An exploration of power within the context of strategic collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. to University of Galway

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Abstract

Approaches which support strategic collaboration across a range of service provision contexts for children, young people and families have grown exponentially in recent decades. Yet the significance of the impact of power on such processes is under-explored in the literature. This thesis explores power within the context of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) in Ireland. Underpinned by aspects of interpretivist and social constructionist epistemologies, the study was influenced by approaches to the study of power which acknowledge the ubiquitous nature of power in all social and organisational relations. The study examines how members and leaders of CYPSCs construct the meaning of participation in these structures through the lenses of power and influence. A sequential, mixed methods approach guided quantitative and qualitative data collection, and the views of CYPSC membership and leadership were at the heart of the study. Key research findings of this study show that power plays a significant role in the operation of these strategic collaborative structures, but that the impact of this is not often considered. Further, the study highlights differing perspectives on power and influence in strategic collaboration, which are dependent on the professional and organisational contexts of membership and leadership. The significance of the capacity of power even when it is not used in an obvious way is emphasised and aspects of the productive nature of power associated with the collaborative structures under investigation highlighted. The study stresses how the concept of governmentality can be used to further an understanding of collaborative processes, alongside the significance of structural and organisational contexts in supporting participation. Further, the significance of aspects of personal power is emphasised. The study calls for attention to be paid to power structures, relations and processes by practitioners and policymakers associated with CYPSCs and other collaborative structures which have, as their focus, wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. It offers a preliminary framework to support participation for all in strategic collaborative contexts, which has theoretical and practical application. Recommendations are offered related to the review of policy and practice guidance for CYPSCs which acknowledges the role of power in these structures, alongside consideration of the leadership model and the incorporation of aspects of reflective practice in these strategic collaborative contexts.

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"Ní neart go cur le chéile" Irish proverb which means *"there is no strength without unity".*

List of Abbreviations

BOBF:	Better Outcomes Brighter Futures
C&V:	Community and Voluntary Organisation
CFSN:	Child and Family Support Network
CSC:	Children's Services Committee
CYPP:	Children and Young People's Plan
CYPSC:	Children and Young People's Services Committee (formerly Children's Services Committee)
DCYA:	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DCEDIY:	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
ETB:	Education and Training Board
FRC:	Family Resource Centre
HSE:	Health Service Executive
LCDC:	Local Community Development Committee, City and County Councils
POBAL:	An intermediary body which manages national and EU funding on behalf of the Irish Government
REC:	Research Ethics Committee
NUIG:	National University of Ireland, Galway
PPFS:	Prevention, Partnership and Family Support
UNCRC:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the context of service provision for children, young people and their families, the importance of collaboration is widely acknowledged in the extensive body of literature that considers models of collaborative or inter-agency working. Collaborative models underpinning public policy aim to secure better coordination across government and are an acknowledgement that no one agency can solve complex or "wicked" problems (Williams, 2012). Collaborative approaches are often tasked with producing solutions to ongoing wicked problems (Gray and Purdy, 2018) or grand challenges (George et al, 2016) and thus, "introducing new practices, technologies, and rules" (Lawrence et al, 2002, p. 283). Butcher et al (2019, p.75) conclude that collaboration has become something of a "Holy Grail through which multiple parties seek to resolve wicked problems by combining their resources and expertise". In the Irish context, collaborative forms of working are emphasised in many government approaches. In current policy direction towards children and young people's outcomes, a cross-governmental approach is recommended to address needs in terms of health, education, safety, economic security, and connectedness (DCYA, 2014). However, while there is a move towards more strategic collaboration to improve wellbeing and outcomes, there are multiple conceptualisations of collaboration in the literature (Devaney et al, 2021). The term is ubiquitous, used to describe many forms of working together in various contexts, with Canavan et al (2014, p.8) arguing that "much of the literature on working together and related terms can serve to obfuscate rather than illuminate".

Much of the literature on collaboration fails to acknowledge the role of power in collaborative contexts, and this topic provides the context for this research study. The literature which does focus on the impact of power on collaboration highlights risks for these contexts which may bias decisions towards participants and/or agencies with the most resources (Huxham and Vangen, 2000, 2005); challenges related to power disparities among participating organisations (Purdy and Jones, 2012), and the need for building in resources and tactics for dealing with power imbalances (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2005, 2006, 2010, 2015). Further highlighted is the importance of ongoing building of trust, (Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Bryson, 2010) and the challenges for government agencies who may be both convenors and participants in strategic collaborative contexts (Broome, 2002).

Overall, the literature highlights risks for organisations or institutions who may create power asymmetries (Gray, Purdy, and Ansari, 2022), and this study seeks to deepen our understanding of these asymmetries. Power has many dimensions, and this study focuses particularly on aspects of power structures, relations, and processes. The study will add to the understanding of strategic collaborative processes by using conceptual and theoretical lenses or approaches to the study of power and by applying these lenses to the specific collaborative structures under investigation. My study brings power to the fore and reveals "what lies beneath", a perspective which is not frequently

explored. Such an examination makes an important contribution to the understanding of the impact of power structures, relations and processes in strategic collaborative contexts and will inform future developments.

In this chapter, I will introduce the subject of my study, set out the rationale for the research and introduce its professional and practice background. Further, the scope of the research project will be outlined, and the study methodology clarified. I will highlight the contribution that my study will make to the body of knowledge regarding the impact of power on strategic collaborative processes. Finally, I give an overview of the structure of the thesis, including a summary of each chapter. I start by introducing the background to this study.

1.2 Background to the research study

This study is set within the context of the strategic collaborative processes that are Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) in Ireland. CYPSCs are interagency structures comprised of managers, budget holders and decision makers from a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations and agencies that provide a broad range of services to children and young people within their County or administrative area (DCYA, 2015). Their aim is to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families living in their area under the objectives set out in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020 (DCYA, 2014). These objectives relate to health, education, safety, economic security, and belongingness. They are presented diagrammatically in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 Five national outcomes for children and young people

CYPSCs are the vehicle through which significant state policies related to children and young people's health and wellbeing are being implemented, with funding towards these objectives increasing significantly in recent years. CYPSCs are expected to achieve their aims by working collaboratively. First piloted in four areas in Ireland in 2007, there is now national coverage of this initiative with twenty-seven CYPSCs in existence. While policy guidance is provided, originally in the Blueprint for CYPSCs (DCYA, 2014) and now in Shared Vision Next Steps (DCEDIY, 2019), in terms of the structure and membership of these committees, there is little guidance by way of functioning or training for collaborative working in this context. In 2014, I started working as a coordinator of two of these structures in Galway and Roscommon, in the West of Ireland. In this role,

I became interested in the "how" of collaborative working and in particular, the responsibility of ensuring that all members felt they shared in the decision-making and goal development processes. Looking to the literature, it became clear that there were few examples either in Ireland or internationally, of the consideration of the impact of power on strategic collaboration. This sparked my interest in the topic as a potential research project.

1.3 Motivations for studying this topic

I approached my research on this topic both as part of my professional practice, and as an academic enquiry. My professional role requires that I work with multiple stakeholders to agree joint actions to improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families. My undergraduate degree in Social Science and my master's in social work fostered in me a curiosity for social research and learning. I have worked as a social work practitioner, Workforce Learning and Development officer and a CYPSC coordinator for twenty-five years across a continuum of service contexts. In my current role, I was responsible for introducing the first CYPSCs in Galway and Roscommon and continue to work to implement this initiative across the area, which has a population of 433,906 (CSO, 2022). What I brought with me to this role was a commitment to the values of collaboration. I had experienced the positive impact good working relationships between different disciplines who worked or trained together had on services for children and families. I also brought with me a commitment to the importance of building relationships among people, and an awareness of how essential it is for participants to feel that their contribution is not based on their perceived status or the perceived status of the organisation they work for. Finally, my position as a researcher and practitioner emphasised for me the importance of research being meaningful for policy and practice.

While approaching this study as a professional with extensive experience of working in collaborative contexts, I had to consider my dual roles as academic and professional. In planning for the study, I was aware that I was undertaking a research process where academic enquiry and practice processes would overlap, and that I may have been drawn more easily to practice and policy orientated information and learning, as opposed to theoretical and conceptual information. Therefore, in consultation with my study supervisors, I embedded a process of reflection into the study to assess and monitor the impact of these dual roles.

1.4 Gap in the knowledge

There is limited evidence generally on the combination of scholarship relating to the impact of power structures, relations, and processes on collaborative working, focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. Each has a significant body of knowledge but not in a combined way. Exceptions in the literature come from Huxham and Vangen (2000, 2005, 2012), Purdy and Jones (2012) and Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2005, 2006, 2012, 2015), who for over two decades, and with others, have all considered the impact of power in their scholarship of collaborative working. Their

scholarship highlights the gap in knowledge related to understandings of collaboration and power (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) alongside risks for collaborative contexts, which may favour those with greater resources (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). In their research, Purdy and Jones (2012) draw attention to power disparities among participating organisations, while similarly Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) emphasise the position of less powerful partners. Their contributions will be detailed in chapter three.

This study aims to build on the understanding of the part that power plays in strategic collaborative structures. It will also consider the meaning of participation in these structures as understood by study participants. These findings should be of interest within a broad interdisciplinary arena, as strategic collaboration impacts many organisations working with children and young people and will also be relevant for educational and research contexts focused on interagency and integrated work processes. This study provides a unique contribution to theories about power through the application of concepts and theories of power into strategic collaborative processes, focused on outcomes for children, young people, and families. While this study has an Irish dimension, its findings have a global relevance. Also, while this study has an academic focus, it should make a valuable contribution to the operation and practice related to CYPSCs across Ireland from the perspectives of leadership and membership. Further, it is proposed that learning can be applied in many other collaborative contexts which have a focus on outcomes for children.

1.5 Research question and objectives

The overall aim of this research study was to explore how power influences collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people. It drew participants from three populations, namely members of Roscommon CYPSC and Galway CYPSC who participated in the pilot phase of the research and CYPSC leadership and membership across Ireland, who participated in the full study.

The study aimed to answer the following research question:

How does power operate in collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people?

The study objectives were as follows:

1. To explore the operation of power in collaborative working within the specific context of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs).

2. To design a preliminary framework to support collaborative working which reflects the operation of power, as discovered, in the study.

3. To develop recommendations for CYPSCs and other collaborative structures which will address issues of power in structured collaborative processes working towards improved outcomes for children and young people.

1.6 Methodology summary

The aim of this research project was to explore the operation of power in CYPSCs across Ireland, and to increase understandings of power structures, relations, and processes in these collaborative contexts. Because of the focus on developing such understandings, the study was underpinned by aspects of interpretivist and social constructivist epistemologies. All research instruments were piloted with members of Galway and Roscommon CYPSCs, with whom I had an existing relationship. Those who participated in the pilot were excluded from the main study. This resulted in a population of study participants from the membership and leadership of twenty-five CYPSCs. Amendments were made to research instruments and approaches following feedback received from the pilot phase of this study.

A mixed methods sequential design was utilised to gather study data. A survey was used to gather quantitative data, which was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and which served to clarify perspectives on power. These were then further explored in the qualitative data collection aspect of the study, which utilised semi-structured interviews, that elaborated on or sought to clarify further the quantitative findings. Qualitative data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2020). Findings from both data collection processes are combined and presented across a range of themes in chapters five and six.

1.7 Layout of Thesis

This thesis is made up of eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, chapter two sets out the context for the study, describing the relevant professional, policy and practice contexts within which CYPSC structures and this study are located. The chapter presents contextual information related to the development of collaborative working methodologies and approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes. Chapter three, the literature review, considers the relevant theoretical concepts for this study, and is set out in two sections: collaborative working literature and power literature. In chapter four, I describe the methodological approach used in which an exploratory sequential design was developed to address the research question. This entailed the collection and analysis of quantitative data, which served to clarify perspectives on power, which could be further explored in the qualitative data collection aspect of the study. Chapters five and six present the core research findings of the study, separated into the key themes identified through data analysis, and which characterise the meaning of participation in strategic collaboration for study participants alongside the part that power plays in strategic collaborative contexts. Chapter seven discusses these findings as they relate to the study objectives and the extant literature and offers contributions to the field. This chapter also sets

out a preliminary framework for participation in strategic collaborative processes, which acknowledges the impact of power on strategic collaboration. The concluding chapter restates the purpose and rationale of the study and reflects on the study objectives. It revisits the methodology and reflects on the contribution to learning that this study provides. It also addresses the final objective of providing recommendations for CYPSCs and other collaborative structures working towards outcomes for children.

Chapter 2 Context

2.1 Introduction

This research took place in the context of the transformation of the social policy and practice context in Ireland for children, young people, and their families. This transformation is accompanied by a changing socio-economic landscape in Ireland, alongside a focus on improving the way services work together to help achieve outcomes for children and young people which relate to wellbeing. CYPSCs have been identified by government, as key structures for achieving goals related to wellbeing, through the implementation of five national outcomes for children and young people, across health, education, safety, economic security, and participatory objectives (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014). They are therefore a potentially powerful structure in relation to this cohort. This chapter outlines the policy, professional and demographic contexts in which this study was undertaken. It considers my own professional context and explains the role and remit of Tusla Child and Family Agency as my employer. Particular attention is paid to the context for approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes. Finally, I bring together all these dimensions to summarise the overall context in which the study was undertaken.

