of whom claims are made (the represented), or to whom claims are made (the audience). The final category is that of *formative experiences*, which provide evidence that a representative is prepared to “put their ideas on the line and suffer” (ibid) in order to demonstrate their worth. Dovi describes formative experiences as “serving as a proxy for a representative’s reliability and good intentions” (2012, p.65).

These sources of legitimation for ‘a good representative’ sit well alongside Saward’s criteria for evaluating the legitimacy of representational claims, in that together they facilitate an analysis of both the dynamic process (“the acceptance of claims over time by appropriate constituencies under certain conditions”, Saward 2010 p.84) and the underlying moral component of representation. There is some overlap between the two sets of criteria which is evident in the data analysis, and in Dovi’s work, there is some un-clarity where she uses the terms of legitimacy and authority, legitimation and authorisation inter-changeably, whereas other scholars (see above) have made helpful distinctions. Dovi does however state that “sources of authority and means of accountability” show that informal representatives can “qualify as genuine democratic representatives” (ibid p.68) and this indicates that the criteria will be applicable to both interview cohorts in this study. As such, elements of her conceptualisation will form part of the analytical framework, alongside Saward’s criteria for claims, to examine the research data from both unelected and elected political representatives in relation to legitimacy and gender. This analysis is presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the next section, the research questions and approach are outlined.

1.6 Research Questions and Approach

This study therefore comprises two inter-connected elements: one, empirical work to obtain and analyse perspectives and experiences of elected and unelected women at a local level; and two, a theoretical exploration of legitimacy in political representation through the lens of gender. The literature and debates provide a backdrop to the study, offering both potential avenues for further consideration and also illuminating where gaps exist in current knowledge or application of that knowledge.

The research methodology is fully explicated in Chapter 3, but briefly introduced here. It utilises an inductive approach, commencing not from an existing hypothesis, but from general observations (derived from my past professional practice);

identifying the area of interest (women as elected or unelected political representatives, at the local level) and the existing scholarship; proceeding to investigate, then to analysis of the resultant qualitative data, making use of conceptual tools in order to produce new knowledge and generate hypotheses. As such, the initial research questions are necessarily broad, as follows:

- How is the legitimacy of local women representatives shaped by gender?
- What differences, similarities and challenges are there regarding the legitimacy of elected and unelected local women representatives?
- How can the gendered dimensions of legitimacy in local level political representation be explained?

These questions have been formulated in order to frame but not constrain the research and its goal of original knowledge contribution, or as in Bryman's criteria "neither too broad ... nor too narrow" (2016, p.83), thus retaining a clear and coherent focus for the research study.

The philosophical approach is described in the methodology chapter, but a brief introduction is offered here. This study utilises a "modern critical realism" (Furlong and Marsh 2010, p.205) which acknowledges interpretivist influences in that it accepts that while social phenomena exist independently, they are affected by our interpretations of them; that reflexive social actors have agency and can effect change to such structures; and that "we need to identify and understand both the external reality and the social construction of that reality if we are to explain the relationship between social phenomena" (ibid). This methodological position is situated within what Squires describes as "a move within gender and political theory to negotiate a position between objectivity and interpretation" (1999, p.106). As indicated, the methodology is explored in more detail in Chapter 3; and areas of further research are proposed in the final chapter.

This study is therefore exploratory, and is intended to generate hypotheses and directions for further research. It will contribute both theoretical and empirical knowledge to understanding how gender impacts on women as local political representatives, identifying and analysing the factors that frame these roles for women; and by theorising further at the intersection of political representation, gender and legitimacy.

In summary, it is proposed that the study will contribute to conceptual work on legitimacy in political representation, bringing further insights from a gendered perspective of women in representative roles; and contributing to the evidence base

about similarities, differences and challenges at the local level. These areas of focus are explored in the data analysis Chapters 4 and 5, where the qualitative data is presented and analysed' using the framework of Saward's (2010) and Dovi's (2012) criteria for evaluating representational legitimacy. The discussion in the final chapter highlights the relationship with key debates, and sets out the theoretical contributions and conclusions of the research study.

1.7 Focus and Rationale

This is an exploratory study at the local level, focussed on the experiences and perspectives of unelected women in community leadership roles, and women in democratically elected roles. The aim is to analyse and compare these experiences and views in order to expand the theoretical and empirical knowledge on representation, legitimacy and gender.

The study includes fieldwork in a specific locality where the elected representatives have achieved numerical gender balance, at close to 50% women and 50% men. This is unusual, but represents the goal of increased descriptive representation of women whereby "gender balance ... expresses an equal right to equal participation" (Skjeie and Teigen 2005, p.195) and as such Tyneside provides a valuable research site (albeit at the local level) in which to examine claims about the relationship of women's descriptive representation to both substantive impacts and also transformative improvements to political institutions themselves (Lovenduski 2005; Norris 1996).

The decision to use Tyneside as a case study was based on it epitomising "an apt context" (Bryman 2016, p.63) or 'best case' scenario of women's political representation in local government, being numerically gender-balanced in terms of both overall elected councillors, and also their Executives (Cabinet memberships). This is discussed further in the Research Design section in Chapter 3. The question of women's under-representation at all political levels has been characterised a problem of presence, of voice, and of process – it is a matter of justice that women be represented at levels equivalent to their numbers in the wider population; it is unfair that their interests are not represented to be part of governmental decision-making; and it is an issue for democracy that women do not have influence over how political institutions are organised and function (Squires 2007). International organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe have highlighted the lack of women in political institutions and called for "equal participation of women and men in decision making", setting a goal of gender

balance in all government institutions in order to address equal participation by women in decision making processes (Squires, 2007, pp.21-22).

Achieving a 'critical mass' of women (widely understood to be greater than 40% and less than 60%, Kanter, 1977) presents a vision in which "outcomes for individuals in such a balanced peer group, regardless of type, will depend on other structural and personal factors" (ibid, p.966) rather than their position as majority or minority members, dominants or tokens. This opens up the prospect that women representatives will have opportunities as men do, not as the "gender-neutral abstraction (which) ends up as suspiciously male" (Phillips 1993, p.56) nor the purportedly impartial agents with their rationality of "monological character" (Young 1990, p.101), but as political representatives who are informed about and challenging of, rather than ignorant of or constrained by, expectations of gender. There are of course elected women who resent their gender being part of their moniker - Susan Lawrence (elected in 1923) "objected to being called 'a woman MP' " (Kelly 2018, p.3) and more recently, Ann Widdicombe who stated "an MP is an MP whether male or female" (The Guardian 2014). This view undoubtedly has a no-nonsense down-to-earth appeal but is easily characterised as inherently naïve or wilfully ignorant, as even a cursory examination of attitudes to elected women (e.g. Campbell and Childs 2010; Ross 2002, 2017) demonstrates that no matter how strongly Ann (and others) refute it, being a woman and a political actor certainly does matter. Gendered notions of power and representation impact on political actors and perceptions of their legitimacy, resulting in asymmetrical outcomes for women and men. Thus the opportunity to study representation in a gender balanced polity provides a rich landscape for research situated within that intersection of politics, legitimacy and gender.

This numerical gender balance in elected representation at the local government level on Tyneside offers a space in which the goal of women's presence (descriptive representation) has been achieved, in that there are roughly equal numbers of women and men as democratic political representatives. This reflects the almost equal proportions of women and men in the UK population more broadly - "There are now 98 men for every 100 women" (ONS 2017 p.6), and is a rare example of gender balance being achieved within a political institution, despite the United Nations calling for gender balance in government more than twenty years ago (UN Beijing Platform for Action, 1995 cited in Squires 2007, p.22). It is therefore of contemporary interest to conduct research which asks about the experiences of women acting as representatives within that space.

However the descriptive representation of women is increasingly seen, and challenged, as a gateway to the substantive representation of women, in that having more women in elected political roles is both proposed and questioned as a pre-requisite to achieving greater representation of women's interests (Celis et al 2008; Chaney 2006). The assumptions that achieving descriptive representation will bring substantive representation for women have been further examined (Beckwith 2014; Bochel and Briggs 2000; Bratton 2005; Childs and Krook 2009; Dahlerup 2006; Tremblay 1998), while the contention that women's presence may have a transformative effect on political institutions has been supported by some studies (Araujo and Tejedó-Romero 2016; Charles 2014; Gains and Lowndes 2017; Lovenduski and Norris 2003). Although still rare, a gender balanced government provides an opportunity to examine the reality of that situation from the perspective of the political representatives acting both within it (elected) and alongside it (non-elected). How the everyday experience of women in those representative roles may be changed by their proportionate increase, is a useful aspect of representation to explore, as the proportion of women in other political representative roles continues to increase, albeit very slowly and unevenly. The question of 'critical mass' in terms of women, or critical actors (Childs and Krook 2008; Dahlerup 1988) has been highlighted but this study is not concerned primarily with the impact of greater numbers of women, nor whether there are individual central players among them. It is concerned rather with exploring any particular effects of there being a gender balance between the elected women and elected men, that is, the impacts not specifically of the *increased* numbers of women but of there being *equal* numbers of women and men, particularly effects related to political legitimacy.

In addition, the contested nature of unelected, or non-elected, political representatives is examined, particularly in relation to questions of legitimacy. It is also of interest whether there are similarities, differences or challenges related to the presence and activities of unelected women who are community leaders and who also act as representatives for women's interests. Further, the interplay between representatives who are part of the local state (elected councillors) and those who are part of civil society is under-researched. There are studies which examine the role of women's movement actors (e.g. Barry 1991; Holli and Kantola 2005) or women as community activists (Naples 1998) in relation to the state, and these challenge the notion that an individual woman can be designated neatly as either a state actor or a non-state actor. In particular Janet Newman's (2012) UK study of women who had held positions in both state and civil society demonstrates

that such a binary framework is insufficient and that a reconceptualisation is both possible and necessary, to explore how women, including feminists, in different representative roles and over time, act collaboratively or not, for women's interests. There is also scholarly work which examines 'state feminism' - Amy Mazur has published widely on this, as have Marion Sawer, Joyce Outshoorn and Joanna Kantola - and their work offers useful insights into the dynamic inter-relationships between elected and appointed women, as well as those outside the state (Weldon, 2002), working for 'women's interests'.

1.8 Personal Engagement with Research Question

Prior to commencing my doctoral studies, I worked in local government for over twenty five years, and also had substantial experience in the community and voluntary sector, with local women's and girls' projects. My local government career included working directly with a number of local governance and partnership bodies, which were developed during the late nineties and into the twenty-first century (Local Strategic Partnerships, New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Management initiatives) and it was during this period that I became interested in questions of legitimacy in relation to women representatives. Over this time, these structures changed shape and focus, but an early principle and continuing feature was the involvement of partners from different sectors to steer the work and determine resource allocation (DETR 1997, cited in Russell 2001; DETR 2001; SEU 2001), whether at an area-wide (i.e. local authority) strategic level or a neighbourhood level with specific targets. This ambition to bring together both democratically elected representatives and local community representatives (alongside other partners, such as the private and voluntary sectors, SEU 2001 pp.76-82) presented opportunities but also many unanticipated difficulties. One of the recurring obstacles throughout, at different local authorities, was the thorny issue of 'representation'. From the beginnings of such partnerships, elected councillors were questioning the legitimacy of these community representatives (Hughes and Carmichael 1998), claiming that they had no democratic mandate, even though in some cases they had been elected – for instance, over 80% of NDC Board members were chosen through community elections (Foden and Pearson 2010, p.5). And the criticism was not uni-directional, as community representatives often challenged councillors as being too busy in 'city hall' or simply out-of-touch with the concerns of local residents (Shaw and Davidson 2002, p.13). As Barnes et al reported "an elected councillor's impact as a board member was linked to their reputation as a councillor, most particularly the extent to which they were perceived

to be *an effective local representative and community champion*" (2007, p.128, my emphasis).

These questions of representation and legitimacy were the starting point for my doctoral research, alongside my interest in the gendered dimensions, and I have maintained this focus although the site of the study has had to respond to the evolving political landscape. Initially I was developing a research study which examined the experiences of women community representatives (some elected but most not) who were serving on different local governance partnerships, alongside elected councillors. I was intending to explore their views and experiences as women and as representatives, in settings where equality of the partners was a foundational principle yet in practice this appeared to be challenged. Originally a community development worker, I was interested in the 'community involvement' aspect of policy and how this was understood, accepted and sometimes resisted in practice. My initial thoughts were that the experiences of the community representatives could be examined through a lens of citizenship, and at that time, the government was promoting its idea of 'active citizenship' (Home Office 2003). The gender dimension of this involvement in governance by community representatives was a primary research interest for me, as so many were women (Foden and Pearson 2010), and I also intended to explore questions of their contested legitimacy.

However, as a result of the change of government in 2010, with the concomitant change in ideology, it became apparent that the place-based regeneration initiatives that I had begun studying would no longer be a policy or resource priority (Lawless 2010). This heralded the demise of those neighbourhood-level partnerships (Deas 2012), and it became clear that the research study would have to be adjusted to take this into account. Not only were the governance bodies that I had begun studying to be deprived of resources while government focus shifted, and therefore closed or left to wither away (Crowley et al 2012; Lupton 2013), they were also quickly dispatched to the past, leaving me to question whether there would be much interest in any related research findings. Keen to ensure that my research would have continuing relevance as well as a wider application for its findings, I felt that it was necessary to switch the site of study away from these now-redundant partnership bodies to some other site, which offered a similar opportunity to examine the experiences and views of women representatives.

At the same time, it was apparent that the numbers of elected women at the local level, although proportionately higher than women MPs, were increasing more slowly than at the national level (Bazeley et al 2017, p.15) so this seemed to offer a comparative study opportunity. I was already focussed on studying the experiences of women in representative roles: there were high proportions of women as community representatives (Foden and Pearson 2010) and there was a strong and developing field of study in women as elected representatives, although this interest was often at the national government level (e.g. Childs 2004; Krook 2010; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Sawer, Tremblay and Trimble 2006; Wängnerud 2009) rather than at local council level. However a different picture was emerging in the North East of England, where the Labour Party dominates the political landscape. As a result of their decision to use all-women shortlists to increase the number of women candidates and ultimately, elected women (Brookes et al 1990; Kelly and White 2009), the proportion of elected women was rising towards 50% in the Tyneside sub-region of the North East where I have worked.

The initial research was shaped by my experiences of working in local authority partnership structures where the policy to seat resident and other community representatives alongside elected councillors in governance, revealed fractures in the understanding about who was a legitimate representative of any given community, neighbourhood or locality. Since women were very much in evidence as community representatives in these partnership structures, I became interested in how these experiences of, and interplay between, elected and unelected actors were shaped by gender. My own experiences of managing a Community Empowerment Network (CEN), a neighbourhood regeneration partnership, and a local strategic partnership all contributed to my first-hand knowledge of these representational dynamics between the elected and unelected. I particularly wished to research the experiences of women because of the legitimacy and gender dimensions of representation that I had observed. In addition, I was interested in the question of what these women think about representing women's interests, and what impacts on that substantive representation.

Thus these two changing situations seemed to present an opportunity to combine them into one study – that of women as political representatives at the local level, both unelected and elected. This would not be focussed around partnership governance structures, but considered in the context of local authority areas, specifically where women comprise 50% (or close to that) of the elected

representatives, and there is a strong presence of unelected women, in community leadership roles, who are representing women's interests at that local level.

1.9 Outline of Chapters

The next chapter (Chapter 2) describes the context relevant to the research study. This encompasses the electoral democratic context, particularly of local government; and the civil society context, focussed on the local voluntary and community sector. Gender dimensions are highlighted, such as the changes brought about by women, and the current position of women as representatives.

The following chapter (Chapter 3) explains the methodology for the study, with epistemological, practical and ethical dimensions explored in detail. There are sections dealing with the rationale for methods selected; the data analysis process; feminist approaches to methodology; positionality; and cross-gender interviewing.

After that, there are two chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) in which data from the interviews is presented and analysed using the framework introduced in Chapter 1. These two chapters are organised around different aspects of the research findings about the unelected and elected representation, to examine legitimacy and gender in political representation

The final chapter (Chapter 6) is two parts: first, a discussion of the findings, related to contemporary debates about legitimacy, gender and political representation; and second, the conclusions of the study. It draws together the findings of the study, comparing similarities, differences and challenges faced by the two cohorts of elected and unelected political representatives. It sets out the contribution to theoretical debates and offers some new conceptual observations to extend our knowledge of gender, legitimacy and political representation. The study also highlights some obstacles to achieving gender equality in political representation; and it uncovers gaps in our knowledge of legitimacy, gender and representation at the local level which merit further study.

1.10 Summary

This chapter has introduced the thesis, and outlined the rationale for the research study.

It has provided an overview of the relevant literature regarding theoretical debates and conceptual frameworks about representation, including work on the descriptive

representation of women and the contested link with representing women's interests. In addition, scholarly work which examines connections between women who are elected and unelected representatives is referenced. The literature on legitimacy has also been explored, grounding the study in normative and empirical ideas of political legitimacy. The work of Saward (2010) and others to provide legitimisation criteria for non-elected forms of representation has been drawn on, in combination with Dovi's conceptualisation of 'the good representative' (2012), to provide an analytical framework with which to examine the original data, as presented in later chapters. This literature provides an extensive foundation for the research and indicates where the gaps in knowledge justify the focus of this study.

The next chapter (Chapter 2) describes the context for the study, with both local government and the landscape of elected representatives being presented, along with background to the women's voluntary sector within civil society, locating these within contemporary policy developments which impact on local level representation, legitimacy and gender.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the relevant context for the research study, including both the electoral democratic and the civil society contexts, and with reference to relevant policy context.

Information about the political context is set within the broader UK policy context affecting representation at the local level. First, the democratic context with the recent increase in descriptive representation of elected women; and second, the civil society context in which the enduring 'women's sector' (in particular the feminist-derived organisations and women in those leadership roles) has had to reframe its relationship with the state. These are each mapped out in order to contextualise the local site of study and each is framed by relevant key policy developments: first, the changes to local government's political structure resulting in the 'community leadership' role replacing committee membership for many elected councillors. Second, the move towards governance and partnership working at both area-wide and neighbourhood levels, placing an emphasis on elected and unelected representatives working together to co-produce policy.

This context highlights both change and continuity in debates about the descriptive and the substantive representation of women and 'women's interests'. Thus, representatives from these two political arenas, both elected and unelected women whose roles encompass representing women (or, women's interests), are of research interest to investigate gendered dimensions of legitimacy and representation.

My experiences of working in the Tyneside area provided me not only with a strong understanding of the background and context of local level representation in this area, but also a wide network of contacts in both the public and voluntary sectors. I anticipated that my prior knowledge of the political structures and also the community and campaigning organisations would enable me to negotiate obstacles to the study. Details of the research methodology are described in Chapter 3 and the contextual background is provided here to 'set the scene'.

2.1.1 The Research Study Area

The area of study is situated in the North East of England and comprises four neighbouring local authority areas, collectively known as Tyneside (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Map of Tyneside, the study area



Four local authority areas are included in the research study area, in part because there is some overlap between both state and civil society infrastructure across this geography and in part to aid maintaining the anonymity of research participants. Geographically, this sub-region is bisected by the Tyne river, with two council areas (Newcastle and North Tyneside) on the north bank of the Tyne and two (Gateshead and South Tyneside) on the south. The North Sea provides the eastern border, with the county of Northumberland to the north and west; and County Durham, along with Sunderland, to the south.

2.2 Local Background

My study is located in Tyneside, which comprises the four council areas that border the River Tyne: Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside and South Tyneside. These council areas are part of the North East region, and with the adjoining Sunderland council area were formerly known as Tyne and Wear. However, various re-organisations and boundary changes have left their mark.

The North East retains a strong regional identity, particularly in the northern part where my study area is located. However, administratively very little remains of the North East region as like other regions of England, the North East regional office of government (established in 1998) was abolished as part of the dismantling of all regional government structures following the 2010 general election and the change of government.

The sub-regional layer of government - Tyne and Wear County Council - was created in 1974, lasting until its abolition in the government re-organisation of 1986.

It consisted of the five metropolitan boroughs of South Tyneside, North Tyneside, City of Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead and City of Sunderland. After the abolition of Tyne and Wear, the five resultant unitary authorities were left with some sub-regional infrastructure, and the responsibilities for these were divided between the five, retaining links through a number of institutions and commitment to shared provision, with joint bodies to run certain services on a Tyne and Wear county-wide basis (e.g. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service; and the Passenger Transport Executive, which runs the light railway system, the Metro). These bodies form part of what Robinson et al (2017) refer to as “the extended world of local governance” (p.45), whereby local councils have the power to nominate councillors to sit on various partnership bodies and joint boards. This gives a considerably wider ‘reach’ to local decision-making than may be realised by examining the responsibilities of councillors only in relation to their own local authority.

These four local authorities on Tyneside are all unitary authorities, each with the full range of duties and responsibilities of a single tier authority, along with the shared residual responsibilities from the Tyne and Wear days.

2.2.1 Population and Gender

One of the features of descriptive representation is that it relates to the numerical presence of that category of people (although the argument for representation of disadvantaged groups has also been made on justice rather than proportional grounds – see Iris Marion Young, 1990). And in relation to the representation of women, their presence as fully half of the population has been a central feature of their claim for political representation. Hence, data on population and gender is presented here. The term ‘gender’ is used here, rather than the more accurate term ‘sex’ (as in, biological differentiation of males and females) which seems to have fallen out of fashion. Of course there are highly politicised contemporary debates

about these terms, in which ‘gender’ in particular has varied and weighted meanings, but here it is used merely as a replacement definitional tool for males/females.

On the most recent census day, 27 March 2011, the estimated population of the UK was 63.2 million, the largest it has ever been. In terms of gender, there were more females (32.2 million) than males (31.0 million) (ONS, 2013). In the North East region, which comprises 12 local authority areas, there were 2.6 million people. Of these, the four neighbouring local authority areas, which together form Tyneside, the geographical site of this study, have a total population of 850,000 (mid-2016 estimates) as Table 1 below.

In three of the four authority areas, females slightly outnumber males, which is entirely consistent with national figures on population and sex (ONS 2013). Nationally by age, males outnumber females in all age groups from 0 to 30 years, and then the trend is reversed, with females outnumbering males in all age groups from 31 to 100+ years (ONS 2017). The table shows proportions by gender for the Tyneside areas for all ages.

Table 2: Population totals and by gender, Tyneside

Area	Total	Females	%	Males	%
Gateshead	201,592	102,375	50.8%	99,217	49.2%
Newcastle upon Tyne	296,478	146,200	49.3%	150,278	50.7%
North Tyneside	203,307	105,037	51.7%	98,270	48.3%
South Tyneside	149,418	76,991	51.5%	72,427	48.5%
Tyneside total	850,795	430,603	50.6%	420,192	49.4%
North East	2,636,848	1,342,491	50.9%	1,294,357	49.1%

(Data from ONS 2017, with further analysis by the author)

Descriptive representation, as Hanna Pitkin (1967) outlined, “depends on the representative’s characteristics, on what he *is* or is *like*, on being something rather

than doing something” (p.61, emphasis in original). This notion that representatives should ‘stand for’ or ‘mirror’ those they represent has gained traction among groups (particularly minorities and other disadvantaged groups) who feel unrepresented, and who look at their representatives and do not see themselves reflected back. However, as Suzanne Dovi (2012) notes, “descriptive representation is considered necessary, albeit not sufficient, for good democratic representation” (p.23). For women, since the early suffrage campaigns, the goal of seeing elected representatives that resemble themselves (i.e. other women) has been consistently promoted in parallel with the conviction that women are more likely to act ‘for women’, that they have shared concerns and are more likely to prioritise issues important to women (Dahlerup 1988; Annesley 2010; Childs 2008, cited in Childs and Lovenduski 2013, p.502), which legislatures dominated by men have failed to do. In that sense, the descriptive representation of women has been understood to be inextricably linked to the substantive representation of women’s concerns. This has been a consistent theme in over 100 years of women campaigning for election. For example, Maud Burnett, the first woman elected as a councillor on Tyneside (1910, Tynemouth) was described thus in the local paper: “She did not seek a seat on the council for her own sake, but because she cared for the weak and oppressed, and because she wished to show that women could help” (Shields Daily News 1910, cited in Hollis, 1987, p.18). And a century later, Patricia Hollis herself (as Baroness Hollis of Heigham, for Labour, in the House of Lords) described how she got support from Conservative women in votes on women’s pension reforms (Grew 2013), evidencing not only substantive representation, but also transformative representation – “bringing something new to the political stage” (Phillips 1991, p.3), the idea that women’s presence in the democratic polity would change how politics is done as well as what politics would address - “an increasing number of women politicians in itself changes some of the social conventions of politics” (Dahlerup 1988, p.290). This contested claim of the purported link between increased descriptive representation of women, and increased substantive (and transformative) representation of women is considered later in the thesis.

Based on this population data, descriptive representation which ‘mirrors’ the proportions by gender would result in the elected roles being held by 51% women and 49% men. However, some scholars have contested this conclusion of identical numerical proportions, as the means to serve justice. For example, Iris Marion Young’s conception is that disadvantaged groups ought to be represented in democratic political institutions but that “does not necessarily imply proportional

representation” rather than the group’s “experience, perspectives and interests” are to be represented (1990, p.187).

However, the question of numerical descriptive representation of women is a strong feature of contemporary debate regarding women as political representatives, persisting as a contentious issue and therefore of continuing research interest. Investigation of these ‘politics of presence’ (Phillips 1995) and examining the association between women’s descriptive, substantive and other forms of representation is at the heart of this study.

In the following sections, the current position regarding elected political representatives in the North East region, and specifically the Tyneside area, is presented. However, before that, I offer two explanatory notes, one on ‘women’ and one on ‘ethnicity’, by way of clarifying the application of these terms in relation to this research study.

Women

In a study which is exploring the concept of representation, it might be fundamental to establish who the represented are, and as this study is concerned with the descriptive representation of women, data regarding the number of women in the study area is relevant.

With regard to contemporaneous debates about the category of ‘woman’, this study makes use of a great deal of existing literature, referring to women (or females). Both the scholarly work, and the grey literature (policy reports, government documents, official statistics, etc.), utilise the conception of woman as those persons sexed as female, having a biological, embodied existence as women. Of course, within this categorisation there are multiple variations. Women are not homogenous and there are many differences between women, in terms of characteristics as well as beliefs and experiences. They will have varying experiences of the inequality and discrimination that women face in their differing unequal societies, and this will reflect what Kimberlé Crenshaw has named as their differently “intersecting oppressions” (1991). There is no ‘universal’ woman. However there are women, and they have “similar experiences and share similar circumstances that give rise to political interests ... these similarities of women’s experiences, deriving from socially constructed gendered constraints and exclusions, provide the foundation for the emergence of similar interests among women” (Beckwith 2014,p.20). This study works with this conception of woman,

which recognises that there is a material reality of women (and men), that includes multiple differences between women but also some shared experiences of patriarchal oppression which provide some common cause.

Ethnicity

Another categorisation which is outlined here is that of ethnicity. One of the features of the research participants in this study is that they are all white. In relation to the expectations of readers of this study it is important to explain and contextualise that.

The North East has 95.2% of its population declaring their ethnicity as 'White', which includes all three 'White' categories used in the Census: 'White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British'; and 'White: Irish'; and 'White: Other' (ONS 2012, p.3). The BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) population for the region is thus less than 5%, very different to other parts of the country, in particular London where "40% of residents identify themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group" (ONS 2013, pp.6-7).

Of course, even when a minority is statistically small, it can be illuminating and advantageous to study that minority, especially in qualitative work. The nature of representational questions indicates that we should consider minorities not only on a numerical basis, but also as a key element of emancipatory political studies. However, the very few eligible representatives in the study area (see sections below for local data) either did not respond, or were unable to take part. It may be that a researcher from a BAME background would have had more success and there is clearly an opportunity to explore the experiences of BAME representatives (elected and unelected) in a study area where they constitute such a minority, and with a not insignificant level of diversity within that categorisation. Unfortunately, that was not to be part of this study - the experiences referred to in this thesis reflect the respondents' lives as white women. They have other variations (of age, religion, sexuality, socio-economic class, marital status, political party affiliation, etc.) but in terms of ethnicity, they were all white.

2.3 Democratic Political Context and Elected Representatives

This section has four parts. It includes data and background information about the UK and local landscape of elected representatives, including gender information; relevant policy background about local government and 'democratic renewal'; and a discussion about the representative role of councillors. Then there is specific

information about the Tyneside study area – its local councillors and leadership and a note about ethnicity. The last part discusses all-women shortlists (a quota system to increase the number of women as political representatives) and the Labour Women’s Network.

2.3.1 The landscape of elected representatives

The democratic political context encompasses a range of elected actors in addition to the councillors at local authority level. In the North East region, as in other parts of England, there are Members of Parliament (MPs); Members of the European Parliament (MEPs); Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and elected Mayors.

Largely as a result of the Labour Party’s dominance in the region, and its policy of all-women shortlists (Bochel and Bochel 2008, p.429), the numbers of elected women in the North East as a whole, and Tyneside in particular, are much higher than in the national picture.

Members of Parliament (MPs)

In the UK, women have been able to stand as Members of Parliament since 1918, and in those 100 years there has been a total of 442 women MPs. To put that in perspective, there are 650 seats for MPs in the House of Commons, and currently 32% (208) are women, which is “a record high ... and the highest proportion to date” (Keen et al, 2018, p.3).

In the North East region, a total number of 25 women have ever been elected as MPs, the first being Mabel Philipson in 1923 for Berwick-on-Tweed. Better known names among those early elected women are Ellen Wilkinson (‘Red Ellen’, best known for her second seat at Jarrow, 1935-1947); and Margaret Bondfield (Wallsend, 1926-1931) who went on to become the first woman Cabinet Minister (Kelly 2018, p.4).

In 2018, there are now 14 women MPs out of 29 North East seats (48%), and of the 9 constituencies which cover the Tyneside area (all held by Labour), five (55%) are held by women, as follows:

- Catherine McKinnell: Newcastle North, 2010-
- Chi Onwurah: Newcastle Central, 2010-
- Mary Glendon: North Tyneside, 2010-
- Emma Lewell-Buck: South Shields, 2013-

- Liz Twist: Blaydon, 2017-

The story of women MPs in the North East can best be described as an uneven one. Although there have been some notable women MPs in the recent past, such as Mo Mowlam (Redcar, 1987-2001), Hilary Armstrong (North West Durham, 1987-2010) and Vera Baird (Redcar, 2001-2010), between 1974 and 1987 there were no women MPs in the region at all. Also, 2010 was the first year that women had been elected to parliamentary seats in the city of Newcastle (Kelly 2018); and Chi Onwurah is the only MP ever in this region from a BAME background.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

The proportion of women in the European Parliament has steadily increased. In 1979, only 16% of all MEPs were women. Following the 2014 election, women accounted for 37% of all MEPs and 41% of UK MEPs (HoC Library Briefing Paper 2017, cited in Robinson et al, 2017, p.35).

There are currently three MEPS in the North East and they are: Jude Kirton-Darling (Labour); Paul Brannen (Labour); and Jonathan Arnott (UKIP). All of them represent the whole of the North East region, and they were all elected in 2014 (European Parliament website, n.d.). Being one woman and two men in the North East equates to less gender equality than the UK as a whole, at just 33%.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

It is a similar picture with the elected Police and Crime Commissioners in the region. There are three PCCs altogether, (these are all Labour) of which one is a woman (33%).

Police and Crime Commissioners were first elected in 2012, and nationally, seven of the 40 PCCs (17.5%) elected in 2016 were women (APCC website, n.d.).

The three PCC roles in the North East have been held by the same three people since 2012: Dame Vera Baird QC was elected as the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria; Ron Hogg is PCC for Durham and Barry Coppinger is Cleveland's PCC.

Tyneside is covered by the Northumbria Police Force, and therefore has a woman (Vera Baird), as its PCC.

Elected Mayors

There are two different types of elected mayors. First, a mayor who is elected to lead a local council, and second, a mayor who is elected to lead a Combined Authority (sometimes referred to as a 'Metro Mayor'). There are of course also ceremonial mayors in councils, but these are not elected positions and so not of interest in this study.

Two councils in the North East have an elected mayor as leader of the council – North Tyneside and Middlesbrough. Both of these current mayors are Labour; one is a woman, one is a man. Norma Redfearn has been elected Mayor for North Tyneside since 2013; and Dave Budd was elected Mayor for Middlesbrough in 2015.

Two Combined Authorities were initially established in the North East region in 2016 – the North East Combined Authority (NECA) in the north, covering Northumberland, Durham and the Tyne and Wear area; and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) covering the southern part of the region (Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Darlington). To date, only TVCA has progressed its status and in 2017 Ben Houchen (a Conservative man) was elected Mayor of Tees Valley (Robinson et al 2017, p.68).

In summary, these elected roles total 38 representatives for the North East, with distinctive powers across different spatial and political levels.

As can be seen in Table 2 below, the overall combined proportion of 45% women is closer to resembling the population of 51% women, than the national figures for the separate roles of MPs (32% women); MEPs (41%); and PCCs (17.5%).

The table below shows the gender breakdown of these elected roles:

Table 3: MPs and other elected roles by gender, North East

Elected Roles	Total	Women	Men	% Women	% Men
Members of Parliament	29	14	15	48%	52%
Members of the European Parliament	3	1	2	33%	67%
Police and Crime Commissioners	3	1	2	33%	67%

Elected Mayors	3	1	2	33%	67%
Totals	38	17	21	45%	55%

2.3.2 Local government and ‘democratic renewal’

The role of elected mayors is a relatively recent one and one of the results of significant policy developments since new Labour introduced its ‘democratic renewal’ agenda for local government twenty years ago. This policy was intended to have a major impact on local government and the role of councillors. One of the policy priorities of the new Labour government was to address the ‘democratic deficit’ in local government – characterised as a combination of low voter turnouts, opaque decision-making and accountability, and a disconnect between councillors and their communities. It was felt that they “spend too small a proportion of their time in their representational work directly with their community, which should be their most important role” (DETR 1998b, cited in Wilson and Game 2006, p.100).

Labour’s White Paper ‘Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People’ (DETR, 1998a) set out proposed changes to local government to address this democratic renewal agenda, and introducing new executive structures, with an elected Mayor or a Council Leader, and a Cabinet (as detailed in the Local Government Act 2000), as well as a scrutiny function for non-Cabinet members and proposals to strengthen the community representative role for councillors. Since then, one of the most significant changes for local councillors has been that shift from the old committee system of local government, to the executive model with a Leader (or elected Mayor) and Cabinet. In fact the option to have a committee structure, albeit with a Leader, was re-introduced (under the Localism Act 2011), but only one council in the North East has adopted this system. Councillors who are not part of the Cabinet (and most are not) are tasked with getting closer to communities, unlike their predecessors in the last century who would have spent a greater proportion of their time in the ‘town hall’ with their committee work. This focus on “local democracy and community leadership” (DETR, 1998b) emphasised the representative role of councillors and a separation of those representative roles from the executive.

Many now see this change as having created a sort of two-tier system of councillors (Tyneside Councillor A, 2015), whereby those in the Cabinet each have a portfolio of services to oversee alongside their high level decision-making responsibilities, while the remaining councillors spend time in the wards, dealing with casework and

acting as communication conduits between the authority and its residents. This separation is seen by some as a diminishment of 'backbench' members which has "distanced (them) from decision-making and undermined their position as local leaders" (James and Cox 2007, p.1). Others have welcomed the strengthening of relations between local elected representatives and their constituents, observing that "good governance is not just about democratic services or even the internal workings of the council; it is also about the relationship between your authority, its elected members, partners and the public" (LGA 2014, p.6).

2.3.3 Representative role of councillors

These changes to the way local authorities are governed, and in particular the evolving role of non-executive councillors in relation to those they represent, underpins one of the main strands of research interest for this study. According to the Local Government Association (2011), there are six components to the role of councillors, of which "representing their ward ... is the primary duty" (p.13). The other roles are: decision making; policy and strategy review and development; overview and scrutiny; regulatory duties; and community leadership and engagement. This last is explained as being "at the heart of the councillor's role, working in partnership with voluntary and community organisations to actively engage citizens, residents and service users" (ibid, p.14).

This 'closer to the people' focus for local elected representatives highlights the representativeness of the representative body as a whole and the individual councillors within it. Anne Phillips has argued that "if democratic representation is conceived in terms of the different needs and concerns of the electorate, this demands closer attention to the characteristics of the people elected" (cited in Judge 1999, p.160).

This study examines the role of elected women in relation to their representative function, how they perceive that representational role, their experiences of it and the factors that impact on their fulfilment of it. The 'community leadership and engagement' component is also of interest, as it has potential intersections with the role of unelected women holding community leadership positions in the voluntary sector, who are also part of this study. In the next section, the context and data related to women as elected councillors is set out.

2.3.4 Local Councillors

The recent anniversary of 2018, marking the beginning of women's suffrage in the UK, has drawn attention to the long campaign waged by women (and their male supporters) for women to have the right to vote and to stand for election to the national parliament, but it has overshadowed the equally tenacious work of women to be represented on local political structures. Initially this meant the Poor Law Boards and Education Boards but as local councils were established, women pressed for the right to vote in these elections and to stand for those seats. After several years of legal and political wrangling, women were able to stand for local councils in England through the Qualification of Women (County and Borough Councils) Act 1907. Among the first 20 women elected as councillors in England, and the first woman elected to a North East council, was Maud Burnett for Tynemouth in 1910 (Hollis, 1987). Since then, the numbers of women councillors have shown a slow but steady increase (in contrast to the pattern for women MPs) as follows:

- 1964 12%
- 1976 16%
- 1994 22%
- 2000 26% England, county councils
- 2004 29% England (22% in Wales)
- 2008 30% England (25% in Wales)

Current proportions of women councillors in the UK are:

- 2013 32% England
- 2014 24% Scotland
- 2014 25% N Ireland
- 2016 26% Wales

(Data from Jill Hills 1981; Bochel and Bochel 2000, 2008; Farrell and Titcombe 2016; EHRC 2017; Keen et al, 2018)

The North East, as in other areas and at all levels of political representation in England, has seen gradual increases in the diversity of political representatives, but this has changed dramatically since the Labour Party's introduction of quotas, through its all-women shortlists. "The North East is still very much a Labour heartland; just over 67% of council seats are held by Labour and 11 of the 12 councils are Labour-controlled" (Robinson et al, 2017, p.6). And this combination -

of Labour Party dominance and introduction of AWS - has resulted in higher numbers of elected women here than elsewhere.

In 2017, 43% of councillors in the whole of the North East region were women (Robinson et al 2017, p.42), well above the national average, which is closer to 32% (Keen et al, 2018, p.10). According to the most recent Local Government Association (LGA) Census of Councillors, 67.3% of councillors in England were male (Kettlewell and Phillips, 2014, p.10), which noted that “councillors’ gender profile was similar across the regions, although a slightly higher proportion were female in the North East (40.7 per cent)” (ibid, p.27).

In Tyneside (the site of the research study, situated within the North East region), all four of the councils are Labour controlled, with concomitant higher proportions of women councillors. At the time of the research interviews undertaken for this study (2015), the proportions of Tyneside councillors were as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Councillors by Gender, Tyneside (2015)

Council	Men	Women	Total councillors	Men %	Women %
Newcastle	47	31	78	60%	40%
Gateshead	34	32	66	52%	48%
North Tyneside	33	27	60	54%	46%
South Tyneside	28	26	54	52%	48%
Totals	142	116	258	55%	45%

(Note: These figures are for councillors and exclude the Elected Mayor of North Tyneside)

The overall percentage of 45% women, with two councils having 48% women, corresponds strongly with notions of gender equity (based on a ‘balanced’ proportion - critical mass - of 40-60%, Kanter 1977) in the descriptive representation of women.

This trajectory of improving gender balance has been confirmed with more recent figures for Tyneside councillors, updated as part of this study and presented below as Table 5:

Table 5: Councillors by Gender, Tyneside (2017)

Council	Men	Women	Total councillors	% Men	% Women
Gateshead	34	32	66	52%	48%
Newcastle	43	35	78	55%	45%
North Tyneside	30	30	60	50%	50%
South Tyneside	27	27	54	50%	50%
Totals	134	124	258	52%	48%

Table 5 shows that by 2017, the proportion of women had increased to 48%, with two councils achieving a 50% representation of both women and of men.

2.3.5 Council Leadership

Even where the numbers of women councillors have been increasing, there are still relatively few women reaching the leadership positions in councils (Leader, Deputy Leader) or Cabinet. Research on English councils by Bochel and Bochel (2008) found “as few as 11 councils in which both leader and deputy leader were women, while 237 had all-male leadership and 8% all-male cabinets” (cited in McNeil et al 2017, p.16).

The position on Tyneside is slightly different, in that more women hold Cabinet positions (see Table 5 below). It may be that as more women get elected and gain more experience as councillors, their skills and abilities are more likely to be noticed and consequently they are more likely to be selected for these senior positions. But that notion is predicated on the idea that Cabinet positions are awarded on the basis of merit or even expertise, and overlooks the role of the party group as well as the Leader, in determining who will sit on the executive. Such decisions are more likely to be a result of the “dynamics and vagaries” of the majority party group, or “criteria as diverse as political ideology, the contenders’ past stance on various issues, to simple personal likes and dislikes” (Copus 2004, p.214). Considerations of trust and loyalty are always a factor, and not to be under-estimated, in decisions about political appointments. A study of councillors in Wales reported gender differences in the reasons given for the over-representation of men in Cabinet roles: male councillors thought it due to “their ability, experience and being long-standing ... (and) elements of political patronage” while female councillors thought it was not

related to skills and experience, but “friendships or political patronage”, designed to reward support and reduce the chance of challenge to the leader (Farrell and Titcombe, 2016, p.876). Gender may be a less significant factor, but achieving visible ‘gender balance’ is an important objective for the Tyneside councils. The point regarding ‘merit’ and its presumed relationship with elected (or appointed) office will be returned to later in the thesis.

Regarding council leadership in the North East, there are 10 Council Leaders and two Elected Mayors in the region, of which only two out of the 12 are women; the deputy leader/deputy mayor positions are also held by 10 men and two women, giving an overall figure of 4 women out of 24 leadership roles (16.7%). In the twelve Executives (Cabinet or equivalent) across the region, there were 109 seats and of these 36% were held by women.

There are particular Cabinet portfolios which are pipelines to the leadership positions, and the recent Local Government Commission, led by the Fawcett Society, has confirmed that in England, these are overwhelmingly held by men rather than women. The report shows that the five portfolios held by the lowest numbers of women are: Transport/ Highways (11% women); Business/ Economic Development (14%); Finance/ Resources (14%); Planning/ Regeneration (20%); and Corporate/ Transformation/ Policy (20%) (Fawcett Society 2017, p.65).