2.2 Policy and practice landscape informing strategic collaboration in Ireland

Working together to improve outcomes for children and young people has become a policy and practice focus in Ireland and internationally in recent decades. In Ireland while the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY/formerly DCYA) has responsibility for children's policy development in addition to services directed at child welfare, child protection and wellbeing, it is important to note that no single government department is responsible for all family and children related policy (Canavan and Devaney, 2022). Many other departments hold responsibilities related to children, including the Departments of Health, Education, Social Protection and Justice. This section considers legal and policy developments related to children and young people's services in Ireland, and the implications of international policy development for Irish service provision.

To go back almost three decades, the Child Care Act, 1991 was the first piece of legislation specifically related to child protection and welfare enacted by the State, replacing the 1908 Children Act. McGregor (2014, p.773) advises that the enactment of this legislation "marked a key moment of transformation in the child welfare and protection system" in Ireland, providing the potential to promote a more proactive and preventative approach in child welfare. The Act is founded on the premise that it is generally in the best interests of children to grow up at home and places a statutory

duty on Health Boards[1] (now Tusla) to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. It strengthened the powers of Health Boards to provide services, facilitated immediate intervention by staff of the Health Boards or An Garda Síochana (Police Force) and gave powers to Courts to place abused or at-risk children under the supervision or care of the Health Service Executive (Ferguson & Kenny, 1995; Buckley 2002). In performing these duties, the Health Boards must regard the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration, have regard to the rights and duties of parents and give due consideration to the child's wishes (Devaney & McGregor, 2017). The overall aim of the legislation was for the State to support the role of parents in a humane way, rather than supplanting it (Ferguson and Kenny, 1995), and for social workers and families to work together to make improvements in the lives of children. While the introduction of the Act marked a key milestone for service provision for children and families in the state, "many of its key provisions have been in force for thirty years. As a result, it can be viewed as out of date at a fundamental level" (Devaney and McGregor, 2021, p.4). The DCEDIY has undertaken a review of the Act and provided the government with recommendations related to its update[2].

The introduction of the 1991 Act preceded the ratification of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by Ireland. The UNCRC is a binding international agreement on the rights of children, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992. In committing itself to the UNCRC, the State commits itself to the general principles of the best interests of children (Article 3), respect for the views of the child (Article 12) and the right to education (Article 28), amongst others (UNCRC, 1989). Countries that have ratified the UNCRC are expected to submit periodic reports on their progress towards its implementation (Röder et al., 2014) and an international Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was established to consider such reports.

Alongside these developments, issues highlighted in reports of inquiries into child abuse and child deaths in Ireland and echoed in other countries, pointed to the lack of collaborative working in relation to concerns for children, and the failure to protect children from abuse and neglect both at home and in institutions. Buckley (2002, p.2) cites the "X" case in 1992, which concerned the right of a fourteen-year-old child who became pregnant as a result of rape to have an abortion, as the point in Irish society which challenged and changed the "cultural and political indifference to maltreatment of children". The inquiry of the Kilkenny Incest Investigation (McGuinness, 1993) highlighted poorly resourced child welfare systems, and deficits in communication and information sharing between

[1] Health Boards were set up under the Health Act, 1970 to provide a wide range of health and wellbeing services in specified local health areas. These boards had responsibility for child welfare and protection services until the creation of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2005 and Tusla Child and Family Agency in 2014 https://www.hse.ie/corporate accesses 13/12/2022

[2] In April 2023, the DCEDIY received Government approval for the drafting of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill, 2023 https://www.gov.ie/publication accessed 31/07/2023

professionals working with the family. These issues were also highlighted in Kelly-A Child is Dead (Keenan, 1995). Another issue highlighted in inquiry reports was the lack of voice or power children in the State had in terms of consultation and participation. A call for constitutional reform to give greater rights to children and to strengthen the powers of the State to intervene to protect all children irrespective of the marital status of the parents, was first made explicitly by Judge Catherine McGuinness in the Kilkenny Incest Investigation Report (Burns & McGregor, 2019, p.120) and eventually implemented by the Children's Rights referendum (2012). The Children's Rights referendum, which posed a question to the population regarding rights for children, was held in 2012 and passed by a narrow majority. It provides that the State *"recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children and shall, as far as practicable, by its law protect and vindicate those rights" (Ireland, 1937*). The amendment to the Constitution emphasised the importance of giving power to the views of children and young people and made specific provision related to outcomes for children in long term foster care who may be adopted by their foster parents, if that is their wish.

The importance of giving children a voice and adopting a child centred approach was reinforced by the publication of the National Children's Strategy (DoHC, 2000), which was the first strategy of its kind in Ireland and the first to emphasise a whole child perspective or approach. The whole child perspective acknowledged the impact of systemic relationships between children and family, community, and the wider society on children themselves. The National Children's Strategy (DoHC, 2000) had three goals, which were that children would have a voice in matters which affect them, that children's lives will be better understood and that children would receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development. Examples of work which emerged from this strategy include the Comhairle na nÓg initiatives and the Growing Up in Ireland research. The Comhairle na nÓg initiative concerns the development of youth committees or councils across the country, which have youth representatives working towards issues for young people in their local areas[3]. The Growing Up in Ireland research uses a longitudinal methodology to trace children's wellbeing and outcomes at particular points in time[4] and emerged from a commitment that children's lives would be better understood, laid out in the National Children's Strategy (2000). The Strategy also committed to giving children a voice by establishing the role of Ombudsman for Children. The Ombudsman for Children Office was set up in 2004 to promote the rights and welfare of children and young people under eighteen years of age and to consider complaints made by or for children and young people about the actions of public organisations[5]. Further, the Special Rapporteur on Child

[3] These link to a national youth parliament called Dáil na nÓg (http://www.comhairelnanog.ie/who-we-are accessed 18/12/2022

[4] http://www.growingup.ie accessed 18/12/2022

[5] http://www.oco.ie/aboutus accessed 11/12/2022

Protection role was created in 2006 with responsibilities for advising Ireland's houses of parliament on national and international legal developments relating to the protection of children (O'Mahony, 2020. p.3).

While significant, these developments related to child wellbeing and welfare were accompanied by an uncoordinated approach to policy development, with responsibility for policy related to children spread across several government departments including health, education, and justice (Hayes, 2002). Following a government decision to consolidate a range of functions that were previously the responsibilities of the Ministers for Health, Education and Skills, Justice and Law Reform, and Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was established on 2nd June 2011 (Ireland, 2012). This development marked a stated increased commitment to promoting an effective cross-sectoral approach regarding the needs of children, young people, and families, and in 2019 the Department expanded to include responsibilities for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Further progress related to the wellbeing of children in Ireland was marked when the Report of the Task Force on the Child and Family Support Agency was published in 2012, and the Child and Family Agency Act (2013) was enacted to support the establishment of Tusla Child and Family Agency in 2014 (hereafter referred to as Tusla). This marked the creation of a stand-alone agency for child welfare and protection services, which had heretofore operated as one service strand within a larger health organisation (Devaney and McGregor, 2017). Child protection and welfare services are provided within the context of the child protection and welfare system. Like many child protection and welfare systems, the Irish system is shaped by its national and regional contexts and emphasises the rights of children and young people (Gilbert et al, 2011, Spratt et al, 2015; Loone et al, 2021), including the right to support and protection (Tusla, 2019: Burns and McGregor, 2019). The literature on the orientations of child welfare systems also emphasises moves towards prevention and early intervention (Malone and Canavan, 2021) and universal prevention approaches (Devaney and McGregor, 2021).

Tusla has adapted several models including the Hardiker model, the Meitheal model and Signs of Safety model to support service provision for child protection and welfare services. For example, the Hardiker model (Hardiker et al, 1991) organises services across four levels of need, from universal services provided to all children and families at level one, through to those services provided to children for whom there are serious ongoing concerns at level four, which is the highest level (Owens, 2010).

Tusla has a statutory obligation to promote the welfare and protection of children, set out in the Child Care Act, 1991, and to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect. It is also the state agency with responsibility for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children, by supporting parents in their parenting role. It does so through a range of services including family support, education support and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services and through commissioned services. It is also required to support enhanced interagency collaboration, through supporting the work of CYPSCs. Tusla's first Corporate Plan, (2015 – 2017) sets out several strategic objectives including to "establish a new and distinct values-based culture that empowers children and families through high-quality services including enhanced participation" (2014, p.24). It carries forward this objective in its current plan (2021 – 2023), with a commitment to "ensure children, young people, families and communities receive a consistent, quality, and integrated response from all our services" (Tusla, 2021 p.18).

Further, its Child and Youth Participation Strategy (Tusla Child and Family Agency, 2019) shows a commitment to breaking down power differentials between children, young people, their parents, and the child welfare system, by committing to involving them in decision making. The child and family are placed at the centre with an emphasis on promoting strengths and resilience (McGregor, 2014, p. 772). In its Commissioning Strategy (2019 – 2023) Tusla commits to working "more effectively with all our partners to proactively and strategically manage the resources at its disposal", and expanding "innovative practice" (2019, p.17). The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) programme was a national Tusla initiative which sought to improve outcomes for children and families through early intervention and preventative work in local areas. This programme had three priority areas of work:

1. Implementing an area-based approach to identifying and addressing needs in a coordinated and timely manner through Child and Family Support Networks and the Meitheal model
2. Supporting parents in developing their parenting skills
3. Supporting the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect them

(PPFS National Guidance and Local Implementation, 2013)

Under this programme, Child and Family Support Networks provide an area-based approach to supporting families, consisting of a broad range of services and agencies that play a role in the lives of children and families in each area. The work of the PPFS programme connected strongly with the work of the CYPSC programme, which I will outline in Section 2.4. While the language of PPFS is no longer in use by the organisation, the approach of prevention, collaboration and family support has been incorporated into the provision of family support services, both directly through Tusla family support services, and indirectly through commissioned services.

Alongside these statutory developments in relation to children, many community and voluntary organisations advocate for children's rights and provide services to children and young people, including the Children's Rights Alliance, Barnardos, the Irish Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Foróige, Youth Work Ireland, the Family Resource Centre National Forum, Early Childhood Ireland, and the Union of Students in Ireland. For example, the Children's Rights Alliance unites over one-hundred-member organisations to ensure that children's rights are respected and protected[6], while Foróige supports young people through a variety of volunteer led and staff led initiatives and programmes[7].

The legislative, policy and practice developments discussed above reflect a clear shift in orientation for all services working with children, young people, and families, marked by a greater focus on early intervention and prevention and children and young people's participation. Services are also required to cooperate within and between each other and systems of welfare and protection, alongside the broader consideration of children and young people up to the age of twenty-four years. This makes it an interesting time to study and explore strategic collaboration towards children's and young people's outcomes.

2.3 Demographic Context

Accompanying these developments over the last three decades are societal shifts, which are important to consider from the perspective of the wider societal context within which these developments are taking place and CYPSC structures operate. Having been an outlier in Europe for many decades in relation to many socio-demographics (Kennedy, 2001; Fahey and Russel, 2001), Ireland now falls more into line with European demographic trends.

In 2022, the total Irish population was 5,149,139, of which 1,201,618 consisted of children and young people, aged from birth to twenty-four years (CSO, 2022[8]). While trends in recent decades are towards a decline in the average number of children per family, Ireland continues to have a youthful population, and the highest proportion of its population aged 0 – 19 among EU countries in 2019 (Eurostat Database, 2020). In 2016, there were 1.2 million families in Ireland, of which 643,904 were couples with children and 218,817 were lone parent families (CSO, 2017). There were 5,872 children in the care of the State due to child protection and welfare concerns in January 2021, with the large majority of these being in foster care (Tusla, 2021). It is interesting to note that figures for the number of children in out of home care have been decreasing every year since 2015 (Tusla, 2020).

[6] http://www.childrensrights.ie accessed 13/12/2022
[7] http:// www.foroige.ie/about-foroige accessed 13/12/2022
[8] Only some preliminary Census data from 2022 was available at the time of submission.

While the poverty rates of the population have been relatively steady over recent years, the Survey on Income and Living Conditions in 2022, shows that the at risk of poverty rate was 13.1%, a 1.5 percentage point increase on the 2021 estimate of 11.6%. This figure is similar to the 2020 estimate of 13.2%, indicating that the decrease in 2021 may have been temporary and linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic measures (CSO, 2022). In 2021, 13.6% of children were considered to be at risk of poverty, down from 18.4% in 2017 (State of the Nations Children Report, DCEDIY, 2022). In 2019, Ireland's unemployment rate stood at 5 %, which was below the average of EU countries (Eurostat, 2020). In terms of education, in 2019 among EU states, Ireland had the fifth lowest rate of early school leavers (5%), and the third highest proportion of twenty to twenty-four-year-olds with higher secondary education at 84% (Eurostat, 2020).

While emigration has long been a feature within Irish society, significant immigration has become a feature in recent years (Canavan and Devaney, 2021), which results in a sociodemographic which is becoming increasingly multicultural. The 2016 census recorded 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland, representing 11% of the total population at that time (CSO, 2017). In line with European and international trends, housing and cost of living issues emerged in 2022 as major national concerns with increasing population figures and immigration placing demands on service provision (Canavan and Devaney, 2021).