However, in the four councils that comprise the Tyneside area the position is more gender equal, with women holding half (49%) of all the Cabinet posts (n39), if slightly less of the leadership roles (three out of eight) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Leadership Roles by Gender, Tyneside (2016)

Council	Leader /EM	Deputy Leader/DM	Cabinet total	Cabinet men	Cabinet women	Cabinet women %
Gateshead	M	F	10	5	5	50%
Newcastle	M	F	10	4	6	60%
North Tyneside	F	M	10	6	4	40%
South Tyneside	M	M	9	5	4	44%
Totals:	3M 1F	2M 2F	39	20	19	49%

This gender equal descriptive representation at Cabinet as well as Council level makes the Tyneside area of particular interest regarding gender and representation research.

Of the varying demographic characteristics of elected councillors, gender is the focus of this examination of women as political representatives. This is not to diminish the importance of other characteristics but to provide a focus for this study. The ethnicity of local elected representatives is a related area of interest (Htun 2004; Mansbridge 1999; Osborne 2013; Phillips 1995; Ray 2003; Takhar 2014) and this is addressed below as part of the context for this introduction.

2.3.6 Ethnicity of elected representatives

Of all the MPs, MEPs and PCCs in the North East - a total of 35 representatives - only one is from a BAME background. Chi Onwurah, MP for Newcastle Central, was elected in 2010 and as mentioned above, she was the first ever Black (or BAME) elected representative in the North East.

It is also the case that very few councillors in the North East are from BAME communities. Ethnicity data is not routinely collected at the local level and the last national (Local Government Association) survey of councillors (Kettlewell and Phillips, 2014) identified just 4% of English councillors as being from BAME backgrounds. Or, as they reported, in 2013 96% of councillors in England were of white ethnic origin (ibid p.10) and noted that of all the regions, "councillors in the North East ... were most likely to be white (100.0 per cent)" (ibid p.28).

More recently, research by Robinson et al (2017) found that almost all North East councillors are white. In the 12 councils, with 770 councillors in total, there were just 9 councillors altogether from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (corresponding to 1.3%). Seven of the 12 councils had no councillors from BAME backgrounds at all (p.42). This is very low, and considerably lower than the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population of the North East which is just 4.8%.

This context is discussed above, as it is an area of considerable variation across the country, which is not always made clear in public discussion. For example, Redcar and Cleveland is the local authority in England and Wales with the highest proportion of 'White British' residents at 98% (Kettlewell and Phillips 2014, p.42), which is in sharp contrast to London with 60% (ONS 2013, p.7).

There is of course some variation between local authority areas in the North East and Tyneside in particular. Of the four council areas in this research study, Newcastle has the highest proportion of BAME residents at 14.6%, while South Tyneside has 4.1%, Gateshead 3.8% and North Tyneside just 3.4% (ONS 2013). There are three BAME councillors in Newcastle, out of 78 (3.8%), and no BAME councillors in the other three councils on Tyneside.

One further aspect of the particular situation on Tyneside with its four 'gender balanced' councils, concerns all-women shortlists (AWS), the political instrument used by the Labour Party to achieve that gender balance. As part of the context setting in this chapter, the crucial role of the Labour Women's Network in relation to AWS is explored below.

2.3.7 All-Women Shortlists and Labour Women's Network

The section which follows this provides context for the unelected women representatives, and thus describes particular features of civil society, focussed on 'the women's sector'. By way of introduction, a civil society women's organisation which has had significant influence in increasing the numbers of elected women politicians, is briefly mentioned here.

The dominance of the Labour Party in the North East has been noted, and the effect of their all-women shortlists (AWS) is consequently more noticeable in areas like the North East. However, it is not the policy of AWS alone which has resulted in these higher than average numbers of elected women (Kelly and White 2016) – such institutional change is often a result of focussed and determined effort by radical campaigners inside and outside the institution itself (Banaszak 2010). The work of the Labour Women's Network has been crucial to increase the descriptive representation of women, through pressing the agenda of quotas, and in providing the support and advice to women to enable them to stand both for council and for parliamentary seats (Labour Women's Network, n.d.). This in some ways mirrors the dual strategy of the Women's Local Government Society (WLGs) in the nineteenth century: lobbying and "strong campaigning" by to clarify the law enabling women to stand for local council seats (eventually culminating in the 1907 Qualification of Women Act); while simultaneously promoting women's candidature, and providing support to potential women candidates (Stokes 2011, p.97).

In this way, both the Labour Women's Network and the Women's Local Government Society could be characterised as examples of women's social movement activism,

making “existence claims” for women and demonstrating both “close integration and sharp separation” in their interactions with formal political institutions (Tilly 2003, p.247). However, the conceptualisation of informal (civil society) politics and formal (state) politics as a distinct binary has been contested, particularly by gender scholars, and this is explored further in the following chapters.

The Labour Women’s Network (LWN) was founded in 1988 by four Labour women: Barbara Follett, Barbara Roche, Hilary De Lyon and Jean Black. They were “disappointed and frustrated” by the low number of Labour women (just 21) elected to the House of Commons in the 1987 general election (LWN, n.d.). This contributed to the total of 43 women (6.6%) out of 650 MPs in 1990 (by-elections had raised the Labour number to 23) (Brooks et al, 1990; Kelly 2018). It was not much better at the local level – only 12% of local councillors were women according to the most recent report (Maud Report, cited in Brooks et al 1990, p.3).

The creation of the Labour Women’s Network undoubtedly pushed the issue forward, despite considerable internal opposition, but there were women in the party who were determined to improve the levels of women’s representation, and felt strongly that a party committed to social justice had to address this. It was also women in the party who recognised that without an analysis of why women were not coming forward, it was no surprise that the previous ‘exhortation strategy’ had failed. Their campaign was framed around understanding that the under-representation of women was not about personal choice. There were political, social and economic barriers to women standing for election, and as a result of these (and other) structural problems, a structural solution was required. They pressed for a debate at Labour conference in 1989 and the result was eventually a quota system for women, the controversial all-women shortlists which were used between 1993 and 1996. This resulted in 101 Labour women being elected in 1997, the highest ever number for Labour and lifting the proportion of women MPs to 18.2%, with 120 women MPs elected in total - twice the number elected in 1992. It also led directly to an increase in Labour women councillors to 25% of the party’s total (Eagle and Lovenduski 1998, pp.1-2). The positive effect of AWS for elected women is still apparent, as the figures, particularly in Labour Party stronghold areas, demonstrate.

Despite the continuing success of AWS as a form of positive action, it has attracted a great deal of criticism both internally and beyond the Labour Party (Campbell 2015), including a legal challenge (the Jepson tribunal case) in 1996. As a result, further legislation (the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002) was

introduced to clarify that political parties can use all-women shortlists to select candidates for parliamentary and other elections, including local government (Kelly and White 2016, p.4). Meanwhile, the Labour Women's Network position is that "in an ideal world, candidates would be selected on merit alone, and we would not need to use AWS. Unfortunately, all the evidence is that we do not have a level playing field" (LWN website, n.d.). They also highlight their commitment to provide "training, development and support for women wanting to go into public life" (ibid), which is similar to the strategies of the other parties, e.g. Women2Win for the Conservatives who are "identifying, training and mentoring female candidates for public office" (Women2Win, 2018); and Libdemwomen (LDW) for the Liberal Democrats which "inspires and provides tailored support and training for women; enabling them to achieve their potential in politics" (Liberal Democrat Women, n.d.).

Further discussion of quotas for women, including all-women shortlists and the consequent challenges faced by elected women, can be found in the chapters below.

The substantive achievement of the LWN (and the WLGS) demonstrates a connection between the presence of women, their articulation of women's concerns, and their ability to effect policy and practice change within a political institution despite significant internal and external opposition. This example neatly prefaces the thesis which will explore further the presence and experiences of women as representatives in relation to political institutional contexts at the local level.

In the next section, women and unelected representation will be contextualised for the study.

2.4 Civil Society Context and Unelected Representatives

While elected representation, by and large, is located within the democratic political sphere, the location of unelected representation is less straightforward to contextualise. Broadly, unelected political representatives originate from civil society, although there are some exceptions - consider for instance, the appointed representatives of government, who act in non-elected representative roles, but are in fact part of the state. But predominantly, it is civil society organisations that provide the basis for unelected representation, in that a group or issue is present that someone chooses or feels obliged, or is asked, to represent. In this section, the voluntary sector context relevant to unelected women representatives, is presented.

2.4.1 Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector

Civil society is a concept which can be used both analytically and descriptively (Lewis 2002). It can be deployed to examine the associational life of a society (Edwards 2011), and is also widely used to denote those organisations and bodies that are located within the voluntary, charitable, non-profit sector as distinct from the state sector or the market. According to the UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations, "the term civil society is used to refer to all organisations that exist between government, individuals, and businesses" (NCVO 2017). In practice, the landscape of civil society is more complex and involves many varied and sometimes surprising inclusions.

In fact, civil society is a broad category which encompasses other terms (such as the voluntary and community sector, the third sector, or charities, NGOs and not-for-profits) and also a wide range of other organisations. It includes political parties and trade unions; sports' clubs and leisure trusts; faith groups and religious bodies; universities and independent schools; housing associations and building societies; co-operatives and community interest companies, and many others (NCVO 2017). It is estimated that there are 390,000 civil society organisations in the UK and a further 600,000 - 900,000 unincorporated organisations (ibid). However, according to the NCVO, "*the voluntary sector is at the core of civil society. The voluntary sector comprises ... general charities but also many more voluntary organisations that are small and operate as unincorporated associations*" (NCVO website, 2017, my emphasis).

This research study is concerned with women who are unelected local representatives, speaking for women's interests, and it is to be anticipated that such representatives will be found in the voluntary sector, in particular in women's voluntary and community organisations (WVCOs).

2.4.2 The Voluntary Sector and Gender

In considering women in community leadership roles, who represent women's interests and concerns, a gendered voluntary sector is part of the context in which their representational role is constructed. Aspects of those gender dimensions are presented in this section as relevant to this study. They concern gendered patterns of public involvement with charities and voluntary organisations; and of their people resources in the roles of volunteers, paid staff, and trustees/directors and leaders.

Following that, the distinctive women's sector is outlined, including women-only organisations within the wider voluntary sector.

According to the Charities Aid Foundation, women are more likely to participate in a range of charitable behaviours and social actions than men – women give more often to charities (both donating money and giving goods), and they volunteer more (CAF 2017). This is confirmed by YouGov research for the Institute of Fundraising, which found that “women are more likely to take part in charitable activities or be engaged in causes: they're more likely to donate, volunteer, sign a petition, buy goods from a charity shop, visit a charity's website or show support through social networking” (Fluskey, 2017). And their support for local charities is higher than men's – half of women compared to a third of men support local organisations:

“Women are statistically far more likely to support or express interest in supporting local charities. One in two women (51%) said they already support small or local charities, compared to only 36% of men” (Institute of Fundraising, 2017 p.23)

According to the Charity Commission, women have higher levels of trust and confidence in charities and “are more likely to think that charities play an essential/very important role in society than men (72% to 66%)” (cited in Fluskey 2017) and this is linked to the fact that “a higher percentage of women say that they have either used a charitable service or received support from a charity” (ibid).

The connection between personal experience and donating money is indicated, “24 per cent of women (17 per cent of men) said that they had done so because the charity had helped someone they knew” (ibid)

These factors are of particular relevance to the women's sector, as many of their organisations (such as rape crisis, women's refuge, women's health projects) are particularly devoted to local provision of women-specific services.

Regarding the people resources, there is a perception that the voluntary sector is dominated by and reliant on women – that the majority of volunteers are women, and women make up the majority of paid staff.

In fact, in terms of paid employment the NCVO Almanac (2017) records that “women make up about two-thirds of the voluntary sector (65%)”. In terms of regions, the North East has the smallest percentage (just 3%) of the UK voluntary sector workforce, with a headcount of 25,725 (NCVO 2017), meaning approximately

18,000 women are employed in voluntary and community organisations, in some full time but mainly part time roles.

However, the WomenCount report on 'top charities' shows that at leadership levels the picture is different with men holding most Chief Officer posts (Jarboe, 2012) and far greater numbers of men than women as trustees (or directors) and chairs:

- 71% of board seats are held by men
- Men chair 92% of the top charities' boards
- Men hold the most senior executive position in 76% of these charities

The index shows almost a third of directors of the UK's top 100 charities are women, twice the number on FTSE 100 Boards, but clearly still a minority.

“Those charities which have 'gender balanced' boards (40%-60% women) are slightly more likely to have a woman chair, although only 22% of the charities fall into this category” (Jarboe, 2012, p.19)

One of the gendered dimensions of the voluntary sector is the claim that more women are volunteers than men. The UK Government's 'Community Life Survey 2015-2016' did not find gender differences (Cabinet Office 2016), but the Charities Aid Foundation did find that “women remain more likely than men to volunteer (18% vs 15%)” (2017, p.8). In the Community Life Survey, the numbers of women and men who volunteer 'at least once a year' are similar, as follows:

- Participate in formal volunteering at least once a year: 41% males and 42% females
- Participate in any volunteering at least once a year: 69% males and 71% females (Cabinet Office 2016)

Formal volunteering means through a group, club or association.

The NCVO Almanac 2017, in its 'Volunteer Profiles' section, reports for 'once a month' volunteering, and also finds that men and women have similar rates:

- Broadly equal proportions of men and women reported volunteering at least once per month (26% of men and 27% of women)

However, for 'informal volunteering' there are higher rates for women than men:

- A higher proportion of women (38%) volunteered informally on a regular basis, compared to men (30%)
- More women (63%) than men (58%) volunteered informally in the last year (NCVO 2017)

The task of unelected representation may be undertaken on a voluntary basis, or as part of a paid role. According to the Community Life Survey, a small percentage of people are representing others in a voluntary capacity:

“14% men and 7% women do this as formal volunteers; and 5% of men and 5% of women represent others informally” (Cabinet Office 2016)

The term ‘representing others’ in this question is not clarified, and this notion of representational volunteering may be different to the political representation being examined in this study. For instance, they may be interpreting it as advocacy, or ‘speaking for’ an individual, as in, contacting state bodies on behalf of another, less able person. However, despite this possible distinction, it is of interest that although equal numbers of men and women undertake informal voluntary representation of others, there are twice as many men as women who undertake formal voluntary representation. This indicates a greater number of men than women who are representing others through involvement with an organisation or group. This gender distinction between the formal and informal nature of the voluntary representation is interesting, as it mirrors the rates of elected representation, in that twice as many elected political roles in the UK are held by men as by women, e.g. 68% of MPs are men, 32% are women (Keen et al, 2018, p.4); and for councillors in England, the same proportions apply (ibid, p.10).

2.4.3 The Voluntary Sector: North East and Tyneside

The context for this research is one where the North East has fewer charities in total and by population than any other region of England; and it has the lowest rates of volunteering, after London.

There are 165,801 voluntary organisations in the UK, and the North East region has the fewest (4,492). This is equal to approximately 1.7 per thousand people, which is half the number in the South West (3.2 per 1,000). In the North East, a Tyneside authority - South Tyneside- is one of the five areas in England with the fewest charities at 0.9 per thousand people (NCVO 2017).

The North East region also has the lowest rates of participation in volunteering in the country, both formal and informal. The rates for ‘volunteering at least once a month’ are:

- Formal - North East: lowest rate (equal with London) at 17%
- Informal - North East: second lowest regional rate 25% (after London 22%)

And the rates for ‘volunteering at least once a year’ are:

- Formal - North East: lowest rate 25%
 - Informal - North East: second lowest regional rate 46% (after London 45%)
- (Cabinet Office 2016)

In the North East, only 50% of people participate in any volunteering at least once a year, which is the lowest rate of all the regions.

2.4.4 VCS on Tyneside

According to NCVS (2016), the North East is the English region with the lowest number amount of registered charities (4,509) by number and by population; and also the region with the lowest number of organisations by income and assets (NCVO 2017).

Most local areas have an umbrella body which acts as a focal point for the voluntary sector, providing a range of support and co-ordination services to that sector, and producing local data reports. On Tyneside, these umbrella organisations are: Newcastle CVS (which also provides a service to the groups in Gateshead since their umbrella body GVOC closed in 2016); North Tyneside VODA (Voluntary Organisations Development Agency); and South Tyneside Inspire, created in 2017 by merging the previous CVS with the local HealthNet to create one infrastructure support body for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE).

In Newcastle, it is estimated (NCVS 2016) that there are around 1,100 organisations registered as charities or community interest companies (CICs), with a further 3,000 small community based organisations (NRF 2010). 'Our Gateshead' lists "over 1000 groups and organisations working in Gateshead" although these may not all be voluntary (<https://www.ourgateshead.org/groups>). North Tyneside has 543 charities and VCS groups (www.voda.org.uk). South Tyneside does not provide a figure for its VCSE (<https://inspiresouthtyneside.co.uk>) although Kane and Mohan's data shows it has the smallest third sector in the Tyneside sub-region, indicated by 144 general (registered) charities in the borough compared with 569 in Newcastle, 335 in Gateshead and 299 in North Tyneside (2010, p.29).

Tyneside has its share of the larger charities - Age UK, Save the Children, Barnardo's, RSPCA, Macmillan, Mind, Citizens Advice, etc. The sector also includes local, independent and smaller organisations covering a wide range of issues, support and services. It also has its own women's sector with an umbrella body, the North East Women's Network.

2.4.5 The 'women's sector' on Tyneside

At the national level, there is a diverse range of civil society women's organisations. The Women's Resource Centre (WRC, the leading UK umbrella body for women's charities) was first established in 1984, registered as a charity in 1998 and has over 500 members (WRC, n.d.). The WRC identify the women's sector, or women's voluntary and community organisations (WVCOs), as operating across:

“a wide range of fields including health, violence against women, employment, education, rights and equality, the criminal justice system and the environment. They deliver services to and campaign on behalf of some of the most marginalised communities of women” (WRC 2015, p.1).

This study is concerned with those that are local to the Tyneside area.

The North East Women's Network was established as part of a national network of support structures for 'the women's sector' and currently has about 150 member organisations from across the region. On Tyneside there is a busy and resilient 'women's sector', with a range of different voluntary, community and campaigning organisations - some are women-only, others work with both women and men. In addition, there is a wide range of voluntary and community organisations that work with all sections of the population, where women's issues will be part of a broader provision.

Across Tyneside there are a number of long-standing (and more recent) women's organisations which provide a range of services, advice and support, and campaigning and representation, e.g. Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, women's health, BAME women's organisations, girls and young women's projects, lesbian groups, etc. Some of these organisations have developed from feminist campaigning or are informed by a feminist perspective and many of them retain that emphasis. For this study, I was interested in the feminist or women-focussed examples of these organisations, some of which are women-only, rather than the more 'welfare and social' organisations such as the WRVS or Girl Guides, or sport and leisure organisations for women.

The type of organisation (as well as a pro-feminist ethos) is a potential indicator of whether their community leaders will be undertaking representational work on women's interests. In their exploration of the link between membership of groups and civic participation, Alexander et al (2012) reported that “association with advocacy-based groups is a more accurate predictor of participation in civic

activities than is involvement in groups with a more narrowly social orientation” (p.55).

The women’s sector can be conceptualised as feminist although not all organisations would use this term. But as a way of differentiating it from the wide range of institutions which work with or for women, it is useful for the purposes of this study to differentiate those which ‘act for’ women, as in having a political perspective, sometimes enshrined in the organisation’s ethos since its inception, and for others, developing as a result of the values of specific women in leadership roles (critical actors).

This dual track reflects notions about critical actors – in that some organisations (such as Rape Crisis, Women’s Aid) were established by feminist women whose politics developed during the 1970s and 1980s, and were a community response to issues facing women which feminists set up because there was a need, and a lack of impetus from the state and other agencies to respond to that need - “they have a unique reach within communities and fill essential gaps in statutory provision often created because mainstream services are non-existent or inappropriate” (WRC 2015, p.1). Feminist actors brought their experiences of women’s activism into their organisations – explicit values which also inform the priorities and the practice of those organisations. “Founded on an ethos of empowerment and shaped by a woman-centred approach” (WRC 2015), these feminist principles continue to shape not only why they do it, but also what they do and how they do it.

Over time, further projects developed which were led by this feminist ethos, some for women, others more generic, like youth projects, training and skills, and housing.

In addition, there have been state initiatives which had a particular focus on women’s interests, such as the women’s committees established in the 1980s by several Labour councils (Wendy Stokes, 2005 pp.187-191). These were tasked to bring women’s sector organisations and representatives together with elected women, to scrutinise council policies for their effect on women; and to support women’s projects through grants, co-ordination and promotional work. According to Halford (1988), the only authority on Tyneside (or in fact, in the North of England) that had such a women’s initiative in 1986 was Newcastle, which had established a Women’s Sub-Committee (p.252). Both Newcastle and North Tyneside councils had a Women’s Officer post for a number of years, held by a highly respected woman (Kate Howie) who had the confidence of both elected councillors and local community representatives, with some very successful outcomes.

Many of the women's activist and feminist campaigners and organisers of the 1970s and 1980s are still on Tyneside, and still involved with the remaining or new projects.

My own background in both as a public sector employee and a voluntary sector trustee on Tyneside, since the early 1980s has provided me with extensive knowledge of the organisations and people working to develop and maintain women and girls' projects over nearly four decades. Tyneside has been particularly rich in this regard, with many feminist women employed in youth and community, play development, and community development council services in the 1980s and 1990s, in addition to the proliferation of voluntary projects at that time.

For instance, on Tyneside there was a Women's Centre, several Young Women's Projects and a Young Lesbian Project. There was a Black Women's Training Centre (which later became The Angelou Project for BAME women); at least two Asian Women's Projects; projects working specifically with women ex-offenders, women with drug and alcohol issues, and homeless women; and Them Wifies, a women's theatre collective. There was a 'Women's Bus' with musical and other creative activities; Tyneside Women's Health project plus at least three other women's health projects, and a Youth and Community Women's Network. There was a Rape Crisis Centre and more than one Women's Refuge. There were women only bands, women only discos and women only accommodation, including a lesbian housing collective. For International Women's Day (IWD) there were women only events in the leisure centres and swimming pools, as well as girls' days at the youth clubs and the children's play centres. And feminists were also working in the community Law Centre, the health services (there was a Women Doctors' group) and in youth projects and community centres across the city. Many of the women who instigated this vibrant women's sector are still on or near Tyneside, and still actively involved in women's projects or activities.

For this research, unelected women in community leadership roles for local voluntary and campaigning organisations were identified as potential 'women's representatives'. The specific 'women's sector' within the broader voluntary and community sector is understood as those organisations which work exclusively or primarily with women, providing support, services and 'a voice' on feminist issues such as rape, domestic violence, women's health and other women's campaigns. Similarly, in their work to identify 'women's interests', Celis et al (2014) examined

“public statements by actors regarding their views on women’s issues and interests” (p.159) to identify those that meet one of five criteria:

- (1) directly constructed as being of importance to women,
- (2) presented as only affecting women,
- (3) discussed in terms of gender difference,
- (4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or
- (5) framed in terms of equality between women and men (ibid)

These have been framed in order to focus on the category of *women*, and not on wider substantive concerns. In this study, a similar process was undertaken to identify appropriate women’s sector organisations, and recognising that a great deal of substantive representation for women *as women*, was also being undertaken by critical actors, predominantly feminist women, in more generic voluntary or community organisations, not only the women-only ones. Consequently, the study engaged with some women leaders in local voluntary organisations and campaigns which have a broad scope – such as youth provision, community health, local transport – but have expertise on the specific issues faced by women and as such act as representatives for women’s issues within their broader remit.

Examples of current women’s sector organisations on Tyneside are listed in Appendix A. They do not indicate which organisations’ leaders took part in this research, but are provided for illustrative purposes only.

2.5 Policy Context: Local Governance

Governance has been described as “not characterized by specific organs, but by procedures and practices; it is not a structure, but a process. Beyond government institutions and instruments, it hinges on the participation of civil society and negotiation between interest groups, networks, and sectors” (Hainard and Verschuur 2001, p.50).

New (turn of the century) governance arrangements included the promise that “opening up decision making about public policies and services to wider influence is seen as a means ... of improving the legitimacy of decisions” (Barnes et al 2007, p.33). The implications for the ‘third sector’ (voluntary and community sector) have been significant, and alongside their increased opportunities to engage with the state sector in a variety of partnership arrangements at strategic, thematic and neighbourhood levels, have come new concerns and additional pressures.

For example, the Local Government Act 2000 required local authorities in England and Wales to each prepare a community strategy to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and its inhabitants. The statutory guidance required new Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to prepare those community strategies (DETR, 2001), and these had to involve voluntary and community representatives as partners. This brought the state and voluntary actors together and meant that elected and unelected representatives were required to work together to identify and address local issues. It has been noted that “such partnership-based governance requires - and, indeed, never happens without - the participation of women” (Hainard and Verschuur 2001, p.41), and women were notably present as voluntary and community representatives (Grimshaw 2011). Although the LSPs are no longer part of the political landscape, the legacy of these governance structures continues, with the concomitant demand for voluntary sector representatives.

For the feminist women’s sector in particular, with its history of ambivalence towards the state, there has been a huge shift in its engagement with state bodies over the past thirty years. This has been in part due to the opportunities in governance and scrutiny structures to influence local policy and resource allocation. According to Suzanne Dovi,

“associational life - social movements, interest groups, and civic associations - is increasingly recognized as important for the survival of representative democracies. The extent to which interest groups write public policies or play a central role in implementing and regulating policies is the extent to which the division between formal and informal representation has been blurred” (2017)

But in other developments, it is the distinctive voice of the voluntary sector which is being sought out. For instance, evolving ideas about ‘customer service’ and targeted provision, especially for groups with protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010), have resulted in greater demand from state agencies for specialist knowledge of minority and disadvantaged groups, which is found in the voluntary and community sector. A report into local women’s voluntary organisations (Jobbins and Young 2012) referred to “numerous instances of referrals from the statutory sector to women’s projects because of the recognition of expertise, specialist approach and ‘reach’,” confirming the expertise role of the women’s sector.

In addition, the economic context has been changing and this also affects relationships at the local level between elected councillors and unelected community leaders. The move to contracting by local authorities and the health

service (and the loss of grants) has obliged the voluntary sector (including the women's sector) to seek resources through bidding for contracts, sometimes for the very services which they had originally established . Due to the competitive nature and the voracious private sector interest in these, this has led on occasion to the specialist local voluntary organisation being unsuccessful (see for example, Butler and Travis 2011; Kelly 2016), and thus losing the resources to provide a service which it might have originally established in the teeth of opposition from the state and complete disregard of the private sector. This has been a particular issue on Tyneside recently, for a number of women's sector organisations, all of which contributes to more complex and sometimes conflictual relationship between the state and the voluntary sector, and the elected and unelected women representatives.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has described the context for the study, with both local government and the landscape of elected representatives being presented, along with background to the women's voluntary sector within civil society. These are located within contemporary policy developments which are relevant to local level representation, legitimacy and gender.

The next chapter explains the underpinning research methodology; describes the research process and considerations, and explores key aspects of the data analysis. The chapter closes with an evaluation of four areas of research consideration.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This methodological chapter describes the research methodology and methods, and the rationale for these choices. It considers the relevance and impact of the methodological framework on the research design, methods, practice and analysis. It explores particular areas of the research practice (positionality and cross-gender interviewing) and frames these within a feminist analysis. Four key areas of the research methodology are evaluated.

Taylor (1999) suggests “the epistemological and methodological principles” that “most writers agree to be the core of a distinctive feminist methodology (are) a focus on gender and gender inequality, a spotlight placed on the everyday experiences of women, reflexivity as a source of insight, an emphasis on participatory methods, and a policy or action component (Cancian 1992; Fonow and Cook 1991; Reinharz 1992)” (p.10). This study is framed by a focus on gender, based on primary data collected about the experiences of women and shaped by a reflexive approach. It is anticipated that the research findings will offer new directions for policy and actions, as well the development of theoretical knowledge, related to the gendered dimensions and legitimacy of local level political representation.

3.1.1 Research Focus and Questions

This is an exploratory study at the local level, focussed on the views and experiences of unelected women in community leadership roles, and women in democratically elected roles. The aim is to analyse and compare these experiences and views in order to expand the theoretical and empirical knowledge on representation, legitimacy and gender.

Thus, the study is framed by three research questions:

- How is the legitimacy of local women representatives shaped by gender?
- What differences, similarities and challenges are there regarding the legitimacy of elected and unelected local women representatives?
- How can the gendered dimensions of legitimacy in local level political representation be explained?

The methodology has been designed in order to address this focus and provide answers to these questions, which will contribute to our knowledge about legitimacy, representation and gender at the local level.

3.2 Theoretical Approach

This study is theoretically informed and makes use of my original empirical research. I have employed feminist methodology based on a theoretical approach which brings together aspects of both interpretivist and critical realist perspectives.

3.2.1 Epistemology

According to Randall (2010), “feminist political scientists ... have not called into question their discipline’s rationalist foundations nor embraced these alternative (post-structuralist and standpoint) epistemologies in any wholesale way” (p.120) but she does suggest that a feminist methodology “entails methodological eclecticism, including borrowing methods from outside the discipline, and above all, gender awareness” (p.122). Other feminist scholars have proposed an epistemologically eclectic approach (Lin 1998; Naples 2003; Squires 1999) however the specific paradigmatic synthesis has to reflect the scholar’s own understanding of how ideas, experiences and reality relate to knowledge production in order to achieve “fruitful integration in feminist theorizing” (Fraser 1995, cited in Squires 1999, p.108). In my research I foreground women’s experiences and perceptions within a feminist frame which acknowledges the context of patriarchal authority, the reality of women’s struggles/activism and the complexity of diverse women’s lives. This attention to a dense combination and dynamic interplay of structure, agency and meaning does not sit neatly within frameworks such as standpoint epistemology or post-modernism, but I share Squires’ contention (after Ferguson 1993, cited in Squires 1999) that a ‘positive engagement’ (rather than a ‘non-critical pluralism’) between different theoretical frames is not only possible, but preferable as “each tempers the possible excesses of the other” (p.109).

According to Furlong and Marsh, contemporary realism maintains that social phenomena can exist independently of our knowledge of it, and the ‘deep structures’ which exist “don’t determine, rather they constrain and facilitate” (2010, p.205). They suggest that the influence of interpretivism on this modern critical realism is evident in two ways. First, that actors’ interpretation of the structures

affects outcomes, therefore we study those “reflexive agents who interpret and change structures” and second, that we can only explain the relationships of these social phenomena if we can “identify and understand both the external ‘reality’ and the social construction of that ‘reality’” (ibid, p.205).

So, from a critical realist perspective, in feminist political science, the existence of the power of patriarchy is acknowledged despite our inability to observe it; and the reality of it has consequences for both political institutions and political actors (notably through disadvantaging women and by denying, marginalising, subverting or ignoring women’s concerns). As researchers, we therefore seek to identify what the gendered social relations of patriarchy are and explain how they operate. However, if we also recognise that people are reflexive actors, who respond and change their behaviour and that these actions can shape and reshape social phenomena, then the knowledge we seek to produce must also explore not only those actions, but also how these actors make sense of (understand) their experiences. This indicates an interpretivist perspective, where the relationship between ideas, experiences and reality stresses the socially constructed nature of ‘meaning’, based on explanations of social events and the relationships between them, but this understanding is derived from interpreting the meaning that the actors provide of such phenomena (Bevir and Rhodes 2003). This is acknowledged as historically and culturally context-relative and therefore produces multiple, partial or provisional knowledge, rather than one universal ‘truth’. Feminist theorists have recognised this, as Maynard notes “the legitimacy of women’s own understanding of their experiences is one of the hallmarks of feminism” (1994, p.23) and there is a significant body of work which emphasises ‘difference’ between women (for example, Collins 1990) as they experience and make sense of it.

3.2.2 A Note on Standpoint and Intersectionality

Undoubtedly, those who are subordinated in oppressive institutions, whether legally, socially or culturally, will have a perspective of that which differs from those who are dominant or able to thrive under such conditions, and when the subordinated have consciousness about their position then their ‘standpoint’ (the development of political theory from their viewpoint) produces knowledge (Harding 1987; Hartsock 1983; Smith 1987). Evidently, subordinated groups are not homogenous – they may share a real experience of subordination based upon a shared characteristic such as being female, but this subordination will take different forms due to legal, social and cultural variations within different contexts, and within these, different females

will experience their subordination differently due to other characteristics which are not universal but vary and intersect across the broader 'class' of women, such as race or socio-economic class (see, for instance, Collins 1990; Phoenix 1984; Dill 1987). The knowledge produced from researching diverse groups may have validity but has been charged with relativism as such knowledge is exemplified by its "partial, contingent and situated" character (Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2002, p.76). These perspectives have implications for research design and practice which are considered below.

Feminist social scientists continue to struggle with the seeming contradiction of a universal experience of being a woman subject to patriarchal institutions, whilst embracing the varied and intersecting experiences of women located differently (temporally and spatially) both in relation to men and to each other. Debates continue to try to develop a feminist epistemology which can accommodate both angles of vision (see for example Andrews 2002).

This imperative to develop new ways of conceptualising knowledge production is not unique to women in social science or even feminist social scientists. Being excluded or marginalised and sharing "collective experiences of being the outsider to methods of ruling and theorising the world" (McLaughlin 2003, p.68), engenders an investigative curiosity about that exclusion in those who experience it, which for feminist scholars means "not only to make visible the daily, concrete social relations through which the worlds of men and women are brought into existence, but also to explain the relationship between these worlds" (Smith 1987, p.85). This includes re-appraising epistemological positions, critiquing and synthesising these to develop new gender-conscious, sometimes 'pragmatically conflated' (Squires 1999, p.110) perspectives on what constitutes knowledge production itself:

"Feminists have employed new ways of thinking (on issues of epistemology and methodology) and modified our understanding of the nature of the social world – providing new questions and angles of vision with which to understand women's issues and concerns." (Hesse-Biber 2007b, p.14)

Inherent within this epistemological position is recognition of the researcher herself as a reflexive actor, no more impartial than others, yet who interprets the interpretations of her respondents regarding their experiences, and therefore the research methodology includes a requirement to be reflexive in order to make any partialities transparent (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). This fits neatly within the feminist paradigm which also exhorts researchers to be reflexive, exploring and revealing not only biases but also the power relations between researcher and

researched (Letherby 2002). This is regarded in feminist methodological approaches as something to be minimised, in order that knowledge production does not privilege the researcher's perspective over the respondents'. Reflexivity is thus both methodologically and ethically necessary for the feminist researcher, and this is explored further in a subsection below.

Scholarly effort is therefore focussed on studying the interpretations and meanings of these constructions (Furlong and Marsh 2010). Qualitative data collection and researcher reflexivity are necessary to produce 'thick description' (Geertz 1973, cited in Furlong and Marsh 2010, p.201) so that the meanings that the respondent attaches to their experiences and actions can be understood ('interpreted') by the researcher. These findings (interpretations) are "always partial and unstable" (Naples 2003, p.198), yet the concepts and theories that we develop from these interpretations, "very often enter constitutively into the world they describe" and may be "appropriated and utilised by social actors themselves" (Giddens 1987, pp.19-20). This 'double hermeneutic' is particularly evident in feminist research approaches, since a focus on "producing knowledge for social change" (Naples 2003, p.12) is one of the key features.

3.2.3 Feminist Methodology: Key Features

For feminist researchers, the methodological approach is based on feminist theory and takes account of feminist principles (see for example Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007; Hesse-Biber 2007a; Letherby 2003; Maynard and Purvis 1994; McRobbie 1982; Naples 2003; Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2002; Ribbens and Edwards 1998; Stanley and Wise 1983, 1993). The term 'feminist' was and continues to be defined and understood in different ways - for example, see Bryson's (2003) historically and politically located explications (also Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2002, pp.5-7 and Reinharz 1992, pp.6-8). However there is a degree of consistency regarding the key elements of a feminist research approach. Knowledge production, whether empirical or theoretical, is undertaken to "perceive structural discrepancies in power accruing to distinct identifications, to discern shared experiences across subject positions, and to map affinities as the basis for collective action" (Squires 1999, p.110).

A feminist approach to methodology has developed distinctive features which address the four key aspects of how knowledge can be produced; who can produce knowledge; what form that knowledge might take; and what constitutes the purpose of knowledge production.

First, regarding the means by which feminist knowledge can be produced, is about our practice and the way in which we undertake research, from the planning, through implementation, to the analysis and 'writing up'. Women's experience is a key element of feminist methodology – both as a source of information on which to build knowledge, and also the experience of the researchers in relation to other actors in the research process. Campbell and Wasco have stated that:

“at an epistemological level, feminist social science legitimates women's lived experiences as sources of knowledge. The ordinary and extraordinary events of women's lives are worthy of critical reflection” (2000, p.775).

Feminist concerns which are embedded in this approach include reflexivity, power and ethical considerations throughout the research process. It maximises these considerations so that they become factors which enhance research practice, its relationships and its outcomes including the knowledge produced. It also concerns the choice of research methods and tools that we deem appropriate, for instance, many feminist researchers advocate for the use of qualitative methods and participatory or 'co-production' tools (e.g. Beebeejaun et al, 2014; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007; Maynard and Purvis 1994; Reinharz 1992; Ribbens and Edwards 1998).

Second, a feminist approach addresses the question of who can produce knowledge by emphasising that the research participants are partners in the production of knowledge, rather than passive responders to us as researchers. Feminists hold that the people we research with are co-producers of knowledge – they are 'meaning makers' within dynamic inter-relationships of research practice and this has clear implications for the choice of research methods. Such knowledge can be produced through an engagement with women, (and other actors) as 'knowers' – recognising and crediting women's experiences and perspectives as legitimate sources of valid knowledge which reveal the reality of gendered social relations.

Third, the form that knowledge can take includes paying attention to the interplay between the researcher and the researched – the dynamic process of interviewing can produce knowledge itself about the process and its concomitant knowledge production.

Fourth and finally, the feminist approach holds that the point of feminists undertaking research is to change things – identifying the gendered dimensions of power and women's subordination therefore is crucial for feminist researchers. And

undertaking empirical and theoretical work to develop knowledge has to be associated with increasing women's consciousness and addressing patriarchal power through for instance, changing the gendered asymmetry of social institutions. Reinharz (1992) expressed this as "some of us see feminist research as ... oriented to social change, and designed to be *for* women rather than only *of* women" (emphasis in original, p.269).

These four aspects of feminist methodology have shaped the research design and practice of this study, and this will be examined in the next section.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Introduction

This section explains the link between my theoretical approach and my considerations about the design and planning of the research study, including my decisions about the research methods.

The research was designed to take into account the methodological, ethical, practical and political considerations. Some of these overlap – for instance, the negotiation of the dynamic interrelationship between me as the researcher and each research participant is methodologically informed, with both ethical and political dimensions. In this section I will highlight the key considerations, which are then explored in further detail in subsequent sections.

The methodological approach is feminist (as outlined above), based on feminist theory and as Maynard has noted, uses an "interpretive and synthesising process which connects experience to understanding" (1994, p.24). It requires that women's experiences and perceptions are foregrounded; that rather than claiming a neutral and value-free objectivity, the researcher adopts a reflexive approach which addresses issues of positionality, in particular the power inherent in the researcher/researched relationship; and that the unequal relations of the knowledge production process are mitigated. A further central feature of a feminist methodological approach is that the knowledge produced is of value in illuminating the unequal subordinated position of women and also has utility for the wider feminist project of empowering women and improving women's lives.

3.3.2 Rationale

The decision to use the four local authority areas of Tyneside as a single case study was a considered response to ethical, political and practical questions which arose during the early stages of the research. An individual local authority area was initially proposed as the site of the study representing a 'best case' scenario or exemplar in that its elected councillors were numerically gender-balanced (as described in Chapter 1). However, it quickly became clear that the anonymity of interview respondents (both elected and community representatives) would be an issue, both in terms of keeping the respondents non-identifiable, and in providing assurance to them in order that they would feel able to contribute fully in the interviews. It was therefore decided that it would be beneficial to widen the geographical scope. Desk-based research into the composition of adjacent authorities satisfied the requirement of elected gender equity, in that the proposed four neighbouring authority areas in combination, would still provide a 'gender balance' of elected local representatives. In addition to providing a greater level of anonymity and confidentiality for respondents, this decision to widen the area of study also offered a broader political landscape in terms of the political parties and sections that councillors were aligned with, and a more diverse civil society from which to invite non-elected representatives. In terms of practical considerations, the extended geography would involve more travel for the fieldwork, and more background research into both local authorities and civil society across the four areas but this was judged as not particularly onerous, especially when weighed against the benefits of increased anonymity, confidentiality and political diversity. In qualitative research, the value of exemplar case studies has been recognised for the depth and richness of data they can provide, such that

“a single case study may bring an important contribution to theory development if the particulars of the case are seen as opportunities to make further adjustments in an already crystallized understanding of reality”
(Mariotto et al, 2014, p.362)

The site of this research study was selected because it exhibits a specific feature of interest (gender-balanced descriptive political representation), with the location itself (Tyneside) being potentially significant due to its local political context which has given rise to this feature. In this way, it is an “exemplifying case” (Bryman 2016, p.409) and as such, provides the researcher with an idiographic opportunity to “reveal the unique features of the case” (ibid, p.61), or what Vromen refers to as its “in-depth distinctiveness” (2010, p.256). It is acknowledged that any findings of

significance derived from such a case cannot be universalised, but the “intensive examination” can “generate theory out of the findings” (Bryman 2016, p.63), resulting in what Yin (2009) names as “analytic generalisations” (cited in Bryman 2016, p.64).

The methodological considerations for the research study design included decisions about the research methods to use, and paying attention to the research relationship dynamics, in order to maximise the knowledge production of, with and for women. These are explored more fully in subsequent sections. Here, the ethical, practical and political considerations, in addition to those above, are described.

The main *ethical* considerations of the research design were confidentiality and anonymity, two inter-linked aspects of qualitative data collection. This was highlighted in the ‘invitation to interview’ emails which included a specific reference to anonymity. I felt that this needed to be very clear from the beginning as it was likely to be a factor in whether someone would take part or not. Once someone agreed to take part, they were sent the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) and Consent Form (Appendix C). These were both explicit about confidentiality of information and the anonymity of research participants; and it also stated that their consent to take part could be withdrawn at any time, or could be exercised by declining to answer questions.

Other ethical issues ranged from the practical issues of access and interview records, to more philosophical concerns regarding ‘informed consent’ and the legitimacy of the interpretive role of the researcher. In addition, the potential for sensitive content to be revealed within any in-depth interview requires care and thought at the design stage, even when the research topic (in this case, the gendered nature of representation) might not be suggestive of personal or intimate revelations, or information about vulnerability and harm:

“the in-depth, unstructured nature of qualitative research and the fact that it raises issues that are not always anticipated mean that ethical considerations have a particular resonance” (Lewis 2003, p. 66)

Of the *practical* considerations, the timing of the interviews was one of the most important, due to the shifting political landscape (annual local government elections; UK General Election in 2015) and the availability of both the elected politicians and the community leaders. The sample size and composition were also both affected by practical considerations of time, access and effort. A further practical matter was determining the geography of the study area. Initially the proposal was to

concentrate on one council area as a case study, but as described above, using a small group of neighbouring local authority areas offered more anonymity for interviewees compared with using just one.

Another *practical* consideration was where to conduct the interviews, taking into account how this would impact on the interviews, and conscious that for all the potential interviewees, there would be time constraints. In the invitation, I offered the respondents the choice of being interviewed at their office or place of work, with an alternative venue of a room at the university. This latter option was to provide a level of neutrality and also to enable interviewees to keep their involvement confidential if that was a concern. Most interviewees asked that I conduct the interview in their office, which was convenient for them and gave me additional insight into their workplaces. A few opted for the university venue, which included an interviewee who was particularly keen that I confirm anonymity. And a further four interviews were held in other venues, one in a café (at his insistence) which I anticipated would be more noisy and disruptive than it actually was. The importance was to give interviewees a choice and to try to minimise any anxieties that they might have about their participation at this early stage.

The *political* considerations were initially related to the sample - which elected councillors to approach first and whether they would be willing or available to be interviewed; and whether corresponding community leaders could be identified who would then be able to take part. There was also a concern with presenting their participation in the research as beneficial for the interviewees, since "co-operation is likely to be easier if the research objectives are seen as valuable and relevant by those to be involved" (Lewis 2003, p.63). I also wanted to ensure that the sample included the different political parties being adequately represented within the elected cohort of interviewees. For the community leaders, I knew it was critical to reassure them about the purpose and anonymity of the research. For them, the potentially negative consequences of engagement with research involving politicians could be seen as an obstacle since the risks include detriment to funding, relationships, contracts and policy influence. These are all potentially in jeopardy if the research exposed, created or exacerbated any tensions between the civil society representatives and the local politicians. This was a particular concern at the time of the research fieldwork, as the government's austerity measures had led to huge cuts in local government budgets (JRF 2015; NAO 2014; SPERI 2014) alongside increasing financial pressures and service demands on the voluntary sector (Bhati and Heywood 2013; Jones et al 2016), putting both under

unprecedented strain. These challenges were differentially distributed across the country, with the hardest hit local authority areas being those with high deprivation levels and higher dependence on government funding, or as one political economist succinctly put it, “Cuts to local government have disproportionately affected the North, deprived areas and Labour councils” (Berry 2014a). This neatly encapsulates the situation in the Tyneside area, site of this study.

Inevitably this challenging context had an impact on local councils (Harris and Mason 2014; Proctor 2015a) and the voluntary sector (JRF 2015), with particular effects on the women’s sector (Jobbins and Young 2012); and was a factor to take into account when planning the research study as it could have adversely affected participation.

Thus the research design was reflexive to the needs of the research study, and adjusted as necessary to methodological, ethical, political and practical considerations as they arose, while retaining the value of a case study which exemplified the goal of gender balance in political representation.

3.4 Research Practice

In this and the following sections, I consider both the research methods I used and related methodological issues from a feminist perspective. As Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) have stated:

In paying attention to the specific experiences and situated perspectives of human beings, both researchers and respondents alike, may actually become a tool for knowledge building and rich understanding. (p.13)

3.4.1 Research Methods

Qualitative research methods have been strongly associated with feminist methodology in political science, as “they prioritised women’s voices and experiences” (Vromen 2010, p.252) and there are a variety of research methods which facilitate this, such as in-depth interviews, as well as case studies, oral history and ethnography.

My decisions about methods were informed by an interpretive approach, as well as feminist sensibilities. I considered using a survey instrument for the councillors as this would provide data from a larger cohort of interviewees than individual interviews would. However, this would not provide the in-depth exploratory experience that a one-to-one interview does, and which my research questions and

methodology called for. For me, “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman 2013, p.9), and like Parr (1998), I had determined that “hearing, as well as listening” to the women themselves, with the opportunity to explore their responses more fully, was vital to my methodology, as my “interest was in explanations and perceptions, then it was greater depth rather than breadth which was required in the research data” (p.89). I also wanted to maximise potential benefits from my relationships and credibility with local representatives, which would have much less leverage if I used a survey since it involves limited contact with the respondents. I examine the utility and value of my relational expertise in the discussion about insider/outsider status, below.

Focus groups were also ruled out, for a number of reasons, one being that the research questions included asking interviewees about a topic (their experiences and perceptions of gender) which can be contentious, and this could prevent some people from exploring this in a group situation, as openly as I hoped for. Group discussion is also less useful if some members feel unable to contribute fully because status or power between members in the group is an inhibiting factor (see Lewis, 2003) and this would certainly be the case with the councillors. In addition, the complexities of getting several respondents to find a mutually agreeable time and place for interviews would present a significant obstacle; it was anticipated that organising a group of elected councillors in particular would prove too difficult, with cross-party issues complicating this further. Therefore it was decided that individual interviews would be the primary data collection method.

I judged that some supplementary data collection would be useful, to triangulate the interview findings, and therefore I decided to undertake a small number of non-participant observations at specific council meetings, and also to carry out document analysis of relevant institutional papers, mainly contemporary agendas, minutes and related reports. This supplementary data “provides part of the context within which [the] narrative accounts are understood” (Charles 2014, p.371). In addition I collected secondary data from organisations’ websites, particularly the historic and contemporary data about elected representatives, and the women’s sector within the wider voluntary sector. Inevitably, this data is subject to change, and local websites are not always kept up to date, so the information was confirmed wherever possible through other sources such as published reports. Using this data, I was able to provide the contextual landscapes for both sectors, and to produce the

electoral statistics for the Tyneside area and compare these with both the North East region and the national picture.

Semi-structured, individual, face-to-face interviews were selected as the core research method. This decision was based on the need to gather depth of data, within a flexible format, in that the interview question schedule acts as a guiding document rather than a fixed one. This is a purposeful process, as Vromen suggests, being “adaptable to changing situations” and able to “pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge” (2010, p.257), in order to acquire the ‘thick description’ of context necessary to develop understanding. The interviewer may probe beyond the answer, seeking clarification or elaboration (May 2011) as the semi-structured format “represents an opening up of the interview method to an understanding of how interviewees generate and deploy meaning in social life” (pp. 134-5). The inter-relationship between the two is framed as an iterative context in which they interpret and co-construct meaning from the information and insights generated during the interaction.

3.4.2 Research Relationships, Rapport and Reflexivity

Interviewing itself has been described as being “consistent with many women’s interest in ... developing a sense of connectedness with people” (Reinharz 1992, p.20) and scholars such as Oakley (1981, 2016) and Skeggs (1994) have highlighted the friendship dynamic that can develop when women interview women, particularly in longitudinal research. Below, I discuss the cross-gender interviewing scenario in more detail, but for me as a feminist, it would not be ethical to consider cultivating an intimacy of friendship with an interviewee even as a means of addressing the recognised hierarchical nature of the interview relationship, much less engage in “faking friendship” (Duncombe and Jessop 2002). My approach is closer to Pam Cotterill’s (1992) in that I distinguish “between friendship and friendliness” (p.595) in professional situations such as interviews, and I aimed for a friendly facilitative interaction as part of developing rapport.

Feminist social researchers have emphasised establishing rapport, empathy and trust in face-to-face research (particularly in-depth interviews) as crucial to the process (e.g. DeVault and Gross 2007). This can be presented as an instrumental strategy, in that “listening, hearing and empathy create a situation in which people feel safe and comfortable, are able to be reflective and talk freely” (Parr 1998, p.94), or as a political strategy, a means of addressing the power relations inherent even between women, through the “use of dialogue, emotion and empathy ... the ‘ethic

of caring' forms one strategy to break down power differentials and experiential differences between the researcher and the researched" (Naples 2003, pp.63-64). I found that Pam Cotterill's paradox of being both "the 'sympathetic listener' (who) is also a 'friendly stranger' who has limited status in her respondent's lives" (1992, p.596) was in fact a beneficial approach, supporting both pragmatic and political aims of the interview process.

The semi-structured method itself also fits with the principle of interrogating the power dynamic of a conventional interview, in order to facilitate a more equitable relationship between the researcher and their interviewee. For many feminists, this focus on reflexive practice represents an ethical development in approaches to interviewing, showing respect for "the understandings and experiences of research subjects, and making explicit the politics of knowing and the possibilities of empowerment" (Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2002, p.155). For others, this emphasis on the internal dynamics of interviewing, or "the search for 'feminism within the research situation', if one can call it that" (Glucksmann 1994, p.151) risks taking precedence over the emancipatory purpose of the research.

Two of the methodological issues raised here - positionality and cross-gender interviewing – are explored more fully later in the chapter.

3.4.3 Population and Samples

A feminist approach to the research study foregrounds the knowledge produced by women themselves (Campbell and Wasco 2000; Cook and Fonow 1986; Edwards and Ribbens 1998; Harding 1987; Hesse-Biber 2007a; Letherby 2003; Naples 2003; Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2007; Smith 1987; Stanley and Wise 1983, 1993).

Within a patriarchal polity, women's experiences and perceptions have been either absent from political discourse or deemed to be of lesser interest – marginalised, ignored or denied.

In order to understand the experiences and perspectives of women in local representative roles, I initially intended to interview women only – both those who held elected roles (local councillors) and also women in community leadership roles in voluntary organisations which provide services or campaign specifically on women's concerns, as "they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study" (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003, p.78).

However, I also surmised that the research would be strengthened if the elected participants included men as well as women. For many feminists, hearing from women is critical to developing our understanding and knowledge of the gendered social relations which delineate women’s lives. However the idea of hearing from male, as well as female councillors, was stubbornly present for me, and I determined that interviewing both might yield interesting comparisons, whether similar or different. I was also mindful of debates that challenge the claim that it is women in elected representative roles who undertake the substantive representation of gendered issues (e.g. Bochel and Briggs 2000; Campbell, Childs and Lovenduski 2010; Celis et al 2008; Childs and Krook 2009; Tremblay 1998); and I realised that a cross-gender sample would provide an opportunity to explore this contention within the research study.

I therefore decided to interview both female and male councillors, as well as the cohort of community leaders. These two ‘parent populations’ each required their own sample, and in both cases it was a purposive sample, where “members of a sample are chosen with a 'purpose' to represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion” (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003, p.79). In the first cohort, the key selection criterion was being an elected councillor for one of the four Tyneside authority areas, with gender ‘nested’ within that criterion. The gender criterion meant that the sample had to comprise roughly equal numbers of women and men, as the councillors in the study area at that time were 45% women and 55% men, as per Table 4 below: (reproduced from Chapter 2)

Table 4: Councillors by Gender, Tyneside (2015)

Local authority	Male	Female	Total	M %	F %
Newcastle	47	31	78	60%	40%
Gateshead	34	32	66	52%	48%
North Tyneside	33	28	61	54%	46%
South Tyneside	28	26	54	52%	48%
Totals	142	117	259	55%	45%

Further nested criteria within each gender ‘nest’ were political party affiliation and geographical/ward distribution. The importance of including members of different political parties was to encompass their potentially different views, and the inclusion

of councillors from varied wards was in recognition of different socio-economic and urban/ sub-urban factors. A further consideration was to interview councillors from a variety of gender combinations in the wards – all Tyneside authorities have multi-member wards, with three councillors elected to represent each ward. Thus in theory, a ward may have any of four possible gender combinations: three men; two men and one woman; two women and one man; or three women. It was not possible to select for respondents from these different combinations (being reliant on councillors volunteering to take part) but the final sample did include respondents from all combinations except the ‘three women’ combination, as at the time of the fieldwork, there were no wards with this gender profile. Criteria such as age, ethnicity, length of service and other characteristics are missing from the sample design (although this information was collected from all respondents – see Appendix D) only because of the small sample size. I agree with Ramazanoğlu with Holland (2002) in that “leaving difference out of research without acknowledgement has implications for what knowledge feminists produce, what power relations they consider, and whom they constitute as absent” (p.114). I acknowledge that these ‘missing’ criteria could also be significant to the research however the focus on gender, within the elected sample, seemed the most appropriate given the research questions. As Ritchie, Lewis and Elam have noted “the precision and rigour of a qualitative research sample is defined by its ability to represent salient characteristics and it is these that need priority in sample design” (2003, p.82).

The sample for the second cohort of interviews was also purposive, in that it comprised women representatives who are unelected (community leaders), in order to compare these with the elected women representatives. My practitioner background and contacts enabled me realise this sample’s “distinctive nature” (Vromen 2010, p.259) through drawing up a list of these organisations which ‘represent’ women’s issues locally (as outlined in Chapter 1 above), and identifying their Chief Officers as the population from which to choose this second sample. In this case, the only other criterion was that there should be geographical - and therefore the opportunity for ‘representative’ - congruence between their areas of work and those of the elected councillors in the first sample.

In order to reach prospective sample members, I adopted differing strategies for each sample. For the elected members, I collected the contact details of councillors in Tyneside, and sent them an invitation e-mail. As they responded, I kept a record of how each interviewee met the sample criteria, and adjusted subsequent invitations to ensure that the final sample met the criteria. I also made use of two

other techniques to create the sample. First, I used 'snowball sampling' (Bryman 2016, p.415) by capitalising on the enthusiasm and goodwill of the initial respondents and suggested that they ask their colleagues if they would like to take part; and second, after I interviewed a councillor who was also a Party Whip, he framed himself as a 'gatekeeper' (Bryman 2016, p.142) in that he offered to "recommend" participation to his colleagues, and I agreed to this intervention.

My strategy for the second sample involved two routes of snowball sampling. First, I decided to undertake the councillor interviews first in order to ask them to suggest names for the community leaders' sample. This would provide useful data, not only for creating the second sample but also in terms of who the councillors perceived as being 'representatives' of women's issues and which of these they actually knew or had contact with. In addition, I also asked each of the early interviewees in this group to suggest other leaders of organisations with a similar focus on women's issues.

Through these methods, I achieved the two samples as intended, meeting requirements for symbolic representation, as individuals were chosen to "both 'represent' and 'symbolise' features of relevance to the investigation", and also sufficient diversity in the samples "to identify their different contributory elements or influences" (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003, p.83). This of course is not to claim 'statistical representation' in terms of the samples, but to ensure that relevant criteria were included, recognising that "good purposive sampling ... supports the use of small numbers because it ensures that the sample will be highly rich in terms of the constituencies and diversity it represents" (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003, p.85).

I interviewed 30 individuals in total, in two cohorts of elected and unelected representatives, the first comprising nineteen councillors (nine women and ten men) and the second with eleven community leaders (all women). The features of both cohorts are set out in Table 7 below.

The length of service for elected councillors ranged from less than one year to over 30 years. Eleven of those interviewed had been in post for less than five years (two of those for less than a year); another two had between five and ten years' service, a further three between ten and twenty years; and three of the councillors had over twenty years' service each. This differs slightly from that for councillors in England as a whole. The Local Government Association Census 2013 found that about 60% of English councillors had less than ten years' service, about 30% had 10-20 years

and about 10% had more than twenty years' service (Kettlewell and Phillips 2014, p.11).

Table 7: Features of Interview Respondents

Feature	Categories	Elected	Unelected
Gender:	Female	9	11
	Male	10	0
Ethnicity: (UK Census categories 2011)	White	19	11
	All other categories	0	0
Age Bands:	29 years and under	2	0
	30 - 39 years	4	0
	40 – 49 years	3	2
	50 – 59 years	2	6
	60 – 69 years	7	1
	70 years and over	1	2
Party Affiliation:	Labour	14	n/a
	Liberal Democrat	5	n/a
	Conservative	0	n/a
	Other	0	n/a

For the community leaders, the length of time in their current position ranged from less than two years to over twenty years. Four of them had under five years, five had between five and ten years, and two had over ten years in their current role. The question was about their current role, in order to correspond with the elected representatives, but in the interviews it became clear that the majority of these non-elected women had many more years of experience in other similar community, voluntary or campaign leadership roles.

3.4.4 Practicalities

The interviews were all one-to-one, except on two occasions. In the first of these, I had had great difficulty trying to find a time to meet with a particular councillor, and eventually she suggested that I interview her and another councillor colleague together as they would be available at the same time and place. I agreed, not entirely wholeheartedly, as I wanted the interviews but was concerned about pair-interviewing as I had no experience of that. On the second occasion, I was just commencing the task of finding suitable times to interview two of the community leaders but they suggested a pair-interview as the most time-effective arrangement for them. Both of these pair-interviews worked very well, which was probably because in both cases they knew each other socially as well as professionally, they

were familiar with each other in discursive situations and were skilled at facilitating each other's conversation as well as making their own points.

Almost all the interviews were held in office locations, either at my university or at their place of work. I offered all respondents their choice of venue, whilst emphasising that a quiet, formal space (such as an office) was necessary. On one occasion I interviewed someone in their own home. This was at the end of the interviewing period so I was feeling more confident, and it was a woman who is known to me, a feminist and considerably older than me – all factors which made the interview very low risk. It was her suggestion and it would have felt like refusing an invitation to suggest that she come to my office instead. This was one of the longest interviews, which I think was partly due to the informality (and comfort) of the situation, in her home.

The interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to almost two hours, with the majority of them lasting about an hour. Each interview was recorded, with permission, using a digital recorder, and these recordings were then saved in a password-protected electronic folder, with the typed transcripts filed separately under the pseudonym of each interviewee, to protect both anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4.5 Positionality

For feminist researchers undertaking qualitative research, our positionality with its "emotions and subjectivities, unique lived experiences, and worldviews" (Brooks and Hesse-Biber 2007, p.14) is an important component of our work which we should embrace rather than ignore, in particular when exploring and negotiating the research landscape with our participants. Maynard and Purvis (1994) remind us that foregrounding "power, politics and responsibility in the research process" (p.3) is crucial to feminist understanding of research practice, and is integral to our own position. For some scholars, positionality has been theorised as women's or feminist 'standpoint' (Collins 1990; Harding 1987; Hartsock 1983; Smith 1987), however Naples (2003) prefers the concept of 'positionality' when referring to "subjectivity and subjective knowledges" because, as she puts it, "the 'position' from which one acts politically is also subject to investigation" (p.22). It is this conception of positionality, examined reflexively as integral to feminist praxis (the interaction of knowledge and experience) which informs the following discussions.

Throughout this research, I have been aware that there were three aspects of positionality that are particularly relevant and of central importance when undertaking qualitative research, especially face-to-face fieldwork. These are my gender (as in being a woman); my political and theoretical commitment to feminism; and my 'insider/outsider' status in relation to the interviewees. These 'positions' overlap with each other in various ways, but I will attempt to tease out the main issues.

First, my being a woman has several implications for the interviewing. Since Oakley's (1981) ground-breaking work, a great deal has been written about women interviewing women, and feminist scholars have presented multiple and contested views about whether women make better interviewers than men (better at listening, creating rapport, dealing with emotions, etc.) and what constitutes a feminist approach to interviewing, predominantly when interviewing other women. Further debates have questioned the assumptive basis of 'shared female identities' (Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2002, p.106) or a 'universal woman' who can 'know' other women, despite complex intersecting and conflicting differences between women, including that some women are in dominant positions vis-à-vis other women (e.g. Collins 1990; Mirza 1997; Phoenix 1994; Skeggs 1994; Tang 2002). In addition, as more feminist researchers interview men, new issues have been raised, including concerns about safety and about hyper-masculine (such as sexual, controlling or patronising) behaviour in the interviews (see for instance, Arendell 1997; Gurney 1985; Horn 1997; Lee 1997; Pini 2005). I explore the implications of this gendered dimension of interviewing more fully in the next section.

Second, feminism, which is not only social science theory and a methodological approach for research but also an integral part of my 'self' (Letherby, 2003 p.7), providing me with a congruent political and social framework for all parts of my life, outside the academy as well. As a feminist researcher, I am "part of the process of discovery and understanding and also responsible for attempting to create change" (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994, p.28). As the research study is informed by feminist principles, examining our position in relation to research participants is often posited as a purposeful attempt to address the hierarchical nature of that relationship with a view to creating a more egalitarian form, as this creates better dialogue and therefore better knowledge. Within this the question of self-disclosure (what, when and how detailed) is raised.

Disclosures may be made to participants, or withheld, to achieve different aims – the “strategic disclosure” described by DeVault and Gross (2007) as “sharing personal information or a willingness to reveal research interests and political commitments” (p.181). For instance, like Arendell (1997), I named myself as holding feminist views when I was asked by interviewees, but I did not volunteer this information otherwise. Conversely, I also found (like Lee 1997, and Puwar 1997) that some respondents were aware or assumed that we shared a feminist approach and that this enabled them to be explicit about their feminist perspectives during the interviews. Other feminist scholars have discussed how researchers with a history of feminist activism (DeVault and Gross 2007; Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994; Naples 2003) may infuse the research dynamic with that politics of experience, even if like me, this was not explicitly referred to in the interview situation.

For all researchers engaged in reflexive practice, which involves “a systematic examination and explication of our beliefs, biases and social location” (Harding 1992, cited in Mauthner and Doucet 1998, p.122), decisions about self-disclosure will be deliberate. In my interviews I was conscious of using self-disclosure for different reasons on different occasions: to move the conversation forward; sometimes as a response to hesitation from the interviewee; sometimes to achieve a sense of shared understanding or experience (e.g. Letherby 2003), for instance when I chose to tell some interviewees that I had worked closely with councillors in the past, or that I had been a trustee of a women’s charity.

“Researchers who self-disclose are reformulating the researcher’s role in a way that maximises engagement of the self but also increases the researcher’s vulnerability to criticism, both for what is revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure” (Reinharz 1992, p.34).

Third, my status (actual or perceived) as insider/outsider had clear implications for the research. In reflecting on this, I was conscious that neither the category of ‘insider’ nor of ‘outsider’ was sufficient to fully explain my position in relation to the research participants.

Having read Brown’s (1995) typology, this seemed to offer a more nuanced interpretation of insider/outsider status, as it proposes four categories (albeit situated specifically within a police force setting). I have therefore generalised the four categories (see Figure 2 below) to a broad range of research situations, building from Brown’s original work. This typology recognises the ‘research position’ in two dimensions – those of subject-role and those of object-institution. The subject-role encompasses ‘insider’ as an internal research expert, such as a Policy

and Research Officer employed within an organisation, and ‘outsider’ as an external one, so typically (but not always) a researcher from an independent institution such as a university or consultancy. The object-institution dimension refers to the organisation or other social structure which is the site of the research – the researcher might be located (employed, embedded) within this institution (‘inside’) or be researching it from ‘outside’.

Figure 2: Typology of Researcher’s Insider/Outsiderness

<i>Research placement as inside the institution being researched</i>	Inside-Insiders	Inside-Outsiders
<i>Research placement as outside the institution being researched</i>	Outside-Insiders	Outside-Outsiders
Research position	<i>Research role as an insider (internal) ‘expert’</i>	<i>Research role as an outsider (external) ‘expert’</i>

(based on Brown, 1995)

Thus there are four permutations, although there may also be fluidity between categories when applied to actual research situations, as with the more commonly applied binary concept. According to Doucet and Mauthner (2008), “ ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ are not fixed or static positions; rather they are ever-shifting and permeable locations that are differentially experienced or expressed by community members” (p.334). An example of this is the difference in how my status might be ‘understood’ by different actors within each cohort of the research interviewees. Those who do not have personal knowledge of me would presumably categorise me as an ‘Outside-Outsider’ as I am known to them only as an academic researcher

(outsider), who works at the university (outside). However, to a number of the interviewees, I would be seen as an 'Inside-Outsider', because I worked in local government for over twenty years, in this same geographical area, and I have also been involved with the local women's voluntary and community sector (VCS) since the early nineteen-eighties. My role as a university researcher is still 'outside' both institutional structures, but my wider knowledge, experiences and contacts give my relationship to local government and the VCS, a strong element of 'inside' status, especially for those who have previously worked with me in my 'Inside-Insider' role as a local authority policy and research lead.

Integral to these considerations of positionality are the decisions of the researcher in choosing which is the most useful aspect of oneself to bring to each interview event - whether the primary aim is to put participants at their ease, or to 'display' appropriate credentials, or simply to show attentive interest. Perhaps it is inevitable that a key feature of interviewing is about playing a role, as Miriam Glucksmann stated: "I suspect that being a credible actor must be a part of all qualitative interviewing" (1994, p.162).

3.4.6 Cross-Gender Interviewing

In my research there are three areas of interest in terms of the experience of being a woman interviewing men – the application of aspects of feminist methodology; issues of risk and safety; and negotiating obstructive masculinised behaviours.

First, having established certain principles of a feminist methodological approach (valuing and validating women's experiences and perceptions; seeking to democratise the researcher/researched relationship; acknowledging my own positionality in the interaction) – do I apply the same principles to interviews conducted with men? Gatrell (2006), having decided to interview fathers as well as mothers, concludes that "trying to apply methodologies with a personal/political dimension, in an empirical context, may produce unanticipated research dilemmas" (p.248). Other feminist researchers have found that even when they intend to apply the same methodology, they can find themselves thwarted by the behaviours of their male interviewees (Campbell 2003); or constrained by the gendered environment in which they conduct the research (Gurney 1985); or that the research topic or subject itself impacts on the interview process (Arendell 1997). For feminists who decide to interview men who are known to be violent towards women, they are able to articulate in advance how they intend to address men's dominating behaviours, through limiting that use of power against themselves as women

researchers but still reveal it in relation to the study (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994). Similarly, Lewis and Cavanagh (2006) have provided a clear account of their preparation for such interviews and state that “challenge was ... important not only on a political and ethical basis, but also as a methodological technique; potentially it could provide us with more fulsome data” (p. 96).

Second, there is risk management in all fieldwork, however specific safety issues been highlighted in some accounts of women researchers who have interviewed men (Arendell 1997; Lee, 1997; Gurney 1985). Aware of this, I was risk-averse in all my interview preparations, by for instance, suggesting that we could meet in ‘a quiet, formal space such as an office environment’ and by limiting the available interview appointments to daytimes or early evenings. I arranged the interview space (before the participant arrived) so that there was always a table between us (on which I placed the recorder) although the chairs were placed on a diagonal and not directly face-to-face, as I wanted our interview to avoid resembling an assessment interview. I also paid attention to my “impression management” (Letherby 2003) in creating a researcher identity for myself that would be perceived as at least equal status to my interviewees, and I did not see this interviewing men as “studying up”, any more than when I interviewed women. Undoubtedly other interviewer characteristics, such as age, have an effect (Horn 1997; Pini 2005), however I do not claim that it is solely due to my preparations that there were no incidents. It is over thirty years since Gurney (1985) reported that some interviewees expected sexual favours, and nearly twenty years since Arendell (1997) reported sexual touching by interviewees – the climate has changed considerably (#MeToo), although Pini’s (2005) experience of sexual comments reminds us that ‘everyday sexism’ is still an issue.

The third area I want to examine is how male interviewees behave in the interview, in particular whether men use male entitlement or masculinised behaviours to either diminish my role as researcher/interviewer or to derail or obstruct the interview. Controlling, sexual or dominating behaviours have been reported by female interviewers (Arendell 1997; Campbell 2003; Horn 1997; Pini 2005) but in my interviews this was an infrequent experience and relatively unproblematic. There were some “displays of masculinity” in which they “positioned themselves as busy, powerful and important men” (Pini 2005) and there were examples of “resourcefulness of ... interviewees to challenge and undermine my control of the situation” (Campbell 2003, p.297), which I did not experience with any of the women interviewed. However, I did not find, as Arendell (1997) did, that the men

“buttressed and buffed their masculine identities through their interactions with me” (p. 347), nor did I feel I was “being patronised” (Horn 1997, p.300) by them. There is some evidence of men being interviewed by women where no difficulties have been observed, and the research results are comparable with those of men in the same study who were interviewed by men (Padfield and Procter 1996; Williams and Heikes 1993). I suggest that these less problematic cross-gender studies reflect Pini’s (2005) proposition that “the intersection of the mediating influences of ‘who, whom, what and where’ “ constitute “a more sophisticated critique” (p.213) than only considering the gender of the interviewer and the interviewee. The research subject, as in divorced fathers (Arendell, 1997) or the research environment, as in the male-dominated police force (Campbell 2003; Horn 1997) or the masculinised rural, agricultural organisation studied by Pini (2005), are also part of the gendered context in which “a woman asking men about gender relations is likely to meet with a high degree of resistance” (Pini 2005, p.212).

For the most part, the men I interviewed were “gender-wise” (Arendell 1997, p.359) and did not express sexist views, as evidenced by two interviewees who, at certain points, expressed concern to me that something they were about to say “might be sexist” (although it was not). As Gatrell (2006) has noted, “cross-gender interviewing may be beneficial in terms of research outcomes” (p.237) and I conclude that interviewing men as well as women has added an important dimension to this study, without the negative experiences that other women researchers have reported.

3.5 Analysing the Data

3.5.1 Introduction

In this section, two aspects of the analysis process are discussed: first, the process by which the raw data, from the interview participants, is dealt with post-interview – the transcribing, coding, sorting and category formation, followed by thematic determination. And second, a consideration of the interpretation of data, relating that to the role and responsibility of the researcher. The notion of “ ‘hygienic research’ in which no problems occur, no emotions are involved” (Stanley 1984, cited in Cotterill 1992, p.593), or a value-free objectivity in social research “is held with less and less frequency among social scientists nowadays” (Bryman 2016, p.34). It is acknowledged that qualitative studies, conducted methodically, provide invaluable findings of depth and richness which are required for comprehensive knowledge production about human experiences (Flyvbjerg 2006, cited in Vromen, 2010, pp.252-253). As such, a rigorous and reflexive system of analysis for research data

is necessary, as part of the “trail of evidence throughout the research process to demonstrate credibility” (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006, p.81), but the “art and craft” (Mutch 2006) of analytical interpretation is equally indispensable. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have expressed this seeming dichotomy thus:

“Qualitative data analysis requires methodological knowledge and intellectual competence. Analysis is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques; it is imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive. It should also be methodical, scholarly, and intellectually rigorous” (cited in Mutch 2006, p.51)

3.5.2 The Process: Raw Data to Themes

In order to make sense of my data, I used a process for qualitative data analysis that Bryman describes as coding followed by “thematic analysis” (2016, p.584), and Carol Rivas (2018) calls “thematic content analysis” (p.430). This is routinely undertaken by the qualitative researcher both for practical reasons to reduce and make sense of the data by sorting it into categories (or themes), and also to “move beyond simple descriptive use of themes, to consider underlying concepts” (ibid p.430) which then contribute to our construction of knowledge.

This process of analysing my interview data is described here as a sequence of activities: first transcribing the interviews, then undertaking analysis of the data – through open coding (based on descriptive features), followed by broader category formation, and then overarching theme development (Rivas 2018). However, this is not a linear but “an iterative and reflexive process” (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006, p.83) and as such there is an element of reviewing and revisiting throughout all the stages.

I transcribed each interview myself – listening, recording, listening again and checking each typed record for errors or lack of clarity. I also recorded references to non-verbal elements, such as pauses, sighs, laughter and other expressive behaviours, to contextualise the speech and remind me of the ‘mood’ of the interview. As Holland and Ramazanoğlu have observed, any interview comprises more than the text of its transcript, as “body language, non-verbal exchanges, distress and laughter are all part of that interchange, and all need to be taken into account in understanding and interpreting” (1994, p.141).

I wanted to be “thoroughly acquainted with the body of material” (Bryman 2016, p.587), to gain that immersion in the data, and I worked hard to achieve this through

transcribing my own interviews, and by reading and re-reading these. Sandra Mutch has noted that “analysis is not simply a matter of classifying, categorizing, coding or collating data” (2006, p.61), and the question of validity, of ‘truth’, and claiming “authoritative conclusions about the nature of other people’s experiences” (Holland and Ramazanoğlu, 1994, p.125) is one that has engaged feminist researchers, particularly in relation to qualitative data analysis. For me, the process of transcribing – listening to each voice and recording their words, pauses, emphases - reminded me of each experience and created a strong sense of the interview, its emotions and nuances, alongside the record of the words, and this helped to re-orient me to each interviewee’s complex presentation. Pam Cotterill (1992) has described how she was reminded of her own feelings when listening back to her interviews and the “emotions which came flooding back later during the transcription of tapes” (p.602), whereas during my transcriptions, I was more often struck by the emotions exhibited by my interviewees. I felt that the intensive listening to each interview – the process of playing, pausing to type, re-playing to check – brought each alive again. I was reminded of Agnes trying to hold back tears in that bleak council room; and the angry frustration of Vincent filling up the small office where we met. I could see Doris firmly behind her desk, maintaining a physical and emotional distance; and hear Dan tapping his pen as he spoke in order to emphasise certain points. These and other emotional behaviours inevitably drew attention to certain aspects of the data, both during the interviews and afterwards when listening to the recordings, which may have affected my decisions about their relative importance however I felt that any such attribution on my part was therefore based on their ‘signals’ as well as their words. This was not “to privilege experience, subjectivity or *emotion*” (Holland and Ramazanoğlu, 1994, p.146, my emphasis) but to take a holistic view, albeit one which continued to impact on me during the transcription work. Consequently, I have had to reflect on the significance of these “emotional entanglements” (Laliberté and Schurr, 2015) as an integral part of the data analysis process, whilst striving to retain an “empathetic neutrality” (Vromen 2010, p.257).

Throughout the data collection and transcription period, I was immersed - re-reading the transcripts - which has been identified as indispensable in order to “enhance your sensitivity to meanings in the data you have collected” (Rivas 2018, p.431). During this process I made marginal notes about points of interest and relevance to the research study and I collated and expanded on these in my fieldwork diary as further interviews were undertaken and recorded.

This constant comparison is part of the iterative and reflexive process which enables each interview not only to stand as important data in its own right, but also to act as a check for the interview process, ensuring that the questions and the interview approach are generating the best possible data, or indicating areas where these can be improved. Vromen (2010) has described this process as being “adaptable to changing situations and has the ability to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge” (p.257), and is compatible with the inductive approach.

I utilised this reflective method to amend the interview questions – keeping the overall research aims in mind, but focusing on specific items – and I was also alert to opportunities when another interviewee referred to similar or related experiences, or expressed views about these, and I was therefore better prepared to probe and seek further information. In this way, the interviews and the transcribing process fed each other in a “zigzag approach” (Rivas 2018, p.433), with my reference notes acting as a guide to ensure that the overall focus of the interviews was retained, whilst being responsive to what the interviewees brought to the table and maximising the benefit of their specific perspectives.

As the series of interviews progressed, and I was transcribing each, I was accumulating dozens of pages of raw data in the form of interview transcripts. The next task with each transcript was to simplify this mass of data, which was undertaken initially through a coding process. This coding began as I noticed repetitions, similarities and differences, and omissions in the interviews (Bryman 2016, p.586), and I continued to make marginal notes to capture these as I read and re-read the transcripts. This method of developing data-driven codes has been described as “inductive coding - themes emerging from participant’s discussions” (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006, p. 91). I built up a list of these descriptive codes as I created them, noting recurrences in new transcripts and adding new codes as these appeared. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have described how this coding process commences as the researcher notices and then seeks to identify core and recurring elements within the data, names these and then uses the resultant codes to reduce the mass of raw data to relevant, workable segments which can then be easily retrieved (pp.28-29). Thus sorting all the resultant coded segments into categories was the next part of the data analysis process.

Once all the interviews were complete and recorded, I checked through the list of codes this had generated, and began to identify tentative categories – clusters of codes which were similar or had overlapping meanings. I then printed out all the

transcripts and physically marked them up with highlighter pens, allocating a different colour for each potential category. As I reviewed my initial open codes in the context of the interview transcripts as well as checking the list, I was able to see where some could be combined. For instance, initially I had several separate descriptive codes related to children, parents or parenting but as I gained a fuller understanding of the overlaps – and differences - between them, I was able to cluster them into broad categories of *'being representatives and also parents'*; *'issues from 'the represented' about children'*; *'perceptions of/ assumptions about parenthood'*; and *'organisational responses to parents/ childcare'*.

As noted by Carol Rivas (2018), “some researchers still prefer the physical approach” (p.438) and my own preference was for physically sorting the highlighted segments of data into these broader categories by “cutting and pasting in the literal sense of using scissors and paste” (Bryman 2016, p.583) rather than using online tools (although I am trained to use NVivo software). For me, the ability to look at large sections of paper data spread out across a table (or kitchen floor) and move them around to determine which categories they belonged with, also enables (in my experience) patterns and inconsistencies to be seen across a whole panorama of several transcripts simultaneously. Once I had established the categories, and determined which segments of data belonged to each of these, I created electronic ‘category documents’ and copy-pasted the relevant segments of data into them. In this way, I retained the integrity of the whole transcripts but also was able to ‘read’ the category documents for coherence and adjust them for inconsistencies. Rivas (2018) has highlighted that category development may involve some interpretation, but at this stage, the process is primarily to “systematically group multiple fragments of unconnected literal codes into something meaningful and more analytical and digestible” aided by “constant comparison” of data both within categories and across different categories (p.439). In this way, I was able to develop categories which encompassed key areas from the interviews, including some which many interviewees discussed and others which were raised by some people but noticeably not by others, for instance, being a parent with young children and the impact on their representational work.

As noted above, different scholars describe this qualitative data analysis in different terms, but generally the process has similar stages. For instance, after these categories have been identified, the next stage of “second generation” (Griffin and May 2018, p.517) theme development requires insight in order to conceptualise the data. For Bryman, the second stage of searching for “common elements in codes

(to raise them to) higher-order codes or themes” (2016, p.588) is then followed by the next (third) stage of the process to evaluate these for even higher-order codes, while also “searching for sub-themes or dimensions” (ibid). Whereas for Rivas, the third stage is theme development, in which “themes are abstract concepts shaped from two or more literal categories” (2018, p.440) and Bryman does acknowledge that the naming of these higher-order codes “can at this stage be considered *concepts*” (2016, p.588, emphasis in original).

In my data analysis process, I re-examined the category documents I had created, and also referred back to my earlier notes and the literature in order to identify overarching themes. During the fieldwork, I had observed what appeared to be certain themes emerging and I had discussed these with my supervisor to gain another perspective. These initial thoughts and the discussions were recorded in my fieldwork diary, and I was able to draw on these notes at this later stage of the process, revisiting ideas about themes and cross-checking these with the interview data (now sorted into categories), which illustrates the “constant interplay between conceptualization and reviewing the data” (Bryman 2016, p.589).

I was then able to conceptualise these themes with reference to the analytical framework of gender and legitimacy. For example, in relation to the children and parenting-related categories, I could identify that there were gendered dimensions to being a parent while also being a representative; that there were institutional barriers to parents (particularly women with younger, school-age children) being able to carry out or progress their representative role; and that constituents’ perceptions of representatives, and their respective areas of expertise (for instance, in relation to children) appear to be shaped by gendered norms, with these assumptions having asymmetrically gendered effects on the workloads of elected representatives. These gendered themes relate to ideas about the legitimacy of political representatives, as set out in Chapter 1, in that the accounts illustrate how both the authorisation and accountability of women representatives (both elected and unelected) was challenged – overtly in some cases, subtly in others - on the basis of their gender. This is explored in the following chapters where the data is presented and analysed.

The interpretation part of the analysis process has been briefly discussed here, and is considered further in subsequent chapters. However I feel it appropriate to examine the area of ‘interpretive authority’ more closely in this context of methodology, thus this is the subject of the next section.

3.5.3 Interpretive Authority

Data analysis has been described as “a fundamentally subjective, interpretative process” in which “we are confronted with ourselves, and with our own central role in shaping the outcome” (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.122). My own interest in this aspect of the research process is primarily related to the concept of interpretive authority.

The researcher has a responsibility to interpret the data and determine findings, synthesising and relating these to theory – this is the ‘interpretive authority’ described by Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p.17). Despite the misgivings of some regarding the privileging of the researcher’s perspective in that interpretive process, we are “required to theorize our respondents’ accounts and lives, and locate them within wider academic and theoretical debates” (Mauthner and Doucet 1998, p.141). The results of this will be judged by peers through the academic routes available - conference talks, workshop discussions, and of course publishing, in order that the work is validated as knowledge production. For some researchers, “a collaborative interactional process” (Holland and Ramazanoğlu, 1994, p.135) means a more reciprocal arrangement, whereby the interview respondents themselves are a vital component of the entire process, and therefore are re-engaged post-interview, to review their transcripts for errors and clarifications, or to have the opportunity to change or remove sections of data, or even participate in the interpretation and construction of meaning. In reality, while attractive in theory, this is not without its complications. It can introduce a considerable time burden to a research project; and also requires a cohort of interviewees (as well as researcher/s) who are able to contribute effectively and continuously to the project as a co-production model. This can introduce further complications related to power relations, and inevitably, most researchers accept that “there is no technique of analysis or methodological logic that can neutralize the social nature of interpretation” (ibid, p.133).

There is both an obligation to act professionally and to ensure that the information entrusted to us by our participants is treated with integrity. Carol Mutch has described the interview as:

“more than an uncomplicated retelling of a set of events. It is, instead, a complex re-crafting of events, emotions and interpretations, constructed for the purpose of the interview, which can be deconstructed to reveal levels of meaning” (2006, p.67)

and it is these layers of complexity (emotions, interpretations, meanings) that the researcher must honour. This means of course not “squeezing your data” to fit some preconceptions nor correlate with some current theory or interest (Rivas 2018, p.545), but also holding onto our own role as researchers, with expertise, who are attempting to reveal some knowledge or connection which the interviewee may never have considered: “It is we who have the time, resources and skills to conduct methodical work, to make sense of experience and locate individuals in historic and social contexts” (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994, p.37). If we fail to interpret the data, and merely recount it, we may find that “in our concern for representing the voices of others we may be constrained in developing our own voices as academics and authors” (Edwards and Ribbens 1998, p.17). The purpose of undertaking research is not to simply present - “as a mere mouthpiece” (Bryman 2016, p.584) - experiences and perspectives which may or may not have been told before, but rather to examine that data through the lens of existing knowledge (theoretical or empirical) and to use the expertise of the researcher, with their research community, to formulate propositions about it, and thus expand knowledge and enhance understanding.

Linda Alcoff refers to “the mediated character of all representation” and that representations are “the product of interpretation” (1991, p.9) and that such interpretation is in part shaped by the social location of the speaker. There are undoubtedly difficulties, and these are particularly of concern when the researcher is from a more influential group in society that those being researched – the power dynamics of the researcher/ researched relationship will more likely mirror those in wider society than be immune to them. I was conscious of the gender dynamics in the interviews, but did not feel as Stanko (1994) did, that “I am not a man, and do not have the accumulation of gendered knowledge against which to balance what the men are saying and sharing about their lives” (p.103). I was more concerned, as a middle class woman, to ensure the working class women and men that I interviewed were able to give their accounts as they wished.

Ribbens (1989) acknowledges that we need to be aware of the researcher’s power and adopt strategies to minimise it however “ultimately we have to take responsibility for the decisions we make, rather than trying to deny the power that we do have as researchers” (p. 590).

3.6 Evaluation of Research Process

In this section I review four key areas of the research process, and highlight what worked well and what could have been done differently in terms of my research design and practice.