Having considered policy, practice and societal contexts, this chapter will continue with consideration of the context for strategic collaboration in Ireland.

2.4 Strategic collaboration for children and young people in Ireland

Integrated and collaborative working is seen by the Irish state as central to achieving the policy goals set out for children and families in Ireland (Canavan et al., 2009; 2014). In 2014, a new policy framework was published relating to children and young people. *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF): the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 –2020)* is the second policy on children and young people produced by the Irish government and replaced the National Children's Strategy 2000 – 2010. Like the *National Children's Strategy*, it emphasised the whole child perspective and the need for a whole of government effort, and shared responsibility to improve outcomes, rooted in the State's commitments under the UNCRC (DCEDIY, 2022, p.2). Its aims are based on five national outcomes (referenced in Figure 1, Page 2) and six transformational goals for children and young people. The outcomes relate to health, education, safety, economic security and participation and the transformational goals are:

1. Support for parents,
2. Earlier intervention and prevention,

3. Listen to and involve children and young people,
4. Ensure quality services,
5. Strengthen transitions,
6. Cross government and interagency collaboration and coordination (DCYA, 2014, p.xv).

The strategy applies to children and young people from birth up to the age of twenty-four years and its stated vision is that Ireland would be one of the "best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family" (DCYA, 2014, p.viii). The purpose of the strategy is to provide a strategic framework for the co-ordination of policy and implementation across Government departments, agencies, and constituent sectors to achieve better outcomes for children and young people[9].

CYPSCs were recognised in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* (DCYA, 2014) as a key structure for implementing government commitments to children and young people. First piloted in four areas in 2007 as Children's Services Committees (CSCs), CYPSCs aim to bring together local agencies and services working with children and their families to plan services collaboratively and to develop ways of improving wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. They are structured collaborative mechanisms, consisting of the main statutory, voluntary and community organisations working in local areas (DCYA, 2015). They are required by the DCEDIY to draw up a Children and Young People's Plan in each county or administrative area, by exploring the demographic profile, carrying out an audit of available services for children, young people and their families, and consulting with children and young people. This process helps to identify gaps in service provision and an action plan is developed to address these gaps over a three-year period. To progress the implementation of the plan, CYPSCs establish thematic substructures, which are supported by the nomination of a chairperson, who is always a member of CYPSC, but who can work for any member agency. Membership of these substructures is drawn from agencies or organisations working with children and other expert contributors nominated or invited to the group and can be broader than main committee membership. The work of each working group or subgroup is linked to the national outcomes for children and young people, while also being cognisant of the six transformational goals outlined in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014). Initiatives associated with CYPSCs are generally linked to levels one and two of the Hardiker model (Hardiker et al, 1991), which are concerned with the universal needs of children, young people and their families and children who have some additional needs.

Since 2007, the DCEDIY has supported the rollout of the CYPSC initiative in every county and/or Local Authority administrative area in the Republic of Ireland and there are now twenty-seven

[9] A third national children's strategy is under development in 2022.

committees in existence. In the main, each committee aligns to Local Authority[10] boundaries, and has its own coordinator. However, some committees operate a single committee across two counties, and such committees have one coordinator, including Sligo/Leitrim, Longford/Westmeath, and Laois/Offaly. Also, while Galway City and County have separate Local Authority structures, there is one CYPSC that covers both areas. The age remit of CYPSC was extended from birth to eighteen years of age to from birth to twenty-four years of age to reflect the aims and objectives of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (DCYA, 2014), and to ensure coordination of services for young adults. The DCEDIY provides strategic and policy direction for the CYPSC initiative nationally, originally through the *'Blueprint for Children and Young Peoples Services Committees'* (DCYA, 2015) and subsequently in *'Shared Vision Next Steps'* (DCYA, 2019). While many different organisations supported the piloting and phased implementation of the original Children's Services Committee (CSC) initiative, in 2017 Tusla was given the operational responsibility for all CYPSCs by the then titled Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This marked a significant moment for CYPSCs, which were then placed under the operational leadership of one organisation which has as its focus children and young people's wellbeing and protection. From a Tusla perspective, the work of CYPSCs supports commitments to a public health paradigm of universal prevention (Lonne et al, 2021) and assists in achieving aims regarding early intervention, prevention, and universal service provision. However, Tusla is a relatively small organisation with just over 4,000 staff members, and the literature on child welfare systems provides widespread evidence of increasing rates of referrals to child protection and welfare systems internationally (Devaney and McGregor, 2021). This results in increased demands on systems and a focus of resources towards a narrower child protection realm (Canavan et al, 2022).

In its role regarding the operational leadership of the CYPSC initiative, Tusla supports the roles of national coordinator for CYPSC and local coordinators in each area. The national coordinator supports the implementation of the initiative at a strategic level and provides key linkages between the DCEDIY and Tusla regarding CYPSCs. The chairperson role for CYPSCs is allocated to Tusla Area Managers, who are also responsible for the line management of CYPSC coordinators. The deputy chairperson position is allocated to the Local Authority. This model is implemented in all CYPSCs in the country, bar one, where the Council hold the Chairperson role for CYPSC. As set out in Shared Vision Next Steps each committee is expected to have the following membership:

[10] Local authorities are multi-purpose bodies responsible for delivering a broad range of services in relation to roads; traffic; planning; housing; economic and community development; environment, recreation and amenity services; fire services and maintaining the register of electors https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/26251-local-government-structure-and-functions/ accessed 12/07/2022

- Tusla
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
- Education and Training Board
- Community and Voluntary Organisations
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
- Family Resource Centre
- Young Person
- National Educational Psychological Service
- City or Council Council
- Health Service Executive
- An Garda Síochana
- Irish Primary Principals Network
- City or County Childcare Committee
- Probation Service
- Third Level Institution
- Social Inclusion Partners

(DCYA, 2019, p.44).

While national policy guidelines influence membership of CYPSCs, membership is also influenced by local need. This is exemplified in Galway where the Galway Traveller Movement is represented on the committee because of the relatively high population of Travellers in Galway City and County (CSO, 2016).

Main committee meetings take place approximately six times a year and range in length from one and a half to two and a half hours. Substructure meetings usually take place on a more frequent basis, with the substructure chairperson responsible for reporting on the work at CYPSC meetings and seeking approval for direction of work from the main committee. Examples of some of the work CYPSCs engage in include: the development of Early Years strategies for young children and their parents; the development of supports for young people who are members of the LGBTI community and their parents, where gaps exist in service provision; and the development of a range of supports related to mental health and wellbeing, including the introduction of new models of care or work approaches. The work of CYPSCs is supported by annual seed funding from the DCEDIY, which is used to assist in the achievement of action or programme goals in each local area. Since 2017, CYPSCs also have responsibility for administering Healthy Ireland funding on behalf of the Department of Health and DCEDIY, to support the implementation of the Healthy Ireland Framework (2019 – 2025), the National Framework for Action to Improve the Health and Wellbeing of People Living in Ireland.

Alongside their own specific guidance, the work of CYPSCs is strongly influenced by wider guidance which includes the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making 2015 – 2020 (DCYA, 2015). This strategy is the first of its kind in Europe and is underpinned

by the Lundy Participation model (Lundy, 2007) which states that children and young people must have a space, voice, audience, and influence on all matters which affect their lives, their communities, their education, their health, and wellbeing and in legal contexts such as family law cases (DCYA, 2015). Further, guidance for CYPSCs in Shared Vision Next Steps (DCYA, 2019) recommends that CYPSC membership should include young people. There are different approaches to young people's participation on CYPSCs in Ireland, with some committees having young people on their main committees while others have young people as members of CYPSC substructures.

While CYPSC structures have the potential to have a powerful role in relation to children and young peoples' lives, there is little reference to the topic of power and the impact of power structures, relations and processes in the evaluation and policy guidance which has been developed for CYPSCs. There is one reference to power in Shared Vision Next Steps, which is the current guidance document for the development of CYPSCs (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2019) in Section 3.2.4: "Members will be of sufficient seniority to represent their agency and to exercise decision-making powers" (2019, p.43). This reference relates to a recommendation regarding the status of members of these collaborative networks.

2.5 Approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes

Because the concept of children's and young people's wellbeing has influenced the conceptual underpinnings of recent policy and practice landscape in Ireland, and the initiatives under exploration in this study, it is important here to consider the context for approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes. The rationale in the literature for the importance of child wellbeing[11] is that it is an important indicator of lifelong wellbeing, education attainment, fulfilment, and productivity (Kovan et al, 2014; Green et al, 2018, 2020; Land and Mochalos, 2018 cited in Fane et al, 2020). This section considers the context of policy approaches and conceptualisations of child wellbeing and outcomes, alongside approaches to measuring wellbeing and outcomes.

2.5.1 Policy approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes

The context for child wellbeing generally emphasises the multi-dimensional nature of wellbeing and how it is impacted by environment. Such approaches are influenced from a theoretical perspective by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological approach of human development which conceptualises child development based on four concentric circles of environmental influence (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). This approach is therefore fundamentally concerned with the interactions between individuals and different levels of systems and encourages consideration of the multi-dimensional nature of children's wellbeing (Cho and Yu, 2020, p.6). These interactions range from the immediate microsystem of family, education, and community contexts, to the macrosystem of social and cultural

[11] While the language of "child wellbeing" is adapted for this section, the child wellbeing literature incorporates the wellbeing of children and young people.

values in society. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasised the way in which all these factors interact with the child, affecting how they develop, and ultimately, their wellbeing and outcomes. In later work, Bronfenbrenner acknowledged that the individual was overlooked in his original model and that biological as well as genetic aspects of the individual are relevant in human development (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). Also, more recent work emphasises the child in relation to their immediate environment, especially the parent-child relationship (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). This conceptualisation has been very influential in the development of approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes and is complemented by approaches associated with the new sociology of childhood. These approaches emphasise childhood as a stage in and of itself (Ben-Ariah, 2007. p.6; Qvortrup et al., 1994)) and are associated with James and Prout (1990). They proposed a new paradigm for conceptualising childhood as socially constructed, and like Bronfenbrenner, argued that childhood is shaped by the cultural and social context in which children live and participate (Corsaro, 1997). In developing their model further, they proposed that children were considered as having agency and power, rather than it being afforded to them by adults (Prout & James, 1997).

These theoretical approaches have been influential in developments in the legislative and policy spheres in recent decades and are reflected in the approach of the UNCRC, detailed in Section 2.2. The UNCRC emphasises the importance of all actions concerning children being in their best interests, and through its global ratification and its reporting and monitoring mechanisms, has played a role in increased interest in the field of wellbeing and outcomes for children (Ben-Ariah, 2012, O'Hare 2011). In the UNCRC, rights are implicitly understood as creating opportunities for wellbeing (Ben-Ariah and Fones, 2011, p.463). In an Irish context, approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes are strongly influenced by these theoretical and policy developments, exemplified in national policy frameworks – National Children's Strategy (2000) and Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014). The work of CYPSCs is key to meeting child wellbeing and outcomes objectives for the Irish government, as CYPSCs aim to promote wellbeing and outcomes for children across all activities and programmes of work at national and local level (DCYA, 2019).

These conceptual and policy developments related to children and young people which emphasise a whole child perspective, have given rise to an increased interest by policy makers in child wellbeing and outcomes, while also giving power to children's voices through an increased focus on child participation. This section will continue with a consideration of the conceptualisations of wellbeing and outcomes as they relate to policy development for children and young people.

2.5.2 Conceptualisations of child wellbeing and outcomes

Definitions of child wellbeing are influenced by approaches to general wellbeing, which is defined by the World Health Organisation as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (1946). Ben-Ariah and Fones (2011, p.463) describe child

wellbeing as a desirable state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous. The multi-faceted nature of child wellbeing is acknowledged, as that which encompasses "mental/psychological, material deprivation, physical, social dimensions as well as subjective feelings about one's quality of life" (Lee, 2009, p.1). A systematic review of child wellbeing literature carried out by Pollard and Lee (2003) indicates variations in definitions across the world. Several critiques regarding child wellbeing emerge in the literature, including that definitions of child wellbeing remain poorly defined and strongly contested (Maccagnan et al, 2019: Redmond et al, 2016); risks that children are regarded as a homogenous population; the lack attention paid to early childhood; and the fact that research is seldom conducted in low-income countries, including South Asia (Cho and Yu 2020, p.10). Ben-Ariah and Fones emphasise that approaches lack a unifying taxonomy (Ben-Ariah and Fones, 2011, p. 461), while other authors express concerns regarding approaches which reinforce power differentials between adults and children (Harden et al, 2000; Mayall, 1994; Sixsmith et al, 2007). The literature also highlights that certain groups of children and young people are 'seldom heard', including young children (Gibbons, 2021), and children and young people from minority communities, such as those from Traveller and Roma communities, and those from the LGBTI+ community (Kelleher et al, 2014).

Alongside debates regarding child wellbeing are debates regarding outcomes for children, which are defined as those "events, occurrences, or changes in conditions, behaviours, or attitudes not what the program or organisation itself did, but the consequences of what the programme or organisation did (Bouchaert and Van Dooren, 2003, p.130 cited in Canavan et al, 2014). These debates connect wellbeing and outcomes by characterising outcomes as those articulated expressions of wellbeing of a population in a place (Hogan, 2001). However, they also highlight difficulties which arise when exploring links between any initiative and outcomes for children and young people, when other factors may be at play. One example in the literature of findings that strategic collaborative structures improved outcomes is found in a national evaluation of Children's Trusts in England and Wales (University of East Anglia and National Children's Bureau, 2007: O'Brien et al, 2009). It found that over two-thirds of the sites were able to provide examples where local children's trust arrangements had improved outcomes, either for particular children or for children with particular issues. However, the evaluators concluded that this could have been due to other funding initiatives happening at the same time (cited in Devaney et al, 2021, p.20). Further, Canavan et al highlight the questions which may arise as to the way in which outcomes are agreed, defined, and measured and by whom? (2009, p.377), but acknowledge the benefits of adopting an outcomes-focused approach are numerous and the arguments well-rehearsed (Bruner, 1997; Friedman et al, 2005; UNICEF, 2007 cited in Canavan et al, 2009).

2.5.3 Measuring child wellbeing and outcomes

Despite varying definitions and approaches, attempts have been made by many countries to collect data through multi-national surveys to gain insights into child wellbeing. In the main, this data is gathered using surveys, and the results of these surveys have been fed into multidimensional indices or indicators which attempt to compare the wellbeing of children between countries and between children in different circumstances within countries (Bradshaw et al, 2011, p.2). An indicator provides evidence that a certain condition exists or that certain results have or have not been achieved and enable decision-makers to track progress towards the achievement of intended outputs, outcomes, goals, and objectives (DCEDIY, 2022, p.6). Child wellbeing indicators are usually population based, so they reflect the wellbeing of a group of children, such as those in a country or state or those belonging to a certain race or age group (O'Hare, 2012, p.79). They are used in relation to the implementation of policies and programmes (Moore et al, 2004 cited in Ben-Ariah and Frones, 2011, p.461), as well as to study the status and life conditions of children (Ben-Ariah, 2009). They provide a useful way to determine how children and young people are doing, from a range of perspectives. Indicators are regarded as a vital tool to deepen our understanding of children's lives and have several uses, including by child advocacy groups, policy makers, researchers, the media, and service providers (Ben-Ariah, 2007). In terms of the research regarding wellbeing indicators, Ben-Ariah (2012) found that the volume of activity is increasing. The rationale for having an approach which considers indicators is that they:

- Help to track progress towards outcomes.
- Assist in identifying trends.
- Contribute to priority setting or resetting.
- Inform policy formulation and service provision.
- Provide for international comparisons, where possible (DCEDIY, 2022, p.vii).

While Lippman (2006) and others highlight earlier efforts to define indicators which focused on survival, more recent iterations focus on wellbeing and well-becoming (Ben-Ariah, 2007; Fane et al, 2020), emphasising "community participation, community connectedness, participation in positive activities, and the development of skills" (Fane et al, 2020, p.1896). Further, Gross Manos et al (2021, p. 2098) distinguish between a traditional approach for studying children's lives, which was "largely *about* children and new approaches which are *with* them influenced by perspectives of the new sociology of childhood". From a power perspective, it is interesting that more recent approaches which emphasise children's participation in wellbeing research and indicator development, emphasise the importance of "reducing power relationships between children and researchers and wider power dynamics between the child and wider social structures and research traditions" (Macdoughall and Darbyshire, 2013 cited in Fane et al, 2020, p.1898).

To summarise this section, the context for child wellbeing and outcomes highlights the importance of measuring and reporting on these as an indicator of how societies are doing in terms of supporting those younger members of their society. It also highlights that in order to enhance wellbeing, a number of different approaches are needed, and one of these is the strategic collaboration approach, which is the focus of this study. It is interesting to note that it was difficult to find literature which related solely to child wellbeing and outcomes, as the concepts are usually included in the literature with other concepts and their impacts, such as societal and family dynamics and their impact on child wellbeing and outcomes. These are exemplified in the work if Chaudry and Wimer (2016) who focused on poverty and child wellbeing; and Waygood et al, (2017) who focused on transport and child wellbeing.

2.6 My Professional context

In 2014 I was employed by Tusla to set up and coordinate two CYPSC structures in Roscommon and Galway and continued to coordinate both structures until 2016 when another colleague was employed to coordinate Galway CYPSC. Both CYPSCs share a Tusla service area, and I work closely with my Galway colleague. Both CYPSCs have a separate identity, profile, and membership apart from sharing a chairperson, but pool their resources and support each other's work where possible. There is an occasional overlap in working relationships between subgroups. For example, in 2015 the Internet Safety Subgroup was set up across the area and shared membership and outputs for services and families in both counties. The work of both committees was also supported by the allocation of a research position, funded by Tusla from 2014 to 2021. This was a unique arrangement for Roscommon and Galway CYPSCs which provided support on the evaluation of programmes, access to research, information, and an evidence base for the various projects across the area. It also provided support on facilitating children and young peoples' participation on a range of thematic areas to support the implementation of actions in the Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs), and other actions related to Healthy Ireland funding. In my role as coordinator, I am responsible for ensuring meetings of CYPSC and its substructures take place and ensuring that all meetings are fulfilling the work of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and Healthy Ireland programmes of work. I am responsible for achieving the aims and actions of CYPSC with and through members, by developing and maintaining positive relationships between a wide variety of stakeholders.

While carrying out this role, I became conscious of the importance of each member feeling that they had influence on these complex interagency structures, and that their membership was meaningful for them. I became very interested in the way in which power was shared to ultimately benefit children and young people. When exploring the literature, I discovered that there was very little on the impact of power on collaboration which focused on outcomes for children. This gap in the literature lead to the development of my research question, which was: "How does power operate in collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people?".

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to clarify the context within which this study takes place. The practice and policy landscape were discussed, with a specific focus given to progress towards collaborative working for children, young people, and their families over recent decades. Landmark developments, such as the enactment of the Child Care Act 1991, and the ratification of the UNCRC in 1992 were referenced as key events for ensuring that the voices and views of children and young people would have a place, culminating in the Children's Rights referendum in 2012. Alongside these, the creation of a full cabinet position of Minister for Children and the role of Ombudsman for Children supported progress towards giving children a more powerful voice in Irish society. Developments related to the creation of Tusla Child and Family Agency, in 2014, with its specific focus on the welfare and protection of children were described, as well as commitments by the agency to children's wellbeing and participation. Further context was provided with the inclusion of some key demographic trends related to children and families in Ireland. Progress related to strategic collaborative working towards children and young people in Ireland was outlined since 2007, with a description of the development of CYPSCs. The structure, membership and functioning of CYPSCs was described to give the reader an insight into how these structures are operationalised in Ireland, alongside details of the role of Tusla in this initiative. The aim of these structures to improve outcomes for all children, young people, and families under the policy framework of BOBF, developed by the DCEDIY was also laid out. Because the structures under investigation work towards wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people, the context for debates and approaches to child wellbeing and outcomes was discussed, and their relevance for this study considered. Finally in this chapter I outlined my own professional context and role as practitioner and researcher, which will be further explored in the methodology chapter. This sets the context from within which this study takes place.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

In order to support the development of the methodology for this study and to inform discussion on the findings, I undertook a review of the literature pertinent to the research question. The first section of this chapter sets out the purpose of the literature review and elaborates on search strategies utilised. It also clarifies the structure of the chapter, which discusses the literature under the following headings, as they relate to the research question:

1. Strategic collaboration towards children's wellbeing and outcomes
2. Power structures, relations, and processes

The final sections of this chapter contain a summary and synthesis of the literature presented and consideration of the implications of the literature review for the study.

3.2 Literature review: purpose and strategy

For this phase of the research process, I used a scoping approach to searching for pertinent material, which aimed to review and map existing literature in a field of interest in terms of the volume, nature, and characteristics of the primary research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The scoping review is further described by Grant and Booth (2009, p.101), who list fourteen review types and associated methodologies. They characterise the scoping review as that which "provides a preliminary assessment of the potential size and scope of available research literature. It aims to identify the nature and extent of research evidence" and shares "several characteristics with the systematic review in attempting to be systematic, transparent, and replicable". The aim of the review was to consider the extent and range of literature related to strategic collaboration towards children's wellbeing and power and identify research gaps. The rationale for selecting this approach was that these specific research topics are not extensively reviewed or researched together.

Thematic, conceptual, and subject areas relevant to the overarching topic being studied were identified and used to guide literature searches. Databases such as SAGE Complete, SAGE Premier 2008, Taylor & Francis, Journals Complete, Social Science Premium Collection and Wiley Online Library were accessed using the NUIG online library. Relevant material published in English was explored. Books were reviewed using the NUIG Hardiman Library and significant texts were purchased. To complete the picture, grey literature including policy and practice materials were sourced from a variety of online and offline sources, including the Tusla Child and Family Agency

website[12] and DCEDIY internal distribution channels. Hard and soft copies of texts and articles were stored in folders under various headings. Significant references cited in these articles were noted, reviewed, and reflected on, before being inserted into the literature review. These were added incrementally to the study bibliography.

Starting with the literature on the theme of collaboration, I developed a list of search terms, Boolean phrases, and key words to guide the search. These search terms and phrases helped elucidate the most relevant literature on approaches to collaboration in health and social services, from both national and international perspectives. I focused on the nature and characterisation of collaborative working in the literature towards child wellbeing and outcomes, and aspects of collaboration and power processes. Searches of the literature on collaboration included the use of key terms such as:

- Collaboration (and/or) Interagency Working (and/or) Power

- Strategic collaboration (and) power (and) child well-being

- Nature (and/or) characterisation of collaborative working (and/or) outcomes for children

These phrases were selected from my research question and objectives. The rationale for including this literature is that the empirical basis for this research are CYPSCs, which are constituted by membership from multiple services or organisations which come together to agree shared strategic goals for children, young people, and families.

From the perspective of the literature on power, I established that there were approaches to power associated with work of Lukes, Foucault, Clegg and Haugaard, which had greatest relevance for my research question. Themes such as power and knowledge, power and resistance, consensus and conflict, and power within organisations had relevance. I also engaged with secondary references in The Sage Handbook of Power (Clegg and Haugaard, 2013) and Power A Reader (Haugaard, 2002). The Sage Handbook of Power offers a "comprehensive overview that can be applied to understanding power at various levels from personal/micro to organisational and structural/macro levels" (McGregor et al, 2019, p.11). These texts led me to other relevant books and chapters, including classis texts on power.

It is important to reflect here on the different nature of the two types of literature that I worked with overall, which resulted in different searches. In the main the literature on the theme of collaboration was more empirically based and focused on journal articles which considered collaboration as it related to certain topics, whereas the literature on the theme of power was highly theoretical and driven from classic texts, books, and chapters. Generally, journal articles contained a detailed look at

[12] https://www.tusla.ie accessed 12/07/2022

particular aspects of a topic while the book literature considers topics from a broad range, which was appropriate for this exploratory study on power in strategic collaborative contexts.

3.3 Strategic collaboration towards child wellbeing and outcomes

Effective interagency collaboration between agencies has become a key consideration in service provision for children and families in recent decades. Many benefits of working together are highlighted in the literature, including cooperation, support, identification of need and development of common goals (Frost, 2005; Horwarth and Morrison, 2007; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; O'Reilly et al, 2013; Vangen and Huxham, 2012). This section considers dimensions of the literature on strategic collaboration towards child wellbeing and outcomes under the following headings:

1. The nature of collaboration
2. The features of collaboration which include benefits and challenges
3. Collaboration and leadership
4. Collaboration and power

3.3.1 The nature of collaboration

It is clear from the literature that the term 'collaboration' is ubiquitous and is used to describe many forms of working together in various contexts. There is a sizable body of literature describing models of inter-organisational relationships (Walter and Petr, 2000) and "in many parts of Australasia, Europe, the UK, and the USA some form of collaboration, co-ordination, or joint service provision is mandated for child protection and other health and social services" (Bazley, 2000, Blanch et al, 1994, Department of Education and Skills, 2003 and 2006, Hetherington et al, 2002, Queensland Department of Families, 2002b cited in Darlington and Feeney, 2008, p.188). However, despite a shift towards collaborative working at policy and practice levels, many different terms are used in the literature to describe working together. The literature indicates that collaborative working models which focus on child wellbeing and outcomes have many different aims, goals, or outputs. These range from producing some form of innovation (Gray, 1989), to "introducing new practices, technologies, and rules" (Lawrence et al, 2002, p.283) and creating common goals and improving working relationships (Williams, 2012). This section will outline the nature of collaboration from theoretical and policy viewpoints.