3.6.1 The Choice of Research Methods

The primary source of data collection was semi-structured interviewing with supplementary data gathered from observations and document analysis.

In acknowledging that an interview is a mediated, interpreted occasion, 'a moment in time' there is a high value for social science researchers to interview people about their experiences and perspectives. The information may be partial, homogenised, packaged specially for us, but there is information to be heard ... "we can describe truthfully, de-limited segments of real-live persons' lives" (Miller and Glassner, 2016, p.55) People will not tell us everything – memory, language, emotions may be obstacles to disclosure of details or particular points; social, cultural and political barriers may inhibit a full and frank recounting. But if we acknowledge this and take steps both before and during the interview to enable as much as possible, the recounting of experience and the facilitation of their 'meaning making' then, it ..."may result in deeper, fuller conceptualisations of those aspects of people's lives we are most interested in understanding." (Miller and Glassner, 2016, p.55).

3.6.2 The Research Sample

The qualitative interpretive focus of knowledge production meant that a representative sample was not required. In fact, many aspects of diversity are not routinely recorded about councillors, nor publicly available, at either the national or local level, (Kettlewell and Phillips 2014) making it difficult to establish a representative sample if one was required, even for large data sets. In addition, this study was constrained by time and geography, and involved relatively small numbers.

The sample did include a diversity of other characteristics but notably, all members of the sample were white. Reinharz (1992) suggests that "feminist researchers may feel paralyzed by anticipatory condemnation" (p.257) for their failure to ensure a fully diverse sample, even or especially when displaying "feminist sensitivity to issues of diversity" (p.258).

Nor could I interview people who were simply too busy, or not interested in my research – I was informed for instance, that one Asian councillor would be “*impossible*” to interview because of the amount of additional casework from that community, over and above their ward casework, and in fact they did not respond to the invitations.

Furthermore, the very small numbers of some intersecting identities or minorities within the broader category of women, resulted in not being able to attach their characteristics as this would compromise their anonymity.

In conclusion, the sample was well balanced between the three cohorts of interviewees, and the elected cohort was sufficiently heterogeneous in relation to some diverse characteristics in the wider elected population, to produce knowledge from a range of perspectives. The exception to this was ethnicity. The very small numbers of BAME councillors in the area of study (1-3 individuals in each local authority area, out of 334 councillors in total) made it more difficult (but not impossible) to recruit them to the research. However the indication from some interviewees that their Asian councillor colleagues were even busier than white councillors (due to them being contacted with casework from Asian residents irrespective of ward residency, an example of Mansbridge’s (2003) surrogate representation) suggests an area for further focussed study.

3.6.3 Reflexivity and the Interviews

A reflexive approach entails considering the “effect of researcher characteristics and the roles we adopt whilst conducting the research” (Horn 1997, p.306) and reflecting on this in order to learn from the experience and improve one’s practice.

The effect of being a woman interviewing women, and interviewing men, does not in itself mean that the former interviews were more equal, empathetic or ‘sisterly’, producing better data; nor that the latter were sabotaged by the mis-match of gender. In fact, from my previous practice, I am aware of the high value that some people place on having a person who does not share core characteristics in order for them to be able to speak more freely.

I think an element of this outsidersness may have been at play in the interviews I conducted with the male councillors – I am not ‘of their community’, as in not a member of their political party, and potentially my being a woman enabled them to say things they might not have felt able to say to a male researcher. Equally, my

being a woman (and also, to some interviewees, being known to be a feminist) may mean that there were things they felt they could not say to me, or alternatively, that they ought to say.

Phoenix (1994) has described how the matching of gender and 'colour' of interviewers to interviewees did not produce 'better data', and that respondents certainly talked readily with interviewers who did not share these characteristics. She noted that a majority of interviewees expressed a preference for gender matching (64% of women preferred to be interviewed by a woman) but not particularly for colour/ethnicity (20%, mainly Black respondents) (p.67). She surmised that the respondents may be more comfortable with "interviewers of particular colour or gender" and that there was some evidence that interviewees may tailor their responses according to the colour and gender of their interviewer (p.68).

Reinharz (1992) discusses how 'women interviewing women' can be perceived as both inherent to feminist research and also necessary as the development of rapport and empathy is more likely. Between two women, that a level of shared understanding will enhance the interview process and deliver more or better quality data. However 'gender is not enough' (pp.23-26) – other characteristics, life experiences or attitudes which differ between the researcher and the researched, may act as obstacles to understanding or revelation. And some researchers have found that it is difference, or perceived distance, that enables some interviewees to 'tell their story' more fully. Glucksmann (1994) has highlighted that "good rapport or a friendly woman to women interview or lively discussion" should not be mistaken for "equal involvement in the research process" (p.155). I am confident that I was able to achieve Cotterill's combination of 'friendly stranger' and 'sympathetic listener' (1992, p.596), and therefore conduct the interviews in a professional manner with those who I already knew and those I did not, as well as with those who stated views that I agree or disagree with, or have no opinion about.

3.6.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Both cohorts of interviewees could be described as 'elites' because of the senior public roles that they hold, as elected councillors or Chief Officers and leaders of local organisations and campaigns. Beyond the usual level of sensitivity regarding confidentiality for research participants, this additional 'high profile' element to their roles could raise further concerns for them as "(elite) participation may be dependent on guaranteed anonymity" (Vromen 2010, p.258), due to the potentially

public political as well as personal costs of any breach of their confidentiality. And, as referred to elsewhere in the thesis, the dis-benefits and negative commentary for women scrutinised in the public sphere can be especially difficult, often abusive and even threatening, particularly on social media (Fawcett 2014; IPU 2016; Ross et al, 2013). As a consequence, I was determinedly diligent about communicating to them the measures I was taking to protect their anonymity and confidentiality, as well as paying very careful attention to matters such as how I contacted them; where and when we met; and what I did or did not say regarding other potential interviewees.

My decision to offer the choice of a pseudonym to each interviewee, worked well as an introduction to the topic of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. It emphasised the importance of these ethical concerns and reiterated my commitment to these - it had been stated in the Interview Invitation and the Information Sheet (Appendix B) provided to all respondents. I think this consistent approach created confidence in interviewees and that this is a factor in the openness with which some people responded.

I also note that the responses of some interviewees demonstrated their lack of understanding regarding the implications of using their actual names. In many ways, this is not a surprise – for the elected cohort, use of their own name is a central feature of being a representative. Those who responded with puzzlement or refusal to the offer that they choose a pseudonym, served to remind me of my responsibilities as the researcher, to take the broader view about how each respondent's anonymity is inter-related with the others, through their wards or political, professional or social relationships. In that sense it confirms difference between the researcher and the researched, and how they are situated differently in relation to the research process and its ethical governance.

The decision to anonymise all interviewees, and also the site of research, is to act ethically in terms of confidentiality. These two concerns are inextricably linked – making known the identity of one interviewee, matched with content of their interview and the specific area where they were located, could easily lead to others being identifiable and thus breach their anonymity – the risk of 'jigsaw identification' (O'Hara et al, 2011) has been highlighted in recent legal cases, as it becomes easier for anyone with the inclination to both search for and to connect pieces of personal data from the mass available online. As Lewis (2003) has made clear, "direct attribution (if comments are linked to a name or a specific role) and indirect (by reference to a collection of characteristics that might identify an individual or

small group) must be avoided. Indirect attribution requires particular care” (p.67). Thus, I have not provided a list of the organisations that the unelected representatives were from, and the data about the respondents’ features (Table 7) is deliberately presented in a way that does not inadvertently reveal individual participants.

I am confident that the steps I have taken are sufficient to protect both confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the research. In summary, this section has outlined four key areas of the research design and process, and evaluated these.

3.7 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has described the research methodology and methods, and the rationale for these choices. The impact of the methodological framework has been outlined. Particular areas of the research practice (positionality and cross-gender interviewing) have been explored and framed within a feminist analysis, and four areas of the research methodology have been evaluated.

The next two chapters set out the data from the interviews, and analyse this within an overarching frame of representation, legitimacy and gender, and making use of relevant studies, debates and concepts from the literature, as well as the analytical framework set out in Chapter 1.

The next chapter (Chapter 4) focuses on the data from the unelected respondents; then Chapter 5 covers the data from the elected respondents.

CHAPTER 4

UNELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on both the extant literature and original research data to contextualise and analyse the legitimacy and gender dimensions of unelected representation. The analytical framework introduced in Chapter 1 provides the theoretical basis for examining the data.

In the first section, the views of unelected respondents regarding representation are presented and discussed in relation to 'being a representative', specifically the unelected dimension. The data from respondents is examined for gendered dimensions, and these are considered in the context of their legitimacy, as women representatives, who 'speak for' women or women's interests.

The second section explores how and where these unelected community leaders undertake their representative roles, considering their substantive representation of women's interests their experiences of this and how it relates to their legitimacy.

The third section explores the inter-connections – formal and informal – which unelected women describe as part of their representation of women's interests, and how these intersect with legitimacy claims as political representatives.

The conclusions are set out in the final section of the chapter, with the whole chapter summarised and the next chapter introduced.

4.2 Unelected Representatives

In this section, unelected (or non-elected) representation is presented using the data from research respondents.

There are questions about the legitimacy of representatives who are not elected, and a number of scholars have addressed this, in particular those who utilise the concept of 'claim-making' to define representation, rather than 'presence'. A primary proponent of this constructivist turn in representational theory is Michael Saward (2006, 2010) and his criteria for evaluating legitimate authority will be employed, with reference to other key conceptualisations of non-elected representation (Montanaro 2012; Rubenstein 2014; Slim 2002). Underpinning the analysis is

Suzanne Dovi's conception of 'a good representative' (2012). The debates and relevant aspects of these theoretical positions are applied.

In particular, the legitimacy and gendered aspects of being an unelected representative, and a woman representing women's interests, are highlighted.

4.2.1 Being Representatives

The unelected/non-elected representatives are simultaneously community leaders and campaigners, members of civil society who represent women's interests both in public discourse but also directly to the state.

The question of whether such unelected persons can legitimately claim to be representatives or be acknowledged as such, is explored through the data provided by interview respondents.

Non-elected women spoke about their representative role, as in sometimes representing their organisation:

“(I am) externally facing both in terms of representation, representing the organisation and dealing with commissioners, funders, decision-makers”
Ciara

and at other times, representing the needs of the women (and others) who use their services, and how these two representational tasks are often indistinguishable.

However both these representational claims correspond to criteria of authorisation – their “institutional affiliation” (Dovi 2012) and their “surrogacy for wider interests and new voices” (Saward 2010) are inherently linked and thus indicate a legitimisation of their claims. Some also referred to speaking for a wider sector - whether on specific themes like youth or health or violence against women or race; or speaking for a wider constituency altogether (the women's sector, or the voluntary sector):

“I suppose the representational role is taking the views, not just of our organisation, but the wider sector, out and reflecting them back” Eva

“from my point of view, unless you put yourself out there as a community representative or, as like, a spokesperson on, you know, on behalf of young people's issues, they don't get heard necessarily” Susan

The unelected represent different women's interests and the range of organisations, groups and campaigns that these women community leaders represent are illustrative of that. There are both specific groups of women (women fleeing violence, young women, BAME women, working class women) whose interests are being represented; and also women who are part of a broader group (such as

young people, or people with mental health needs, or public transport users) who have specific interests as women, within that broader group of people. Their “social location” (Dovi 2012) and “specialist expertise” (Saward 2010) are evident here, authorising their legitimacy. The concept of women’s interests has been examined earlier in the thesis, and the respondents do not necessarily distinguish between *who* they represent i.e. different groups of women, and *what* they represent as in different interests:

“I’m able to go and represent the views of young people, in particular of young women, from my area of work and expertise” Susan

“part of my role and responsibility is to reflect the views of the voluntary sector ...” Eva

“you do have a duty to represent people who cannot represent themselves” Helen

“We represent, and advocate, on behalf of the young women we work with” Doris

In this regard, these unelected representatives can be seen to be representing (some of) those whose interests are currently under-represented and this could be characterised as addressing a democratic deficit. This understanding of descriptive representation has been explicitly associated with concerns to address the under-representation of minorities, as a counterbalance to the over-representation of the privileged (Young 1990; Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999).

Young (1990) in particular is very clear about the need for under-represented groups’ interests to be represented, as democratic politics has to be seen to be representative if it is to maintain its claim of legitimate authority. For Young, this was not defined as proportional representation, but a requirement for overlooked groups’ interests to be made present. Childs and Cowley (2011) reiterated:

“Crucially, the ‘politics of presence’ is about the inclusion of the previously marginalised, disadvantaged and excluded (Young, 1990), rather than with microcosmic representation per se” (p.8)

The context of these representations includes the situations and spaces where the women make their claims. The respondents also talked about what kind of representations they are making, such as responding to the state agenda, challenging proposals or decisions, or lobbying for specific women’s interests:

“Both influencing the money, where the money comes from, but also influencing their policies and procedures, so that my practice is embedded in what they’re (deciding)” Doris

And they described the many spaces in which they represent women's interests:

“going to different issue-based networks whether it's the mental health programme board for (area), or the domestic abuse executive forum run through the local authority” Ciara

In describing *how* they act as representatives, respondents often referred to 'meetings', which is a broad term for the many situations in which they represent women's interests:

“it's going to meetings, out and about, trying to influence” Ruby

“I have to go to regular ward committees to (say) 'I've got a real issue with what you're talking about', so I need my voice to be heard at that small neighbourhood level, cos actually they're making intrinsic changes which will have a real impact” Doris

The opportunities that are presented to unelected representatives, and the tactics that they deploy to maximise their representative function, are varied.

Undertaking the representative function is seen in different ways by different actors – they are not merely speaking of 'meetings' but also their varying approaches to being representatives. For some, the importance of 'meetings' lies in the opportunities to stay informed and to influence decisions, as well as establishing their credentials as a specialist representative or as someone who can bring a specialist knowledge to a general theme. This corresponds with one of Saward's (2010) criteria for evaluating non-elected representative claims, that of 'specialist expertise' (p.98). In this way, they recognise that their status as a representative is mutually constituted by their interactions with the state actors, who are both requesting representation from them (thus providing authorisation of their claims), and also requiring them to act representatively. Through undertaking this role of representative, they both confirm their expertise and legitimise their representative credentials through that expertise.

For others, their legitimacy as representatives is established through their practice and through external validation of this, for example, professional and public recognition and awards: “When we win awards, when we win European and national awards and I get to stand on a stage for twenty minutes and think about what it's like working here” (Doris). This is an example of external sources of legitimation, by institutions which have the “standing and licence” (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, p.55) to assess and in this case, endorse, the representative's organisation. This provides a legitimated “institutional affiliation” (Dovi 2012, p.62)

which in turn indicates authorisation for the representative. Doris is seen as a legitimate representative in part because of her organisation's success with high level external validation.

In tandem with this, because the external validation is based on their professional practice working with women, their representative authority also derives from and is generated through their proximity to the women whose interests they 'speak for'. As frontline workers, they have recognised credentials to 'speak for' those women and represent their interests, and these claims have been categorised as "surrogacy for wider interests" (Saward 2010, p.98).

Unelected representatives, whether garlanded with awards or not, are making representative claims to different state actors, including elected representatives and also state officials:

"anything from local authority commissioners, local authority senior management and sometimes local councillors, elected members. But often elected members who would have a portfolio for the particular area" Ciara

This range of state actors encompasses both the elected and the appointed who are involved in decision-making, and illustrates the complex environment for unelected representatives who are making representations for specific interests such as women's interests. Elected representatives are *enclosed* within complex multi-layered institutions, with many actors around them. Unelected representatives have an independence from that but also lack its security – in many ways they are outsiders, but the permeable boundaries of the state (especially through the contracting-out of services) means that some civil society actors have a more complex relationship with these institutions. Lee Ann Banaszak has argued that "outsider status is not determined by location or by tactics but by the degree of *inclusion* in institutions" (2010, p.6, emphasis in original) and this raises the question of who designates the outsider status. Certainly the state does, as in consultations and scrutiny, it is required to demonstrate that it takes 'public' views into account, and here there is utility value in framing the non-state civil society actors who represent different sections of that public as outsiders. But as unelected representatives are called upon to have these increasing involvements with state institutions, they risk losing their outsider status, in terms of how they are viewed by their 'constituency' and their peers – they become seen as 'co-opted', with the corresponding loss of perceived authenticity which is fundamental to their legitimacy and role as unelected representatives. For some unelected representatives, this perceived authenticity is allied to their "social location" (Dovi 2012, p.63) which

provides a basis for their legitimacy, thus the loss of it will affect peer evaluations of the representative as legitimate. This community leader gave an example:

“I know women who spend all their days in meetings and then you wonder how they manage to do anything in their organisations, because they’re in other people’s organisations all day, and they’re on everybody’s board, and they go to all the meetings and they’re on all the strategic things” Doris

This illustrates how complex and contested their authorisation can be, as the dense networks of their peers evaluate their legitimacy using criteria such as being seen to be independent and “untainted” (Saward 2010, p.107), in their relations with the state institutions. It also indicates the tightrope that unelected representatives are walking in their dealings with the state, whereby they may need to assert their position in “the chain of formal democratic recognition” (Saward 2010, p.105) to satisfy the state’s idea of legitimate representation.

For all these unelected women, in the act of representing, they need to use scarce resources (tenacity, time and connections) to identify which opportunities for representation will be useful or meaningful, which actors need to be reached and what is the most effective and time-critical mechanism to do that. But the state is not a single fixed, monolithic institution. It is rather a set of more or less inter-connected institutions, each multi-layered and with both vertical and horizontal lines of decision-making. The development of partnerships and governance has increased the complexity of state institutions and the necessity for civil society actors to decipher, in order to meaningfully engage with, these institutions. The structures, processes and fast-moving landscape (political and economic) have to be understood and navigated by community leaders, if they are to act effectively:

“We are in interesting times as they say, because of the whole commissioning and, you know, when you look at the council now it’s very different from years ago. I wouldn’t know who to go to. (In the past) I would know who to go to, to try and gain influence in domestic violence policy, or to make sure that the work I was doing, was influencing that” Doris

Some unelected representatives are not only speaking to the state, but also increasingly to other sectoral players. They seek to influence these because corporate bodies or larger voluntary sector organisations are also involved in shaping and delivering public services which used to be provided by the state, and in many instances are still overseen by the state:

“it is good to be able to influence from that perspective, it’s not just influencing politicians so much as people in business yeah, people in charities, you know right across the board” Helen

Although the respondents were selected for their non-elected representative roles, some of these actors also hold elected positions (for example, in other local authorities, trade unions or political parties), or their representative role was achieved through an electoral process, opening up the possibility of democratic legitimisation based on that. Such “hybrid forms of semi-elective representation” (Saward 2016, p.260) are a feature of governance and partnership structures, particularly for the voluntary and community representatives. The obverse is seen in the elected women’s cohort of respondents too, as several of those hold non-elected representative positions in addition to being local councillors. In some instances, the non-elected are elected as representatives for a wider civil society constituency:

“(name) and myself, we were elected from within the community and voluntary sector, to be the VCS representatives on what preceded the current health and wellbeing board” Jenny

“I represent the voluntary sector at a lot of these forums as well, so I’m not going in the name of (her organisation) right, I’m going because the VCS in (the area) have voted me on that group” Ciara

In this role, they may be speaking directly to the state, or to a partnership or network arrangement which has state representatives on it or will report back to the state. These structural layers can be complicated and the decision-making can be opaque. For unelected representatives, the nuances of the diverse women’s interests they seek to present may be lost or become indistinct in these processes. One representative explained her frustration with these arrangements:

“I think, what you’ve gotta do, or what I do, is work out where my representations will be heard and acted (on). So you can go to some meetings, and you know that it’s a talking shop, and you’re not gonna be listened to, and nothing that’s said in that meeting is gonna have any influence on anything that happens in the future. So I s’pose you’ve gotta work out where you will be listened to, where you will be heard, and, sometimes, where it’s important to make a noise” Doris

This example captures the ability of unelected representatives to ‘read’ opportunities that they are presented with, and to see past what is said - the state will describe its offers as consultation or advisory or setting the agenda, shaping the future direction, etc. but experienced civil society members will know that this is often not the case. This is not necessarily because the ‘spin’ is deliberately misleading, but because the resources or the commitment - to make the changes or take the direction that unelected representatives will advocate – are not available, or not for the entire timescale required. The more experienced representatives will have seen this

before, so they may decide not to engage or to do so with a different, more limited expectation of what may be possible.

This leads to community leaders utilising different strategies to develop effective representations. One respondent recounted how the local council had undertaken a consultation about changes which would impact on young people, but she knew that only a handful of young people had been asked, late on in the process, so she went along to the event where the report was being presented for the council's decision:

“(I asked) a question about how young women’s issues were gonna feed into that new tendering process, restructuring, and they had no answers

I wanted to see how that was going to be presented to the councillors, who are gonna make the decisions about cuts in services

And - the councillors weren't very pleased with how young people had been consulted – only 25 young people, across the whole (area)!

So as a result of that, they're now having to do a full consultation” Susan

Stakeholding can be a legitimising basis for representational claims (Saward 2010, p.100) and this unelected representative has a stake in the consultation process, in that her work with young women is about their engagement with processes that impact on them, as well the stake that the young women have in the provision that will be affected by the decisions.

Another respondent spoke about how some of their influence is not through working directly with the elected representatives on their partnership or scrutiny or review structures, but by identifying other routes to get priorities established or to challenge contentious decision-making: “that's an example of where that's all behind the scenes” (Jenny).

These multiple layers of representation can produce other challenges for non-elected representatives. For instance, the significant demands of time required for the role of an external-facing representative can conflict with their organisational leadership role:

“it becomes all-consuming and then you'll find that bread and butter issues ... back at your own base - which is what you're responsible for at the end of the day - can suffer, while you're out representing your peers” Ciara

The same representative also spoke of the pressure to be present, despite their other responsibilities and their experience on occasion of unsatisfactory processes:

“the voluntary sector always turn up to these meetings and always offer their view but often don't get to steer the direction or the content, so we kind of get things fed to us. You don't see the private sector at those gatherings right, although then contracts might go their way. You often don't see public sector providers at those gatherings, but the voluntary sector always turn up because we are, I think, motivated by fear. If you're not in the room, you don't get a chance to represent the interests of the people that you serve or in fact represent the interests of your organisation. Things will happen and you'll get left behind” Ciara

This conceptualisation of these processes as an often hollow experience, that disproportionately impacts on the unelected representatives, is perhaps more keenly felt by those who act, and ‘speak for’ others, based on a commitment to represent oppressed groups and from a value base of social justice and integrity. Appointed officers and others who are involved in these complex structures with their opaque decision-making processes, may not be so affected by expending their time and energy, if their outcomes are achieved.

The data presented here has illustrated the ways in which the non-elected see their representational role. Their experiences demonstrate that unelected representation can be legitimated through the authorisation it derives from the state (which requested it) and based on the expertise generated from their ‘frontline’ experiences with those whose interests they represent - a legitimacy derived from a combination of “specialist credentials” (Saward 2010, p.98) and “social location” (Dovi 2012, p.63).

In the next section, the specific gendered dimensions of unelected representation and legitimacy are explored, utilising data from the study respondents.

4.2.2 Gender Dimensions

Respondents were asked if there was a gendered dimension to their representative role, not in terms of what they do (which is discussed in the next section) but rather who they are as representatives:

“probably the bit that you're interested in, I think, of representing the organisation in sometimes different ways with different groups of people, and pushing that - you know, women-only services, women-only space, the sort of feminist voice – we do that in kind of different contexts, and ... I think people seek us out for that kind of thing really” Rachel

This respondent identifies that they represent a particular set of experiences, as a women-only service, and an avowedly feminist organisation, and that they are representing that perspective when they speak, and also that they are contacted specifically to provide that specialist voice.

Another respondent was unequivocal about the importance of unelected women as representatives:

“If we weren’t there, women’s issues wouldn’t be seen as different or a priority (and) the gender issue would slide off the table” Susan

This may be specific to the context in which she makes representations, but she is clear that it is the presence of women, and feminist, representatives who are ensuring that gender dimensions and specifically women’s interests, are part of the agenda. This indicates “good and worthwhile ends” (Dovi 2012, p.63) the intangible goods as arguably, the feminist value base emphasises a moral dimension to these representational claims for women.

Unelected representatives describe themselves as representing women through representing their interests – their particular concerns or priorities: they speak up for women. In this regard the legitimacy of their claims is based their social location (Dovi 2012).

These representative claims are based on the experiences of women community leaders representing women’s interests. Their representations are purposeful - to highlight women’s concerns or priorities, in order that they be addressed, and it is women who do this (i.e. men generally do not); and it is suggested that such representation is inherently linked to a wider women’s or feminist perspective.

One respondent outlined how her representational work is inherently linked with her feminism, and how being a woman provides a social context for her political role:

“for someone’s who’s involved with equality ... and actually pushing that agenda forwards ... Some of that will come because I’m feminist, (and) the voluntary sector is at least 70% female” Eva

“I think gender’s got to do with everything. I think it’s how you’re treated, by others, how you’re perceived by people, ... how they make assumptions about you as an individual, how, and also to me as an individual, it runs through my actions - how I treat them, and I will tend to gravitate to the women, ... not just what can I get out of you” Eva

“I’ve always counted myself as being a feminist even though I didn’t know the word feminist” Eva

Being a representative of women, or *for women’s interests*, presents the women with challenges over and above the role of representative, and also the status of being unelected. Being a woman, especially a feminist, can mean facing direct or more frequently indirect sex discrimination and several women spoke of having to deal with being patronised or overlooked. In this representative role, it may be that

such challenges are intended to undermine the legitimacy of these unelected women, or that they merely have the effect of de-legitimising them and their claims.

One case study is presented here, in some detail, as it illustrates the way that a series of actions (underpinned by gendered norms) can interact to discriminate against a woman, and advantage a man. In this example, a community leader spoke at great length (and with some anger) about a situation where she had put herself forward to be the chair of a sub group in a health institution but the role was given to a man instead:

“So it went out, you know, this is a lay member opportunity, could lay members send in an expression of interest. So I thought this’ll be interesting, I’ll try this one Sue, sent in an expression of interest, saying very interested in this. I’m only chairing one sub-committee so I said I do have capacity to chair this committee, I’d like to put my expression of interest forward. No other expression of interest, so I was contacted by one of the officers saying really pleased that you’ve sent in your expression of interest, I’m really pleased it’s you cos you do have a handle on (the relevant) areas of what’s happening locally with GP surgeries and partnerships and everything, that’s great, I’ll take that forward”

“So as soon as it went to the next Board meeting, cos of how it was presented as being a strategic partnership sub-group, another colleague put in an expression of interest. And then, we were both approached at this meeting, saying (to her), are you still keen to do it? Yes I am, I’d like to chair. And this other person (said) ‘well I think it would be really good if I chair it’ ... And I said, well that’s fair enough, but I think on the balance of gender, it should be a female lay member that chairs this group. Yes, that was accepted. So it was accepted.”

“So in between the meeting and the last meeting, the other lay member, who’s a male, this other lay member said, are you chairing that meeting? I said yes, I’m chairing that meeting. That was agreed, fine”

“So on the day that I was gonna chair the ... partnership, the officer came up to me and said, are you happy to chair this meeting, and I like, how many times have I said that I am actually chairing this meeting? I don’t have a problem if somebody else wanted to do it, they can fight me for it. But on a balance of gender, it’s only fair, that in terms of our outward looking approach, there should be a female lay member, and I’m the only one, so surely this should be setting a precedent. Yes, that’s fine. Then we went through all of our governing meeting and then the person who I was up against - who was gonna be the vice chair - came to me and said, I’ve been on this training, I know everything about this primary, you know public health, NHS England, sort of like CCG commissioning approach, I think it would be useful if I chaired the first meeting”

“And I’m like, why are you asking me about chairing this meeting, when I’ve been asked several times that I’m gonna be chairing this meeting, and you know what I did Sue, I thought you know what, if he wants to chair this meeting he can chair the meeting, because I have now done this four or five times (tapping the table to emphasise), said I’m happy to chair, I’m okay to

chair, I've got the agenda, we had a meeting with the NHS representative, all the way through that process, in my mind, I was chairing that meeting. But in the mind of the other lay member, he was chairing the meeting and by hook or crook he was gonna chair this meeting" Susan

What this case study shows is not only the attitude and behaviours of the particular man, who had only expressed his interest in the role when it was made clear it was a 'strategic' role, but also how his sense of entitlement to the position was supported by both action and inaction on the part of others who were supposed to oversee the process. He was effectively enabled to take the role by the other actors, despite the fact that her expression of interest was the only one submitted by the deadline, and she met the criteria, and this health body had recently been criticised for its lack of women chairs.

This type of discrimination could be because of her sex, or the fact that she comes from the voluntary sector, or because representing women's interests is perceived by some as a narrow field of expertise. However, in this example, both the fact of being a woman, and a voluntary sector representative were important criteria for this representative to get the chair position. But the combination of the other male representative's determination and the failure of the health body to pay attention to its processes (or even ensure that a woman representative was treated with equal respect) led to the outcome where the unelected woman withdrew: "quite frankly, I don't have to fight this battle, I've made my point so I just backed off" (Susan).

In other examples, respondents spoke of the contradictory position that women representing women's interests may find themselves in, in that they are sometimes sought out for their specialist knowledge, and at other times or in other settings, they are dismissed for being 'only about women'. This can be understood as a form of de-legitimisation, in that their legitimising "specialist expertise" (Saward 2010) is transmuted into a narrow and insufficient claim of representation.

For some, their representative function is inextricably linked with the frontline experience of working directly with the women whose interests are being represented:

"we've got a rep- we built our reputation not just in relation to being a service provider for women but also knowing what we were talking about" Ciara

This representational claim illustrates the importance of authenticity and expertise, and resonates with Slim's conjecture that the authority of non-elected representatives derives from "their presence in the field" (2002) and that their

relationships, knowledge and expertise constitute “tangible sources of legitimacy”. Dovi (2012) has also highlighted how “social location”, “formative experiences” and “institutional affiliation” can be sources of authorisation and legitimation for informal (i.e. non-electoral) representatives (pp.62-64).

But another respondent recognised that being a representative from a women’s organisation could also lead to being dismissed, especially when this was also linked to a particular (in this case, working class) neighbourhood:

“Yes, cos you can talk, but people don’t really listen to you (pause), because we’re a ‘*stupid women’s centre*’ from (area), that’s what I think people still think - ‘*what do they know?*’ “ Doris

Another respondent described how she addresses the issue of not being taken seriously as a representative from a women’s organisation who is known to represent women’s interests:

“My approach? I come as (my organisation) or as a VCS rep, but I get into the issue that’s being discussed in its own right, rather than introducing the word ‘women’ into every sentence because that then becomes about who you are and your issue, rather than the collective issue on the table and I felt very strongly about that in order to be seen and received as credible” Ciara

A different respondent offered a view of how her ‘constituency’ of local women might view her legitimacy and how it could be undermined if she focussed her time on the external-facing representative role. This would entail spending more time out of sight of the women who use the service, evidence of another dilemma faced by many civil society leaders based in the communities and neighbourhoods that they represent. That is the conflict between being seen (literally) by your ‘constituents’ (who provide you with authorisation to speak for them, and authenticate your representations through sharing direct knowledge of their interests), and being visible and present with those who have resources, decision-making, etc., such as state actors, including elected representatives:

“If I spent my time going to meetings and didn’t take care, then people in my community would know that I was doing that. They’d go (she’s) sh-t, she’s never in (the project), and she always thinks she’s better than she is and she’s always at high-up meetings with bloody councillors and that” Doris

This illustrates one of the difficulties that the unelected women have to address, which is the importance of their representative role (to speak for the women’s interests) but how this can remove them from the source of their authority to represent those interests. Their expertise is identified as deriving from their proximity to the women with those interests (even if they also share those interests)

and thus their authenticity as a representative – and therefore their legitimacy - is compromised if those relationships are diminished. This authenticity is both foundational to their recognition by the state as an authorised representative, but also the source of their diminished status in some circumstances and with some (state) actors. Some respondents articulated their experiences of being dismissed for their representations on behalf of women:

“if I became associated with a mantra which was ‘*what about women?*’, not that I find anything wrong with that mantra, but people are then very quick to dismiss you as almost like a one-trick pony – ‘*oh that’s all you’ve got to say*’ “
Ciara

“Sometimes I think you get dismissed because they expect you to say what you’re gonna say ... you do get stereotyped in terms of what your challenge is gonna be” Susan

This evidences the contradiction for these unelected women – their legitimacy as representatives is predicated on their expertise, their specialist knowledge and close relationships, and the ‘dense networks’ (Saward, 2010) they share with other women, both those whose interests they represent and others who represent women’s interests. They are authorised to provide this supplementary representation by elected (and appointed) state representatives on the basis of this expertise, yet they are also on occasion, ‘dismissed’ for this focus. It seems they are both legitimised through their expertise as women who represent women’s interests, and yet also de-legitimised as just being about women. The basis of their authorisation as legitimate representatives is also the grounds on which their representations are dismissed, or diminished, by some.

Despite this, these unelected women are making representations to state institutions and actors, and some respondents discussed factors which support or underpin those. For instance, more than one respondent referred to their history of political relationships which they can draw on to facilitate their representations:

“And some of it - I’ve got credibility cos ... I’ve known quite a lot of them for quite some time ... so there is that sort of knowledge, organisational memory, cos for some of them I was there long before they were” Eva

This respondent had previously been an elected member, and has long connections through her party membership with both current and past elected local representatives. This is facilitated locally by a women’s network, and such interconnections evidence the dense networks which act to legitimise these women as representatives.

Two other respondents referenced their close connections to local party members as a factor. One linked it to being 'well known' to the elected members:

“And the background to this is, I’m quite well known in (local authority area), including in the Labour, the current administration” Flora

Another named her party membership as a factor, when asked about getting recognition as a representative from the elected representatives:

“well, partly, I've held onto my Labour Party card and I'm sure they check who you are” Linda

This respondent also made it clear that this is a two-way street – she doesn't hold onto her party card simply as a means of access to elected members, she also requires recognition as a credible representative, and her party membership is part of her evidence that she is legitimate:

“I would leave the Labour Party if I didn't get that. So I don't know if the legitimacy is based on that but it's, yes, a web of things” Linda

In this example, the elected politicians are elided with their party in terms of recognising the unelected status as a representative. This acknowledgement from elected politicians is in part based on the unelected woman's known party membership which provides some assurance to the politicians of her credentials, or legitimacy. Dovi (2012) has identified members of political parties as a category of informal political representative (p.54) however in this example, it is the shared membership of a specific party which confers legitimacy. The unelected woman acknowledges that her recognition is related to her party membership, but also that for her, her membership of the party is related to being recognised as a representative – she speaks for certain interests, and she is heard by politicians at least in part because they know she is a party member *like them*. This membership which she shares with them confers on her some of their representative status – they have things in common, important things which indicate shared values and goals. And their history in the party will also have provided many opportunities to observe and to hear what each other's views and actions are, thereby underscoring the shared values. Saward (2010) has identified three modes of representative claim-making by political parties, and this example of an alliance between non-elected representatives of specific campaigns or issues, and political party members, could indicate a 'reflexive' mode of representative claim-making (p.134) by the party or its elected representatives. Through their association, each

representative strengthens their authority to ‘speak for’ that issue, and their perceived legitimacy.

4.3 Unelected Representation

Unelected representatives can be understood more easily as substantive than as descriptive, since their role as community or campaign leaders is self-evidently about ‘doing things as and for women’. Their constituency is clearly defined, in terms of a specified category of women, or specific women’s interests as part of a wider group or theme. The representative status is sometimes conferred on them by the state precisely because of their ability to represent a particular perspective – they are invited to represent women’s interests. In terms of making claims at the local level, their source of authorisation is often the state – by its agents as elected representatives, or its officials, or other representatives of quasi-governmental bodies.

4.3.1 Doing Representation

The non-elected representatives ‘do’ representation through their community leadership roles, by representing their ‘constituencies’ and through a mediated public role of ‘speaking for’ and ‘making claims’. They are legitimated through a combination of being authorised by the state (invited as representatives) and being accountable through their authentic representation of their constituency’s interests, underpinned by their “institutional affiliation” (Dovi 2012) and “specialist expertise” (Saward 2010).

The substantive ‘acting for’ by these unelected women is representing women (and girls) and the different forms that this reported substantive representation takes can be categorised into four types of activity:

- Influence policy
- Secure resources
- Develop or defend service provision
- Create or extend opportunities for women and girls

In all these contexts, they describe making representational claims for women’s interests, seeking acceptance for those claims from different audiences and in a range of situations. The interview data from women community leaders provided a number of examples, which are presented here:

“I believe my role, as a senior practitioner, is to be able to advocate on behalf of those young women, and get their voices heard in those forums that are about making decisions about their services ...” Susan

“So we say ok, we'd like to participate in the review, so that's when we bang on about women-only services” Michelle

These are examples of how the unelected women are representing specific women's interests (young women, assaulted women). In both cases, the community leaders have identified important state spaces where decisions will be made that impact on their constituency, and they have taken steps to ensure that they are able to influence policy and represent their women's interests. These claims illustrate the legitimising value of their institutional affiliations and their specialist expertise, but also indicate the salience of their overlapping 'stakeholder' claim (Saward 2010, p.99)– their organisations are dealing with the women's interests they represent, often with many years' experience, and as such have a stake in the development of policy, or decisions about resources for services.

Two other unelected women described how they acted as representatives for more vulnerable groups of women, in order to secure resources:

“The Roma women's group that are constituted, I supported them to get funding ... to be able to do something around domestic violence, to equip themselves to understand” Ruby

“So our organisations got together and campaigned to get (the) Council and the PCC and the health organisations to commit to funding them” Michelle

These examples highlight how the representational role can be presented in different ways, which plays into the challenges facing unelected but also elected representatives – can 'support' or 'campaigning' be understood as a form of representing? But the women are 'acting for' in these examples, which involves being acknowledged as their representative, in order to speak on their behalf and in their interests, by the state actors.

Another respondent gave two examples of how she had represented women's interests in settings where she sought to develop or defend provision for her constituency of women:

“Now she's (the local PCC) set up her own rape scrutiny panel, where we actually look at the cases that the police have worked with, commenting on, you know, best practice” Rachel

“(they) said *‘oh we never understood why that's a problem to a female victim’* but it's just obvious to me and it's obvious to the women I work with, so I suppose I do quite a bit of stuff around that“ Rachel

The stakeholder representative claim is clearly indicated, alongside Rachel's "formative experiences" of working with raped and assaulted women, providing legitimacy to her surrogate representations on behalf of the wider constituency of such women. In other cases, women explained how their representations were creating new avenues for women's interests to be represented:

"I got asked to go and you know, be on the stakeholder group where they interview all the candidates. That would have never happened years ago"
Rachel

"I think it's like providing an opportunity for women, who may have seen themselves as more feminist in the past, but recently it's all been a no-no, hasn't it? Encouraging women to actually kind of express that stuff"
Flora

The respondents also spoke about who they represent to, and how their accumulation of knowledge, experiences and relationships shape those representations:

"I think I'm aware of relationships, I'm aware of power relationships, I'm aware of where to go, I'm aware of when not to go, and I've learnt the hard way, you know ... So who has got the influence to do the things, some of that is through personal knowledge"
Eva

"obviously I've been in the job (many) years, I know people who work at the council, who I trust, and who know me, and we get back to that – individuals. Who do you work with? do you work with a structure, a system? or do you work with individuals?"
Doris

"I've been around for a long time, yes, people know me and I think that that probably does help"
Flora

"we knew how to operate because I'd been chair of Labour party constituency, so I knew how things operated. So that gives you a whole set of knowledge about who's who and what's what, and how to get things done"
Linda

For these women, the context in which they are representatives 'acting for' has different gendered dimensions. One woman highlighted the increasingly competitive environment for the voluntary sector, despite which the connections across the women's sector are being utilised to strengthen their claims as legitimate representatives of women's interests:

"mostly women and (whether it's) violence against women or Asian women, so they're coming together to form partnerships. Some of it is about trying to keep the, can I use this term? the big boys ... the big aggressive organisations out, they're more likely to engage in that way. Not everybody, but I do see different behaviours and (exhales), I don't know how it can't be gender"
Eva

This illustrates how the contracting culture is doubly disadvantageous to the local women's sector, in that it is not only the economics but the gendered politics of the situation which will affect how (and whether) women's interests will be met. Faced with much larger generic voluntary organisations (and quasi-voluntary ones) competing to win contracts for previously specialised women's services, the women's sector risks losing its basis for representative claim-making in tandem with losing its resources for provision of services (Butler and Travis 2011; Kelly 2016).

And another respondent, who described how everyday situations provided opportunities for micro representations on behalf of women:

“so I happened to be out on a social occasion and bumped into the chair of governors from that school, who I know through other things and I said oh, I was at the women's group today and they were saying blah blah blah. I then got an email from the woman who's responsible for running it, saying can I come and talk to their women, we'll see how we can make it more accessible for the women who want to use it. So that's like for the kids, so it's not a woman's issue you know, but it's affecting women. And I kind of knew, if I mentioned it to (her), she wasn't just going to let it lie” Ruby

This example shows the range of representational acts that are available to community based leaders who operate at strategic levels, and also at a local neighbourhood level. They are able to create opportunities to represent women's interests to state actors wherever they find them, and are heard as legitimate representatives for those interests. This connectedness is a feature of the women's sector, with a variety of forms. In this locality, a number of these women community leaders referred to the local Women's Network:

“we've got a (name of) women's network and they're working on .. with women's organisations and trying to ... that whole thing about the need for women's space, in particular working with girls, the need for separate things, the push, the work about violence against women and girls, so we've tried to do that” Eva

“the women's network, I mean they do quite systematic gathering of information so all of that would get added into that. So I'm trying to get, sometimes we have women's network meetings here right, and I'm trying to get some women to attend but they can't, because it's not what they want to do” Ruby

Another community leader described her strategy regarding wider networks involving men:

“I've consciously joined some groups because I can see they're so male dominated and so would join, just to get a female perspective there. Voluntary sector networks for example, when we were trying to get (something) off the ground, all the folks who stepped forward were men ...

so I just thought, I'd better get myself in there then or it's just going to, we'll all get knocked over by the testosterone at the end of it all (laughing)" Ciara

The gendered differences in men's attitudes and behaviour was discussed as part of thinking about women-only or mixed gender representational experiences.