The term 'collaborative working' is described by Balloch and Taylor (2001) as that which incorporates the concepts of partnership, cooperation and collaboration and consists of a network of professionals from different agencies who work together to meet the needs of their client group. It is characterised by work which occurs in an organised or planned way and mandated fashion, but not characterised by a single model or approach in the literature (Devaney et al, 2021). Neither is it characterised by a single agreed descriptive term. In her literature review which informed the CYPSC initiative in Ireland,

Statham (2011, p.6) advises that the term 'interagency working' is often used "interchangeably with other terms such as 'joined-up', 'partnership', 'multiagency' or 'integrated' working". She highlighted the shared characteristics of interagency working as those where more than one agency or organisation work together collaboratively, in a formal and planned way. She emphasised that the CYPSC initiative was more reflective of a collaborative rather than integrated working context (2011). Canavan et al, (2014, p.8) use a similar approach to that of Statham, by defining "interagency working as all those forms of working together which do not occur at service level, but rather involve strategic or high-level activities". They acknowledge that although definitions of types of interagency relationships vary, a continuum or hierarchy is typically posed, with loose single-issue coalitions at one end, followed by co-operation, co-ordination, collaboration, and then integration at the other end (Hallett, 1995; Walter and Petr, 2000). Frost (2005) describes four levels of 'interagency working' which are cooperation, collaboration, co-ordination, and integration. In turn, Horwath and Morrison (2007, p. 56) use the term 'collaborative partnership' which has five levels, namely: communication; co-operation; co-ordination; coalition; and integration. More recently Cornforth and others (2015, p.777) have used the terms 'collaboration' and 'partnership' interchangeably to refer to "formalised, joint-working arrangements between organizations that remain legally autonomous while engaging in ongoing, coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that none of them could achieve on their own". Because the aim of CYPSCs is to "agree goals that are beyond the reach of individuals" (Scott, 1998 cited in Vangen and Huxham, 2012, p.734), I have selected the term collaboration as that which best reflects the aims, objectives, and ways of working of these structures. I further refine the term collaboration by describing the work of CYPSCs as being that of strategic collaboration, as their work involves multiple stakeholders across an administrative area or county, and not collaborative working on an individual agency or case basis.

Likewise, definitions of collaborative working in the literature vary. Some commentators emphasise "a commitment to mutual relationships and goals, a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards" (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992, p. 4, cited in Townsend and Shelley, 2008, pp.102 – 103). Others place emphasis on an "organised and structured process through which inter-organisational and multiplayer groups, both public and private, develop, implement and evaluate collective strategies" (Favoreu et al, 2016, p.439). Collaborative structures are often associated with a move towards new and innovative solutions, thus providing a recognition of the need for a change of approach. Lawrence et al (1999, p.481) distinguish 'collaborative working' from other forms of organisational activity by emphasising that it occurs between organisations rather than at the individual or organisational level, and conclude that:

> "… the production of a collaborative relationship can therefore be thought of as a discursive accomplishment. Through the negotiation of various dimensions of collaboration, and through

the importation of concepts from the surrounding organisational field, the members of a collaboration come to enough agreement about the nature of their activity that they can identify it as a collaborative relationship" (ibid, p.488).

Horwath and Morrison (2007) highlight the purposes of collaborative partnerships such as:

- joint training
- budget, staff, and decision-making
- single assessment
- consolidated management system
- shared goals and targets
- common governance, which are mandated.

These various purposes are also highlighted by Statham (2011) who advises that structures can bring agencies or individuals together for different purposes: to make joint decisions on policies and to plan services; to organise the delivery of services; or to work with individual children and families. O'Reilly et al, (2013, p.7) emphasise the focus for multiagency working as that which aims to provide "comprehensive and seamless services for children young people and their families, particularly those with complex needs". Agranoff and McGuire (2003) emphasise aspects of membership by acknowledging that collaborative structures can include public and non-profit leaders or statutory and community and voluntary leaders - as they are described in Ireland. Nugus et al, (2010, p.898) stress the context for "positively communicating among clinicians to address client needs" provided by collaborative working contexts, while Whittington (2003, pp.15 – 16) emphasises its active, dynamic nature: "It is the active form of working together: collaboration is partnership in action".

Models associated with collaborative working reflect "varying degrees of integration across the different elements of collaboration, and in particular the remit and expected function of the multi-agency approach" (Bregu and Delaney, 2016, p. 9). Devaney et al, (2021, p.2) highlight the importance of effective models considering several factors which influence collaborative models. These include the national but also local context; resources available; availability of other services; capacities of human resources; and the development of trust and working relationships.

While the flexible approach to collaborative working is welcome, differing terminology, purposes and goals can lead to risks for collaborative working, highlighted by Vangen and Huxham (2003, 2005). In their research spanning a number of decades they emphasise the tension between what they call 'collaborative advantage' and 'collaborative inertia' (Vangen and Huxhan 2012). They found that collaborative structures are set up to achieve collaborative advantage, but often they progress slowly, achieve little and fail to agree common goals, leading to 'collaborative inertia' (2003, 2005). They recommend seeing a collaborations' goal system as a partly hierarchical 'tangled web' of individual,

organisational, and collaborative goals that are partly congruent and partly diverse and that change over time (2012). They also highlight challenges for collaborative leaders, which will be explored later in this chapter in Section 3.3.3.

Despite the use of differing terminology globally, discourses on collaborative working towards child wellbeing have several commonalities, which include:

- having a focus on solving problems or wicked issues (Williams, 2012; Keast and Mandell, 2014).
- being mandated in some way (Horwath and Morrison, 2007; Ansell and Gash, 2013).
- occurring between organisations as opposed to being at an individual level (Lawrence et al, 2009).
- reflecting an increased orientation towards improved communication, cooperation, understanding and sharing of resources (Frost, 2005; Horwath and Morrison, 2007).
- reflecting increased orientation towards prevention and early intervention (Malone and Canavan, 2021, p.2).

While the lack of clear definitions and variety of terms and models may be interpreted in a negative way, it may also be regarded as a positive feature, reflecting "a desire to be flexible and accommodating of different perspectives and interagency working arrangements" (Devaney and Mc Gregor, 2021, p. 3).

3.3.2 The benefits and challenges of collaboration

This section focuses on developing an understanding of the nature of collaboration, which has benefits and challenges, as evaluated in studies which focus on collaboration for general wellbeing, mental health, and child welfare.

In the literature, collaborative approaches are generally evaluated positively, and interagency collaboration seen as helpful and important by professionals, parents, and carers (Cooper et al, 2016). However, evaluations of the operation of interagency collaboration are sparse and where evaluations were available, they were, in the main dated or focused on early implementation rather than full operation (Devaney et al, 2021; Bregu and Delaney, 2016). The literature highlights challenges for 'proving' the links between collaborative initiatives and outcomes (Sloper, 2004; Wong and Suminson, 2013), and risks for collaborative contexts which frequently fall short in addressing the problems they seek to ameliorate (MSI Integrity, 2020).

Many authors highlight the potential of collaboration to problem-solve. For example, Agranoff and McGuire (2003) describe collaboration as:

> "… the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organisational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organisations. Collaborative means to co-labour, to achieve common goals, often working across boundaries and in multi-sector and multi-actor relationships (ibid, p.4)

The potential of collaboration to solve complex problems is emphasised in the scholarship of Keast and Mandell (2014, pp.34-35) who use the term 'collaborative networks', which are formed to deal with very complex problems that no one organisation or group can deal with on their own. This potential is also emphasised in the work of Williams (2002). Sousa and Klyza (2007) highlight the potential of collaborative governance to produce more effective, efficient, and flexible policies with greater acceptability (cited in Purdy and Jones, 2012). Vangen et al (2015, p.1245) found that the "potential to achieve goals at different levels (individual, organisational, collaboration) motivate partners' participation", and Diamond and Vangen (2017) cite the potential of collaborative structures to deal with resource constraints.

However, the literature provides evidence on the benefits for specific individual outcomes regarding wellbeing, as opposed to evidence regarding more general wellbeing or outcomes. This may suggest that those general wellbeing outcomes are harder to measure. Several studies have found a positive association between levels of interagency collaboration and mental health service receipt (Pandiani et al, 2001; Bai et al, 2009, Chuang & Wells 2010; Chuang & Lucio, 2011). Hurlburt et al, (2004) found that greater interagency collaboration was associated with more focused service receipt, and a greater allocation of services to children with high needs as compared to children with low needs. Ogbonnaya and Keeney (2018, p.239) found that interagency collaboration between agencies providing child welfare and substance use services lead to "positive well-being and permanency outcomes for service users". Further, Sharifi et al, (2019) found that collaborative mental health care is feasible and effective for adults with common mental health disorders and recommended that it should be expanded to children and young people. Other benefits for agencies highlighted in the literature include increased financial resources; greater visibility and presence in the community; enhanced legitimacy and credibility; as well as decreased service fragmentation, redundancy, and cost (Lawrence, Hardy & Phillips, 2002; Mitchell, 2014; Seldon, Sowa & Sandfort, 2006).

Much of the literature on collaborative working focuses on what works and not the challenges of collaborative working (Berry et al, 2004, McGuire, 2006). Mitchell et al (2015, p.695) highlight that "collaborative working can be time consuming and stressful and can lead to conflicts between collaborating organisations and with the public". Where challenges or barriers are discussed in the literature the following themes emerge:

- disciplinary differences,
- organisational differences,
- culture, attitudes, and relationships

Disciplinary Differences

As argued by Reich and Reich (2006, p.51), "interdisciplinary collaboration capitalises on a diversity of perspectives and practices that each discipline offers", which aim to develop solutions to complex problems. However, evaluations of collaborative initiatives indicate that professionals from different disciplines and/or working in different agencies may operate with different knowledge bases, discourses, and conceptual frameworks (Hetherington et al., 2002; Tye & Precey, 1999); possess unequal status; and be afforded differing levels of professional autonomy (Sheehan et al, 2000; Hudson, 2002). Difficulties with participants not being able to agree on common aims and develop trust, or not knowing with whom they are linked have also been highlighted (Huxham, 2003). A fundamental component of collaborative relationships is the ability to respect and have a "positive view of the role and the staff of the other agency" (Darlington et al. 2005, p.1087). Castro- Kemp and Samuels (2022) emphasise the role of higher education institutions on embedding these positive perspectives of disciplines involved in the delivery of health, education, and social care services.

Organisational Differences and Culture

The literature also reveals that interagency collaboration and service coordination are difficult to accomplish in the 'real world' as multiple organisational and system-level barriers exist (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006; Glisson & James, 1992 cited in Lee et al, 2015, p.171). Aspects of organisational climate are highlighted which include such aspects as "supervisor support or leadership, shared goal setting, level of trust among employees and communication within the organisation" (Bednar, 2003; Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998 cited in Lee et al, 2015, p.171). Heikkala and Gerlak (2005, p.658) mention "conflicting agency goals and missions, inflexible administrative and legal procedures, and constrained financial resources as weaknesses in collaboration". The absence of "effective interagency structures and policies, including effective liaison and guidelines, are cited by Darlington et al" (2005, p.1087) as being a barrier to collaboration. Further, Darlington and Feeney (2008, p. 198) cite "insufficient staff and excessive workloads among the structural challenges which may result in single-focus thinking". They conclude that "structural changes require collaboration and commitment at the highest levels of policy development and in some cases, legislative change" (ibid, p. 199). In their scoping literature review of collaboration Martin-Misener et al (2012, pp.333 - 334) cite resource limitations as impacting collaboration. They found that "health reform and government mandates for development of teams and partnerships were important systemic factors enabling collaboration". Martin-Misener et al concluded that government involvement and endorsement of the

collaborative approach were important facilitators (of collaboration). They further concluded that "collaborations were successful, for the most part, if they were adequately funded but that not all successful collaborations required additional investments" (ibid, p.334).

Linked to organisational culture were barriers to collaboration found in resource limitations, in the quality of professional relationships, and lack of clear roles and responsibilities (ibid, pp.336 – 337). The lack of administrative capacity for collaborations was referenced by Babiak and Thibault, (2009 cited in Bryson et al, 2015) as an organisational challenge for strategic collaborative contexts. Given that collaborative structures play such an important role in shaping and implementing the direction of a partnership, Huxham and Vangen (2000) emphasise another organisational or cultural issue related to the fact that they are often not within the control of their members. "The structure of public sector collaborations is often externally imposed by policy makers or funders rather than determined explicitly by the collaborations' initiators or members" (ibid, p.1166) as is the case with CYPSCs. Alongside this, Vangen et al (2015, p.1258) acknowledge that the governance of collaborations is highly resource intensive, requiring "continuous energy and commitment and a great deal of skill from those who are in charge of them".

Culture, attitudes, and relationships

Martin-Misener et al (2012, p.335) found that "many successful collaborations were driven by values and beliefs, most commonly a belief in the value of collaboration between sectors, the value of prevention, health promotion and population health and the importance of teamwork". Citing the work of Fieg & Mc Cullough, (1997); Young & Gardner (2002); Young, Gardner & Dennis (1998), Drabble (2007, p.32), in her research on collaborative practice between child welfare and substance abuse agencies, identified significant barriers to collaboration between systems, which included "conflicting attitudes and values about parents with alcohol or drug addiction, and differences in focus, policy, and practice between child welfare professionals and treatment staff". Drabble also emphasises the importance of developing mechanisms for better communication and collaboration across fields to address fundamental differences in attitudes and relationships between different sets of professionals working with children and families (2007). "Employee work attitudes, their perception of management styles as either supporting or pressuring, and their understanding of the goal of policies and practices" are cited by Lee et al (2015, pp.171 – 172) as affecting service delivery.

In addition to challenges or barriers regarding individual, organisational and attitudinal perspectives, there are also factors that span these levels cited in the literature. Cooper et al (2016, p.326) identified the principal barriers to collaborative working as being "poor role demarcation, along with struggles over status and power, and a lack of equal representation across agencies". Mitchell et al (2015) emphasise the importance of collaborative structures having a common "belief system", building

norms, values, perceptions, and worldviews, providing the principal "glue" to hold together networks of actors (Fleishman, 2009; Sabatier, 1993, p.27).

3.3.3 Collaborative leadership

All forms of leadership aim to mobilise actors and resources (Sorensen et al, 2021), and across the literature on collaboration, the impact of leadership on collaborative structures is clear. Collaborative leaders have responsibilities for being inclusive and participatory in their approaches, while also having responsibilities for achieving collaborative outputs. While the topic of leadership did not form part of my starting research question, it emerged in the literature and findings as a significant factor in the exploration of strategic collaborative working and hence its inclusion in this section. Huxham and Vangen (2000, p.1160) share Williams' views on the lack of focus on leadership, finding in their research that "the literature on collaboration – including that on private sector alliances – has had little to say about leadership". Vedung et al (1998, cited in Sorensen et al, 2021, p.270) use the term public leadership to describe "an endeavour to mobilise resources in society via transactional and transformational leadership using sticks, carrots and sermons".

The main conceptualisations of collaborative leaders which appear in the literature are those of "boundary spanning" (Williams, 2002; 2012) and "collaborative leadership" (Ansell and Gash, 2013; Crosby and Bryson, 2005; 2010). Williams (2002, p.110) emphasises that much of the literature on collaborative working focuses on the motives, contingencies, and structures, and fails to focus on the essential aspects of those with responsibility for implementing collaborative processes, who he refers to as boundary spanners. He emphasises the importance of boundary spanners, in cultivating interpersonal relationships, communication, trust and their need to acquire an understanding of people and organisations outside their own circles. Williams found that "inter-organisational management is a highly complex business" (ibid, p.118) and concluded that "a clear recognition and understanding of effective boundary spanning capacities is essential to inform training, development and education of current and potential practitioners" (ibid, p.122). He further concluded that collaborative environments are not characterised by typical bureaucratic or power structures (Williams, 2002) and therefore require a particular leadership style which is facilitative in nature. Ansell and Gash (2013, p. 5) characterise collaborative leadership as 'facilitative' and further describe different types of leadership including 'steward', 'mediator' and 'catalyst'. They conclude that collaborative leaders often present themselves as "humble, observant, and thoughtful" (ibid, p.10). Bryson et al, (2010, p. 504) use the terms 'sponsors' and 'champions' to describe collaborative leaders, while Crosby and Bryson (2010, p.211) describe 'integrative public leadership' as that which brings "diverse groups and organisations together in semi-permanent ways". This leadership style typically requires leaders to work across "sector boundaries, to remedy complex public problems and achieve the common good". Crosby and Bryson (2010) emphasise the importance of having one committed champion, who they

define as a person who is a "tireless, process–savvy organiser and promoter of the change effort". A champion, according to Weber and Khademian (2008, p.340), acts as a "collaborative capacity builder" and is "someone who either by legal authority, expertise valued in the network, reputation as an honest broker, or some combination of the three, has been accorded a lead role in the networks problem solving exercises".

Drawing on experience of collaborative governance in the United States, Bryson and Crosby (1992) and Chrislip and Larson (1994) contributed extensive discussions of the leadership tasks and skills needed in "shared power" and "collaborative leadership" societies (cited in Huxham and Vangen, 2000, p.1161). Collaborative network leaders not only conceptualise and facilitate the relationships that connect people; they must also actively manage those social resources to be converted to public value (Keast and Mandell, 2014, p.34) and leverage relationship assets. Haller et al (2018, p.2), in their research on the impact of a leaders' personal power, build on the conceptualisation of leadership as an influential process through which followers form values, attitudes and behaviours and conceptualise ethical leadership as socially responsible power use. The impact of structures is emphasised by Huxham and Vangen (2000, p.1166) who say that aspects of structure are significant because they "determine such key factors as who has an influence on shaping a partnership agenda, who has power to act, and what resources are tapped". Other debates emphasise the possibility of those individuals with the most influence may be those without formal roles (Vangen et al, 2015, p.1253).

3.3.4 Collaboration and power

In this section, I present what is known from the literature on collaboration about power and strategic collaboration. These topics are not frequently addressed in the literature, but as this study focuses on power and strategic collaboration, an exploration of what is known was necessary.

While Huxham and Vangen (2005, p.174) noted that "there is no coherent body of literature on power in collaborative settings" their research on both topics, spanning two decades, makes a significant contribution. They highlight a number of risks for collaborative contexts when aspects of power are considered, which include the possibility of decision-making processes favouring those participants with greater resources and providing a context for advancing self-interest goals such as increasing power (Huxham and Vangen 2000). They conclude that a dearth of theory exists to guide conveners, participants, and researchers in understanding how power shapes collaborative processes and outcomes. Further, they acknowledge the challenge of analysing power in collaborative processes because these processes can change rapidly (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). Whelan (2014, p.76) agrees with this argument when referencing collaborative power as "a fluctuating thing, which can be experienced momentarily and differ from context to context". Purdy and Jones (2012, p.409) also

make a significant contribution to debates regarding collaboration and power. They argue that "many of the concerns highlighted in the research on collaboration and power are linked to power disparities among participating organisations and how power affects such issues as representation, participation and voice". They use the term "collaborative governance" to refer to processes that seek to "share power in decision making with stakeholders in order to develop shared recommendations for effective, lasting solutions to public problems" (ibid, p.409). Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2006), emphasise the position of less powerful partners who may have more difficulties than others in advocating for their interests in this process, though leaders can use several techniques to equalise power (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Ospina & Foldy cited in Crosby &Bryson, 2010, p.221). They propose that "cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed when they build in resources and tactics for dealing with power imbalances and shocks" (ibid, p.50).

In the literature, issues with power and collaboration are often associated with issues of conflict, which may vary by phases, as Gray (1996) found. As Gray elaborates: "As groups try to agree on the nature of the problem that concerns them, they are likely to argue about who gets to be at the table; as they debate approaches to solving the problem, they compete to shape the collaboration agenda, and control information; once the implementation is underway, collaboration members may seek to maximise their authority, influence and control over resources" (Gray, 1996 cited in Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p.222). Many of these risks can be associated with different status or perceived power of members and/or their organisations. These are highlighted by Broome (2002) who emphasises the need for adequate power to convene stakeholders, which is often associated with government agencies who may act as both "conveners and participants in collaborative processes, raising questions about their ability to dominate such processes" (cited in Purdy and Jones, 2012, p.410).

Risks are also highlighted in the literature concerning actors (or members) who are less powerful in terms of resources, voice, or legitimacy who may be excluded from collaborative processes or may be co-opted by more dominant parties (O'Toole and Meier, 2004 cited in Purdy and Jones, 2012, p.410). In the literature, Nugus et al (2010, p.899) provide a distinction related to this point between 'competitive or 'collaborative power'. They define competitive power as the "domination of a clinician from one occupation over others in decision-making" (ibid, p.901) while collaborative power is characterised by appropriate "role distinctiveness and role interchangeability" (ibid, p.907) among other features. Vangen et al (2015, p.1241) highlight the tension between the shifting of power away from elected bodies and public agencies to shared power among stakeholders. Further, the literature highlights that theories addressing personal forms of power are inadequate for understanding collaborative processes, while models emphasising structural aspects of power are limited by their focus on a single organisational context. Therefore, "to understand power in collaborative governance processes, one must consider power's political, economic and social aspects (Bierstedt, 1950), as well

as its structural, relational, and cognitive aspects" (Hardy and Philips, 1998 cited in Purdy and Jones, 2012, p.410).

Overall, in the collaborative literature, power does not feature strongly, despite its significant impact. By having as its focus an exploration of power in collaborative contexts, this research study endeavours to address this gap.

3.3.5 Summary

This section has considered the literature on and approaches to strategic collaboration. The literature describes terminologies and approaches used towards collaborative working. Common approaches which share information, resources, and goals to benefit particular client groups or communities were highlighted. Further, disciplinary, organisational, and attitudinal differences are described, alongside conflicting responsibilities of collaborative leaders who have responsibilities for both participation and goal achievement. Gaps related to the exploration of power in strategic collaborative contexts were highlighted.

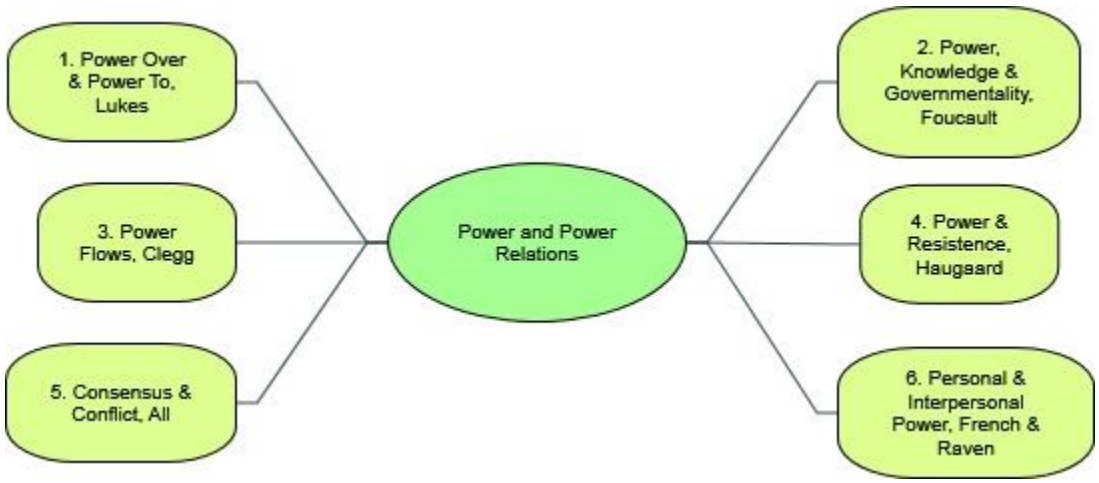
By comparison to the extensive theoretical literature on power discussed in the next section, the nature of the collaborative literature is, in the main under-theorised and descriptive. The overview of literature relating to power structures, relations, and processes to follow, offers a way to strengthen the understanding and processes of collaboration. In the conclusion of the chapter, I will return to consider how robust power literature can inform collaborative approaches to deepen our understanding of strategic collaborative processes.

3.4 Perspectives on power

The literature makes it clear that it is not possible to apply a single definition of power, relevant to all aspects and uses of the term. To this end Haugaard and Clegg (2009, p.400) suggest the need to think in terms of a family resemblance concept or 'families' of power which include 'power over', 'power to' and 'episodic power' family members. Therefore, this study will explore the many relevant aspects of power which include debates on the concepts of power over and power to, power and knowledge, organisational power, and interpersonal power, and how they relate to and impact on collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people. This section also considers differing conceptualisations in the literature on power, including sociological, political, and social psychological perspectives, with my focus being on the wider sociological and political conceptual dimensions. The rationale for this is the complex and large field with many disciplinary interests and dimensions. Certain main authors were relied on, given their specific contributions to understandings of power structures, relations, and processes.

In reviewing texts on the subject of power the work of four authors emerged as significant for the research question. I have relied specifically on the work of Lukes, Foucault, Clegg and Haugaard for their consideration of power from organisational perspectives, as the empirical context for this study is organisational collaboration. However, while concentrating on these perspectives, the impact of personal power on organisational contexts emerged and I added the work of French and Raven to the literature review. These debates are introduced here as they illuminate aspects of power relevant to organisational and inter-personal contexts. The work of Stephen Lukes' (1974; 2005) is frequently referenced in the literature and his conclusion that "power over others can be productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity" (2005, p.109) was very relevant to the study, which proposed to explore the themes of power and influence for CYPSCs in Ireland. Michel Foucault's (1977;1979;1980) perspective on the ubiquitous nature of power also emerged as being very significant. In particular, his focus on understanding how power operates within a diverse context was significant for CYPSC structures, which have a diverse membership. His perspective on the links between power and knowledge (1980) was interesting because CYPSC members bring with them specific knowledge from their various disciplines or fields of expertise. His work provides a broad range of dimensions in relation to power, which necessitated that I focused on aspects of it, which were his analytics of power; power-knowledge, and power and governmentality. Stewart Clegg's (1989) work on organisational power, circuits of power and divisions of labour within organisations also provides a relevant perspective for this study. His description of networks of people moving through different phases of power-sharing from the formative to the operational stages was very relevant for the research question. Mark Haugaard's (2002, p.308) approach to the study of power and in particular his position regarding how normal conflict is, was also significant. His conclusion that "sometimes there is consensus, sometimes conflict and, most frequently, there is both" chimed with my observations as a reflective practitioner of collaborative contexts where I observed little conflict. This was something that I wished to explore further in the study. The interpersonal power framework of French and Raven (1959) was interesting from the perspective of facilitating an exploration of the personal power of study participants, and how and if this has an influence. This chapter will continue by elaborating on these perspectives, and the structure of the remainder of this section is outlined in diagrammatic form overleaf:

Figure 2 Thematic Map Power Literature Headings



3.4.1 The 'power over' and 'power to' debate

In "Power: A Radical View" originally published in 1974 and republished in 2005, to include two additional chapters, Steven Lukes' proposed a model which assists with the theoretical consideration and empirical study of power. He used the terms "dimensions" or "faces" to describe various aspects of power and argued that power should be viewed as having three dimensions. Lukes provided a critique of the dominant academic positions regarding power in the USA at that time, which are outlined here, in order to contextualise his ideas.