Another woman gave an example of how she responds to the attitudes of some male colleagues towards her:

"I am challenged as a chief exec so if - and I never normally say when I'm in meetings '*I'm (name) and I'm the chief exec of (project)*' - but every so often I will bring out that title to try and make sure I'm on an equal playing field with some of the other chief execs. And for me, it's like a title. I'm not bothered about it but it does open doors, and that's what really frustrates me because it should be about who you are and what you can bring to the table, yeah"
Susan

And another woman community leader describing the male trustees:

"it's almost like, when we have men on the board, they come on with different attitudes to the women who come on. It's kind of like, they come on and they're much more formal, or they feel like they're a boss" Ruby

"We only seem to get men who (pause), they're generally, they're full of their own self-importance right, and they're not really involved in the discussions that the women are. So it may be that we exclude men, so we're back to all women again yeah, and it works better with all women" Ruby

Most of the women respondents were involved with the local women's network and many of them were leading or support women-only provision. This is increasingly contested and one woman spoke about the challenge at a local level and representing women's interests:

"there's a real risk that (it's) really going down this kind of gender-blind route and it's just not ok. So I would find myself consciously talking about- well, from the perspective of a woman who might use these services, we need to be sure that this and this and this, is taken into account" Ciara

"I've been in situations where I've felt these waters are muddied here. Decisions have been made which actually disadvantaged three women's organisations in (area), or potentially damaged three women's organisations, except the three of us got together and fought it" Ciara

Unelected women representatives can and do act collaboratively, sometimes specifically because of their recognition that as women representing women's interests, theirs is a contested, fragile status:

"I think you can be shot down, or set up to be shot down, so if you have a particular opinion, or challenge or say I'm always presenting the young women's voices and views, so it's '*oh (she) will always do that.*'" Susan

They recognise the risk (and in some cases have had the experience) of being sidelined by influential actors:

“if I became associated with a mantra which was ‘*what about women?*’, there is the, not that I find anything wrong with that mantra, but people are then very quick to dismiss you as almost like a one trick pony – ‘*oh that’s all you’ve got to say*’ Ciara

These challenges indicate that their “specialist expertise” can be overturned on occasion to de-legitimise their representative claims, and women community leaders adopt a range of tactics to address these potentially adverse situations:

“Sometimes I think you get dismissed because they expect you to say what you’re gonna say ... so you do get stereotyped. So it’s good if another person said it, and vice versa. One of my colleagues always presents the homelessness issue, (so) I might present it on their behalf and they’ll back me up on a young woman’s issue” Susan

“I consciously made a decision to make sure our knowledge, expertise and capability in relation to health and wellbeing was known, right. So I didn’t at every turn talk about women. I would when it was clear that there was a need for that but I would talk, I would engage in those (wider) issues” Ciara

In Banaszak’s (2010) discussion of how feminist activists operate, she makes a distinction between tactics and strategies:

“Tactics are the specific means employed ... while strategies are longer term and more comprehensive plans of action focused on achieving a specific goal or set of goals” (p.117)

The tactics described above by the respondents represent two different approaches. The first is ‘swapping’ key interventions with other voluntary sector actors: if you represent my women’s interests, I’ll represent your homelessness. The second tactic is an example of ‘smuggling in’ women’s interests under a broader theme, such as health issues – a version of ‘stealth’ representation.

There is clearly a contradiction in being legitimised as a representative for women’s interests because of their expertise and frontline accountability to those women, and being diminished – or de-legitimised - as someone who *only* represents women’s interests.

These tactics, as well as specifically addressing the challenges, illustrate a wider legitimisation of these representative claims – the women representatives are embedded in broader networks of voluntary organisations, and also within the structures for advancing broader themes (such as health and wellbeing) where they represent women’s interests. One woman who has been involved with many

campaigns over the years, described their tactics which have had the additional outcome of giving her a network of contacts. She explained how she (and others) would engage with elected representatives, sometimes targeting people that they already know, and who might be sympathetic to their representations:

“(we) decided to campaign against it and I suppose there were about 10, 15 people and we used to go out and we lobbied councillors and we went to see councillors personally that were on the transport committee. Yes, the five boroughs because all the five boroughs were involved” Linda

“so it was quite friendly. We have got a good relationship with one or two people who have the same political views as us” Linda

She also described how these initial representations to elected politicians, can then develop into relationships with the most influential actors:

“it was the campaigning that has created the group and has made us, not *very* widely known publicly, but it has built a relationship with the councils right. So we've got a relationship with the movers and shakers on some of the councils, most of the councils right, to see all of the leaders of the councils and talk to them, and so and so” Linda

This example underscores the co-legitimising potential of a political party (and its members, elected or not) if it wishes to operate in reflexive mode (Saward 2010), as mentioned above, since it needs the legitimate unelected or informal representatives as allies to confirm its reflexivity as legitimate. And, another respondent acknowledged the importance of allies for support when representing women's interests:

“for me it's worth having a few allies within this field of work. So for example, if it's to do with the health and welfare of women, and young women, when I know that I've got one of my, another colleague in the room, I know that if I say something that's about challenge, I will get a challenge back-up, and vice versa. So I think that understanding's absolutely crucial in this field”
Susan

These are examples of unelected women adopting tactics, which utilise existing relationships, and create new ones, with elected representatives and others, in order to progress women's interests.

Another feature of the respondents' data was the extent to which the state (elected or appointed) representatives invite the unelected to represent women's interests, and the range of situations that involves. Newman (2012) has described the 'invited spaces' where governmental actors invited non-elected representatives into partnership and other governance structures, or advisory and consultative bodies,

and this concept may be useful here. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the offers from the state comprise formal institutional opportunities:

“I sit on probably about five or six different strategic partnerships ... so they get direct information from a service provider that tells them ... exactly what’s happening, with young women, on the streets of (town)” Susan

“Oh I’m the rape woman now, yeah, so that’s how I sometimes tend to get selected for things like the CPS panel (or) the violence against women and girls’ scrutiny panel” Rachel

“I get involved with the local authority in their domestic violence and sexual violence forum and I’m seen within that forum as the specialist voice” Michelle

“So we have participated in a number of reviews ... because we work with, we’re representing a body of women who have a specific issue and we need you to remember these women” Michelle

“The elected members ... invited a range of professionals to go and speak to scrutiny panel ... (about) the needs of young people, and particularly young women” Susan

There are also opportunities, connected to the institutions but less formalised, where elected and unelected women can make representations to each other, which might be described as semi-institutional:

“We have a meeting, it’s an informal meeting not within the party structures ... where councillors can come together ... and women activists” Eva

“I’m very, very involved in North East Women’s Network” Ruby

There are also informal arrangements, which evidence how non-elected women work to develop or maintain connections with elected women, or women who are other state actors:

“I do use them quite often, and quite often it’s with other women, and other women in positions of, like, power, or authority, or commissioning” Susan

“Yes, I have a - I rely on that network, probably more than the official network, which is quite interesting“ Susan

Coffee and cake: “It’s that thing around women and food, which I will acknowledge, you know, (is) a way of actually meeting people, so I tend to meet people outside the formal structures” Eva

And finally, there are the community connections, often historic, which provide an invisible underpinning to the more apparent connections:

- through feminist activism and events

- membership of the same political party or trades union; or through previous community work or local community projects: *“I’ve been around for a long time, yes, people know me and I think that that probably does help”* (Flora)
- through other women and feminist actors

One of the unelected respondents provided examples of her ongoing connections with elected representatives, simply as part of her describing her long history of local activism, particularly around women’s issues. She is experienced at identifying influential people and ensuring that they get involved:

“Of course (Cabinet Member) comes to our meetings and she’s brilliant in many ways and so maybe, I suspect having her in the group is actually quite important, because then it gives the ok to certain officers” Flora

But also, these are women that she knows, so she is well aware of those who would be interested in the activities or representations that she is involved with:

“I mean (the MP) has come to some of our events as well, if invited, and we always have a chat when we see each other and all that kind of stuff” Flora

The connectedness of elected and unelected women as evidenced by these bi-directional ‘invitations’ into each other’s space for representation of women’s interests, demonstrates a co-legitimation process which benefits both groups of representatives and provides a range of contexts in which claims for representing women’s interests are being presented, evaluated and then re-presented.

The next section presents data from the unelected representatives illustrating the key features of the relationships and connections which facilitate their representational claims, and provide a level of co-legitimation.

4.4 Unelected Representation: Connections

In order to represent women’s interests, the unelected women undertake representation in a variety of different spaces, with different actors. They develop strategies and build relationships in order to maximise their representational outcomes. They have a relationship with state institutions, which includes the elected representatives. These community leaders have to engage with increasingly complex state structures.

One respondent described an offer from local councillors for her to represent young women’s interests: “the elected members, part of the scrutiny committee at the local authority, invited a range of professionals to go and speak to scrutiny panel” (Susan).

This respondent is a diligent advocate and representative for young people's concerns, and has many years of experience dealing with the public sector and the world of local government. She understands what the role of scrutiny panel is, including the opportunities and limits that there are in relation to her aim of representing young women's interests. She is therefore able to make use of the representative opportunity, not only to 'speak for' the young women - utilising her 'institutional affiliation' and 'social location' (Dovi 2012) to legitimate these claims - but also as someone who has a good understanding of how her intervention might be utilised by the elected representatives:

"from that meeting I was able to say, and to share the issues that young people are presenting especially young women, to us as an organisation, to those ward councillors, who then hopefully would influence the officers of the council to say that they are in touch with what's going on. So I think it fuels them with information sometimes so they can challenge what's going on from the officers' point of view" Susan

This unelected representative is aware of the tensions that are sometimes present within local government, between different state actors, such as politicians and officers, and she is conscious of how to negotiate these (an example of 'specialist expertise' (Saward 2010), and to make use of the influence that the elected representatives have (as councillors) to advance the substantive representation of young women's issues, in a forum where her ability to influence has to be mediated through them.

Another respondent described the direct relationship between herself as an unelected community leader and the elected ward councillors: "Yes, they've all been here a long time and then in (ward), we've got a good rapport with them" Ruby

She provided more detail about the relationship:

"we don't have a strategy as such but we email him if we've got issues right, and he'll follow them up ... but he's there if we need him, do you know what I mean?" Ruby

And then about the three ward councillors:

"(Name 1) - he's another local councillor right, and him and (name 2) don't get on, so you've got to manage those relationships. And then (name 3) is really good, she's a mum. So we've got relationships" Ruby

This last quote illustrates a gender difference (which might be unique to this group of elected councillors) but the acknowledgement by the community leader that they have to "manage those relationships" between the two male councillors is strikingly different to the easy way the relationship with the one woman councillor is framed.

The former indicates an additional task for the community leader, in that the broken relationship between the men requires 'managing' – an indication of the extra workload that falls to women, and in particular the emotional management tasks which are related to the behaviours of male colleagues.

Whereas the relationship with the one woman councillor is framed in a more straightforward way – she is described as being 'really good' and alongside this, is positioned as a mother. In other circumstances and by other actors, this could be a diminishment of her status, as with the elected representative in the previous chapter, who was criticised by her male peers for perceived failings in her wife/mother role, and assumed to be unsuitable as a councillor because she had young children. However, for this community leader motherhood is a positive characteristic of the women she represents, and supporting women to negotiate the obstacles they face as women and as mothers is a primary feature of the work undertaken in her organisation. For this representative, there are gender dimensions to her relationships with the local elected representatives, and a legitimacy based on 'formative experiences' (Dovi 2012).

A number of respondents in considering their relationship with elected representatives., were reminded of their involvement with women's policy initiatives linked to various political institutions. One respondent in particular talked about her experiences as part of the local council's women's committee.

In the late 1980s, there were two councils on Tyneside that had a Women's (Issues) sub-committee (Stokes 2011 p.105). These were "a formal part of local government and bound by the relevant rules and regulations" (Stokes 2005, p.188); for instance when they were first established, the councillors and community members each had a vote, plus there were non-voting members. But after a legislative change in 1989, the co-opted members – the local women and community representatives – were "debarred" from voting (ibid, p.237) which created some tensions. The culture of each different council and the skills of their lead officer varied – some afforded a great deal of influence to their community representatives, valuing their contributions and effectively treating them as equal members, but others were more circumspect, and community members reported that they felt their inclusion was 'tokenistic' (Halford 1988 p.254). But the committees achieved a great deal, addressing childcare provision and violence against women, as well as providing training, support and funding for women's issues; and they were trailblazers for working across departmental boundaries, placing women's issues front and centre

of local authority policy and provision, and also for engaging the community. However, they had their detractors, including many councillors (Welsh and Halcli, 2003) and by 1995 nearly all of the committees had been dissolved or restructured into generic equalities committees (Stokes 2005, p.190).

The local community representative in this study reflected on the local committee as having a considerable impact in terms of advancing women's interests. She observed that the committee had a strong presence within the council and that this meant it had power: "yes, very powerful committee yes" (Linda). Wendy Stokes (2005) has noted that:

"They were an anomaly within local government, because their brief was not the management of a statutory duty, such as Education or Planning, but the scrutiny of other departments. They were established to monitor policies and practices" (p.187)

And this power had a long reach – like other council women's committees, its agenda was not confined to a limited menu of 'women's issues' and small grant-making decisions, it was constituted in such a way that it effectively had a scrutiny role over the policies of other committees:

"the women's issues committee was much more powerful internally I think, because it was vetting every decision of the council right. It had to be vetted on the basis of - was it lowering pavements? was it improving lighting? was it employing women, bringing more women into senior positions?" Linda

These committees were in place over thirty years ago, yet the experiences of women who sat on them (whether as elected or community representatives) still have resonance today, and provide a legitimisation based on that shared 'formative experience' (Dovi 2012). These early experiences of working together (albeit within the constraints of local government structures) are remembered by those women among my respondents, and the relationships, achievements and conflicts of those days still to some extent shape the connections, reputations and activities of women representatives (both elected and unelected) today. In fact, there are some social connections which go back years because some women have lived in the same area, and been active in women's politics for a long time:

"(a leading councillor) I mean she knows me, that helps probably, that oiled the wheels right. I knew her" Linda

Sometimes the link is more directly through a shared membership:

"not as a friendship but - I suppose I've been in the Labour Party, I've been in (for many years) so I know all these characters who are the links" Linda

This apparently obvious, but sometimes overlooked, component in the web of social relations (political party membership) functions as a network between elected and unelected women in a local area, especially where there is a women's group or network for the members. Such networks can provide a form of co-legitimation for the members, whereby the shared history, values and current concerns equate to a common experience of 'social location', one of the criteria suggested by Dovi (2012) for 'a good representative'. The Labour Women's Sections are particularly strong, as mentioned in Chapter 2, and provide a social and support mechanism for women representatives. The same unelected respondent, although located firmly 'outside' the state demonstrates a strong commitment to increasing the number of elected women:

“trying to get more women councillors, more women governors because I was involved in the training of women governors right, trying to get through there as well” Linda

She recognises the importance of having more women in these state roles, despite her 'outsider' position, as she has direct experience of the value of strengthening alliances between elected and unelected women in order to increase the substantive representation of women. When asked if she thinks it makes a difference to have women in political positions, she highlighted their importance as a source of getting women's interests prioritised by the state: “oh, I think it definitely makes a difference” (Linda).

She was not the only respondent to highlight the relevance of women holding political representative positions, in order to push representational claims for women's interests.

4.4.1 Inter-connections: Women Representatives

Respondents were asked about their representative connections and the women provided information which highlighted the connecting factors of being women, and of being feminists.

What's gender got to do with it?

One respondent spoke of her conviction to prioritise working with women:

“well, why wouldn't I do it with women? why wouldn't I help women to succeed?” Eva

And she also referred to the culture of her organisation being a continuance of the previous leader's approach:

“also I think (my predecessor) was a strong woman - would she call herself a feminist, I don't know - who ran the organisation before for a long time. So it's never been a barrier, being a woman working here” Eva

Another respondent described her interactions with both unelected and elected representatives:

“Well, (long pause) I think in the main it tends to be women fighting for women, I have to say ...” Susan

“From my point of view I've always experienced female politicians as being much more sort of like thinking, taking it forward, moving it forward, and the male politicians sort of, I think, ticking the box” Susan

“I met with three ward councillors that were concerned about having detached youth work in their wards ... the two female councillors were can do and did do, and the male councillor didn't” Susan

This chimes with the findings from Bochel and Briggs' research with women councillors, that “women have a tendency to 'do' as opposed to 'being' – that women get on with the job of representing their constituents” (2000, p.67).

Some women referred to women in other elected positions (not councillors but local MPs and the Northumbria PCC):

“Yeah, I think it's because it's a woman, and it's because it's a woman who's very well known for her interest in violence against women and girls” Rachel

“I think she has things which she is incredibly passionate about ok, and committed to, and it's very clear when you're talking to her” Rachel

“In terms of key people, I mean she's also keen on women's equality so all that kind of stuff, and she's been to all our international women's day events” Flora

“we have good links with (the MP), she's good to the project and we're good to her, and we have good links with female Labour councillors as well” Doris

Another woman who's been an activist in the area for many years, noted that women are getting elected in greater numbers, and also that a woman known for her commitment to women's issues, holds the elected PCC role:

“I'm not saying they're all feminist but look at the number of women MPs in the North East, yep. There wasn't one 7, 8 years ago I think” Linda

“that's what so interesting, that you've got Vera Baird (woman PCC) in that role yeah. I mean that's phenomenal in the North East.” Linda

And one woman contrasted the response from a local woman MP with that of the men:

“if you present Chi (Onwurah, woman MP) with a concern or a query, she listens and the next thing is, you hear it being raised in Parliament ... but we didn't get the same from other, male politicians” Susan

Another respondent identified shared values and approach as determining who her allies are, rather than gender:

“so I actually have a very good alliance with a male colleague, but only again because (they're) like-minded, they get it, they see through the political agenda, they look at the power imbalances, the gender imbalances and they're very, very open-minded. So might be a couple of guys, but mostly women” Susan

This respondent was clear that the gender of her allies was not irrelevant, but rather a reflection of those values, and she clearly linked the shared value base with more women colleagues than with men.

Other respondents also discussed values and approach in terms of their representational relationships and connections, and the extent to which this is about a feminist perspective.

What's feminism got to do with it?

One respondent clarified that for her, it is not about whether someone identifies as a feminist, it is about the values that they demonstrate:

“so if, in terms of making a decision to collaborate or something with someone, it's about the kind of values that you would want to see coming from someone - that they are inclusive and that they are non-discriminatory. So whether or not someone says I'm a feminist, or someone says we need to do our best for people we support, whether that's women, or women and men” Ciara

She explained this in relation to her experience of working with women from a wider range of backgrounds:

“If I'm honest, I don't feel in order to have a good and productive and collaborative working relationship with a woman, that she has to identify herself as being a feminist right, because having worked in different cultural contexts, where the words - I mean, where women don't have a word in their local language for feminism, because there isn't a word for it ... Because it's whether or not what they're saying rings true to me, is valid, rather than whether or not it's feminist” Ciara

Other unelected women referred to local elected women that they had connections with, in terms of their feminism:

“They're all - well you know - they're all feminists, all very effective in the roles that they've had” Rachel

“We've been contacted by one councillor ... because she was particularly interested in this topic area” Michelle “Yeah, she's a feminist”

As well as feminists, some elected women were defined as ‘not feminist’ (Welsh and Halcli, 2003). For some respondents, long-term activism also means long memories, and those who have transgressed are remembered for that, in contrast with those women who have maintained their focus on women's priorities:

“some, though not all of them. I think (name) is very good on women's issues but there are some women councillors that didn't want to come to our women's council, that were totally against it, right, were keen to help, working to help get it closed down” Linda

“they weren't feminists, nope” Linda

“I'm talking about Labour party members who were not feminists”

“they don't worry about helping other women up the ladder, or so-called ladder”

“well, they didn't participate in the women's council for a start. And they weren't keen to have a woman to be MP” Linda

But another basis of feminist values is a connecting factor:

“She's very supportive of our ideas. I don't know to what extent she would call herself a feminist - she probably would actually, but clearly an activist in the Labour Party, so that's good” Flora

“Whoever had been in power, we'd have done the same thing. The issue is the broader issue about improving women's situation and of course feminist awareness as well is very much at the back of all our minds” Flora

One woman summed up her view of what underpins the representation of women's interests and the connections between unelected and elected women:

“I think it is, I think it is about feminist politics” Ruby

These twin push factors, of being women and feminist, can be understood as critical in both determining who makes claims for women's interests, and also how much legitimacy they are perceived to have. Neither is required – there are non-feminists who make claims for women's interests (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000) and there are men who do so too – however the combination of both women and feminism in political representation provides legitimation for claims about women's interests. This is based on Saward's criteria of speaking for ‘wider interests and new voices’ (2010) and Dovi's normative concept of the ‘good representative’ (2012) underpinned by “vital contributions” and “multiple sources of authority” (p.65) which offer varying degrees of legitimacy, both for elected (formal) and informal representatives.

Dovi (2012) in particular has identified 'intangible goods' as one of her evaluative criteria, and feminist goals can be perceived as meeting that criteria of "worthwhile and good ends" (p.63) – goals such as challenging dominant narratives around rape, sexual harassment or domestic violence – and indicating the legitimization of their organisations and their advocates. In addition, this feminist perspective, located as it is within dense networks of accountability, can be seen as evidence of a 'deeper group morality', and therefore legitimate as an example of Saward's "deeper roots" (2010 pp.95-96).

Women also described the multi-layered state institutions they are representatives to, and the relationships they create and nurture in order to help them to effectively navigate the sometimes opaque processes.

They also participate in semi-formal and informal structures, including the networks which exist at the margins of the state and civil society. Examples include trade union women's sections, work-based networks such as the Women Youth Workers' Group, the women-specific North East Women's Network, and political party-based women's groups:

"I'm very, very involved in North East women's network, because obviously they're saying about women, the thing about women being more disadvantaged than men, right" Ruby

"I've also been involved in north east women's network right, and there we have been pushing issues very directly, focusing on, challenging others to not be gender-blind but to have a gendered approach to what they're doing" Ciara

"I mean we've got a Northern Women's Network and they're working on, with women's organisations and trying to ... that whole thing about the need for women's space, in particular working with girls, the need for separate things" Eva

Some of these elect (or choose) women to represent the network members to other organisations at different levels (regional, national), leading to some unelected women representatives holding elected roles in other contexts:

"and then through the north east women's network, using the might of bringing either women-only or women-focused organisations together" Ciara

Respondents also described connections with other critical actors (mainly other women) in a variety of civil society and state settings. This respondent has identified colleagues who are allies and also act for women's interests when she will not be present:

“I meet two other chief execs, female chief execs who I think, are like-minded, who have other opportunities to inform and influence decision-makers and policy-makers and elected members, especially around women’s issues again. And I think it’s good to have like-minded colleagues where you feel if you’re in a meeting, you’ll get backing from them, and vice versa, so I think that always is good to do” Susan

And a respondent who was involved with the TUC Women’s Committee:

“the other thing I was part of, which was incredibly hierarchical, was the TUC women’s committee. So I represented the (name of trade union) on the women’s committee” Linda

who was also involved with the Women’s Section within the Labour Party:

“it was mainly, we tried to influence Labour Party policy yeah, on equal pay and all of that. (The) Sex Discrimination Act had come in but it was how it was used - it was about ‘equality of opportunity’. I hate that word” Linda

These institutional elements, such as hierarchical structures and the non-emancipatory language of policy, can be obstacles (or irritants) to ‘outsider’ activists, even within non-state institutions.

One complaint that activists make of political institutions (whether state, as in local government, or civil society, as in trade unions or political parties) is that their structures and procedures become barriers rather than facilitators of outcomes. This is another area of politics that the increased descriptive representation of women is proposed to change – the transformation of the institutional structures (the rules that regulate how politics is done) and its culture - the informal rules and norms which also shape how politics is done, but in more subtle generally unwritten ways. Feminist institutionalists have begun to investigate and reveal the gendered nature of these ‘rules-in-use’ (Lowndes et al, 2006) but there is much more to be done.

One unelected woman was confident that the presence of women (with the corresponding value base and commitment to women’s interests) as critical actors in these complex state institutions (Weldon 2002) is what retains a focus on issues of concern to women:

“my professional opinion is that if there are not women in positions of you know, strategic partnerships or opportunities like that, it would slide back” Susan

Another unelected woman can build new relationships by recognising that has something that she can provide that the state actor needs or wants, and that making use of this to strengthen this relationship has benefits for them both, and also then for the wider partnership:

“I think the guy who is the classic formal chief executive, NHS chief executive, he can't, he doesn't know what to make of me, he actually quite likes me in spite of me almost, cos I come out with lots of information and do you know this is happening, that is happening, he'll say to me, can you explain to me why this happens, so I can offer him informality, and a space that he perhaps doesn't get with other people, like councillors” Eva

Another example of the inter-connections is described next, where an unelected woman explains how an elected partner used his influence to make a decision which suited both parties, and in the process confirmed trust between the two groups. A partnership between politicians and activists had to have a chair, and a councillor, in a more powerful position, made the selection:

“because the guy responsible for transport in (local council) knew the person, he's worked with our chair. He said she could be the chair of it, so it's like a partnership right which seems, it works very well” Linda

and he chooses an activist who satisfies both groups, because he has confidence in them due to a previous positive experience of being employed together: he sees her as legitimate based on a shared formative experience (Dovi 2012) as “she'd worked with (the councillor) years ago, so it was an easy relationship so he trusted her” (Linda).

There were other examples, like these from two respondents who mentioned allies. The first stated “because it doesn't harm to have a few males, men in the room, that back you” (Susan). In this case, the importance of gender is presented in a different way, in that it is relevant that the intervention is on occasion, made by a man. This community leader is not only referring to men being supportive when women speak up for women's interests, but more specifically, the tactic of having men sometimes represent the interests of women, rather than it being the same women representatives doing it. These women recognise that getting the attention of those they are trying to influence, requires a change in the usual practice – a different speaker explained:

“you would know the people who would be responsive to that yeah, because you wouldn't phone some people up. It's people that you know, almost who've got the same political leanings as you” Ruby

These quotes reference the importance of shared values in strategising around representation for women's interests, and show how unelected women utilise a range of tactics to negotiate and maintain their status within complex institutional processes, and their relationships with state actors. Part of their legitimacy in these

situations is their stakeholder role, combined with their specialist credentials (Saward 2010).

One respondent spoke of maximising her representational role through pro-actively identifying opportunities with those state institutions:

“I use every opportunity I can, because they are limited, to be able to look at the work that we do, and the issues that are being presented, to be able to inform and influence policy makers and decision makers. So that they're hopefully making the decisions with the best information that they do have, and my role, as a community leader, is to always look at those opportunities and think, there's an opportunity to talk about what's happening with some of the findings here or something I've heard, or a piece of research that's just come our way, so I always use that as an opportunity to talk work” Susan

Other unelected women reported connections and relationships:

“I've become more aware of it recently, in terms of realising oh yes, those people are always sitting together and talking, in a particular corner of the room - they're also really involved, heavily involved in the Labour Party” Ciara

“I've met three Cabinet Members in the last four weeks, since Cabinet was announced. And ... I met somebody else on Saturday, so I will unashamedly use those connections for what I think is the benefit” Eva

Another respondent expressed her concerns that her presence might not be at the right level for influencing the decision-making:

“I sometimes struggle, when we're subsidising this process and *we're legitimising it by being there*, and then I find out in the course of the group that actually, there's a higher level group that exists” Ciara (my emphasis)

She highlights the multi-level and opaque processes which frustrate her intention to be an effective representative, and this indicates that there may be 'false' spaces of representation. Cornwall (2004) reminds that every 'invited space' is situated within “institutional landscapes as one amongst a host of other domains of association into and out of which actors move” (p.9) and that not all elements of this will be (or become) apparent to these invited community leaders. But the respondent's proposition that the unelected representatives might provide legitimation for a state process which is perhaps more akin to a 'swamp' (Taylor et al 2004), extends questions about the legitimacy of unelected representatives. These aspects of legitimacy are explored further in the final discussion in Chapter 6.

Others recognise workload difficulties for elected representatives, and indicate that unelected representatives can help:

“I think there is a willingness for elected members to listen but I suppose it’s the capacity that they have to listen to what’s being, what can be presented, and I think they’re overwhelmed sometimes, with the amount that they’re given, and they just need to cut through that and hear what’s happening, what are the issues that young people are presenting, what’s the current like, trends” Susan

And how it can be difficult for the unelected when dealing with the state, and how they can create supportive mechanisms for their mutual benefit:

“we’d had a particularly difficult meeting with one of the officers in the local authority ... and at the end of that I said shall we just go for a coffee and debrief ... And then we went for a coffee, and for me that, it’s precious time, but instead of thinking through in meetings what you want to say, you can do some preparation, so when you’re met with those sort of challenges again, you feel you’ve got a collective voice, and your colleagues’ll back you. Whereas often I think in this day and age, you’re running from one meeting to another to another and you’re not quite sure where people are sitting, so for me it’s worth having a few allies within this field of work” Susan

And one respondent specifically referenced her Board members as a resource:

“obviously that’s where my Board of Trustees come in ... cos they’re influential with them groups (elected women) ... to a certain extent you have to have Board members who operate in the same circles as you but, it’s good to have Board members who operate in different circles from you because then you have a wider influence” Doris

This second example illustrates the overlapping areas of connection and influence that unelected women have and have access to. And, this encapsulates that for unelected representatives, as mentioned in other examples above, there is additional, often unrecognised, work involved in identifying allies, and the resources to nurture those relationships, which can provide additional layers of legitimacy, through the institutional affiliations that such allies have (Dovi 2012).

4.5 Summary

These women community leaders are unelected representatives for women’s interests, both as an intrinsic part of their role and at the invitation of state actors, including elected political representatives.

Within the women’s sector, and the wider voluntary sector, they are identified as legitimate representatives for women’s interests, because of their acknowledged role in leading a women’s organisation (institutional affiliation) or their role in prioritising women’s interests within the broader envelope of their organisation’s work (stakeholding, and surrogacy for wider interests). This is based on their specialist expertise, authenticity and frontline accountability to the women (social location) whose interests they represent. Some of these unelected women share

characteristics or life experiences with the women they work with (formative experiences), and this provides another layer of legitimacy as they are seen to be 'speaking as' (a form of 'mirroring'), not just 'speaking for' (Slim 2002).

They also experience being authorised as legitimate representatives by the state, which authorises them to represent women's interests in a variety of 'invited spaces' (Newman 2012), based on the utility value of their expertise, and the symbolic value of their inclusion as part of a diverse public. The unelected representatives know that theirs is a contested, fragile status, in relation to the state. The basis of their legitimacy can also be the basis of challenge as they experience being patronised or dismissed (de-legitimising their claims) as women who *only* represent women's interests. The 'invited spaces' are often complex time-consuming sites of decision-making, and the community leaders have had to develop strategies and identify allies in order to navigate these, maintain their independent and 'untainted' status and to circumvent the challenges they face.

They also experience gendered norms, behaviours and expectations from state and voluntary sector actors, which can have de-legitimising effects.

They negotiate these with the support of networks (formal and informal), where both gender and feminism are central to the connections between women representatives; and they utilise their connectedness as a potential co-legitimation tool against the challenges they face as representatives for women's interests.

The next chapter presents data from the elected respondents, and discusses their views and experiences of being representatives, paying attention to questions of legitimacy and gendered dimensions.

CHAPTER 5

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data from the elected representatives, both women and men, and compares these, using literature and original research data to contextualise the gender dimensions and legitimacy of elected representation. The analytical framework introduced in Chapter 1 provides the theoretical basis for examining the data.

In this first section, the views of elected respondents regarding representation are presented and examined for gendered dimensions. The findings and subsequent analysis offer a useful backdrop to the following sections in which the detailed examination of respondents' views of gender, representation and legitimacy is presented, and examined.

5.2 Elected Representation

In this section, elected representation is discussed using the data provided by research respondents. In particular, the gendered aspects of being an elected representative, and their particular emphasis on 'gender balance', are highlighted.

For elected representatives (unlike unelected representatives), their legitimacy is inextricably bound up with the concepts and practices of democracy, whereby democratic elections are held to confer legitimacy upon political representatives. However a gendered analysis of the study findings illustrates how the legitimacy of elected women as political representatives can be contested.

5.2.1 Being Representatives

Being an elected representative is framed by the responsibility to represent their electorate and also, how the representative perceives and undertakes this responsibility. These representatives expressed views about their role and this responsibility, and it is apparent that these are context-dependent - shaped by the policy, practices and expectations of their party and party colleagues.

The elected respondents were almost all 'backbench' (or community) councillors rather than members with Cabinet portfolios. This means that they are expected to

engage more fully with the residents in their area than was perhaps the case in the past, when the committee system linked many more councillors into the policy and decision-making level of the local authority – a move described rather optimistically by the Local Government Association as:

“a welcome opportunity to reshape their role away from bureaucratically-driven, paper-heavy meetings and processes, towards more creative roles, leading and energising their local communities” (2016, p.5)

They do retain a strategic role, as members of full council, which means that these councillors are both ward representatives and also politicians with authority-wide decision-making powers. The relationship between these two ‘levels’ of representation has been studied and different role orientations (e.g. district-level or state-level) proposed, with reference to questions regarding the mandated/independent approach (Eulau et al 1959; Hecllo 1969; Newton 1974; Lepine and Sullivan 2010). The respondents in this study at the local level, are conscious of the ‘local ward/whole borough’ (or ‘local ward/whole city’), debate which is analogous to the ‘district/state’ levels of studies at national level. They report varied views and experiences, interlinked as it is with their responsibilities to different ‘levels’ of constituency, and also that their representative responsiveness is shaped by their knowledge of the heterogeneity of their wards and therefore a multiplicity of constituents’ interests and priorities.

In discussing their ward-level role, some respondents expressed the view that they represent everybody. One respondent in particular emphasised this point:

“It doesn’t matter who they are, I am their representative and I represent them on the council.” Ann

She referenced her political party interests as well, but clarified that these are secondary to the constituents’ views:

“I’m not representing particularly the (party) interests which is, well that’s what, who I am. But I represent everybody.” Ann

“Well, I think that it doesn’t matter that you are, whatever political colour you are, you represent ... (pause) We’ve got 4000 houses in our ward so we represent everybody’s interests, everybody’s problems, everybody’s issues, so it doesn’t matter who they are ...” Ann

This conviction that a local elected representative has to represent everyone in their locality, is given added depth and complexity with the conviction that they have to know what the constituents think:

“but I think, in the end, it’s about all the people on the doorstep - I represent them, need to know what they think, that kind of thing” Sarah

Another respondent drew attention to the constituents’ point of view, suggesting that the representative needs to *understand* their issues:

“from the communities’ end, I guess it might be more important, that they feel they’ve got, they have a representative as it were, wherever they live in the (area) ... understands the particular problems they face or whatever” Dan

This suggests the need for a deeper relationship between the representative and the represented, in that it goes beyond being told what their interests are, to being able to comprehend those interests – knowing what they mean, rather than simply having information about what they are. This emphasises the importance of legitimating criteria such as “social location” (Dovi 2012, p.63). This view leans towards claims that representatives - in particular, elected representatives - should better reflect their constituency (whether in characteristics, experiences or circumstances) and this aspect of representation is explored further in the section that follows this one.

The extent to which a political representative should present the views of the represented, or use their own judgement, when making decisions is often referred to as the trustee/delegate question or the ‘mandate-independence’ dichotomy (Pitkin, 1967) and recognition of this distinction is present in some of the responses:

“It’s about using your understanding and experience on the Council to see what can be done for people in communities” Tom

“Well I think it’s very important to represent peoples’ views even when you don’t agree with them” Barbara

The first respondent understands that they have been elected and that their own ‘understanding and experience’ forms the basis of decision making. This indicates a trustee view of representation, in that the constituents have elected someone (knowing what their views are – party membership, manifesto content, history if they are an incumbent) and place trust in that representative to act in the best interests of the constituents. The second respondent offers a delegate perspective of representation, where the elected individual bases their decision-making on knowing what the electorate think about an issue, in order to act based on those expressed views “*even when you don’t agree with them*” (Barbara). The delegate view is complicated by the diverse make-up of any representative’s constituency, which will result in a broad and sometimes conflicting range of views. The delegate

position therefore also involves having to choose between different constituent perspectives and priorities, in order to decide which to represent, and thus an element of trusteeship will come into play, as described by Newton (1974 p.619). Equally, the trustee position also requires an element of delegate representation, as the elected representative who pays no attention to their constituents, and whose decisions do not chime, at least in some part, with the views from some of their electorate, may find that at election time, they have lost the confidence of the voters. They will be held-to-account through the ballot, and politically through other public channels (e.g. social or traditional media), demonstrating that authorisation is not a static event even for elected representatives, but it is always conditional.

Another elected representative recognised that constituents will have different, sometimes conflicting views, and that these need to be negotiated or at least taken into account:

“it’s probably one of the most diverse wards in the city ... and it’s where I live and what I want, what I’d like to represent, so trading off all those, or coming to the solutions which benefit most people, is very – is a real challenge.” Charlie

And another elected representative emphasised the obligatory nature of an interactive view of representation, in that a representative should find out what their constituents want (so not a pure trustee) and that involves an active engagement with the constituents:

“ *‘how do you represent people?’* Well you can't and I don't think we do, in that sense, but you can't even have any idea of what they're thinking or would like, unless you talk to them” Fiona

One respondent specifically referenced the issue of not only knowing what constituents want, but also balancing the differing priorities that constituents have, and that that is not straightforward:

“the biggest challenge of the whole thing, is making sure what you’re doing in any one circumstance, you’re acting on behalf of the whole community, particularly given the diversity, not just the people who will turn up at public meetings.” Charlie

This notion of representing ‘everybody’ or ‘the whole community’ is clearly easier to articulate than to achieve, given the variety of views and the different emphases that constituents will have within any single ward:

“that’s the massive challenge, to make sure you’re representing everybody and not just the people who are vocal, or one issue.” Charlie

This illustrates the difficulty of applying a delegate/trustee framework to representation – in reality, representatives make use of both aspects. They increasingly look to their constituents and seek out their views, effectively seeking re-authorisation of their representative status. Ideas about a more participatory democracy have gained traction, both as a means to increase access to constituents' views (DETR 1998), and to broaden the range of constituents who engage with their representatives (Lowndes 2004; Ray 2003; Schlozman et al 1995). This inevitably reveals differences between constituents' views, as well as variations and sometimes conflicts between local interests and the authority-wide policies. The Local Government Association (which provides guidance, information and support) describes councillors' role as "community leaders, facilitators and brokers" (LGA 2017, p.3) and that they "will be expected to balance the needs of your local area, your residents and voters, community groups, local businesses, your political party (if you belong to one) and the council." (LGA 2018, p.7). This acknowledgement of the breadth of different constituent groups and the consequent potentially wide range of views provides a rationale for the brokerage role being highlighted, as part of the representative function, both between differing interests and priorities of constituents, and between constituents and 'the council'.

Some representatives in this research study recognise that they may hold different views to those expressed by their electorate, and they may be obliged, on occasion, to represent views or positions that they do not agree with:

"I have to put the points of view of my residents in the ward who are unhappy about the idea and don't want it to go ahead. So I do feel very much that you have to represent their views." Barbara

"you know, everybody's got their own moral framework and the question is, if that is different from the views of the people you represent, what do you do in the circumstance?" Charlie

But also recognition that some of the public are more informed, and expect more of their representatives than perhaps was the case in the last century:

"actually life has changed, and politics has changed and you're far more scrutinised ... and the public is far more demanding, and you're held to account by a variety of groups who are very vocal, some of them, and very well versed in (political activity)" Fiona

This acknowledgement of being 'held-to-account' illustrates how this is an ongoing part of the representative relationship and not a singular event at election time.

Another respondent attempted to describe how they might deal with these dilemmas:

“Sometimes you can find – fudge would be too strong a word - you can find compromises within that, if you feel that you are both representing your views and the views of your constituents when they don’t ... you can find an overlap, where they don’t overlap directly” Charlie

This quote is from an experienced councillor who has served several terms and illustrates some of the complexity in considering who elected representatives speak for (even with a clearly bounded constituency), and how they think about differing views of constituents in relation to their responsibility to represent. Another long-serving councillor acknowledged this dilemma:

“there are potentially perhaps even conflicting interests as well as the different geographical communities within the area and you have to kind of be responsible to, and accountable to all of those, but in the end you have to take decisions for what you think is right, not necessarily what would be the most popular thing.” Dan

This summarises their approach as thinking that they should be a delegate, yet acting in a trustee capacity, because their experience of the complexity of representation has shown the impracticality of the former. It also raises the question of accountability to those heterogeneous constituents, with their differing priorities and interests.

The recognition that constituencies have many components with varied and sometimes conflicting views, then leads to the notion that representatives should reflect these variations in some way; that rather than being neutral conduits of opinion, that they should have experiences or characteristics in common with at least some of the constituents in order to draw on those when forming opinions or making decisions. If elected representatives have to act as trustees rather than delegates, then the basis of their opinion forming needs to reflect to some extent, the wider interests and circumstances of the electorate, which includes those related to gender.

This section has contextualised how elected representatives view their representative role, particularly in relation to accountability to constituents and their views. Increasingly, in public discourse, claims are made that representatives - in particular, elected representatives - should better reflect the diversity of their constituency (whether in characteristics, experiences or circumstances). For scholars of representation, such as Saward and Dovi, political representatives (whether elected or not), can utilise their diverse characteristics and experiences to demonstrate legitimacy, as accountable and authorised representatives. This facet

of representation is explored in the next section, which examines respondents' views regarding gender and their role as elected representatives.

5.3 Does Gender Matter?

The question of gender in relation to elected representatives has been subject to theoretical and empirical studies, but primarily at the national level of politics (Celis et al 2008, p.105), as discussed in previous chapters. In this section, the gender dimensions of elected representation at the local level are explored through an examination of the data from respondents (elected representatives, both women and men) in order to understand whether their gender matters in relation to their legitimacy as a representative.

The electoral areas in this study are multi-member, in that each ward has three seats, which offers opportunities for each ward to have some diversity within the ward 'team' of three councillors. Moving away from all-male wards (with only men as the councillors) has become a focus in recent years, with political parties adopting different strategies to increase the overall number of women councillors and also to ensure at least one woman and one man in each three-councillor ward. This attention to the descriptive representation of women has been successful in some areas, and this study was undertaken in a geographical area which in recent years has achieved gender equity in political representation i.e. equal proportions of elected women and men as councillors (as described in Chapter 2). This set of circumstances provides a new context in which to explore the concept of local representation using gender analysis. This numerical 'gender balance' has been achieved through increasing the numbers of elected women, predominantly via the Labour Party's policy of positive action, using all-women shortlists (AWS). However the use of such quota systems to improve the descriptive representation of women has led to challenges regarding the legitimacy of those elected women, and this is discussed further in this section.

5.3.1 Elected Representatives: Gender

This is an exploratory study of gender and representation, and as such, the interviews evolved over the data collection timeframe - information about this can be found in the Methodology chapter. However, this section is prefaced with a note, because when asking the respondents whether the gender of elected representatives matters, it is self-evident that the precise phrasing of the question,

and who was being asked, would lead to differing responses which of themselves provide an insight into the gendered dimensions of local elected representation.