In "Power: A Radical View", Lukes (2005) outlined the development of a pluralist or one-dimensional view of power, put forward in the 1960's by Dahl, Polsby, Wolfinger, and others. According to Lukes (2005, p.17), in *Who Governs* (1961), Dahl's central method is to "determine for each decision which participants had initiated alternatives that were finally adopted, had vetoed alternatives initiated by others, or had proposed alternatives that were turned down". Dahl considered that those "participants with the greatest proportion of successes" were the most influential (ibid, p. 17). This approach, with its focus on concrete, observable behaviour, and conflict, raised questions for Lukes in terms of those behaviours and issues which cannot be observed because of the interests of specific groups.

Lukes agreed with the most well-known critique of Dahl's view, which is provided by Bachrach and Baratz (1970), who also argued that a one-dimensional view of power was restrictive. Their two-dimensional view of power involved a qualified critique of the behavioural focus of the first view. It allowed for "consideration of the ways in which decisions are prevented from being taken on potential issues over which there is an observable conflict of interests, seen as embodied in expressed policy preferences and sub-political grievances" (ibid, p. 25). They added to Dahl's one-dimensional perspective by providing a second dimension to be considered, namely, the securing of compliance

through the threat of sanctions, which Lukes labelled as coercion. Their typology of power embraced coercion, influence, authority, force, and manipulation (ibid, pp.20-21). While Lukes felt that their view went further than that proposed by the pluralists, it did not go far enough for him (2005, p.15). He considered that this view was still too committed to behaviourism and too focused on actual observable conflict. From his perspective this approach ignored the "crucial point that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place" (2005, p.27). The third aspect of his critique is its insistence that non-decision-making power only exists where there are grievances which are denied entry into the political process in the form of issues, and the assumption that the absence of grievance equals genuine consensus (ibid, p.28). In turn, Lukes developed his theoretical approach to the study of power by adding a third dimension or face which is concerned with the unintended structural effects of action (Haugaard, 2002, p.3) His three-dimensional view of power (Lukes, 2005, p.29) thus focuses on:

a) decision making and control over the political agenda

b) issues and potential issues

c) observable and latent conflict

d) subjective and real interests

In this model Lukes asks us to consider who does not participate in decision-making and why, and what issues do not get on the agenda and why? He questions what part the operation of power or the powerful play in this. Lukes' contribution is towards encouraging consideration of the capacity for power or 'power over' and therefore the impact of power even when it cannot be observed or has not been enacted. In commentary on this perspective, Haugaard (2002, p.38) argues that Lukes asks us to consider the "culturally patterned behaviour of groups" and 'false consciousness' whereby the less powerful are not aware of their 'real interests'. Gohler supports this view by emphasising that "power is not only the suppression of subjective, but also of objective interests – interests that those subjected to power are not aware of but would pursue if they knew that they corresponded with their objective situation" (Gohler, 2009, p.29).

In the re-issue of his seminal text in 2005, with the addition of two essays, Lukes addresses key criticisms of the first edition and shows how his thinking has shifted. He elaborates on his thinking at the time by saying that "we speak and write about power in innumerable situations" and yet "there is no agreement about how to define it, how to conceive it, how to study it and if it can be measured, how to measure it" (2005, p.61). He locates his original book in the context of the 'community power debate' and concludes that power is essentially a contested concept (ibid, p.63). Importantly, he distinguishes his third-dimensional view from Foucault's position, as highlighted by Dowding (2006,

p.136). However, Lukes also concludes that “Foucault’s insights into the intimate connection between power and knowledge have helped increase awareness of the third dimension of power”. Foucault’s approach will be elaborated on in the next section. Menge (2018) and Swartz (2007) both advise that Lukes stresses even more the dispositional nature of power with regard to his earlier conceptualization in the 2005 re-issue. This is described by Swartz (2007, p.104) as emphasising that a broad definition of power should not limit itself to the visible exercise of power but should also consider the “capacity or ability that may or may not be explicitly activated”. Second, Lukes moves to a position that not all power is negative and zero sum. Some forms of power, including forms exercised in relations of dependency can be positive, productive, and transformative, such as the student-teacher relationship (ibid, p.104). Third, and following on from this point, Lukes writes that "power over others can be productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity," even for dependents under certain conditions (ibid, p.105). Fourth, his earlier conceptualization tended to assume that actors in asymmetrical relations have unitary and opposing interests. But now he stresses that actors have multiple interests, and some may be conflictual (ibid, p.105). Finally, his earlier account tended to look only at binary relations between actors. Yet in many situations there can be multiple actors, and multiple interests (ibid, p.105).

In his work, Bates (2010) also provides a critique of Lukes’ insistence on allying or putting to rest the connection of power with agency and his lack of focus on the impact of structures on power. He concludes that this makes Lukes unable and/or unwilling to account fully for the way in which structures are involved in *producing* the decisions of powerful actors. Bates (ibid, p.355) distinguishes between the power(s) of structures and agents, and views structures as sources of power, conceptualising them in terms of systems of social relations. Swartz (2007, p.108) concludes his analysis of Lukes revised position, with a critique, which for him concerned the lack of focus on the “capacity of the state to legislate and regulate broader areas of social life”.

Despite these criticisms, Lukes model provides a useful and relevant theoretical and conceptual framework for the exploration of power in strategic collaborative working for this study. This section will continue with consideration of the work of Foucault and its relevance for this study.

3.4.2 Power, knowledge, and governmentality

Gilbert and Powell (2010, p.4) highlight that Michel Foucault provides an authentic “conceptual toolkit” with which to interrogate power relationships between health and social care professions and service user groups. Foucault’s broad approach to the study of power, as something which is ever-present and always being created, provides an interesting perspective for this study. This approach marked a move away from notions of sovereign power, as that which is held by one person over another or others, to a way of thinking about power as being ubiquitous. Foucault’s work provides an immense range of dimensions in relation to power, which necessitates that I focus on particular

aspects, which are conceptualisations of power and knowledge, his analytics of power and power and governmentality, given their specific contributions to understanding power structures, relations, and processes. This section is based on literature developed by Foucault from the 1970's onwards, in particular Discipline and Punish (1977), The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol.1 (1979), Power/Knowledge (1980) and commentary on this work.

Power and Knowledge

In his conceptualisations of power, Foucault emphasised the connection between knowledge and power and explored power in the context of unequal relationships between individuals. He introduces his views on power and knowledge in Discipline and Punish (1977) where he argues that "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1977, p.27). He elaborates on this viewpoint further in Power/Knowledge (1980) by arguing that when power is exercised, new objects of knowledge and bodies of information emerge, and conversely, knowledge creates power. He states that it is through understanding the relations between power and knowledge that one gains insight into "how certain discourses and ideas come to hold a certain 'power' and 'truth' over others at moments in time" (Satka & Skehill, 2011, p.200). Foucault (1977, p.224) concludes that "the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process", described by Satka and Skehill as a 'spiral' (2011, p.199). They emphasise that it is "one of the most well used concepts deriving from his work which relates to Foucault's conceptualisations of power" (2011, p.199). Other commentary on the topic of power and knowledge supports Foucault's views. In Visions of Social Control, Cohen (1985, p.25) highlights the circular nature of power and knowledge "forms of knowledge such as criminology, psychiatry and philanthropy are directly related to the exercise of power, while power itself creates new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information". Cohen (ibid, p.101) refers to the emergence of distinctive bodies of people such as specialists, experts, and professionals of all sorts, who each work with their own category of deviants and concludes that "only the experts know what to do (knowledge); only they should be allowed to do it (power)". Using a Foucauldian approach, Flyvbjerg (1991, p.226), in his investigation of the Aalborg project in Denmark, also supports this perspective by concluding that "power determines what counts as knowledge, what kind of interpretation attains authority as the dominant interpretation. Power procures the knowledge which supports its purposes, while it ignores or suppresses that knowledge which does not serve it". To conclude this section, Foucault was concerned with "what types of knowledge gain hold and keep hold and by what process" (Winter and Cree, 2016, p.1176) which is an interesting concept to apply to an exploration of strategic collaboration.

Power

In his work The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1 (1979), Foucault proposes an analytics of power as opposed to a theory of power, describing the analytics of power as "toward a definition of the specific domain formed by relations of power, and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis" (1979, p.82). He describes power as something that is "produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (ibid, p.93). He argues that "power is not an institution and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (ibid, p.93).

Foucault's understanding of power as dynamic begins with his rejection of any reification of power. He insists that "power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away" (ibid, p.94), such as sovereign power, but rather is "something which circulates" (1980, p.98), which is not static. Neither is it held by a subject or person, but it is exercised by structures and through actors, contending that individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (ibid, p.98). He suggests that relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations, such as production, kinship, family, and sexuality (ibid., p.142). Foucault used the term 'strategies' for the multiple ways in which heterogeneous elements align or conflict with one another to constitute power relations (Rouse, 2003). In commentary on this aspect of Foucault's work on power, Gallagher argues that in one of his later papers, Foucault (1983, p.220 cited in Gallagher, 2008, p.397) offers a general definition of the kind of power in which he is interested, as "a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions". Gallagher (ibid., p.398) concludes that throughout Foucault's historical analyses, "the question "what is power?" is left open, with enquiry focused instead on *how* power is exercised in particular contexts, and with what effects".

Foucault's characterisation of power as that which is ever present, in all social relations and contexts, and his argument that the important aspect to consider is not what is power, but how it is exercised in particular contexts is significant for this study. His approach marked a compelling move away from associations between power and sovereignty. Having considered Foucault's approaches to power and knowledge, and his analytics of power, the final part of this section is concerned with Foucault's approach to the study of government.

Foucault and Governmentality

Foucault's concept of governmentality is essential when considering those levels of power which reach from societal and structural systems into familial and personal systems. Raffnsoe et al, (2019) characterise Foucault's writings on governmentality as part of his third wave of work, which focuses

on the connection between government and rationality. Parton advises that in the late 1970s, Foucault began to explore what he called "the art of government" (in Chambon et al, 1999, p.103), and Gordon advises that Foucault defined the term 'government' as being "the conduct of others' conduct" (in Faubion, 2001, p.xxix). Foucault put the terms 'government' and 'rationality' together to create the concept of 'governmentality' marking "the emergence of a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising power in certain societies" (Foucault, 2007, pp.98 – 110). Parton comments that:

> "Foucault's concept of governmentality both broadens and redirects the analysis of political power. It recognises that the exercise of power takes place through an ever-shifting set of alliances of political and non-political authorities. Professionals and other "experts" are crucial to its operation, but they also have their own interests and priorities, which means that day-to-day policies and practices are not unified, integrated, or easily predictable" (in Chambon et al, 1999, p.105).

In his commentary on government, Foucault (cited in Faubion, 2001, p.205) argued that "practices of government are multifarious and concern many different kinds of people" from the head of the family to the teacher of a pupil. Explaining Foucault's approach to governmentality, Dean (2010, p.18) takes the term government to refer to "some sort of attempt to deliberate on and to direct *human* conduct" and the term rational to refer to the "attempt to bring *any* form of rationality to the calculation about how to govern". Dean (ibid, p.19) concludes that the term 'government' not only encompasses "how we exercise authority over others…but also how we govern ourselves" and explains that "the notion of governmentality implies a certain relationship of government to other forms of power, in particular sovereignty and discipline" (ibid, p.29). He further concludes:

> "… an analytics of government takes as its central concern *how* we govern and are governed within different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate, and are transformed. An analytics of government thus emphasises 'how' questions" (ibid, p.33).

Foucault argued that governments are concerned with economy and welfare: "the art of government is just the art of exercising power in the form, and according to the model, of the economy" (cited in Faubion, 2001, p.207). He concluded that overall governments are concerned with men and their relations with "wealth, resources, … customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking" (ibid, pp.208 – 209). Government is also responsible for "the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition" and improvements in health and wellbeing (ibid, pp.216 -217). The concept of governmentality provides a useful context in acknowledging how power operates within societal and structural systems, and how power impacts on familial and personal systems, among others. It also opens up a critical perspective on the power of professionals and surveillance, exemplified in Foucault's work by Bentham's (1843) panopticon.