When asked “Does the gender of elected representatives matter?” in the interviews, the responses received were only about women, from both women and men respondents. Once this was apparent, the question was re-phrased as “Does *your* gender matter as an elected representative?”. This re-phrasing resulted in three types of responses. First, as before, most respondents referred initially just to elected women in their discussion, indicating that the terms gender and women are frequently assumed to be synonymous. Second, women respondents made a strong association between having women as elected representatives and the positive effects for women constituents; they reported that their women constituents are positive about increased numbers of elected women, and also that they raise concerns with the elected women *because they are women*. Third, men respondents did not mention their gender until specifically prompted, and then were unable to articulate what effects or benefits that might have, including those men who were able to describe benefits of having women in elected roles. These responses are considered in relation to questions of legitimacy and representation later in the thesis.

One of the respondents, who acknowledged that the gender of elected representatives does matter, stated “*I think it probably does*” (Fiona), but also suggested that it is part of a wider ‘offer’ of representation with different facets to it:

“maybe it's not so much gender, maybe it's about finding some common ground, whatever that common ground is, or feeling that you can trust someone. If you don't take to somebody, it's quite difficult to talk about some of the very private issues that people bring to you, you know” Fiona

This perception, that it may not be gender so much as a common ground or trust, links to debates about having a more diverse representative body, as that would provide more likelihood of the members of a heterogeneous (and increasingly diverse) constituency seeing a representative with whom they have something in common - or even feel able to trust, especially those marginalised groups whose interests have not hitherto been represented (Williams 1998).

Another respondent made a connection between gender and wider diversity:

“it's having that diversity, definitely that diversity of ideas, that diversity of experience, that different way sometimes of thinking about issues and things” Agnes

In this, they were explicit in seeing gender as part of - and beneficial to - a more diverse representation, in terms of a utility argument i.e. that having women as well as men is part of increasing the diversity of elected representatives in order to deliver better representation. This may be achieved either through engaging with new, previously unrepresented groups to bring unarticulated interests on to the agenda, or having a particular perspective which was missing in a more homogenous representation. Saward has suggested that “wider interests and new voices” may form the basis for legitimate representative claims (2010, p.98).

A number of the elected representatives referred to wider diversity matters in relation to elected representation. For some of them, broadening the range of elected women was highlighted; for others, the discussions about gender flagged up further diversity concerns – the lack of BAME councillors for instance. Some respondents were keen to wave their party’s diversity credentials, such as one of the women respondents who related questions of gendered representation to other diversity characteristics:

“We’re proud that we’ve got a number of BME councillors, we’re approaching a 50/50 ratio male to female and we’ve got LGBT ones” Sarah

Another, long-serving councillor commented on the changing diversity of councillors:

“It’s a different kind of profile, I mean it’s, the age range, and the gender range, and the experience range on the council now, it’s phenomenal. it’s like we’ve always said, that the council should be representative of the whole ... section of society and it blooming well is, you know it really is, but I don’t think we’re using that experience as well as we could” Becca

This acknowledgement - that increased descriptive representation is not an end in itself (no matter how strongly desired) but can bring other benefits - connects a normative claim for justice, “the council *should* be ...” with a disappointment about failing to maximise the utility of a more diverse representative body. The significance of this utility argument is re-visited later in the chapter.

One male councillor linked increased women representatives to the need to diversify elected women:

“also, what sort of women are we getting? It’s great to have more women, but we’ve got to have more working class women, women in employment, (pause) and maybe we need to do more to encourage and facilitate that” Dan

At one reading this can be seen as a call for intersectional interests to be given more prominence and a recognition of the complexity of diversity in relation to

political representation (Celis 2013; Dovi 2002; Mackay et al 1999; Mansbridge 1999). Yet at another level, it might be seen as characteristic of oppositional tactics – seemingly in support of more women but by questioning ‘*which women?*’ (when ‘*which men?*’ is not a question), it is women’s presence itself that appears to be under scrutiny. In an exploration of the resistance to increasing women’s political representation, Joni Lovenduski identified eight types of opponents, including “the *diversity advocates*, who argue that gender is only one of many identities; (and) their mirror image, the *anti-essentialists*, who think that claims for more women ignore the great differences among women” (2012, p.698, emphasis in original). Of course, both of these positions can be framed as supportive of women’s increased participation in politics, but these positions are also utilised to undermine or delegitimise women, and critically, are gendered in that they are rarely applied to male candidates or politicians.

This respondent also lamented the loss of representatives from traditional working class groups:

“well, in my day, there were more councillors who’d been active in the trades unions and (we) had a sort of railways section (laughs) ... (some) were committee chairs and the Lord Mayor and four of them were senior people ... They’ve not been replaced by anybody with that sort of background” Dan

Given the time period he is referring to, these would have been working class men and the reference to the ‘railways section’ confirms this. The suggestion that the increase in women’s descriptive representation has been at the cost of working class men has been made and challenged (Cowley 2013), but persists as a challenge to women – that they displace working class men from elected positions. It is noted that there is a gendered dimension to these claims as the discussion does not point to the over-representation of middle and professional class men in elected positions as a displacement of other groups of men, perhaps because “the ‘archetypal candidate’ which apparently people expect to see in the role is usually white, male, professional and university educated” (Durose et al, 2011, cited in Farrell and Titcombe 2016, p.870). This respondent reiterated his point:

“It’s good to have young, professional people, which many of our colleagues are, if you use the term fairly broadly, but it would also be good to have people with some experience of, I don’t know, driving buses or whatever” Dan

The responses about both women and men as elected representatives, and whether their gender matters, are discussed in the following two sections.

5.3.2 Elected Representatives: Women

All of the respondents stated the importance of having elected women. One woman recalled the women's committee and how her initial opposition to the idea was changed because of her experience as a member:

"I think it can do. I always remember when I first came onto the council I was asked if there were any committees I didn't want to be on and I said women's issues because I didn't think at that time that it was an appropriate thing to have, I thought it was sexist. I did go onto the women's issues committee eventually and I really enjoyed it because there were important issues that were discussed, you know important to women like breast cancer screening, domestic violence, these sort of things and you know, it actually worked very well. Eventually it turned into the equalities committee and it was never as good again and it really did seem to have a specific role"
Barbara

"So I think it can make a difference if you've got mainly women meeting, discussing issues. We did have men on the committee ... the issues we discussed were those of particular relevance to women.

"No, I really started to enjoy the meetings and I was surprised. Initially I felt it was a bit patronising to say that we had to have a specific committee for women's issues and make special allowances for women." Barbara

Another of the women respondents expressed it in relation to her work with residents:

"I didn't really appreciate, until I'd actually been a councillor, how deeply vital it is to have a woman in your ward" Sarah

She described being ambivalent about this prior to her election, but spoke at length from her recent experience, about the very tangible everyday benefits for women in the ward. Like other elected women, she referred in the main to her constituents, in particular the women, and this is explored more fully later in the chapter where substantive representation, or claims to represent particular interests, are examined. The relevance or importance of being a woman was recognised with an emphasis on their role as a conduit for the needs or expectations of the constituents, as in, the women whose interests are to be represented. This section, which considers the descriptive representation of women, finds that a justice (or fairness) argument for more elected women was much less in evidence than a utility argument, among these respondents. For instance, for another elected woman the issue of women's representation is inextricably bound up with her workplace trade unionism and that experience of representation, in gendered terms:

“I come from a workforce (with) eighty-two per cent female-dominated membership, but all they seem to see is men, who are in those positions of authority” Agnes

She is conscious of the gap between the electorate and their representatives which can be seen as part of the ‘democratic deficit’ in that perceptions that elected representatives do not *look like* those they represent are inextricably tied up with ideas that they also do not share the everyday experiences of ordinary people, as evidenced by the ‘price of a pint of milk test’ (Barford, 2012). They do not understand the lives and views of the represented and, it is argued, this diminishes their claim to be able to effectively represent them. In this, the price of milk is a proxy question for having to watch the pennies, or being someone who does mundane tasks like shopping for groceries – effectively, it is "shorthand - or a way of expressing succinctly that a politician may be out of touch" (King, quoted in Barford 2012). Whereas having a shared characteristic, like being a woman, can be assumed shorthand for understanding about women’s life experiences or interests, and (as with the respondent quoted above) sharing other characteristics (such as socio-economic class) offers a capacity for a more closely informed representation analogous with Dovi’s (2012) criteria of “social location”.

This raises questions about whether women can represent women, what women’s interests are and whether there are common interests between the disparate, diverse groups that comprise the category ‘women’. But one area of concern was highlighted by one of the elected women, expressed by women she represents:

“you go into the community, and you suddenly realise that you’re representing women, who just deal with great slabs of sexism every day”
Kate

This elected woman acknowledged the difference between her own everyday experiences and those of her constituents, yet she felt able to draw on her knowledge and understanding of what sexism is and how it impacts on women’s lives, even though this is not the same as her own direct experience, to be able to represent her constituents as women. This corresponds with Karen Beckwith’s (2014) conception of ‘interests’ (as distinct from issues or preferences) that emerge from “the similarities of women’s experiences deriving from socially constructed gendered constraints and exclusions” (p.20). This respondent recognises that experiences of sexism, although not identical, are shared by many women (as is the impact that it has on women’s lives) and it can be seen as linked to a feminist sensibility. In which case, elected men who are pro-feminist would be expected to be equally suitable and capable to represent these women’s interests, yet it appears

that women, whether pro-feminist or not, are able to represent women in ways that men are not. As such, women as political representatives may act as “surrogate voices” (Saward 2010) or demonstrate “formative experiences” (Dovi 2012) which can legitimise their representative claims regarding women’s interests. One might expect that having a feminist outlook would certainly prime a representative to see issues through a gendered lens, yet in this study, this does not appear to hold for men as it does for women, which strengthens the claim for increased descriptive representation of women as a key part of the substantive representation of women. This is counter to the findings of Tremblay and Pelletier (2000) for whom ‘feminist’ was a more certain indicator of representing women’s interests, than being a woman.

The issue of more diverse representation, not only with regard to gender, was raised by a number of respondents. One elected man saw women representatives as part of a wider goal of diversifying elected representation:

“I think we ought to try and, to a degree at least, reflect the communities we represent, so it’s good to have women” Dan

This correlates with normative ideas of symbolic as well as descriptive representation (Pitkin 1967) as in, the electorate should be able to ‘see’ themselves in their representative bodies, that even one woman can ‘stand for’ other women, and that representatives should in some way mirror their electorate. In fact, Saward has proposed “mirroring” as a basis for judging the legitimacy of representative claims (2010, pp.99-100). But the notion of ‘reflecting’ communities also nods to the idea that representation entails having knowledge of the interests and concerns of those being represented, and in this conceptualisation the representative ought to ‘know’ something of the everyday experiences of the electorate. One of Dovi’s criteria for ‘a good representative’ is evidence of “social location” or “first-hand experience” which can provide authorisation “to serve as the voice of the community” (2012, p.64). And in this way we see that both being a woman and also having the experiences of being a woman (which includes the variations of these) are relevant to the question of having women in representative roles. These elected women respondents referred to this dual aspect of being gendered as a representative, in that the fact of being a woman influenced how she was perceived and in some cases treated by both constituents and by colleagues (other elected councillors) particularly where she had faced difficulties; and her experience of being a woman was equated with having knowledge of women’s interests and concerns and this was referred to in relation to undertaking the role of being a

representative, especially in constituent-facing work such as street meetings or casework. This facet of substantive representation, as in acting as a representative, and the gendered expectations of others, is explored later.

Another woman spoke of different aspects of her own experiences as a woman – being employed, having dependent children – and how bringing these into the field of representation brings new perspectives, contrasted with men who have traditionally been elected as councillors:

“it’s still from a woman’s point of view, a working woman with children, you know, being seen to still be able to contribute, in a different way, that has been predominantly traditionally something that’s been done by old, retired men” Agnes

For her, being a woman representative is important but it is not the whole picture – there are also other differences in life experiences and circumstances, which distinguish her from the men who have held representative positions, and these differences also matter. In this, she conjures up notions of ‘mirror’ representation whereby her experiences “afford special insight into a specific group’s interests” (Saward 2010, p.100), interests which otherwise would continue to be unrepresented. She also acknowledged that these experiences can bring challenges to taking on an elected role:

“a lot of it was whether I could actually do this and looking around at the people who are councillors, there aren’t many of us who have school-aged children, who were working as well” Agnes

Having these different dimensions to the life experiences that someone brings to the elected role can provide a more diverse representative body, but the institutions have not been structured to take this into account. The traditional councillor (older, retired with no caring responsibilities, see Kettlewell and Phillips, 2014) has not faced the difficulties that younger, employed people or parents might face in trying to carry out the role of elected representative – many meetings are held during the weekdays for instance, making it difficult for working people to attend. One of the respondents, who is younger than average and working full-time, noted:

“I think (the local party) does fairly good work ... to encourage women to come forward. I think, I wonder how much we need to stop looking at support, and start looking at practical barriers because I think, is gonna be much harder” Kate

She recognises that there are obstacles which the institutions (the party or the council) need to address. This view locates the responsibility with institutions to facilitate the representation of overlooked interests and differs from those who claim

it is individual women simply choosing not to stand, or not to continue, in elected roles. Another older male colleague acknowledged:

“I think you’ve got to make it easy and welcoming for women to come into, to public life” Dan

One woman noted that being a councillor brings a third workload to the already busy ‘double shift’ that many women are managing (Hochschild and Machung, 1989), as in having both paid work and unpaid care/domestic responsibilities:

“I know women in other regions with unsupportive partners, but a lot of us have partners who are also in the Labour Party so maybe they’re much more sympathetic, but um, you know, I think the practicalities of it, particularly that thing of looking after young families, keeping your toe on the career ladder, and doing this. I mean the workload is extraordinary” Kate

This elected woman described the ‘genuine support’ she had received and how important that was in sustaining her through the early period when she was new to the role, and also had to deal with ‘an unpleasant issue’ in the ward. But she highlighted the difficulties she saw for women with young children in trying to become and remain as councillors:

“A huge issue is still, it’s difficult for women with young children and that’s partly about just the practicalities of being a councillor, when things tend to happen, and also how demanding the schedule is mm, and how much stick you get if you don’t drop everything, from residents, if you don’t drop everything and be there” Kate

Here she refers again to institutional barriers (such as the demanding schedule) but also to the expectations of constituents. Interestingly, she did not raise this as an issue for men with young children, nor did other elected representatives, including at least one man who does have school-age children. There is a recognition that although the talk is about *parents*, in most cases it is still *women* who are primarily responsible for caring for children, and as a result it tends to be women who give up responsibilities external to the home when they clash with the needs of raising children:

“it would be very, very difficult to sustain even a part-time job, plus a youngish family, plus being on the council” Kate

This was said by a woman who was in employment but did not have dependent children. In contrast, a male councillor who expressed similar sympathy for women trying to combine a political role with the demands of parenthood, did not ascribe this difficulty to his own situation, although he does have young children.

The failure to address these issues affects women differently to men, when standing for elected positions in particular because women are still primarily care givers in relation both to children and older relatives (Coote 2018). However, this is often characterised not as an institutional problem to be addressed, but as a ‘supply’ problem, of individual women choosing not to stand. One male respondent (in a ward with three elected men) described how they tried to change that:

“Well, we’ve always tried to persuade one woman in the ward to stand for us. She’s a party member, parents (are) party members, goes back a long time. She’s started a family and has now moved out of the ward unfortunately but, you know, we could never persuade her to ... She always helped us, supported us, delivered loads of (leaflets), all the rest of it, but we couldn’t persuade her to stand for us, so a shame” Charlie

When asked why he thought it important to try to have a woman as part of the electoral representative body, he responded:

“I think there is an element of that balance. Not having been in a mixed ward, I don’t know if you get that sort of male doctor, female doctor thing? Well, if there is an issue that a woman wants to come and talk about but she feels ... sensitive, but could be, I don’t know, domestic violence or things she’d like to talk freely but she might be embarrassed to talk to a man about. I don’t know whether that actually makes a difference. But the prime reason for wanting to persuade this woman to stand is because she’d have been very, very good before anything else, but there was a secondary feeling that yes, it would bring a little bit of balance for the ward” Charlie

And when asked what that ‘balance’ was about:

“Just making sure that we’re not being blinkered in a male way to situations, and I suppose you could say this about a lot of circumstances, whether it’s gender or anything else. You know you’re always looking at the world through your frame and you know that’s not the full picture and nobody can see it universally, so if you have lots of different frames then you are more likely to get a better picture” Charlie

This demonstrates the utility arguments for more elected women – how there might be specific ‘sensitive’ issues from women constituents who would prefer or would only speak to a woman about; or that a woman would bring a different perspective to that from the male representatives. This suggests that their legitimacy might be underscored by these specific additional benefits that they bring to the representative role. But he also gives a strong acknowledgement that the specific woman would be a good representative. What is missing is his analysis of the reasons why this woman in particular, but other women too, are not willing to stand for election. He also does not describe how his party, or their selection process, might be hindering rather than helping women to stand. Institutional barriers are

further discussed below, where substantive representation is described by respondents and their experiences are examined.

The question of whether gender is a factor for the elected men, in that both being a man and having the (various) experiences of being a man, are relevant to the question of men holding representative roles, is less straightforward.

5.3.3 Elected Representatives: Men

In contrast, the male councillors really struggled with the question of whether their gender matters in relation to them being a representative. There were silences, long pauses, and then uncertainty in their answers. It seemed that they had not considered this before: the notion that being gendered and therefore bringing something of that gendered experience to the role of representative, had only been framed as something that women do, not that men do.

Because the initial interview discussions about whether gender matters in elected representation were reframed by respondents in terms of what women as representatives might bring to the role, in subsequent interviews the male councillors were explicitly asked what they thought they might bring to the role as a *man*:

“I struggle to think what I would bring differently as a male councillor (pause). No, I can't really answer that” Pete

This respondent then tried to answer by comparing himself with women representatives:

“when it comes to men, I don't really - I'm doing myself out of a job here you know I can't think of anything that I would say, that I offer something that a woman doesn't have, yeah, can't really picture anything” Pete

And then this:

“No, I can't think of anything specifically that would set me apart being a male councillor, than if I was a female councillor, to be honest” Pete

This respondent was very research-compliant, as in he obviously felt that he should answer every question, and I observed that he was disturbed by his inability to perform his role as an interviewee, as much as his lack of an answer to the specific question. However, he was very interested in the question, and promised to think about it afterwards and get back to me (he didn't). Another male respondent struggled to conceptualise himself in gendered terms, as a man:

“I don't think I bring anything to the table as a man. I can't analyse it if I do, but I think it's more based on who I am right. It's all melded and merged into one really” Ken

He was another who was very interested in the question, and persevered with this response:

“I guess I don't define myself in that way. I suppose it would be difficult for me to answer that because I don't think I bring anything as a man. I think I bring what I am - a man. I can't do anything about that but I think what I bring is based on who I am, you know. It's not necessarily based on my gender or if it is, I haven't, I can't distinguish it” Ken

This response demonstrates how difficult this man felt in trying to see himself as male and how that might impact on his role as a representative. Culturally and socially, men still tend to be less frequently differentiated by their gender, unlike women, who live and are perceived as gendered beings in their everyday experiences. So there are MPs and there are women MPs. If socially and culturally it is difficult to name men as male, it should not surprise that individual men also struggle with this. Even in more recent times, gender-neutral language was introduced in order to end the use of *men* as a catch-all term for *humans* or *people* (i.e. men and women), because that had the effect of erasing or invisibilising women. However the introduction of these new linguistic conventions has also led to their use in place of relevant gender-specific terms, thus allowing the gender of men to be obscured, so that it is commonplace to talk about *people* even when the group is entirely composed of *men or boys*, and that is significant. A recent example was a report about sexual assaults in schools (BBC 2017), where it was reported that *children* were assaulting other *children*, whereas the data showed it was *boys* who carried out the assaults, predominantly on *girls*.

In this social context with these speech conventions, it is unsurprising that men are not able to conceptualise themselves as men, or do not have the language, and so continue as gender-neutral beings, inhabiting their roles and presenting themselves not as *men* but as ungendered persons. It may be that this is only these men, at this time and in these circumstances: elected male representatives, being interviewed (by a woman) about gender and representation, at a time when the language of gender and its 'correct' use has been characterised as a signifier of one's political position, particularly one's gender equality credentials. It may only be about their political roles, but that is the focus of this study.

For women however, there are myriad social and cultural norms which not only engender women, but define them in relation to men, while emphasising their

difference from, and subjugation to, men. And in politics, women have had to claim a space in the representative institutions often as *women*, where their gender is foregrounded, so it is unremarkable that they are viewed, and view themselves, in this context in gendered terms. The confusion embedded in the address of 'Madam Chairman' illustrates this neatly.

It appears that there are some men who are interested in gender issues (they did volunteer to take part in this research), but are not able to articulate their own gender identity. It indicates that for some, 'gender' is seen as being about women and this was apparent in the confused responses from the elected men. Another respondent who spoke at length in response to other questions, seemed at a loss for words when asked whether it made a difference to the role of elected representative that he is a *man*: "I don't think so, no" (Jason). He seemed unable to envision himself as a *male* representative. He was then asked to consider, as the elected women were, whether his gender made a difference to those he represents:

Are issues raised with you as a man and a male councillor?

(long pause) "no, I don't think so" Jason

Their discomfort and unfamiliarity with being asked, was evident, yet these respondents are men who appear very comfortable discussing gender, and show understanding of sex discrimination and commitment to feminist ideas. The responses of these three men (aware, supportive and vocal about women's rights) underline the difference in gendered self-perception of women compared with men – women are conscious of being women, and speak about this, often relating it to their everyday lived experiences of the world. Perhaps men do not routinely experience themselves or analyse their lived experience through a gendered lens, until they are asked to or this is presented to them. Or perhaps men do not identify that they have gender in common with other men, that there may be shared male gender experiences, and that there could be utility value in this - they could make use of it to benefit their constituents. Deephouse and Suchman (2008) have suggested that an 'absence of questioning' (p.57) can indicate an acceptance of legitimacy, and it may be that for these men, their legitimacy as men who are political representatives is unquestioned, as in, a question that has not ever been asked.

Or perhaps because men do not see themselves in gendered terms, the men who are their constituents may not present concerns as being gendered, and the men representatives may not be able to identify the concerns in that way, so that it may

be that there are male gendered interests but they remain un-named and unrecognised as such.

Despite this failure to identify the implications or even benefits of having men as elected representatives, while proclaiming both the justice and the utility value of having women as representatives, a minority of the respondents were reluctant or even hostile to increasing numbers of women, in particular to all-women shortlists and also to the possibility of wards with three women (i.e. no men). The goal for political representation was expressed as 'gender balance' which is understood as an end to men-only ward teams (i.e. three men), and a pro-active approach to having at least one woman in each multi-member ward. Of course the picture is complicated where different political parties hold seats in the same ward, as the gender balance is then subject to two (or more) unconnected selection procedures, as well as the vagaries of the electorate.

While no utility argument was advanced for men to hold these elected positions as *men*, much emphasis was placed on the utility argument for having at least some women as local councillors. The elected women in the main responded by relating their gender to the views, concerns or circumstances of their female constituents; elected men also emphasised this for women, and some were keen to raise the need for wider diversity in elected representatives, but were not able to articulate the same for men – this relates to a still prevalent conceptualisation of men as gender-neutral. Some of the men clearly see the addition of a woman to their ward team as providing a different perspective, which is not only a utility argument but also somehow places the woman as supplementary to the men's elected position – that women bring not only different experiences which some constituents will relate to, but that this *supplements* the elected men in their ward-based work. If men are not bringing anything specific because of their gender, but women do bring additional interests, there does not seem to be a utility argument against even more women, and potentially all-women ward teams. However, the legitimacy of women may be predicated on this additional utility argument, which is not as substantial (what if a woman representative did not bring these different experiences?) as a justice argument.

5.3.4 Elected Representatives: Gender and Constituents

When asked whether the gender of elected representatives matters, several of the respondents offered examples of the views and expectations of their constituents in relation to women councillors.

The importance of having women in elected roles was remarked on as a benefit for the political party and is one aspect of the utility value of women candidates:

“the thing that changed my mind was just talking, campaigning, for myself and for a couple of other candidates, and just how many women thought it was great having a woman candidate.” Kate

“some of the older women are like ‘yes, I vote (for your party) - good on you’
“ Agnes

More than one councillor remarked on the views of their older electorate. One elected woman representative saw that for older women constituents, gender was more important to than being the party candidate:

“I know that when I was first working in the ward there would be elderly ladies that would be particularly impressed that a young woman was doing this. One or two had said to me that they’d voted for me - they hadn’t voted for the party before, but they’d voted for me” Barbara

There was also an example given where constituents who are older men were seen to have a preference for the male councillor:

“certainly if you’re out and about, particularly some older men will talk to the man” Kate

This elected woman also described a situation where her male partner was out canvassing with her, and a number of residents assumed that *he* was the candidate. This relates to how the constituents see the gender of their elected representative. It is not known why these men choose to talk to the man, although there are also have examples of ‘older women’ being described as more likely to talk to a woman representative (by a different respondent) so perhaps there is a generational factor, in that some older people may prefer someone of their own gender.

Another elected man saw that, in his experience, gender was less important to the constituents than being the official party candidate:

“I’ve noticed this when we’ve been out canvassing and (she) has been the candidate, that men will vote for her because she’s Labour. They don’t see a problem with voting for a woman at all. This is white men I’m talking about, and similarly a lot of people in the Asian community I think will vote on a party ticket rather than necessarily making other kinds of choices” Tom

And this includes men in the constituency or party, accepting a woman as the representative:

“I don’t want to malign the men in the ward, a lot of them have been absolutely there. There’s absolutely no side to it - ‘you’re our representative, we’ll work with you’ “ Kate

This reflects a political party perspective on the legitimacy of a candidate – for many candidates, their acceptance by the electoral constituency is shaped by the party constituency members, providing evidence of legitimation through an “institutional affiliation” (Dovi 2012). If the local party officials accept the candidate, and work with them on the election, this visible street-level support will be seen by the residents (whether party members or not) and will impact on them.

It may be that the selection of the candidate confirms their party credentials, leading to acceptance by the electorate as a legitimate candidate, and then as a representative. Another factor is the history of individual councillors – some have strong associations with their ward (as residents, or long-serving councillors) and this will impact on how they are perceived by the constituents. In a ward, with two women and one man, the more recently elected woman observed:

“looking at how they get on with the male councillor compared with the women, I think that it does make a difference there. I think that there probably are some residents who – they don’t particularly know us – who’ve seen three names of three councillors and I think there are some who will go for the man, again out of deep, deep ingrained prejudice really (laughter) or for some reason they think a man will do more for them” Becca

This respondent also acknowledges the micro-locality factors, where a councillor is associated with one specific area within the ward, in this case as a resident:

“I think maybe to some extent, things which are very local are picked, people will go to the woman who’s been there forever. Well people have known them, people who live in the same street and so on, and I think that happens to some extent in the area the man lives in” Becca

And of course, constituency is not static, in views, priorities or even people. Wider cultural changes in views over time about women in public positions, including political roles will contribute but in some cases it may also be a reflection of the ‘personal following’ that long-serving (incumbent) candidates develop (“80% of council seats went to incumbents each year”, Fawcett Society 2019) which can override other factors (including party) and also perhaps gender:

“I think I’ve got a reasonably good reputation in the ward (now) so perhaps being a woman was more important in the early days.” Barbara

This notion that being a woman was important ‘in the early days’ reflects this councillor’s experience that her gender attracted a lot of positive comment when she first stood for election in the 1980s, including women who stated their intention to vote for her, although they would not usually vote for her party. This illustrates the then novelty of a woman candidate, but also the importance to ‘the represented’ of

seeing representatives who can (in some regard) 'mirror' those constituents (Saward 2010). There were further examples given of residents showing a preference for women representatives:

"when a resident goes to look up who their councillors are, if they're a woman I think they're more likely to ring me. Some women are more likely to ring me" Agnes

"I also think it's true that in certain circumstances, people would rather speak to a woman than a man. That happens quite a lot, actually" Ken

Several of the women respondents spoke about the significance of being both women and being elected representatives, in particular the importance of that combination to women constituents or residents in their local area. This reflects the findings of Barry (1991) from his interviews with councillors in London:

"As one Liberal woman explained, 'I find a lot of women, particularly older women, will come to see me *because* I am a woman ... my constituents say, 'we feel we can talk to you *because* you are a woman' " (Barry, 1991, p.194, emphasis in original)

In one instance, the quote is almost word-for-word the same as answers given to me some 300 miles and twenty-five years later:

"It seems like, people are coming to me because I'm a woman." Sarah

Another elected woman expanded on why she thought this was the case:

"I think some (women residents) find it easier to talk to a woman. You seem to understand more because you've had kids yourself, I don't know, your work life balance - that you understand a bit better than men would" Barbara

This presumption of shared experience (an example of Dovi's 'social location' 2012) as a mother is a noticeable feature in this study, as it is a specifically gendered observation. There were some elected men in the study who are known to be fathers, and who are active parents of young, school-age children, yet these expectations were only expressed about the women, and that included women who do not have children. Several respondents referred to 'having children' as an assumed shared experience between women and how this was connected to their substantive representation of women's concerns:

"Women are coming to me because I'm a woman about things that concern them about their children, and their relatives, and - even though I have no children myself - just because I'm a woman" Sarah

"Most of the activists in the ward will be women and yes, the mainstays of society in our ward are women. And they run clubs, run things for the kids, run things for the elderly and all the rest of it and as such, I think that those

women do relate more to a woman than they do to a man. Looking at how it works in our ward and looking at how they get on with the male councillor compared with the women, I think that it does make a difference there”
Becca

This seems to indicate that for her, there is a recognition from the women residents, of something shared with other women, including women councillors, about women’s experiences and understanding of care for children and ‘the elderly’. This chimes with Murray’s (2015) findings, in that:

“Voters also want someone ‘like them’, sharing their experiences and interests, as well as supporting more diversity” (p.773)

And this is reflected in Dovi’s identification of “social location” as a legitimating factor in her concept of the ‘good representative’ (2012, p.64). Other elected women see that they may share life experiences with their constituents, in ways that have not been represented before:

“you look to see who it is that’s representing you, and speaking on your behalf allegedly, and all these things and when the people that you see and the people that you hear don’t, kind of not me, they’re not like me and also from I suppose from a work point of view, they’re not like the people that I represent at work either” Agnes

The disparate electorate, made up of diverse constituents will inevitably have differing views. Some welcome women as political representatives, seeing the ‘woman’s perspective’ as a ‘new voice’ (Saward 2010) legitimating factor; others challenge and seek to undermine or de-legitimise them – this latter aspect is explored later in this section.

One elected woman highlighted what she saw as gendered differences between how she as a woman approached the ward level work with local organisations and how the two male councillors did:

“so play for children, that kind of bridging the age gap between the older and the young, those kind of activities - we’ve been given a pot of money this year ... right, so I’m trying to get them to sit down and look at how we can spend and allocate this fund and that’s just really, really challenging. It’s not a priority for them (the male councillors) which it absolutely is for me” Agnes

She was clear that these different priorities were linked to everyday experiences (evidence of ‘social location’) which are gendered, and that this was an argument for having women as well as men representing the interests of local communities.

5.4 Gender Balance

In this section, questions about women as elected representatives will be explored through the respondents' own frame of 'gender balance'. Different perspectives will be examined on what gender balance means in practice; any gendered distinctions between the views of elected women and men; and how this frame relates to questions of representational legitimacy.

The concept of 'gender balance' was raised by respondents in relation to the three-member ward team. One of my respondents said: *"It's like a marriage with three"* (Ann) but mainly the phrase 'gender balance' was used, and its frequency was one of the interesting aspects of the interview data, along with their responses when asked about its importance. Several versions were given, and examples of these are provided below.

Gender balance was seen as a 'good' thing:

"So I'm a woman with two men and it works very well. Works very well, we sort of balance each other out." Ann

"I think it makes a massive difference yes, so we have three councillors, I'm the only man. We've all been politically united in ensuring that there's women's representation with that kind of balance" Tom

"I think yeh, it helps to have a balance really." Barbara

Gender balance is important to bring different gendered contributions:

"certainly we do approach things differently and he's really good at nitty-gritty of detail and I'm good at seeing the broader picture" Becca

"I think perhaps we think slightly differently about certain issues. It's nice to get the balance, getting a different view if something comes up that we need to discuss" Barbara

"we've each got different skills, and we balance each other out. So, yes, it works." Ann

"And I'm the kind of balance between them because I've got social skills, okay? and I'm good with people." Ann

Gender as one element of a balanced team:

"yes, (having a woman councillor) would bring a little bit of balance for the ward ... just making sure that we're not being blinkered in a male way to situations" Charlie

"I think, obviously you should try and have a balanced team, both in terms of skills and knowledge, and experience as well as gender, in order to kind of reflect the community that you serve" Fiona

The consistency of this message indicated that it might be a party directive, and it became apparent from the respondents that achieving gender balance is part of the wording of the Labour Party's policy:

"Well, we have kind of quota rules in Labour Group" F1

"The Labour Party's very committed to gender balance and our group is very committed to gender balance and to other balance as well... we're approaching a 50:50 ratio male to female" F2

(Note: respondents have been further anonymised in this section, as their party membership could be combined with other information about them in other parts of the thesis, making 'jigsaw identification' (O'Hara et al, 2011) possible.)

Some respondents spoke about what the policy means in practice:

"If we're in a position where we hold all three councillors in a ward - which of course we don't everywhere - but if we do, we insist that at least one of them is a woman" M1

"we try to make sure that committees are gender balanced" F1

And some referred to critical actors in key positions who are able to drive the policy changes:

"I think some of it comes from having very established men and women councillors who are very committed to a gender-equal approach to things, who you know, probably set the tone" F3

"it's one of the things that I've pushed right, all these rules about gender balance" M1

The political parties have different strategies for improving 'gender balance' or achieving 'gender equity' in elected political representation. The Labour Party use of all-women shortlists (AWS) has had remarkable results, particularly in the North East of England, where electoral politics is dominated by the Labour Party (see Chapter 2).

It is of course easier to change the rules than the culture and norms of an institution and some respondents acknowledge that there is opposition to AWS:

"there are some women who are against them as well, 'cos they think a woman should get there on her own merits yeah, against all sorts of competition. But as you are well aware, the evidence is - that doesn't happen." M1

"I've got colleagues, all men, who think all-women shortlists are not affirmative action, they're discrimination" F2

These views foreground the main arguments expressed against quotas for women, in that it is claimed that such women will not be of 'merit'; and that it is discriminatory, which is unfair and therefore wrong. Both these arguments are of course gendered, in that the 'merit' of elected men *as men* is not highlighted, but perhaps 'what is really going on' is a lingering nostalgia of some for the "traditional ways of selecting the local 'favoured son' candidate through old-style patronage rather than merit" (Edwards and Chapman 2000, p.370). The continuing discrimination that results in only a third of elected politicians being women does not attract the same level of energy or passion as the AWS policy, which is understood by some as a remedial action. In her work examining this question of merit and 'quota women', Rainbow Murray has observed that "quotas are ... argued to undermine the legitimacy of women politicians, and as such, they may do more harm than good" (2010, p.94). The correlation between women's political representation, questions of merit, and legitimacy, is explored more fully below.

The Liberal Democrats also have policies to address the relative lack of women in elected positions:

"We don't have all women shortlists but we have um, for the selection of MPs, there's meant to be one woman on each shortlist but we've struggled with that frankly and quite often, the woman on the shortlist is a token to balance that out. It's not always true but, we had one parliamentary candidate in 2010 who was female. So it's again, it's probably more an issue of who's choosing what they want to do with their lives and all the rest of it"
M2

And the latter part of this quote shows how, for some people, the lack of women 'coming forward' is presented as an individual choice. Which of course it will be at one level, but at another level, there is a broader issue which reflects on the institutions: the party processes, the informal rules, the gendered asymmetry of roles and responsibilities, formal and informal, once elected.

Karen Celis et al (2014) found that each party had adopted a different approach in order to address the low numbers of women as political representatives: "Labour stressed the need for quotas; Liberal Democrats advocated reform of the electoral system; and Conservatives were silent, remaining averse to measures that might interfere with 'merit' " (p.170). Their respective women's organisations reflected these different approaches:

"Labour women tended to be in favour of gender quotas, (while) Liberal Democrat women stressed other more 'supply-side' reasons for the lack of women in parliament. For one prospective female candidate, these included

child care responsibilities: 'fatherhood sells' a male candidate, whereas motherhood was a 'millstone around a female candidate's neck' ... Conservative women, in contrast, encouraged women to take part in public life but also considered women to lack confidence and, because of their 'biology', to be more involved with their families than men" (ibid p.170)

This reference to the Liberal Democrats emphasising supply issues, and also seeing it as an individual concern (rather than a structural or institutional issue which the party might address), corresponds with this study's findings, as above.

The repeated references to the term 'gender balance' prompted further consideration. Gender balance is expressed both as an aspiration and as an outcome. It can therefore be understood by some people as ensuring that at least one woman is included, and by others as having equal numbers of women and men. In the former case therefore, the presence of one woman in a ward team of three satisfies this notional target at that level – the group is seen to have 'gender balance' with a composition of one woman and two men. What is remarked on is the presence of the woman, and the fact that it is therefore not an all-male group. The latter case, which might be more accurately described as gender equity, would entail 50% women and 50% men. Obviously this is more complicated to achieve in multi-member wards, with three seats, and where many wards are represented by a mixture of political parties.

A difficulty then arises if the whole council as a result only has one third women because at that level the discrepancy is obvious between 'gender balance' and gender equity. Gender balance in the council is seen as a 50:50 split between women and men, however the majority Labour Party can only control its own selection processes, it has a knock-on effect to other parties, who are conscious of their own 'gender (im-)balance'. The notion of gender balance appears to have replaced a discourse about equal representation, but contentious quota systems (such as Labour's all-women shortlists) lead into the 'merit' debate. This is discussed in the last chapter, and related to legitimacy.

5.5 Gender and Legitimacy

Some elected women have experienced challenges to their legitimacy as political representatives, despite their electoral credentials. In this section, data from two respondents is presented as two case studies, illustrating different aspects of the AWS debate which raise issues of merit and legitimacy.

The first case study concerns a male Labour councillor who is opposed to AWS. For him, the 'justice' argument for increasing the number of elected women, is overturned by an 'injustice' argument:

"nothing personal right but what it means is that men are being excluded, that men are being discriminated against. Basically you can't become an MP in the north of England if you're Labour"

"This might be a simplistic way of looking at it - let's take me, I'm excluded from becoming an MP because I'm born in the late you know, twentieth century and I've got a penis. Or I'm male"

"I don't think it's fair"

"I think I would class myself as a feminist, I really would. I would even though I don't agree with all women shortlists" Vincent

He recognises and utilises 'utility' arguments for increasing the number of elected women, but reverts to 'justice' and equality (AWS is unjust and anti-equality) when it directly impacts on what he wants to do, which is to stand for election in his home seat. His argument sometimes places him in a 'class of men' but not consistently. He does not accept that the often less visible discrimination that women face is as significant as the direct, visible exclusion that he faces (and feels very keenly) from the selection process. His treatment is unjust and he is pretty angry that he cannot change it – in the interview, he displayed a great deal of frustration at being unable to get it changed (and he has tried).

There is a wider point here, about how women are challenged as not being legitimate, through the argument of not being 'local':

"the all-women shortlist meant that we had to have somebody essentially parachuted in from another part of the city, who had no connection whatsoever to (this ward), and to be truthful that's still a bit of an issue" Ken

This can related to Saward's "mirroring" as a basis for claims to represent "wider interests and new voices" (2010, p.98), or to Dovi's (2012) conception of "formative experiences" (p.63), whereby a representative is seen as legitimate (or 'authentic') because of some experience which evidences their explicit relationship to the interests they are to represent, such as being born or resident in specific communities. This demand for a 'local' candidate has been raised previously, such as the 2010 selection process for a new candidate for a Tyneside MP's seat, when a local party member said:

"we don't want a London metropolitan candidate foisted on us here, we want a local candidate" (Labour Party Member A, 2010)

In that case, the 'London metropolitan candidate' was a woman. And most notably, so was the candidate in the Blaenau Gwent constituency row in 2005. In that case, Maggie Jones was selected via the AWS process, but she was effectively refused by the local party:

“Local party members insist she is not a legitimate candidate” (BBC 2005)

and was then overwhelmingly defeated by the local Labour man who stood against her as an independent candidate (BBC 2005; Cutts et al, 2008).

The argument for a local candidate is understandable, although as Childs and Cowley (2011) have demonstrated, the definition of 'local candidate' is neither straightforward nor consistent. That example above contrasts with another elected man's view:

“Oh, I'm in favour of them (AWS). I don't think we'll make any progress with women's equality without them. (Look at) Europe and the only place where women have made any significant advance, has been where you've had labour or social democratic parties who have had those women-only rules or those gender quotas. And yes, the argument against it is nonsensical really”
Tom

This view, that quotas are simply a means to an end, was widely expressed, by both women and men. This respondent was clear though, that the opposition to quotas is rooted not in the process but in more deeply held attitudes:

“I don't know it still kicks in, in politics. It's the assumption that a man can do it better, that it's a man's province rather than a woman's” Tom

The related but contested questions of gender and legitimacy in this case are explored further in the final discussion.

There are still some who feel that political positions should be held by men and not women (IPU 2016). Consequently, there are some who attempt to undermine women – in particular women elected via quota systems such as AWS, both by challenging individual women, and by challenging the policy (in order to prevent AWS and therefore prevent women, but consequently support men, in gaining seats). This in turn can have a negative impact on individual women as both current and potential representatives: studies show that the more minority role models there are, this correlates with an improved perception of, and confidence in, political representatives by minority constituents (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006).

Another interview respondent, also a man, reported opposition to AWS from women:

“There are some women who are against them as well, cos they think a woman should get there on her own merits, against all sorts of competition but as you are well aware the evidence is that doesn't happen” Jason

He acknowledges that there is a problem for women getting selected, and raises the concern about ‘merit’, albeit presented as someone else’s view. This view persists, despite the weight of observation and evidence to the contrary (e.g. Murray 2010) nor as Jane Mansbridge noted twenty years ago:

“the institutional tools that have recently been used to promote relevant descriptive representation ... do not seem to have resulted in representatives with noticeably lesser skills or commitment to the public good” (1999 p.633)

These questions of gender and legitimacy can be present in a variety of situations. In the second case study from the interviews, an elected woman described the challenges she has faced in her ward since becoming a councillor:

“I've never been allowed to forget the fact that I was elected on an all-women shortlist, I was selected on an all-women shortlist. But there you go ... by the Labour councillor, who had earmarked somebody else (*male?*) yeah, for the seat. But he was told it was an all-women shortlist and then he fought like hell right, to get it not to be an all-women shortlist” Agnes

This particular elected woman described a number of incidents where she was challenged by men. Her ward had previously been all-male – three male councillors - with a culture among those men that they should hold the seats, and they were entitled to the seats, in a way that she was not. Some of the criticisms relate to inter-party conflict, and some to her being a non-resident (‘not local’, in common with other contested seats), however she cited several gender-specific challenges that she faced from men (as a group) in her ward. But she offered a robust defence of AWS and women’s legitimacy as political representatives:

“another comment that has been made about all-women shortlists is ‘well, you're going to get, you're going to end up with a woman just because she's a woman’ and not looking at ability and you know, not necessarily getting ‘the best man for the job’ and my response is - *I think you've got the best person* - so that's just wrong” Agnes

The ‘*just because she’s a woman*’ comment indicates a marshalling of the ‘merit’ argument – that she is not a legitimate representative because (in their view) she did not get there on merit, which is interpreted as ‘she has no merit’. The irony of those men talking about ‘*best man for the job*’ had apparently gone unnoticed by the

men, although not by Agnes. She also described some of the comments she was subjected to, which indicate an aversion to women in elected roles, such as:

“and expectations about - oh this really annoys me - comments about ironing and washing and all of those kind of things. I don't, I do very little of either, I do as little as I can get away with (laughing)” Agnes

Here she is expected to justify herself when challenged about her lack of 'housewife' credentials (in a comment more reflective of the 1950s than the 2010s): How was the housework going to get done if she's here at a ward meeting? This is a clear example that one of Lovenduski's category of opponents to increased women's political representation, “the *dinosaurs*, who think politics is best left to men” (2012, p.698, emphasis in original) are still to be found in 21st century politics. And in a further example of '*dinosaur*' behaviour, this elected woman was challenged too about bringing her children (once) to an evening meeting, when some of the men expressed straightforward anger at her about this. This reflects the findings of a recent study of councillors in Wales, in which “female members reported that casual sexist comments are common”, including '*I'm surprised you are here with two children at home*' (Farrell and Titcombe 2016, p.877). The gendered issue of emotional behaviours and the display/ management of these by elected representatives is examined later in the chapter.

Agnes was also concerned that the advances made regarding elected women, are not embedded yet:

“to be honest sometimes it feels like if we ever took our foot off the pedal in terms of all-women, we'd just go back, we'd absolutely go back and you've just got to see that happening in terms - you just look at the other political parties for example, you know it's horrendous. You just look at who the leaders are across (the local area)” Agnes

Here she widens out the responsibility for maintaining the changes to the other political parties, and highlights the importance of individuals in leadership positions (critical actors), but she is not hopeful. This woman is also conscious of the merit argument being used against AWS women and the extra pressure that places on them: “we have to, we're women so we have to prove it” (Agnes). As a local woman and parent, embedded in her party and trade unionism, she embodies many characteristics which are sought after for political representatives; and she is able to make claims based on several legitimating criteria – expertise, surrogacy, mirroring (Saward 2010); and institutional affiliation, social location, formative experiences (Dovi 2012). Yet, for some people, including some of her party colleagues, she is not acceptable as the candidate nor as the councillor. Her selection via AWS is

deployed to de-legitimise her, and despite her electoral success, she is challenged and undermined in distinctly gendered ways – comments about housework being neglected, and attempts to exclude her (accompanied by her children) from local council meetings. The link between AWS and questions of legitimacy is discussed further in the last chapter, while acknowledging that the policy also has some support. Here, justice arguments regarding women’s political representation are used to justify AWS by another respondent:

“I think you’ve just gotta look at the numbers y’know, just gotta look at the numbers of women in parliament and the numbers in (this) council - it’s made a huge difference” Becca

“It wouldn’t have happened otherwise, it absolutely would not have happened otherwise. I don’t believe I would have got a seat at that time to be honest” Becca

And this woman respondent confirmed the difficulty regarding selection as a woman with her own experience:

“I just think it’s a basic prejudice there and everybody would deny it but the reality is – it does convert into women finding it very hard to get seats and there was an awful lot of opposition. I think when I did first go for this target seat, and there were several seats selected for all-women shortlists, there was huge opposition in the ward. Oh no, not from the electorate, from the party. I always remember, well the excuse was ‘*there aren’t enough women, there’s no women coming forward*’ and all the rest of it. But there I was, sitting there as a woman yeah, well exactly. It was still, there were still wards that were targets which were opposing it. They certainly didn’t want me” Becca

Another elected woman, who had not always supported AWS, marshalled utility arguments for it, based on her own experiences:

“I’ve got colleagues who think, all men, who think all-women shortlists are not affirmative action – they’re discrimination. If that was raised again I would tell what I think, and that’s if I was not here or there was not a woman to talk to, then some safeguarding issues would never have come forward at all” Sarah

She was certain that having a woman as one of the ward’s representatives had opened the door for some very serious issues to be raised, and that these were raised with her because she’s a woman. As a result, she saw the importance of having women as elected ‘mirror’ representatives, and using AWS if necessary. She also references the challenges to AWS (and by extension, the women selected through AWS) that are presented by male colleagues. The contestation that AWS women are somehow less deserving of elected seats than men, and less meritorious than other candidates (whether women or men) is never far from the

surface of discussions about women and quotas. Women's legitimacy is questioned with a persistent underlying antagonism towards women representatives, as found in another study, where Edwards and Chapman (2000) stated that "all the women candidates (and later Assembly Members) we spoke to refuted this charge of preferential treatment" and quoted two of their women respondents:

'The meritocracy argument is a load of rubbish because they just use that as a justification . . . but if you judge us on abilities then I am at least as able if not more so than that [male] person.'

'I thought like that initially - I'd rather win it on my own - until I realised I had no chance of winning it on my own. As a woman I never had a chance of being selected.' (p.371)

Their study was undertaken across different areas of Wales, but they found particular problems for women candidates in the South Wales Valleys, noticeably where Blaenau Gwent (discussed above) is located.

For elected women, quota systems to improve descriptive representation (such as all-women shortlists - AWS) have been used as a springboard from which a range of claims are made against them, including the 'merit' argument (see for example, Walker 2016), but also adverse displacement, and intersectionality failings. Despite studies which refute these claims (Allen et al, 2016; Cutts et al, 2008; Murray 2010; Nugent and Krook, 2015), an underlying antagonism persists towards AWS and women representatives more generally. These claims seek to undermine women's legitimacy *per se* and are advanced as part of a wider backlash against women gaining political (and other public leadership) positions (Bon, 2017; IPU 2016).

This section has explored perceptions of women in the role of elected political representatives, and found that despite numerical advances (increased descriptive representation) to 'gender equal' levels in the councils in this study, there is still some residual opposition to women in political roles - *plus ça change*, as Mary Beard might say (2017). This is primarily posited as opposition to quota systems (positive action for women as an under-represented group), but the challenges of merit, displacement and intersectional failings broaden the debate to de-legitimise women. This is supported by evidence of explicit misogyny faced by some of the elected women.

Discussions about the representative role are also framed by notions of justice and utility, and the next section explores how the utility of women representatives may be connected to their legitimacy.

5.6 Gender, Casework and Constituency

The elected representatives describe their casework and interactions with residents, and in addition, the scrutiny or other committee work that some of them are involved in. The role of the local representative is therefore inextricably linked to their constituents' demands on them:

“you have to let people know what you're doing and what's going on ... it's important for a local councillor to know what the issues are and respond to them” Barbara

These issues will require the councillor to act on behalf of the resident, but may also link to their role in the development of policy or delivery/ review of service provision. It has been claimed that women representatives might prioritise policies and issues differently to men – that their overlooked interests as women will be foregrounded by having women as representatives - and one of the elected men was confident that that had been the case in his council:

“I think a lot of the things that protect the vulnerable and support the least well-off (in this area) have been driven by women predominantly” Ken

There is also the claim that women representatives change *how* politics is done, not just *what* politics are done, which is linked to ideas of transformative representation (Norris 1996). Contestations that the basis for this essentialises women's contribution (women are more co-operative than men, and less aggressive) are countered by feminist claims of social construction – that women may be more co-operative and less aggressive, but that this is part of their constructed gender role rather than an innate and universal female characteristic.

“So I think from me, health scrutiny, sort of coming in with a gender, well feminist, perspective, it's been very good actually. Which is really nice ... that there's that culture around that particular committee and some of that comes from having a female chair and vice chair” Kate

In this example, she is claiming that in part, the positive culture of the committee is due to having women in the leading roles. Her feminist perspective forms her view of the committee experience and her conviction that these women are critical actors shaping the institutional culture.

Another area discussed in the interviews was whether they thought that the gender of elected representatives matters to their constituents. One woman described it as mainly unimportant:

“on the whole, people, they've got a problem, they're upset and angry and they want it resolved, and I'm not sure they're particularly worried if it's a man or woman that resolve it as long as it's resolved. They may feel more able to talk to a particular gender, depending on what the issue is and who they are you know, but we could always accommodate that” Fiona

Another elected woman was unclear about whether the differences in approach between her and an elected colleague are due to their gender or not:

“I think we approach things differently. But I'm not too sure whether that's the differences between men and women. But I do tend to, I do tend to see things in broad terms, kind of take an overview if you like and not necessarily get down to the nitty-gritty of detail. Whereas the man in our ward, he does seem to have a kind of forensic mind” Becca

She is indicating ambivalence about naming the differences in approach as related to gender. She acknowledges these differences between herself and her male colleague, but is uncertain - this may simply be an individual difference. She followed this up with:

“I think some people come to me in preference to the other two and some people go to the other two in preference to me, but I don't notice that it's particularly women's issues or anything you know” Becca

Here she emphasises that the choice of a resident may not be related to the gender of the representative, since when choosing to raise issues with her (the woman representative), the residents are not specifically raising 'women's issues'. This frame of 'women's issues' is not clarified here, but elsewhere it is used by her colleagues to mean specific issues like domestic violence, although these are also referred to by some respondents as 'sensitive issues'. This respondent stated earlier in her interview that she could see how women in the local community, who are running the community centre, putting on activities for children and the elderly residents, alongside their personal responsibilities for children and elderly family, identify with women who are elected and see them as sharing these areas of experience. This sets up expectations regarding what this 'constituency of women' might expect of their elected women, and offers a legitimacy predicated on perceptions of shared social location and formative experiences (Dovi 2012, p.63). However, this assumption of a shared understanding of women's lives and experiences is not the same as the 'women's issues' mentioned and the distinction is clear in other contributions. Childcare and other concerns regarding children are

not the 'women's issues' she refers to, although they are almost always noted as being raised by women residents, and not by men. Women's issues, in other contributions, are defined as issues by their serious nature, such as domestic violence, rather than the more everyday concerns that women raise. This respondent has a view about 'women's issues' as an indicator - that if they were being raised with her, that would indicate that her gender as a woman was a factor for the resident. As these issues are not being raised with her, this indicates that when residents come to her, it is *not* because she's a woman.

This differs from other women councillors (and some men) who reported examples of 'women's issues' (the main example given was domestic violence) being raised with women and not with men; or not being raised until a woman was elected as part of the team. This indicates (and some respondents stated this very strongly) that these issues are not raised with the ward team, unless there is a woman in it. The one elected man who raised this related it to his professional background, not his gender:

"I'm kind of used to dealing with, well DV and all that kind of stuff, so I guess, maybe with that experience I'm perhaps a little more able to, or perhaps felt to be a little more accessible, to women. Although, on the whole you don't get the deeply personal stuff" Dan

A related but different perspective is highlighted next, because of the particular view it offers of how gendered difference might be understood. This example was given by a male councillor, thinking about why it's beneficial to have both men and women on the ward team – first, talking about the local women's refuge:

"you need a woman to go there. Imagine if me, (big) bloke, walks into there, wouldn't be good. That's just a very clear example where you need a woman" Vincent

Then, his example of why it's necessary to have a male councillor:

"For instance let's take the club. She (the woman councillor) is not allowed in the main bar right. Now that's no fault of (hers), no, but you need, just an example how sometimes you need to be of a certain gender to gain access to issues and problems." Vincent

This elected representative has described the inappropriateness of a male representative going into a woman's refuge (a woman is 'needed' in that situation) and compared it with a female representative being barred from the main part of a particular club (she is 'not allowed in'). He draws a clear parallel between these:

“So there's two very clear examples where one or the other would be beneficial” Vincent

For him, women are needed to gain access to women's interests, where there is an issue affecting predominately women, and which affects women in brutal and debilitating ways, and as a result the physical space is women-only. However men are needed to gain access to men's interests, because they have created a social setting, which they maintain for men's use and refuse to allow women into that physical space where they meet.

The very fact of seeing these two situations as the same, both examples of single-gender spaces giving rise to the need for both genders, men and women, to be represented, shows a lack of understanding about gender. There is not an equivalence between constructing a women-only space for safety reasons, as a result of power imbalances and the oppression of women through violence and controlling behaviours, a space which is primarily about challenging sex discrimination and empowering women in their personal relationships; compared with constructing a men-only space for social reasons, and excluding women because they have the power to do that, not as an expression of anti-oppressive practice but as a form of direct discrimination.

This may be a singular perspective, held by just one elected representative. However when the other male councillor for that ward was interviewed, he described how he spends a great deal of time in this building (although he neglected to say it was men-only), using it to generate casework and in fact, referred to it as 'his surgery'.

This broader question of which issues constituents might raise, and if that differs according to the gender of their representatives, could have implications for the legitimacy of elected representatives. Gender is only one characteristic which representatives might share with their constituents, which may matter in some situations and not in others. However, when it does matter – for instance, whether a particular issue is raised at all, or if the presence of women generates a greater volume of certain issues – the legitimacy of women as representatives is underscored by this utility value for constituents' casework.

When asked if there any issues that were raised particularly by men or women, one elected man said:

“You need to ask our female colleagues about that right, because (she) says she gets certain issues raised with her, like domestic violence, that we don't get” Jason

“Residents seem to be more likely to bring up domestic issues with women than they do with men right (*because?*) I think it's often a woman who's on the wrong side of it, a domestic issue. So she's more likely to approach a woman than a man” Jason

In order to explore this further, this elected man was asked about his areas of interest (transport) and whether there were any gender issues raised with him, and his initial response was:

“I don't think there's any issue there, not that's come to my notice” Jason

And then, as if thinking out loud, he said:

“I know women worry more. Nobody ever complained to me about the Metro 'cos we don't have the Metro (to my ward) but I'm aware that there are women who are wary of using the Metro ... for safety reasons. And we've had some people that brought that up as an issue” Jason

He states that ‘people’ have raised the issue that women might have safety concerns, rather than women raising the issue directly. He is clear that the ward he represents is not covered by the Metro system, so it is less likely to be raised as a ward issue, although residents will use the Metro as part of other journeys they make beyond the ward. However this is an example where a ‘women’s issue’ has been brought to his attention, yet he does not mention any further discussion, nor initiatives to address it, despite his involvement with transport decision-making.

Another male councillor raised a different issue, where women representatives are not only an asset, but might also acquire additional casework in relation to their male peers. He described limits on his ability as a man to represent some of the BAME women in his constituency:

“It strikes me that women in some of those East European population groups are more reticent about talking to men and certainly within the Muslim groups, there are women who wear the full hijab and the rest of it and they just, in some cases, just can't cope with dealing with a man which I think is a bit sad in a way but they are almost frightened you know. If you try to say hello in a community setting or something they just can't deal with it” Tom

These examples illustrate some elements of gendered distribution of constituents’ demands, which will potentially result in gendered effects regarding elected representatives’ workloads. The indications are that the gender of elected representatives makes a difference in casework, to constituents, and around ‘sensitive issues’, such as domestic violence, or the needs of Muslim women. As

such, these alternative forms of women's legitimacy - based on specialist credentials, surrogacy for new voices (Saward 2010), social location and in some instances, formative experiences (Dovi 2012) - as political representatives are in contrast with the earlier examples of elected women being de-legitimised. This is explored further in the discussion in the final chapter.

5.7 Gender and Emotions Management

This section explores the sometimes difficult behaviours experienced by elected representatives in different but often public settings. A number of examples were given, including outbursts and aggressive behaviour from both residents and male peers, but first an example is presented of one elected woman's experiences of aggression directed at her, from both male councillors and from residents. Her identity has been further anonymised as a protective measure:

"I suppose yeah the awful ones - the ones that are really aggressive - are the men I mean, *really* aggressive"

"what I mean - it is against me, when they're telling me to shut up and they're stopping me from speaking, then it is against me and I find it challenging as well because as I said I didn't have a privileged background, and (there was) domestic violence in the house, and so I've grown up with that"

"The ward committee has probably been working the way that they've been working a long time. They're like that, a traditional style of members at the top of the table, residents at the bottom and they just shout at the members and blame them for everything and what have you, put you on the spot and wanna do this to you all the time, and you know I kind of think, you know that's not why I did, that's not why I came into this. No, I came into this to work with residents, to find solutions to things and we might not always agree about the way things are and how to do it - but that's not how it is"

"the police officer was at the meeting, that really hostile meeting where allegations were flying and the shouting and things and I just walked out of the room. I said to them 'I can't believe that you're willing, without letting me speak or anything like that, you're always willing to make a judgement about me' and I just walked out the room. And the policeman afterwards, the next time we met, made reference to it ... anyway and he said he feels like he should have stepped in (intake of breath) ... and I just turned around and said if that was in a street, if that situation had happened in a street, I'm sure the police wouldn't have just walked by. I'm sure they wouldn't have just walked by but it's only councillors. Oh that's what you do with your councillors - you confront them, councillors, and you humiliate them"

This public dimension places an extra burden on the woman tasked with the emotional management role, as the public venues magnify the behaviour and her additional responsibility as a representative of the party. She also had the further

responsibility of having to raise it subsequently with other public officials, such as the police, to discuss their role in such situations.

Another incident she described was on the street rather than in a meeting:

“one guy effing and blinding at me on the street. This is a guy, well respected in the community, has stood to be a councillor for (another) party and he was effing and blinding at me in the street and (pause), and I said how inappropriate he was being and he turned around to two members of the public and said ‘*that’s how you speak to your councillors - I’ve told her*’ “

“He came up to me about 2 weeks later (*to apologise*). My male counterpart (had) took it upon himself to go and tell him how inappropriate his behaviour was, because obviously me saying it didn’t make any difference”

This elected woman’s experiences were still very upsetting, and unfortunately she also did not feel that her party were supportive of her; she was aware of bullying by some men in her own party who had been resistant to AWS candidates for certain seats, and claims that male colleagues were being unfairly thwarted in their ambition to stand for election.

Examples such as this, of aggressive behaviour explicitly directed at an elected woman, were not reported by other respondents. But there were other examples of aggressive behaviours encountered by elected representatives in their work. One elected woman mentioned some negative attitudes towards her as a woman:

“I mean you get, you will meet a few sexist idiots when you’re out campaigning” Kate

She provided no details and there were few examples of explicit sexism given by respondents, or perhaps they chose not to reveal them. Another elected woman referred to gendered differences in behaviour of councillors:

“men can be more aggressive. Certainly the problems we’ve had with aggression tend to be male (right) some councillors being quite aggressive with officers or just being difficult, y’know. Whilst you obviously do get problems with female councillors, it’s not the same sort of thing. Certainly I’ve never seen a female councillor be aggressive with an officer in a meeting. Or unpleasantly aggressive” Barbara

And one of the elected men described his experiences of gender differentiated behaviour in the Council meetings, and how that has affected the council business:

“without any doubt our council meetings - and again, this might not be a gender thing, this might be coincidental - but without any doubt, most of the men are a lot more Punch and Judy ‘yah boo’. You know, up on their feet. And you quite often see, I’m ashamed of myself there, we’ve had no substantial debate right. And actually I find quite often that women, and

again it might be nothing to do with gender, just the women in question, the debate is much more civil, much more informed, much more sensible is the word that probably comes to mind (laughing) and I don't know if that's a gender thing" Ken

Other studies (e.g. Bochel and Bochel, 2000) have found that this masculine culture, including elements of "rough and tumble" (Farrell and Titcombe 2016, p.868) or the "old boys club" (ibid p.877), has been a key factor in women not standing for re-election.

In another example from an elected man, this culture of aggressive behaviour in meetings was put into a different perspective. He spoke of how they (the councillors) would deliberately make use of a woman by having her chair a public meeting which they knew in advance would be difficult:

"it's only on very rare occasions, but it balances the view because particularly if there's any antagonism in the room, you can play a little bit on er, men are less likely to shout at women. (Women have) a different point of view, just to try and take the temperature down a little bit" Charlie

He draws a contrast between the men's behaviour and how women manage it, making it the women's responsibility, and bases this on the gendered perceptions of the constituents. This trope that men won't be as rude or confrontational with a woman as with another man, has been foregrounded before but this assertion is in marked contrast to the experiences that the elected woman described earlier.

And an elected man who had initially said that "everybody's different", when pressed for more detail, said: "well I think men can be ruder in debates than women are" and described Council debates as "in football terms, it's a set piece" (Jason).

This was confirmed by one of the women who referred to the masculine culture apparent on occasion, as in the way some elected men behave at full council:

"The big council meeting still tends to be a bit of shouting match at times"
Barbara

This corresponds to other elected women's experiences, as Emily Thornberry MP described the House of Commons in an interview:

"I think a lot of women here find it really quite shocking, the sort of environment, the level of personal competition and aggressiveness in the chamber" (Boffey 2015)

One of the elected men offered an explanation for the prevailing political culture:

“it's a lot about the tradition of politics. That's always been male dominated, and I think that needs to be tackled, that view that it's a male only club, and that women have an important part to play in that and it's not hostile ground for them to enter” Pete

In another example, an elected man referred to the possibility that one of the elected women from his party might, instead of re-standing for her ward, stand as a candidate for another ward. He called it “a chicken run”, that is, she's moving wards because she's a coward, she doesn't have the courage to stay in her ward. As a member of the local party, and an elected colleague, he would be aware that she was facing particular opposition *as a woman*, even if the details of that were not known to him, yet his response is to belittle her, which can be perceived as a form of de-legitimation. He may just be an unsympathetic individual, who does not have all the information. But it indicates that the experiences of gendered bullying of women councillors, which is not uncommon as recent research with Welsh local councillors has shown (Farrell and Titcombe, 2016), is perhaps not being used to inform and reform party processes of support.

Meanwhile, one of the elected men advanced a hopeful view, that the presence of women (or perhaps the passage of time) would transform the political culture:

“I hope what'll happen eventually is that the political landscape will change to the point where actually politics is friendlier towards women than it currently is” Ken

The examples given not only illustrate gendered behaviours, in that some men are aggressive in different situations, which can be upsetting and also disruptive to the council business, but also the gendered expectation that women are left to manage, or seen as better suited to managing these situations, an expectation which has been framed as “the emotional arena of duty and expectation” (Hochschild 1979).

This indicates that, the legitimacy of elected women is based on their utility, evidenced by potentially larger casework burden, and the expectation that they will ‘manage’ men's emotions as part of their work. And for some elected women, there is also the experience of being directly targeted, with everyday sexism or more aggressive behaviours *as a woman* who is an elected representative.

5.8 Summary

Elected representatives are understood to derive their legitimacy from their democratic electoral status. However, there are gendered dimensions to this for elected women. For instance, quota systems to improve descriptive representation

(such as the Labour Party's all-women shortlists, AWS) have been used as a springboard from which a range of claims are made against them, as forms of de-legitimisation, including the 'merit' argument (see for example, Walker 2016), adverse displacement, and intersectionality failings. These findings indicate that some people remain hostile to women rather than men holding these positions and an underlying antagonism towards women representatives persists. These claims seek to undermine women's legitimacy *per se* and are advanced as part of a wider backlash against women gaining political (and other public) positions (Beard 2017).

Elected women may be symbols of political party commitments to gender equality, in that the increased numbers of elected women representatives are frequently referred to and made visible. The 'gender balance' narrative supports this, and is explained both as a justice argument for more women, and as a utility argument – women bring different life experiences and skills compared to men, and these have a high utility value in the ward-based, public facing work of elected representation. However, the elected men do not experience their gender (as men) as a factor in their representational role – they are not able to discuss themselves as gendered, nor identify ways in which their gender might be relevant or of benefit in their representations with constituents. This "absence of questioning" (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, p.57) suggests an acceptance of their legitimacy.

The workload of ward councillors is subject to gendered expectations and demands. The study indicates that elected women may have a 'triple burden' of ward-based representation work, in that they have their share of the general casework, but they also receive specific work related to women's interests (in particular child-related issues) and also 'sensitive' issues, such as domestic violence. These concerns are raised by residents, who choose elected women representatives in preference to elected men. This potential '*supplementary representation*' may strengthen women's legitimacy as elected representatives, based on claims relating to 'wider interests and new voices' (Saward 2010) as well as 'social location' and 'formative experiences' (Dovi 2012).

In addition, there are occasions when elected women are subject to aggressive behaviour from men, either peers or residents which is made more difficult to deal with because of an apparent lack of appropriate institutional response. And women are expected to undertake emotional management work, to manage men's disruptive behaviour in meetings. These examples indicate areas of gendered behaviour and expectations, based on conventional gender norms, which place

further pressures on elected women, as forms of de-legitimation, which contribute to, or are evidence of, challenges to their perceived legitimation.

This chapter has presented and examined the data from elected women and men, and finds that there are gendered dimensions to elected representation at the local level, as well as legitimacy questions. In particular, the legitimacy of women, and ways in which women are de-legitimised and have alternative forms of legitimation, have been identified. This is explored further in the discussion section of the final chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This thesis explores political representation, through the lens of gender, and is concerned with notions of legitimacy. The initial impetus for the study was my interest in questions of legitimacy in relation to both elected and unelected women representatives. It is informed by data from original research conducted with both elected women and men, and unelected women, at the local level of political activity.

This study explores some of the complexity in relation to ‘what is going on in political representation’ (Mackay 2008) at the local level, and seeks to contribute to the literature on gender, legitimacy and representation, focusing as it does on “actors, relationships, interactions, institutions and norms involved in the representative process” (ibid, p. 125). In order to achieve the necessary depth and rich texture of information, the primary data collection method was qualitative - semi-structured, in-depth interviews, undertaken with key actors - and supplemented by secondary data collection and analysis of documents and online sources.

6.1.1 Research Questions

The study has been framed by three research questions:

- How is the legitimacy of local women representatives shaped by gender?
- What differences, similarities and challenges are there regarding the legitimacy of elected and unelected local women representatives?
- How can the gendered dimensions of legitimacy in local level political representation be explained?

As outlined in Chapter 1, the questions were framed fairly broadly, in order to facilitate exploration of the topic with the interviewees and produce data which reflected their perspectives and experiences. The study has been an exploration of legitimacy and gendered dimensions to representation, based on interviews with local level political representatives, both elected and unelected. The data from these has been analysed and compared in order to expand the theoretical and empirical knowledge on representation, legitimacy and gender.

This chapter commences with the research findings, followed by a discussion in relation to the similarities, differences and challenges. The extant literature and analytical framework are central to this discussion. Then, the key contributions to knowledge are set out, followed by a note on the limitations of this research study, and suggested areas for further research.

The glossary, appendices and bibliography conclude the thesis.

6.2 Key Findings

In this section, the findings from the previous chapters are presented, then the similarities, differences and challenges regarding legitimacy and gender are discussed in relation to the analytical framework.

6.2.1 Women, Legitimacy and Representation

Questions of authorisation and accountability characterise much of the debates about political legitimacy, for both elected and unelected representation. Analytical frameworks, such as the constitutive one offered by Saward (2010) and the normative dimensions of Dovi's (2012) good representative, can provide useful criteria for evaluating the representations of both elected and unelected actors. In addition, this study has made use of a gendered analysis. For elected women, their legitimacy appears more certain, as they have the democratic mandate of the vote. However, they also need to be responsive to the represented, as Rainbow Murray has observed:

“Political theorists question whether representatives should be trustees exercising independent decision-making or delegates following their constituents' demands (Eulau et al. 1959). An ideal representative would think independently and make wise decisions, while also consulting with constituents and including their perspectives. Limitations are imposed by the widespread ignorance and heterogeneity of public opinion. Nonetheless, the imperative of re-election stops politicians from ignoring their constituents. A politician can be an authentic representative only through understanding others' perspectives enough to act on their behalf and with their consent” (2015, p.771)

But their presence as elected representatives is still relatively new, and there is some latent prejudice against women in public roles. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (2011) has suggested that:

“by entering the political domain women are shifting away from a role that confined them to the private sphere and are entering a world where their legitimacy is sometimes challenged.” (cited in IPU 2016, p.1)

In considering whether unelected community leaders can be designated as representatives, distinctions are made in these debates between political representatives, and democratic representatives. But given the unrepresentativeness of political democracy in terms of gender (both the numerical under-representation of women as political actors; and the perceived policy gap regarding women’s interests), some scholars have posited that other non-electoral forms of representation can ‘fill the gap’ by speaking for under-represented or overlooked interests (e.g. Mackay, 2001; Phillips, 1995). In this way, the unelected may provide legitimation for a political system suffering from a ‘democratic deficit’ and public disenchantment.

As well as this capacity to help legitimise democratic representation, the legitimacy of unelected representatives can be assessed by recourse to conventional notions of authorisation (by the audience, to whom representations are made) and accountability or responsiveness, to the represented (those on whose behalf the representations are made).

This study finds that both authority and accountability can be claimed, making use of Saward’s evaluative criteria (2010) and Dovi’s (2012) conceptualisation of ‘a good representative’. The women community leaders are acting as unelected representatives for women’s interests, in two ways. First, it is an intrinsic part of their role – as the chief officer or leader, they are expected to speak for the women and their interests which the organisation or campaign is focussed on (professional affiliation, surrogacy and stakeholding for wider interests and new voices). This establishes their accountability back to their organisation and its ‘members’, as a constituency to be represented, and to whom the community leader is accountable. They are also part of a women’s sector of peers (social location, specialist expertise), to which they are accountable, through networks (both formal and informal). Taylor (2010) has further proposed that for non-electoral representatives “accountability is regulated not via periodic elections but through moral and ethical sanction channelled by community gossip, media exposés or personal campaigns” (p.175), which reflects the adjacency of unelected representatives to their constituents and their community of peers, although evidently there are limitations and risks associated with such forms of accountability.

The connections between women representatives provide important contextual background to their legitimacy as women, .

There is extensive inter-connectivity between these unelected and elected women, based on shared values, shared history (or knowledge of it); and both stability and fluidity in roles which impact on the representation of women's interests. Their connections are dynamic and inter-dependent, making use of the knowledge, skills and experience of women in elected, unelected and appointed representative roles (Holli 2008), across state and community structures. Their relations are not constrained by their insider or outsider positions vis-à-vis the state, and in fact some of their 'border crossings' constitute a collapsing of those distinctions (Newman 20 p.46). These representatives are aware of how each other is positioned and this is taken into account by the women when deciding on tactics and alliances to enhance women's interests.

These roles do not fit neatly into a state/elected and civil society/unelected dichotomy, therefore a four-part typology is presented in Appendix F.

The specific findings for each cohort are outlined next.

6.2.2 Unelected Representatives

The unelected community leaders are identified as legitimate representatives for women's interests, because of their acknowledged role in leading a women's organisation (institutional affiliation) or their role in prioritising women's interests within the broader envelope of their organisation's work (stakeholding, and surrogacy for wider interests). This is based on their expertise (specialist credentials), authenticity and frontline accountability to the women (social location) whose interests they represent. Some of these unelected women share characteristics or life experiences with the women they work with (formative experiences), and this provides another layer of legitimacy as they are seen to be 'speaking as' ('mirroring'), not just 'speaking for' (Slim 2002).

They also experience being authorised as legitimate representatives by the state, which authorises them to represent women's interests in a variety of 'invited spaces' (Newman 2012), based on the utility value of their expertise, and the symbolic value of their inclusion as part of a diverse public. The unelected representatives know that theirs is a contested, fragile status, in relation to the state. The basis of their legitimacy can also be the basis of challenge as they experience being patronised or dismissed (de-legitimising their claims) as women who *only* represent women's

interests. The 'invited spaces' are often complex time-consuming sites of decision-making, and the community leaders have had to develop strategies and identify allies in order to navigate these, maintain their independent and 'untainted' status and to circumvent the challenges they face.

They also experience a variety of gendered behaviours and expectations from state and voluntary sector actors, which can have de-legitimising effects.

They negotiate these with the support of networks (formal and informal), where both gender and feminism are central to the connections between women representatives; and they utilise their connectedness as a potential co-legitimation tool against the challenges they face as representatives for women's interests.

6.2.3 Elected Representatives

Elected representatives are understood to derive their legitimacy from their democratic electoral status. However, there are gendered dimensions to this, particularly for the elected women.

Elected women's legitimacy is bounded by ideas of utility and difference, in that women are described as bringing different life experiences and skills compared to men, which have a high utility value in the ward-based work of elected representation. This could be understood as a source of legitimacy linked to both Dovi's 'social location' criteria (2012) and to ideas of representing 'wider interests and new voices' (Saward 2010). The gender balance narrative highlights this, as women are seen to bring something extra – not that men are seen to be lacking as representatives, but that the presence of women brings the expectation of different claim making, for women's interests. In this way, women's legitimacy as political representatives may be seen as contingent on their different perspectives and skills, whereas the men's gender is not presented as a factor in their legitimacy.

Noticeably, the elected men do not experience their gender (as men) as a factor in their representational role; they were unable to identify ways in which their gender might be relevant or of benefit in their representations for constituents. As Deephouse and Suchman suggest, this "absence of questioning" (2008, p.57) can indicate an acceptance of their legitimacy, assumed both by men themselves as well as by other sources of legitimation. And in Scott's exploration of the bases of legitimacy, he identifies "pre-conscious taken-for-granted understandings" (2001, p.61) as evidence of cognitive consistency, and a legitimacy that derives from internalising conformity and "common frames of reference" (pp.60-61). In this

conceptualisation, men are legitimate as political representatives, not because they meet the regulatory or even normative ideas about legitimate representation, but because at some deeper level, political representatives are men.

The findings also indicate that elected women may have a 'triple burden' of ward-based representation work: their share of the general casework; specific work related to women's interests (in particular child-related issues); and additional 'sensitive' issues, such as domestic violence. This 'supplementary representation' may strengthen women's legitimacy as elected representatives, based on claims relating to 'wider interests and new voices' (Saward 2010) as well as 'social location' (Dovi 2002).

Elected women are subject to forms of de-legitimisation, and the most frequently mentioned example was in relation to quota systems, specifically all-women shortlists (AWS). Some women also reported examples of bullying, sexism and abusive behaviour directed at them *as women*. These behaviours target individual women but are seen as part of a wider attempt to undermine women's legitimacy *per se* as political representatives. The 'masculine culture' apparent in some meetings and the lack of appropriate institutional response compounds these infrequent but negative experiences.

Finally, there are indications that women representatives are expected to tolerate or even manage the disruptive behaviour encountered in some meetings.

These examples indicate areas of gendered behaviour and expectations, based on conventional gender norms, which place further pressures on elected women, as forms of de-legitimation. These contribute to, or are evidence of, challenges to their perceived legitimation, but women also utilise their "cobweb of connections" (March and Olsen 1995, cited in Saward 2009, p.17) to counter this.

6.3 Discussion

In this section, the similarities and differences between the experiences and views of the respondents are discussed, and then challenges, with reference to legitimacy and gender debates.

6.3.1 Similarities

There are similarities between the unelected and elected women in that they are perceived as women who are representatives, and they face similar gendered expectations and demands as a result.

Both cohorts for instance, are examples of *symbolic* representation, as women representatives and as women making representational claims for women's interests.

Both the elected and unelected women undertake representational work to advance women's interests – whether through their casework, addressing issues faced by women as individuals; or by making claims 'for women' as a specific disadvantaged group at a strategic level. Their legitimacy is based on their expertise, their social and political connections and history, and their authorisation in relation to organisations which are themselves legitimated.

They utilise their expertise in speaking for or acting for women's interests, which is based in part on their specialist credentials (Saward 2010), as community leaders of specialist women's organisations, for example. These community leaders are operating in specialist areas (such as sexual assault, or domestic violence, or women's mental health) and as such have both professional legitimacy (through their 'institutional affiliation', Dovi 2012) and also their history of advocating for these interests – some of the women interviewed had held their roles, or worked in their field, for over twenty years. The elected women are also seen to have expertise in women's interests, and spoke of being approached to represent or advocate for individual women, or 'women's issues' which they understood as being a direct result of them being women. On some occasions this was due to the perception of a specific shared experience (having children, for instance), but at other times it was reported as being simply the fact of being a woman.

This expertise is acknowledged by 'the represented' (the residents, in the case of elected women) or the audience (state officials or politicians, in the case of the unelected women) which are sources of authorisation. Constituents seek out the elected representatives with specific gendered concerns; and senior officials seek out and invite the unelected women to represent women's interests in a variety of situations. This iterative process, of seeking the representations, and thus authorising them, is part of the legitimation.

In both these examples, the women representatives are not only meeting a need for women's concerns and issues to be addressed, but they are also filling a gap in institutional processes, whereby if the women representatives were not present, the women's interests would not be raised or dealt with. In this sense, the importance of representation for marginalised groups and overlooked interests is highlighted.

These similarities evidence the ways in which women's legitimacy as political representatives is predicated on the extra gendered contribution that the women bring to the process. This is not to imply that they are better representatives than men, but that they make a different, additional contribution to the representation of claims, because they bring an additional set of experiences and perspectives as *women*, which result in additional demands for representation from them. Both women and men are undertaking their representational roles, but only women, and not men, are being asked to represent specific gendered interests as well. In Dovi's conception of 'the good representative', she presents 'social location' as one of the criteria for assessing "the authority necessary for legitimacy" (2012 p.62). She frames this as "being a member of a certain group, or having certain experiences" that can give an individual the authority to be a voice for that community (p.64). However, she makes no distinction here between a representative being a member of a privileged group or an oppressed group - that legitimacy is related to their 'social location', irrespective of issues of disadvantage or minority interests.

Both cohorts of women construct and maintain networks of like-minded women: the unelected representatives referred to the North East Women's Network (NEWN) (described in Chapter 2) and most of them indicated that they are members. The elected representatives (from the Labour Party) mentioned their Labour Women's Network (LWN) (see Chapter 2) but other party members did not refer to their local women's sections, although these do exist. According to Saward (2009), "dense networks lend legitimacy" and "organisational links and network histories can have wide social legitimacy in their host communities" (p.17). Dovi (2012) also suggests legitimation for representatives through their 'social location', highlighting "particular social connections" and group memberships (p.63) as examples. Community leaders as part of civil society have conventionally been perceived as 'outsiders' to the political institutions of government, and their utility and legitimacy are inextricably bound up with this perceived status.

Further, some of these women community leaders have moved into and out of electoral politics (Banaszak 2010; Newman 2012), and state institutions, as well as holding roles in civil society. This enhances their expertise, in addition to strengthening their associations and alliances. This is another feature of the dynamic and inter-dependent network of claims and relationships which connect elected and non-elected women representatives, providing a level of co-legitimation.

In addition, unelected and elected women spoke of the centrality of both gender and feminism to the range of connections between women representatives, although another study found some antipathy to notions of feminism among some elected women (Welsh and Halcli 2003). The findings also indicate that 'representing women's interests' connects women who are elected and non-elected representatives. This is not only in the specific space of representation, but encompasses a range of connections (networks, relationships, alliances) which anchor them to the communities of women they represent, and both overlay and underpin the formal representational claim-making. Scott (2001) has discussed the "linkages... that confer resources and legitimacy" (p.146), and questions whether the density of "an infrastructure of associated organisations" (p.145) can enhance legitimacy. Saward is also concerned to highlight the "organisational links and network histories" (2010, p.106) as part of a more informal but dense network which can provide legitimation through both support and constraint to those making representational claims. He describes the "equal and opposite" categories of "connection" and of "independence" (2010, p.106), which affect those who make such claims, especially the unelected who may need to demonstrate "an air of untaintedness" (p.107) in order to maintain their legitimacy.

Both unelected and elected women describe examples of sexism, and for some, bullying or abusive behaviours. These findings indicate that women representatives are challenged as women through these experiences of "the attitudes and practices of individual men", which are located within wider contexts (such as formal meetings or institutional processes) where "the masculine culture within organisations" (Mackay 2001, p.195) still prevails.

Other studies confirm that women in political roles experience direct sexism, such as discriminatory remarks and behaviours (Farrell and Titcombe 2016; Fawcett Society 2014), which indicate that some political actors and media commentators believe that politics should be 'a man's world' (or a boy's club), and that women are more suited to other roles (Campbell and Childs 2010; IPU 2016). The small number of reports from women in this research study may or may not describe the full extent of this locally, but the recent Local Government Commission found sexism to be commonplace and considered ordinary:

"We have found that there is a harmful culture of sexism in parts of local government politics which would not be out of place in the 1970s. Written and oral evidence to the commission repeatedly described a culture where sexism is tolerated, and viewed as part of political life. This has to change.

This evidence is supported by the results of our large-scale survey which found that almost 4 in 10 women councillors have had sexist remarks directed at them by other councillors” (Fawcett Society 2017, p.9)

In addition, more serious examples of abusive and intimidating behaviour towards women are reported in social media (Bon 2017; Dhrodia 2017) and the public domain, which have the effect of driving women out and dissuading other women from entering politics (Bochel and Bochel 2000; Boffey 2015; Edwards and Chapman 2000).

A few examples of structural discrimination, such as lack of institutional support, issues with childcare, and failure to follow equality procedures, were also mentioned. These can be seen as indicators of the gendered norms which pervade most institutions and act as obstacles, making these environments more difficult and less welcoming for women.

The importance and centrality for some, of a feminist sensibility was highlighted, as in a feminist approach to their representational work, and the relationships and activities which contextualise that. This commitment to being feminist in representing women’s interests as an expression of representative claim making corresponds not only to Saward’s “specialist expertise” but also a “surrogacy for wider interests” (2010, p.98), as these women speak for an important but missing perspective (minoritised and disadvantaged women’s interests) and a constituency which does not conform to electoral boundaries. The legitimating basis of “intangible goods” described by Dovi (2012, p.63), can be invoked for “what other people consider to be worthwhile and good ends” (ibid). It is suggested that a feminist value base for representational claims constitutes this claim-making for women’s interests as serving moral ends. If this basis is accepted by those on whose behalf the claims are made (in “surrogacy for wider interests”, Saward 2010), then legitimacy is also established on this basis of “intangible goods”.

6.3.2 Differences

There are differences between the experiences of the unelected and elected representatives, and how their legitimacy is understood, and in some cases, undermined.

For example, the legitimacy that unelected women derive from their ‘institutional affiliation’ (Dovi 2012, p.63) is very closely linked to their “expertise and specialist credentials” (Saward 2010, p.98) – they ‘speak from’ their area of specialism regarding women’s interests. This is both a source of legitimation and occasionally

of de-legitimation, by the state and quasi-state actors that form their 'audience' and to whom they make representational claims.

For the elected women, the legitimacy that their 'institutional affiliation' confers may be better understood in terms of Scott's regulative basis for legitimacy (2001, p.60), in that their institution (the council) "is established by and operating in accordance with relevant legal or quasi-legal requirements" (ibid). Of course, elected representatives are then prey to public moods regarding all things political, and their legitimacy is thus contingent – it may rise or fall in relation to current attitudes to politics, politicians or political institutions.

Elected women and unelected women representatives both function as symbolic representatives, but this is demonstrated in different ways. The elected women in this study are symbols of equality for women in democratic politics, through the narrative of 'gender balance'; whereas the unelected women described situations where their presence was tokenistic, as if the institution had to be seen to include them.

The following points summarise the 'gender balance' findings from the elected respondents' data:

- That gender balance in political representation is a desirable goal, whether for justice or utility reasons, and because it enhances the legitimacy of a political institution
- That some political institutions are working for gender balance, making structural changes to policy and practices, e.g. selection procedures.
- That there are obstacles to achieving gender balance, both inside and outside the institutions.
- That what constitutes gender balance is differently understood. One woman in three is gender balance in the numerically awkward three-seat ward system in Tyneside, the research study site. Gender balance is not perceived by everyone as being the same as gender equity.
- And, that women's presence to achieve 'gender balance' (whether for justice or utility reasons) is a legitimising factor for both the political institution and for women as elected representatives. Elected men are not described as bringing 'balance' to a team or committee, perhaps because they are already in the majority. But neither are they described as bringing something unique on gender grounds as men. The position of men, as gendered political representatives, is unquestioned. It seems their gender does not have to be

justified on justice or utility grounds, and nor do they need legitimation based on their gender, as part of their representative role.

There is something about the visibility of women after the absence of women for so long in these political spaces. In Nirmal Puwar's (1997) concept of the 'amplification of numbers', she memorably described women in parliament as '*space invaders*', because of reactions to this heightened visibility. That which we are unused to seeing, is more likely to be noticed and remarked on, even when still in a minority, than that which we are familiar with and used to seeing. For example, one woman on a ward team will be noticed when in the past there were none; while the fact that there are still two men, i.e. twice as many men as women, is unnoticed and unremarked on because it is unremarkable to see men on the ward team. Their presence is usual, and noticing how many of them are present has not previously been a subject of interest, so counting them or paying attention to their numerically superior representation is not done.

Whereas the clamour, albeit contested, for more women representatives, has focussed attention on the presence of women, in that the presence of a woman will be noticed and remarked on, not necessarily as a novel or undesirable situation, but perhaps as an acknowledgement, or a visible symbol, of achieving the gender balance or diversity aim of the institution, by having women in representative (or leadership) positions. Since the legitimacy of many public institutions is partly but increasingly measured through their achievement of external accreditation (certain awards for instance, such as Stonewall 100 or Athena SWAN), which can be categorised as a form of "professional legitimacy" (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, p.53), it becomes obligatory for those institutions to evidence that. The public visibility of women as elected or unelected representatives contributes to that legitimation.

Now the aim is for 'gender balance' rather than 'some women' which means women visibly present in each part of the democratic body: ward teams, committees, scrutiny panels, even Cabinet. This visibility may symbolise equality, or even democracy itself - "if democratic bodies are 'seen' to be representative, they are therefore morally legitimate" (Mackay 2001, p.81) and the presence of women acts "as a kind of proxy measure or barometer for democracy" (ibid). But gender balance is not the same as equal representation, in that it is more conceptual than numerical.

"We do not encounter the world around us empty-handed, but tend to perceive the world through certain concepts that both enable and limit our

field of vision. Concepts open up a way of seeing on our part, but they also convey expectations about what is worth seeing or recognizing in the first place” (Näsström 2011, p.502)

The concept of gender balance appears to be understood by respondents in this study in two distinctive ways:

First, that some people are perceiving the presence of a woman (the visible, physical presence) as evidence of ‘gender balance’. She is visibly present, and thus there is a visible change from a uni-gendered ward team to a dual-gendered ward team, which can be represented as ‘gender balance’. In this conception, a woman symbolises the party’s, or council’s, commitment to gender balance or even the wider policy ambition of equality. Her name on the councillors’ list, her photograph on the website or social media – these are signifiers in the public domain that there are elected women here (Norris 1997), which indicate that gender equality is being addressed. Gender balance symbolises the gender equality ambition of a political institution.

Second, that others are referring not to the physical presence of a woman but to what they view as the differing gender perspective brought by a woman – and that the presence of a woman, any woman, even just one woman, will bring this different gender perspective. Therefore because there are now both gender perspectives (irrespective of how many men or women are present), there is balance, and this equates to ‘gender balance’. In this conception, gender balance is a normative feature of political representation and is presented as morally purposeful by encompassing both genders (in the conventional binary gender distinction).

For the elected women, their place in the gender balance narrative was viewed positively, and as such their representational position could be described as legitimating.

Rebecca Rumbul (2016) has stated that “the very presence of women in the parliamentary system bestows legitimacy on it” (p.65) and adds that they provide “credibility to commitments on inclusion and equality” (citing Mackay et al, 2003). She claims that the same principles apply to women in non-elected politics – that:

“the presence and contribution of women in the political process provides a greater breadth of expertise and knowledge, and lends legitimacy to the process” (Rumbul 2016, p.65).

In this study, the unelected women were on occasion, invited to make representational claims for women’s interests in contexts where they realised that

they were 'tokens'. In these situations, the invitation and their presence was sufficient for the institution, and their representations were not accepted. This experience is linked with a more competitive contract culture, where their expertise is sought at the early stages, but their claims for resources are less successful, or they find that the decisions will be made at another level of the organisation. This creates a sense of 'false spaces' of representation, and de-legitimisation of their representational role.

The elected women representatives achieved a degree of legitimation through their symbolic and their utility contributions to 'gender balance', whereas the unelected women's experience of symbolic representation was less positive and de-legitimising.

Another area of difference is related to the *specialist credentials* of representing women's interests. Although both elected and unelected women evidence their legitimacy through the utility value of their expertise, the unelected women gave examples of where they are de-legitimised for their specialism. Some women reported instances of being dismissed, belittled or undermined on the grounds that they are '*just about women*' or a '*one trick pony*' – and that their specialist knowledge is dismissed as narrow or sectional. They describe tactics they have developed to respond to this, which illustrate the dynamic nature of claim-making and how legitimacy is not fixed but relational.

6.3.3 Challenges

The women reported a number of challenges to their legitimacy, some of which have been covered above. However, three further examples are given here, the first of these applies to both unelected and elected representatives; the other two examples are specific to the elected women.

Behaviours

Women (elected and unelected) representatives report dealing with instances of *unacceptable male behaviour*. This can be where a woman is directly targeted as in patronised or undermined, or it can be more overt insulting, abusive or bullying behaviour. A number of recent reports confirm this as a feature for women councillors (Fawcett Society 2014; IPU 2016; LGA) and a study by Farrell and Titcombe reported that:

“Members were seen to be discontented with the behaviour of their fellow members and some of the responses from women suggested that they experienced bullying and also gender discrimination” (2016, p.873)

The same study also suggests that “a culture of sexism and bullying still persists in many areas of public life” (ibid), citing the Centre for Women and Democracy report 2011; and the Welsh LGA exit survey 2012. This culture is indicated in the reports of shouting and more aggressive behaviour, or male preference. Unelected women gave examples of ‘male dominated discussions’ and male entitlement regarding status positions. Mackay has outlined how these type of behaviours illustrate patriarchal norms and masculine culture:

“some of the reasons for inequality in political institutions are due to cultural stereotypes – ‘patterns of behaviour are shaped by cultural codes of masculinity and femininity and by institutional norms and values. In political institutions the masculine ideal is standard and underpins institutional structures and practices and dominant masculinities are presented as common sense, ostensibly gender-neutral norms, conventions and practices’ ” (Mackay 2004, cited in Farrell and Titcombe 2016, p.873)

Women who experienced the most direct abusive behaviour were seriously affected, and this can be seen as some men not accepting women as political representatives. The study confirms what other similar studies have shown, that there is some latent prejudice against women in public roles. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has suggested that:

“by entering the political domain women are shifting away from a role that confined them to the private sphere and are entering a world where their legitimacy is sometimes challenged.” (IPU 2011, cited in IPU 2016, p.1)

The legitimacy of elected women is challenged on the basis that they are women:

“while behaviour and acts affecting women in politics take the form of ordinary sexism, in many cases they are often part of a broader stereotype that women ‘are not made for’ or ‘should not meddle in’ politics” (IPU 2016, p.2)

Social media in particular is rife with abuse directed at elected politicians but it is elected women who receive gendered abuse off- and online (Bon 2017; IPU 2016):

“Women in politics face an extraordinary amount of abuse, especially on social media, partly because they speak up but also simply *because they are women*. This discourages women from participating in political debate” (Electoral Reform Society, 2018, my emphasis)

And BAME or lesbian women who are disproportionately targeted – Diane Abbott and Mhairi Black, for example. In a political social and cultural climate where women are already less confident, less resourced and less likely to be mentored into

politics, this is a strongly discouraging factor (Shepherd 2014, cited in IPU 2016, p.12). The subjection of women who are political representatives to public critique on gender grounds, that is, as women, and the specific forms this takes (e.g. media sexism, online misogyny, threats of rape or sexual abuse) signal an attempt to 'de-legitimise' women as political representatives.

Workloads

Another area specific to the elected women representatives is in relation to the *casework* in the constituency. As previously stated, the legitimacy of women representatives is in part due to their utility value – in Saward's terms, they are legitimated by virtue of their "expertise and specialist credentials", as well as making representational claims for "wider interests and new voices" (2010, p.98). For Dovi, their "institutional affiliation" and "social location" (2012, p.63) will authorise them as legitimate representatives.

The study findings show that the workload of ward councillors is subject to gendered expectations and demands. The study indicates that elected women may have a 'triple burden' of ward-based representation work, in that they have their share of the general casework, but they also receive specific work related to women's interests (in particular child-related issues) and also 'sensitive' issues, such as domestic violence. These concerns are raised by residents choosing elected women in preference to elected men. In addition, there are occasions when elected women are subject to aggressive behaviour from men, either peers or residents which is made more difficult to deal with because of an apparent lack of appropriate response. And women are expected to undertake emotional management work, to manage men's disruptive behaviour in meetings.

This study found , in relation to the workload of elected women at the local level, that they face a 'triple shift' which comprises general casework, and additional women's and 'sensitive' issues, and emotional management work.

Respondents explained how both women and men get the usual range of issues from local residents (litter, bins, parking, etc.) and they did not notice gendered dimensions or differences in this and were keen to emphasise that these concerns are raised by men and women. However, one councillor did describe how car parking has been presented to him as an issue differentiated by gender – men raising it because it affects where they can park their car, whereas women had raised it in relation to children's safety going to school.

But generally the differences that were reported indicated additional work for elected women. Examples were given of women residents raising particular issues with women representatives – concerns related to children most commonly, but also older people. Having women in these representative roles also enables ‘sensitive’ issues to be presented to them, such as domestic violence, which it was widely reported as an issue not raised with men (except one, who saw that as related to his professional background). This was presented as a positive aspect of having more women councillors – that these issues were not raised at all, or not so frequently, when the councillors were all men.

The third area of additional work which respondents reported was that of emotional management, where women representatives were either having to deal with men’s aggression directed at them, or more commonly, were expected to deal with more general aggressive or disruptive behaviour from men in meetings. Aside from the emotional toll that this aspect of the role might take on an individual, this is not only additional work, but invisible work:

“Tasks that require the emotive work thought natural for women, such as caring, negotiating, empathizing, smoothing troubled relationships, and working behind the scenes to enable cooperation, are required components of many women's jobs. Excluded from job descriptions and performance evaluations, the work is invisible and uncompensated” (Guy and Newman, 2004, p.289)

For those scholars interesting in understanding why women’s presence in the public sphere is so much less than men’s, the concept of the double shift to describe women’s employed role and their domestic/childcare role will be familiar. The triple shift, which adds in the emotional management role, may be less familiar (Hochschild and Machung, 1989). The combination of the general workload, the women’s and sensitive issues work, and the emotional management work equates to a triple shift which is effectively nested within their role of an elected representative.

This basket of additional work (either as expectations or as duties) indicates that women perform a supplementary role to men – that their presence enhances the ward team by facilitating a wider range of concerns to be raised. The general work of being a councillor is described in terms of the role as it has been performed (by men), and now that there are more women in these roles, especially with at least one woman in each multi-member ward, some differences are being noted.

However these are additional to the role that men have been undertaking, and it is women who are expected to take up these tasks, without any acknowledgement that this might mean that women are doing more resident-led representation than men, and therefore potentially have greater workloads. In fact, one recent study found that “women councillors are among the most active, especially in terms of responding to the needs from ward electors ... (and) women councillors are perceived as more approachable and effective than men in resolving issues ” (Thrasher et al 2015, p.732). This correlates with Hollis (1987) who noted that “impressionistic evidence from all-out elections suggests that women candidates are welcomed by the electorate, as they have a reputation for conscientious constituency work” (pp.478-9).

It may be that women councillors in the North East are devoting the most hours to their role – not only did Thrasher et al (2015) find that women spend more time on the work than men:

“councillors representing relatively deprived areas spend more time on council activities than do councillors representing more affluent areas. The activities that councillors pursue, especially whether they are proactive or reactive towards constituents, relate to the ward context. *Women* and people that are retired from work also *invest relatively more time in their work as councillors.*” (Thrasher et al, 2015, p.713, my emphasis)

but the LGA census also found that North East councillors spend more time (25.3 hours per week, compared with an average of 20.8 hours) on council and political business for their authority, and a small minority (5.2%) of councillors in the North East reported that they spend 50 or more hours per week. Labour Party members are the highest of the political parties (28.5 hours); and metropolitan councils are the highest out of all council types, at 30.9 hours (compared with average of 25.1 hours). (Kettlewell and Phillips, 2014, pp.12-13).

The elected women in this study, while not all Labour, were all in the North East and are all members of metropolitan councils. Councillors in the North East were also twice as likely as the rest of the country to say that holding surgeries was important (25.3% agreed, compared with 12.7% nationally), which is where a significant proportion of casework can be generated.

Women representatives are undoubtedly described (by men and women) as bringing different perspectives, skills and experiences and this is viewed positively. The utility value of having women in elected positions, especially public-facing roles like ward councillors is unambiguous. However the ‘utility’ argument for women in representative roles acts to disadvantage women, in that their utility appears to

expand their workload relative to men. This 'supplementary representation' may strengthen women's legitimacy as elected representatives, based on claims relating to 'wider interests and new voices' (Saward 2010) as well as 'social location' (Dovi 2002). Further, if elected women are undertaking more local casework, then that would potentially place them more often in the locality, facing the gendered expectations and demands of residents more frequently. One of Farrell and Titcombe's respondents stated that: "women are often more successful in the community as people find women easier to speak to" (2016, p.878).

For those in executive positions, there are questions about how the ward level work is distributed between the remaining two councillors in the ward, and in councils where more elected men than women hold executive roles, it is possible that other elected women may be disproportionately picking up that ward-based workload. It may also be the case, that in wards with both women and men councillors, the distribution of roles is gender differentiated – that the ward-based, public-facing work is undertaken by more women and the committee or panel work is taken up by more men. This may be particularly in councils with lower proportions of elected women, and longer histories and more established norms of men holding committee positions. Or it might be that women prefer the ward-based work to the council meetings. A recent Fawcett Society study of Milton Keynes councillors found that women councillors made fewer interventions in council meetings, including Full Council, than the men, and when the research findings were presented to the women, they responded:

"that women councillors were more active in their wards, out and about doing ward business, and that sometimes they felt that public meetings were something to be dealt with quickly since the actual work was being done elsewhere" (MK Fawcett Society 2016, p.15).

But some of their other responses related how male councillors' behaviour shaped and constrained theirs, for example, men's 'grandstanding' meant some women decided not to prolong discussions by adding to them. This resulted in women councillors having a low profile, and getting very little coverage in the local news, potentially giving the impression that they do less than the men.

It was a conversation that I had with two councillors in another part of the country that alerted me to the possibility that women might be undertaking a greater proportion of the ward casework than some of the men. These two were married and held seats in the same ward (not unusual) and they told me that she deals with the casework "because she's better at it", while he concentrates on committee work,

particularly planning, which he prefers (Councillor A, 2015). At one level this anecdote illustrates a 'different but equal' division of labour. However it can also be framed as a gendered distribution of councillors' responsibilities, which results in further gendered effects as, although both are important functions, the committee work has more status and attracts an additional payment for its members, and its associated workload can be more easily controlled than demand-led casework from residents.

Another aspect of the gendered workloads of elected representatives is that of the utility argument for increased numbers of women in political roles. The justice argument has been made by Young (1990), in that a deliberative democracy ought to have the interests of the oppressed and marginalised included, or it fails the democratic test and simply maintains the interests of the privileged who are already well-represented. Within this argument there is a kernel of the utility argument, in that it serves a useful purpose to have the less-privileged interests represented, in order to improve deliberative politics, involve a wider range of publics and produce improved decision-making for the whole polity. Others have made a more explicit utility argument, particularly for the presence of women. It has been claimed that more women will lead to women's interests being prioritised and women's issues being substantively represented. It has also been posited that more women will transform how politics is done (e.g. Phillips 1991, 1998b), both through doing politics differently (less oppositional, more consensus seeking) and through changing the culture and customs of politics – for instance, introducing more family-friendly hours and tackling sexual harassment. Bochel and Briggs (2000) found that women councillors across all parties were of the view that “women are more willing to listen to the other side, that they are less adversarial, better team players and more amenable to the idea of seeking solutions” (p.66).

Dovi (2007) has argued that women have “overlooked interests” and “male representatives are not always aware of how public policies affect female citizens” (pp.307-309); and Mansbridge (1999) has also put forward reasons for increased descriptive representation, including interests not being fully articulated.

The claim that increased numbers of women will increase substantive representation has been the subject of much scholarly debate and research, with some indications of a link. It is generally accepted that it is a necessary but not sufficient condition, as women are a heterogeneous group and not all women 'act for' women, or have the same view of what women's interests are. There has also

been an institutionalist turn in the politics and gender field recently, leading to more emphasis on the interplay between actors and institutions, with attention to informal and gendered rules (for example, Gains and Lowndes 2017).

The utility argument means that women bring either something different (to men) or bring something additional. The idea that they bring added value is predicated on the notion that men bring enough – that what they bring is sufficient, and that women are adding something to the sufficiency of representation. This solidifies the ungendered norm of men as neutral agents, not gendered beings as women are. The presence of women (and other ‘minorities’) is therefore characterised as supplementing the representative role as undertaken by men. This difference is not a replacement for some aspect of men’s representativeness, but additional to it. The talk of bringing something different appears to refer to something in addition to what men bring, not instead of some aspect or as an alternative to how they act as representatives. Even the proposition that women act differently to men in terms of their emotional management, suggesting that (some) men can be aggressive or confrontational, whereas women are skilled at managing those emotional situations, is not an equivalent-but-different scenario. It is men’s behaviour resulting in an increase in women’s responsibilities.

In this study, the distribution and focus of casework is frequently presented as gendered, which may be a feature of these small ward level ‘teams’ of elected councillors.

Some casework is seen as being more appropriate for women, or more rarely for men, representatives, largely based on conventional ideas about women’s and men’s experiences and roles e.g. issues to do with children are directed to women; issues to do with parking control to men. This is perceived by some as resulting in an equivalence in workloads between women and men, and explained by these actors using an ‘equal but different’ perspective. This would indicate that for some elected representatives, not much has changed in the 35 years since Jill Hills noted “that the social work aspect of the job can be seen as an extension of women’s traditional nurturing role” (1983, p.41).

Some casework is seen as being ‘for women’ because of its inherent ‘sensitivity’ (e.g. domestic violence). There were no equivalent examples given of issues which would be brought to male representatives, indicating that this work for women is in addition to their share of general casework.

A further area of casework was identified as those cases where the resident bringing it has a preference for a woman representative e.g. mothers and older women, both mentioned by several women and men respondents. There was only one instance, mentioned by one male representative, in which a preference for a male representative was stated by a man and this was explained by the respondent as being about his pride which would prevent him speaking with a woman about his issue.

The informal institutions that are “hidden in everyday practices” (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004) may be a useful way of unpicking this issue with workloads. The gender norms and expectations which are integral to gendered informal institutions, also act to shape formal institutions, to constrain or enable actors, and are shaped, reformed and abandoned by actors. They are also socially transmitted. The norms around councillors’ casework certainly act to shape the casework and through that impact on councillors’ roles more broadly, as the micro-level representational tasks that make up the casework, are often time-consuming and involve the elected representative in many communications, over time, with a variety of state and non-state actors. And these interactions with other actors will be impacted by the gendered norms, as repeat representations regarding specific concerns (for instance, domestic violence) will frame the originating elected representative in particular ways.

This political workload with its gendered dimensions can be also be seen as a ‘narrative of difference’, in that each element illustrates a gendered difference:

- Women bring different experiences – e.g. parenting and childcare, *valuing/exhibiting/utilising different life experiences*
- Women approach casework differently - are ‘empathetic’; more ‘social’ *recognising different approaches*
- Residents want to raise some issues with women rather than men – *responding to gender-differentiated demand*

The ‘rules-in-use’ which govern how resident-prompted workload is distributed, are that the councillor who receives the enquiry, or communication from the resident, is the person who deals with it. Some of the study respondents were aware of unfairness in the system, for instance, the person at the top of the list of three ward councillors will get noticeably more casework from residents than the other two councillors for that ward. As a result, they had instituted the practice of rotating their names on the ward literature, so that this distribution was more evenly shared.

However, since constituents have access to all three of their councillors, they can make a choice from the list. This is seen as a positive since some constituents do express a preference for one councillor over another. But does this practice - that constituents determine who gets the enquiry - result in the maintenance of gender norms and expectations? If so, does it advance women political actors or impede them? Given the indications that elected women may be getting higher workloads than men, there is room here for further investigation.

It may be that constituents are demonstrating the value of increased numbers of elected women, in that by having more women in these roles, the residents see it as an opportunity to raise issues they would not raise with male councillors. This could mean that “overlooked interests” are being represented because women are present as political representatives, which would demonstrate a *positive gendered effect* of increased descriptive representation. This would show that the *supply* of women has a *gendered effect* because some issues are not raised unless women are present as representatives to prompt them.

Alternatively, it may be that the constituents are exhibiting a *preference* for women representatives over men, when they have a choice. If this is what is going on, then they would also be raising these issues with elected men, when there are only men to select from, but according to this study, that is not the case, or the issues are raised disproportionately with women. If so, then *demand* from residents has a *gendered effect*, as more women are having more issues raised with them, than their male counterparts are.

The findings from this study indicate that it might be both.

Quotas

Another factor affecting legitimacy for elected women has been the introduction of quotas to improve the descriptive representation of women. As explained in Chapter 2, the Labour Party’s all-women shortlists have been critical in delivering increased numbers of women, especially in the study area of Tyneside, which now has gender equity in the numbers of councillors. However, the study found some opposition, although the majority view was that AWS is ‘a means to an end’.

It appears that there is a residual issue, for some, perhaps only a small minority, but nevertheless there is antagonism about reserved seats for women, and there are those who utilise the fact of quota systems to undermine women candidates. A range of claims are made against them, as discussed previously – ‘merit’,

displacement, insufficiently diverse (Nugent and Krook, 2015). These challenges attempt to present women as not only having attained their position by unfair advantage but also by blocking another under-represented group, such as working class men. Perhaps elite men ought to give up some of their seats for under-represented groups of men? (Dovi 2009; Murray 2015). In addition, it is claimed that such women are unrepresentative of the heterogeneity of women, as well as being insufficiently competent. These tests are not applied to male candidates, and nor do their arguments stand up when AWS candidates are compared with those who have achieved selection in a non-quota process (Allen et al, 2016). These claims seek to undermine women's legitimacy *per se* and are advanced as part of a wider backlash against women gaining political (and other public) positions.

The question of merit has been challenged, for instance by Iris Marion Young:

“the idea of merit criteria that are objective and unbiased with respect to personal attributes is a version of the ideal of impartiality, and is just as impossible” (1990, p.202)

While Cynthia Cockburn has counter-argued that it is the diversity of women which strengthens their claim for presence:

“The validity of special measures for representing women should ... rest on the very diversity of the views and needs that are being marginalised when ‘women’ are marginal” (1996, cited in Mackay 2001, p.85)

The role of merit as an argument to de-legitimise women has been presented earlier, but the relationship between AWS and institutional bases of legitimacy is raised here. AWS may meet *regulative* (Scott 2001, p.61) requirements (via adherence to party policy, procedures, constitutional process, legal hurdles) but for some Labour members it clashes with ideas of equality, and is therefore *culturally dissonant*, in terms of legitimacy. This clash between two forms of legitimacy (regulative, and cultural-cognitive) is not unique, as Scott explains: “legitimacy structures may, at the same time, be contested structures” (ibid).

6.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This study has provided new data from both elected and unelected political representatives, which illuminates the gendered dimensions of political legitimacy. As a local case study, the qualitative nature of the research provides deep and richly textured data, which details the experiences and views of local political representatives. The decision to interview men as well as women, as part of the

elected cohort, is an example of an empirical decision making a significant contribution to the findings and to new knowledge.

The study provides a deeper understanding of how women in political life (both formal and informal) are challenged. The examples of similarities and differences in their experiences demonstrate that the elected / unelected binary is permeable, in the making of representational claims for women's interests.

The analytical framework of Saward's (2010) criteria for assessing representational claim making, with elements of Dovi's (2012) evaluation of 'the good representative' has enabled a close examination of the gendered dimensions of legitimacy for both elected and unelected political representatives.

The findings and discussion extend scholarly ideas, and support evidence from contemporaneous reports, about how women's legitimacy is constructed along gendered lines, with gender differentiated effects. This is unlike men's legitimacy, which is un-gendered.

Particular knowledge contributions include:

- That the specialist nature of women's representational claims for women's interests are evidence of their legitimating expertise, but that this expertise is also used to de-legitimise them.
- That elected women acquire additional work (cases, constituency and sensitive issues) as a result of the gendered expectations of their constituents and their peers.
- That this additional work, along with their management of emotional behaviours, constitutes a *supplementary* representation to that being undertaken by male representatives.
- That both elected and unelected women face challenges to their representative status, from some men, through sexist and abusive behaviours which target them as women.
- That men who are political representatives have no conception of themselves as gendered persons, and thus any benefits for their constituents are not being realised.
- That a feminist value base for representation might be evidence of 'deeper roots' (Saward 2010) and 'intangible goods' (Dovi 2012)

- That unelected and elected women at the local level, are part of dense networks which act to both support and constrain their representational claims, thus providing a level of co-legitimation.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

There were two key limitations of this study. One is related to the characteristics of those interviewed, and the other to the location of the research.

The focus of this study was on gender and the research was enhanced by the early decision to interview elected men as well as elected and unelected women. There are other under-represented characteristics (such as BAME and LGBT) which are under-researched. However, both these groups (which are heterogeneous) offer challenges for researchers – there is very little data collected systematically about councillors. The LGA Census is limited and is quickly out of date, and local councils that I contacted did not have, or would not share, demographic data about their councillors. In addition, a larger study site would be required, in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, due to the low numbers of some groups, and the specific combinations of personal characteristics, party membership and location which could jeopardise individual anonymity through jigsaw identification. There is potentially the same issue with the unelected community leaders, and if the study site is widened too much, the particulars of the locality might become lost.

The choice of Tyneside as the site for the study is justified, both as an exemplar case study of gender equity in local elected representation, and also for practical reasons in terms of prior knowledge, useful connections and a relatively small travel area. However, for the research purposes of comparison, the spatial overlap of ‘acting for’ was limited, in spite of the multi-level sites of representation. The community leaders operate in the main as (unelected) representatives at an area-wide or sub-regional level, whereas the councillors who took part in the research mostly operate as ‘community representatives’ at the ward level. Like Kang,

“It is possible that this study’s measure of women’s representation does not adequately measure the substantive importance of female parliamentarians or female cabinet members, who may serve as crucial allies for women’s groups” (2014, p.155).

It would add considerably to the research to be able to interview executive members, i.e. councillors with Cabinet portfolios, but despite several individuals expressing enthusiasm, it proved impossible to arrange interview times with them.

6.6 Areas for Future Research

Future research could continue to explore the connections between elected and unelected women, by extending the site of study and the categories to encompass Members of Parliament and regional or national leaders of women's sector organisations.

The findings would be strengthened by qualitative data from the constituents of these representatives, as this could verify or test the claims of authorisation and accountability.

A research study to examine the documented casework of elected women and men, especially councillors in multi-seat wards, could provide rich data about the nature and prevalence of any gender asymmetry in workloads.

6.7 Conclusions

“More women in power are needed to meet the needs for symbolism, justice, political equality, and legitimization of the political system, but more Feminists are also needed-women and men-so that the needs, demands, and interests of women find expression and satisfaction within the political arena.” (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000, p.398)

Unelected Representatives:

These women community leaders are unelected representatives for women's interests, both as an intrinsic part of their role and at the invitation of state actors, including elected political representatives.

Within the women's sector, and the wider voluntary sector, they are identified as legitimate representatives for women's interests, because of their acknowledged role in leading a women's organisation (institutional affiliation) or their role in prioritising women's interests within the broader envelope of their organisation's work (stakeholding, and surrogacy for wider interests). This is based on their specialist expertise, authenticity and frontline accountability to the women (social location) whose interests they represent. Some of these unelected women share characteristics or life experiences with the women they work with (formative experiences), and this provides another layer of legitimacy as they are seen to be 'speaking as' (a form of 'mirroring'), not just 'speaking for' (Slim 2002).

They also experience being authorised as legitimate representatives by the state, which authorises them to represent women's interests in a variety of 'invited spaces' (Newman 2012), based on the utility value of their expertise, and the symbolic value

of their inclusion as part of a diverse public. The unelected representatives know that theirs is a contested, fragile status, in relation to the state. The basis of their legitimacy can also be the basis of challenge as they experience being patronised or dismissed (de-legitimising their claims) as women who *only* represent women's interests. The 'invited spaces' are often complex time-consuming sites of decision-making, and the community leaders have had to develop strategies and identify allies in order to navigate these, maintain their independent and 'untainted' status and to circumvent the challenges they face.

They also experience gendered norms, behaviours and expectations from state and voluntary sector actors, which can have de-legitimising effects.

They negotiate these with the support of networks (formal and informal), where both gender and feminism are central to the connections between women representatives; and they utilise their connectedness as a potential co-legitimation tool against the challenges they face as representatives for women's interests.

Elected Representatives:

Elected representatives are understood to derive their legitimacy from their democratic electoral status. However, there are gendered dimensions to this for elected women. For instance, quota systems to improve descriptive representation (such as the Labour Party's all-women shortlists, AWS) have been used as a springboard from which a range of claims are made against them, as forms of de-legitimation, including the 'merit' argument (see for example, Walker 2016), adverse displacement, and intersectionality failings. These findings indicate that some people remain hostile to women rather than men holding these positions and an underlying antagonism towards women representatives persists. These claims seek to undermine women's legitimacy *per se* and are advanced as part of a wider backlash against women gaining political (and other public) positions (Beard 2017).

Elected women may be symbols of political party commitments to gender equality, in that the increased numbers of elected women representatives are frequently referred to and made visible. The 'gender balance' narrative supports this, and is explained both as a justice argument for more women, and as a utility argument – women bring different life experiences and skills compared to men, and these have a high utility value in the ward-based, public facing work of elected representation. However, the elected men do not experience their gender (as men) as a factor in their representational role – they are not able to discuss themselves as gendered,

nor identify ways in which their gender might be relevant or of benefit in their representations with constituents. This “absence of questioning” (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, p.57) suggests an acceptance of their legitimacy.

The workload of ward councillors is subject to gendered expectations and demands. The study indicates that elected women may have a ‘triple burden’ of ward-based representation work, in that they have their share of the general casework, but they also receive specific work related to women’s interests (in particular child-related issues) and also ‘sensitive’ issues, such as domestic violence. These concerns are raised by residents, who choose elected women representatives in preference to elected men. This potential ‘*supplementary representation*’ may strengthen women’s legitimacy as elected representatives, based on claims relating to ‘wider interests and new voices’ (Saward 2010) as well as ‘social location’ and ‘formative experiences’ (Dovi 2012).

In addition, there are occasions when elected women are subject to aggressive behaviour from men, either peers or residents which is made more difficult to deal with because of an apparent lack of appropriate institutional response. And women are expected to undertake emotional management work, to manage men’s disruptive behaviour in meetings. These examples indicate areas of gendered behaviour and expectations, based on conventional gender norms, which place further pressures on elected women, as forms of de-legitimation, which contribute to, or are evidence of, challenges to their perceived legitimation.

To close, the study has shown how the legitimacy of local women representatives is shaped by gender; the differences and similarities that elected and unelected local women representatives experience, and the challenges they face regarding their legitimacy. And the thesis has offered analysis and discussion of these gendered dimensions of legitimacy in local level political representation.

Appendix A

A sample of the voluntary and community sector women's organisations in Tyneside, the research study site:

North East Women's Network - purpose is to strengthen the women's sector and to ensure its survival by encouraging and supporting collaboration between women's VCOs and building partnerships and alliances across other sectors.

<https://www.newwomens.net/>

Women's Health in South Tyneside (WHiST) - mission is to improve the health, wellbeing, education and quality of life of women aged over 16 years old living in South Tyneside. WHiST was originally established in 1986 by a group of local women working voluntarily to address gaps in services and support.

<http://www.whist.org.uk/>

Tyneside Women's Health (TWH) was set up in 1985 to provide mental health support to women in a women-only environment. The driver for this commitment was the belief that gender inequality has a significantly negative impact on women's wellbeing, and therefore providing a sensitive, therapeutic, female environment for women with mental health issues has potential to help maximise women's recovery.

<http://www.tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk/>

The Angelou Centre is a charity in the West End of Newcastle in the North East of England, UK. It provides Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women with training, personal development, counselling, legal advice for immigration and domestic violence. The Angelou Centre began as a network of local black and minority ethnic women community workers which developed into a women's training centre in 1992. <http://angelou-centre.org.uk/>

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland (RCTN) is a charity that provides services to women and girls over the age of 13 who live, work or study in Tyneside and Northumberland. It is a woman-centred, feminist organisation, run by and for women, where feminism informs the ethos, activities and the way in which the services are delivered. It was set up in 1988. <https://rctn.org.uk/>

Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project has been running for 21 years. We work with young women and young mothers in Gateshead aged 11-19 years, to support and guide young women through crisis in their lives. We offer one to one support and often signpost and (hand hold) young women to other services and

professionals who we feel met their needs. Young women and young mothers also have the opportunity to join bespoke groups. <http://gywop.org/>

West End Women and Girls' Centre is a registered charity which has been working with women and girls in the West End of Newcastle since 1981. The Centre provides support through group work where the members have the opportunity to meet, have fun, learn skills, look at issues relevant their lives and generally build confidence in a safe and supportive environment. We also provide individual support offering advice, information, advocacy and referrals to relevant agencies. <http://westendwomenandgirls.co.uk/>

Newcastle Women's Aid was established in 1975 and was one of the first refuges in England. For over 40 years Newcastle Women's Aid provided refuge for women and children in the city of Newcastle. Over the years thousands of women and children used the refuge service to stay safe. We are committed to continue to provide services to women, children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse. In April 2017 we moved into our new premises and launched our new Domestic Abuse Floating Support service (DAFS). <https://www.newcastlewomensaid.org.uk/>

Appendix B

September 2014



‘Representing local communities – does gender matter?’

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with other people if you wish. You can speak to Sue Regan (the researcher) or Professor Keith Shaw (the principal research supervisor) at Northumbria University if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the research?

A research study is being undertaken to explore the views and experiences of those who represent local communities, with reference to gender. This study includes community representatives and local councillors. It will involve interviews with key individuals (men and women) to find out about their thoughts, views and experiences in these roles, at the community/ neighbourhood level.

Why have I been chosen? Do I have to take part?

Because you are a local/community representative, you have been asked to take part in the study which involves a one-to-one interview.

It is voluntary and completely up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you are still free to drop out at any time and without giving a reason.

What do I have to do?

If you do not want to take part, then you do not need to do anything.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact Sue Regan on 0XXXX XXX XXX or s.f.regan@northumbria.ac.uk to arrange an interview time. The interview will be recorded (with your permission) and will last for about one hour. During the interview you will be asked to talk about being a community representative, and your thoughts and experiences about that, with reference to gender.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The information that you give may be used in the final report of this study. This may mean that some of your comments will be included in the report, but your identity will NOT be revealed.

After the interviews have been conducted, the researcher will type up the notes and recordings and any information that could identify specific people will be removed. No-one other than the research team will be able to listen to the recordings or read

the interview transcripts. The recordings will be stored securely in a restricted access folder at Northumbria University and then deleted when the study is finished.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The information will be examined to identify the range of views and experiences of all those taking part in the study, and to compare this with the findings of similar research studies. This anonymous information will be used to inform academic papers, conference presentations and policy discussions.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle.

Contact for further information

If you would like to speak to someone about the study or if you need any further information then please contact:

The researcher:

Sue Regan,

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University

Tel: 0XXXX XXX XXX E-mail: s.f.regan@northumbria.ac.uk

The principal research supervisor:

Professor Keith Shaw,

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University

Tel: 0191 XXX XXXX E-mail: keith.shaw@northumbria.ac.uk

The researcher hopes that you will enjoy taking part in the study and wants to take this opportunity to thank you for your help.

Complaints

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this research, Northumbria University has a complaints' procedure which you can use. You can contact:

Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon,

Associate Dean - Research and Innovation

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University,

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

Tel: 0191 XXX XXXX E-mail: gwyneth.doherty-sneddon@northumbria.ac.uk

Appendix C

October 2014



Research Consent Form

Interviewee copy

'Representing local communities – does gender matter?'

I have agreed to take part in this research project. I have read the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I know that I can contact Sue Regan (the researcher) or Professor Keith Shaw (the research supervisor) at Northumbria University.

What is the purpose of the research?

A research study is being undertaken to explore the views and experiences of those who represent local communities, with reference to gender. This study includes ward councillors and community representatives. It will involve interviews with key individuals (men and women) to find out about their thoughts, views and experiences in these roles, at the ward and community/ neighbourhood level.

My Consent

I agree to take part in a one-to-one interview. The information will be held and processed for the research project: 'Representing local communities – does gender matter?'

I agree to the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Please tick the boxes below to indicate your consent:

I have read and understand the purpose of the study	
I have been given the chance to ask questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction	
I am willing to be interviewed	
I am willing for my comments to be recorded	
I understand that I can withdraw at any time if I change my mind	
I am aware that my name and identifying details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any publication or presentation from this research	

Participant Name: Researcher Name: Sue Regan

Signature: Signature:

Date: October 2014 **Date:** October 2014

Contacts for further information

If you would like to speak to someone about the study or if you need any further information then please contact:

The researcher:

Sue Regan,

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University

Tel: 0XXXX XXX XXX

E-mail: sue.regan@northumbria.ac.uk

The principal research supervisor:

Professor Keith Shaw,

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University

Tel: 0191 XXX XXXX

E-mail: keith.shaw@northumbria.ac.uk

The researcher hopes that you will enjoy taking part in the study and wants to take this opportunity to thank you for your help.

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Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon,

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Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University,

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

Tel: 0191 XXX XXXX

E-mail: gwyneth.doherty-sneddon@northumbria.ac.uk

Appendix D

Interviews August 2015

Code:

Date:

Selected Name:.....

Interviewee Demographic Information

1. Your Gender:

Male	
Female	

2. Which option best describes your ethnic group ? (UK Census categories)

White (English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller; or Any other White background)	
Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean; White and Black African; White and Asian, or Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background)	
Asian/ Asian British (Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; or Any other Asian background)	
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British (African; Caribbean; or Any other Black / African / Caribbean background)	
Chinese	
Arab	
Other ethnic group – please state:	

3. Your age band:

29 years and under	
30 - 39 years	
40 – 49 years	
50 – 59 years	
60 – 69 years	
70 years and over	

4. How long (in years or months) have you been in your current position?

.....

Appendix E

Interview Sheet: 'Representing local communities – does gender matter?'

What is the purpose of the research?

A research study is being undertaken to explore the views and experiences of those who represent local communities, with reference to gender. This study includes civil society and community representatives, and local politicians. It will involve interviews with key individuals to find out about their thoughts, views and experiences in these roles, at the local level.

- **Intro**
- **Consent and recording**
- **Demographics**

Interview Questions

PTO

Name other possible contacts?

Last question - Anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you.

Confirm anonymity and confidentiality (selected name / code)

I'll be sending a reminder later this week - If other colleagues are interested, please ask them to contact me.

Interview Questions

How did you get to be a councillor?

Why did you want to be a councillor?

What do you think about the representative part of the role (of Elected councillors)

What helps you in your representative role ?

Who are you representing? (What about where there are different views/ concerns?)

What do you think makes a 'good' representative ?

Does gender matter?

In every ward there are obviously lots of different residents – how do you represent them all?

Are there particular groups or organisations that you meet with, who represent the communities within your ward?

Are there groups which are all or mainly men/boys? (prompt: Dads group; boys club)

Which concerns/ issues / interests do they have? What have they raised with you

Are there groups which are all or mainly women/girls? (prompt: Young Mums groups; girls club)

Which concerns/ issues / interests do they have? What have they raised with you

In your experience, have there been any issues or concerns or interests which mainly men or mainly women, have put forward or raised with you?

Community reps/ groups – local contacts?

Appendix F

Figure 3: Types of Political Representatives

	Elected	Unelected
State	Councillors MPs, MEPs MSPs, AMs, MLAs* PCCs Elected Mayors (LA and CA)	Officers and Advisors (state) CEOs of state organisations House of Lords Chairs of quangos, commissions The Monarch/Royal family
Civil Society	Trade union reps and leaders VCS reps on partnerships Tenant reps Reps of diverse minority groups Political party leaders	Community and faith leaders CEOs of voluntary organisations Campaign leaders Movement spokespeople Chairs of charity Boards

*Members of the UK nations' devolved governments:

- MSP - Scottish Parliament
- AM - Welsh Assembly
- MLA - Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly

GLOSSARY

APCC	Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
AWS	all-women shortlist
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CA	Combined Authority
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CEN/CN	Community (Empowerment) Network
CEO/CO	Chief (Executive) Officer
CIC	community interest company
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
DV	domestic violence
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
GONE	Government Office North East
GVOC	Gateshead Voluntary Organisations' Council
HoC	House of Commons
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
IWD	International Women's Day
JRF/JRCT	Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Community Trust
LA	local authority
LGA	Local Government Association
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
LSP	local strategic partnership
LWN	Labour Women's Network
MBC	metropolitan borough council
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
NAfW	National Assembly for Wales
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NCVS	Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service
NE	North East (of England)
NECA	North East Combined Authority

NEWN	North East Women's Network
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NRF	Northern Rock Foundation
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
TUC	Trades Union Council
TVCA	Tees Valley Combined Authority
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
VAWG	violence against women and girls
VCS	voluntary and community sector
VODA	Voluntary Organisations' Development Agency
VONNE	Voluntary Organisations' Network North East
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association
WLGS	Women's Local Government Society
WRC	Women's Resource Centre
WVCOs	women's voluntary and community organisations

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