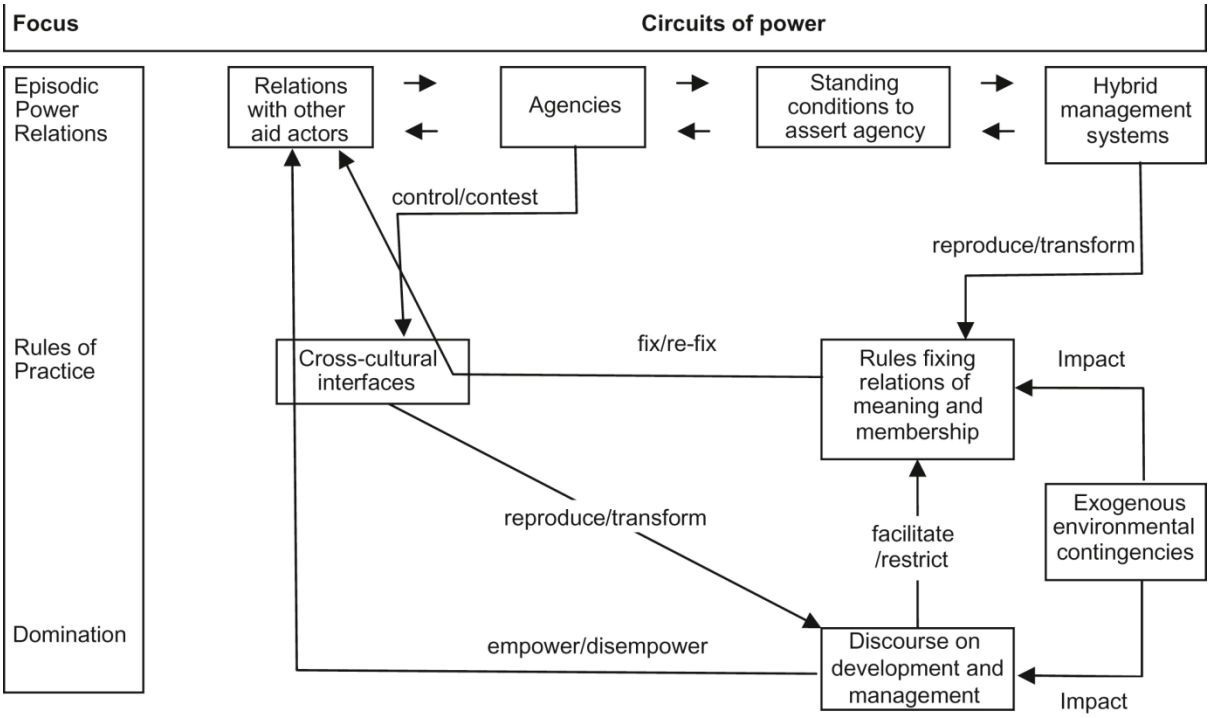
I have discussed in this section, aspects of Foucault's work on power and knowledge, his analytics of power, and in the final section, power and governmentality. All these conceptualisations of power are significant for this study because they propose a way of thinking about or exploring the ubiquitous nature of power, and how structural systems, including governments, engage with members or citizens.

3.4.3 Power flows

By focusing his study of power on organisational power, circuits of power and divisions of labour within organisations, Stewart Clegg's (1989) mid-range theory, which integrates theory and empirical research, also provides a relevant perspective for this study. It is included in this literature review because of its focus on power in organisational contexts.

In Frameworks of Power, Clegg (1989) proposed that it is not possible to have a single all-embracing definition of power but argued instead for a set of family relationships of closely related yet differentiated concepts. Clegg (1989) focused his exploration of power on organisations, where organisations were described as constituting "a form of collective agency" and argued that agency is achieved "because it involves the stabilisation of power relations across an organisational field of action" (ibid, p.188). Implicit in Clegg's approach is a "conception of organisations as locales in which negotiation, contestation and struggle between organisationally divided and linked agencies is a routine occurrence" (ibid, p.198). He argued that for strategic agency to be achieved, two or more agencies must come together to create a point of connection or what he refers to as a "necessary nodal point" (ibid, pp.198-199). For Clegg, power is present or "episodic" at these nodal points, which are defined as the "construction of a conduit through which traffic must necessarily pass" (ibid, p. 205). In proposing that power exists at certain points, Clegg's contribution differs from Foucault's argument towards the ever-present nature of power in all social and organisational relations. Clegg proposed that power moves "through circuits in which rules, relations and resources that are constitutive of power are translated, fixed and reproduced or transformed" (ibid, p.211). He described this power as 'episodic' and argued that it is achieved in the 'enrolling' of organisations and agencies which then 'lock in' membership and meaning. The next phase is concerned with the 'stabilising' of a network of power centrality alliance and coalition, and the third and final phase with the 'fixing' of common relations of meaning and membership in the network (Clegg cited in Haugaard (ed), 2002, p.271). Clegg's model is outlined on the next page in diagrammatic form:

Figure 3 Clegg's Circuits of Power Framework[13]



To explain the diagram, "power is present in the overall flow of action through the circuits of power" (Clegg, 1989, p.213), but is also present at each stage, albeit in different ways. At the episodic level, along the top of the diagram, "existing social relations constitute the identities of agencies" (ibid, p.215) and are influenced by relations with other aid actors. The 'power' of agencies is realised through the organisation of standing conditions, which is the term Clegg uses to describe the organisational context. Agencies possess varying levels of control of resources to produce outcomes for those for whom they have responsibility. These are achieved, Clegg argues through the development of hybrid management systems. These relationships are indicated by the arrows pointing to the right-hand side. "Power at this level will invariably be accompanied by resistance" (ibid, p.215), which is indicated by the arrows which point to the left-hand side. Clegg argues that this type of power is the most apparent and evident in organisational contexts and described by Lukes as that 'power over' (ibid, p.215). At the centre of Clegg's model are those rules of practice which he describes as being always present and at the centre of any stabilisation or change in circuitry, acknowledging that rules fixing relations of meaning and membership are always fluid and may change over time. These are further described in the literature by Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004, p. 37) as being "associated with dispositional power, which can be described as the shaping of power by an organisations rules and resources". Through them all traffic must pass, and Clegg acknowledges that change can occur as a result of struggle or resistance, but also innovation. Similarly, along the bottom of the diagram, "domination is never eternal, never utterly set in time and space" (Clegg,

[13] Published in Clegg, S., Frameworks of Power, 1989, London, Sage Publications.

1989, p. 215) and can subvent as well as support functioning or empower/disempower to use the language of the diagram. Aspects of rules of practice and domination are also influenced by exogenous environmental contingencies or factors external to the direct organisational context. Clegg concludes that "the stabilisation and fixing of rules of meaning and membership, and techniques of production and discipline, in an organisation field which is capable of extensive reproduction over space and time, are the central issue" (ibid, p.241). Clegg proposes that power exists at certain "nodal points", but also that it is ubiquitous:

> "All forms of organisation are forms of organisation of social relations. All social relations involve power relations. Power is evident in relations not only of ownership and control but also of structuration and design ... such relations are likely to be both differently distributed and socially constructed as well as exist in differential demand in differentiated markets" (Clegg, 2009, p.327)

For Clegg (1989, cited in Raffnsøe, 2013a, p.244), organisation studies had hitherto relied all too heavily on a notion of power defined as sovereign power, 'power possessed by unitary, "sovereign" political forces', which ultimately means 'something which denies, forestalls, represses, prevents' (Clegg, 1989, p.156 cited in Raffnsoe, 2019, p.161). Clegg (2009, p.249) explains that agencies interested in maximising their 'strategicality' must attempt to transform their point of connection with some other agency or agencies into a 'necessary nodal point'. He also suggests that "power is exercised within the context of norms". Thus, when power is exercised organisationally, it is always within the context of binding obligations shared by the power wielder and the power subject, and the sanctions that are threatened for non-compliance are always normatively constrained. One may not agree to consent, but one does so in the knowledge of what one can expect the authorities to do in consequence (Clegg et al, 2006).

Clegg's (1989; 2006; 2009) approach to the study of power in organisations provides a significant contribution towards the empirical study of power. While the structures under investigation in this study cannot be described as organisations, CYPSCs do provide organisational contexts or 'nodal points' for services for children and young people in local areas and opportunities for agencies to "maximise their strategicality" as Clegg (2009, p.249) suggests. This takes place when they partner with one or more other agencies to achieve aims and outcomes which would not be possible to achieve otherwise. Clegg helps us understand power structures in an organisational context, through his circuits of power framework, by emphasising how power flows through circuits within organisations. His approach to power in organisational contexts is useful for this exploratory study in its consideration of the impact of internal and external rules, relations and resources or structures and their impact on the functioning of strategic collaboration contexts, which provide the focus for this study.

3.4.4 Consensus and conflict

Within the debates about power in the literature, themes of consensus and conflict arise, and this section considers aspects of both concepts, from the perspectives of all theorists and debates under consideration for this study.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Lukes' (1974; 2005) contribution to the study of power relates to the acknowledgement of the significance of latent conflict, which for him was absent in Dahl's one-dimensional view of power and Bachrach and Baratz's two-dimensional view. Lukes argued that both observable and latent conflict were important to consider in the study of power and highlighted that "the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent observable conflict from arising in the first place" (2005, p.27). He described latent conflict as that which is found in the contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude. He also emphasised the importance of considering that the absence of grievance does not necessarily equal genuine consensus (ibid, p.28). While Lukes does not use the terminology of consensus, he does refer to the 'productive' nature of power, which may be achieved by consensus.

Neither does Foucault use the conceptual language of consensus and conflict, but he does consider the impact of 'disciplinary power' on individuals, on particular contexts, and on society in general. In his work, Foucault provides examples of the operationalisation of disciplinary power, which he argues occurs in the imposing of surveillance and routines, the panopticon being the ultimate example (1977). In a disciplinary power context, consensus is imposed and as a result conflict does not emerge. Foucault emphasises the positive nature of conflict and argues that the suppression of conflict is the suppression of freedom, because "the privilege to engage in conflict is part of freedom" (Flyvberg, 1998, p.229). Further, his concept of governmentality encourages consideration of the impact and reach of governments on the lives of citizens, and that ability to do so in a consensual or conflictual way.

In his framework Clegg acknowledges the normative nature of consensus and conflict in organisations or organisational contexts which engage in 'negotiation, contestation and struggle' (1989, p.198). In order to function, organisations have to stabilise 'power relations across an organisational field' (ibid, p. 188), and fix 'common relations of meaning' (cited in Haugaard (ed), 1989, p.271). Clegg (1989) also discusses the facilitative nature of power which can be found in Parsons' (1967) power schema. Parsons emphasised the way that power facilitates the production of binding obligations within organisational settings, and the reality that the "power of sanction waits unused but ready", should desired outcomes not be secured (1989, p.136). Like Parsons, Clegg emphasises that participants are always aware of the consequences of non-compliance or conflict (Clegg et al, 2006).

In *Power A Reader*, Haugaard (2002) argues that the relationship between conflict and consensus has been a major source of debate in literature on power over the years, dominated on the conflict side of the debate by the work of Weber, Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes and on the consensual side by Parsons, Barnes, and Arendt. Haugaard rephrases Arendt's definition of consensual power to describe it as "an ability to act in concert in the pursuit of common goals through the mobilisation of practices which meet the approval of all" (Arendt, 1970, cited in Haugaard, 2002, p.315). Aside from these opposing positions there is also a middle ground which provides relatively more balance between conflict and consensus, the primary representatives of which are Foucault, Clegg and Haugaard.

Haugaard supports the notion of a middle ground and concludes that "sometimes there is consensus, sometimes conflict and, most frequently, there is both" and argues that most social relations take place within the space between the two extremes (2002, pp.307 - 308). In doing so, he acknowledges "the complexity of people's motives" where most frequently people are neither completely in favour of something nor completely opposed to it, and that people's perceptions can change in the course of carrying out actions. He acknowledges "the dual nature of all social action whereby it has both a goal-orientated and a structural aspect" and the frequency of mismatches between goals and structures (ibid, p.308). He commented that "structures do not confer power equally across the system" but instead confer "large amounts of power upon some individuals and none upon others (ibid, p.309).

In his exploration of the Aalborg project in Denmark, Flyvberg (1991, p.150) observed that confrontations were usually more visible than stable power relations and therefore become conspicuous foci for both power research, press coverage, and public debate. He further found that consensus or 'stable power relations' were more common than open, antagonistic confrontations, but that stable power relations can turn into antagonistic confrontations at any time, and vice versa. He concluded that actors in structured processes tend to actively avoid open, antagonistic confrontations, and when these do appear, they tend to develop rapidly into stable relations again. He argued that stable power relations leave space for the power of rationality, or the force of the better argument making an impact. Flyvberg (1991) concluded that for his study unbalanced relations of power produced an unbalanced project in Aalborg and that institutions which were supposed to represent what they themselves call the "public interest" were revealed to be deeply embedded in the hidden exercise of power and the protection of special interests (ibid, pp.223 -225). In other work, Flyvberg (1998, p.230) argues that "forms of public life that are practical, committed, and ready for conflict provide a superior paradigm of civic citizen virtue than do forms of public life that are discursive, detached and consensus dependent". This argument supports Haugaard's position regarding the healthy nature of conflict and resistance in collaborative contexts.

3.4.5 Power and resistance

One cannot consider the concept of power without also considering resistance and in this section the approaches of all the theorists already outlined are relevant. Kondo (1990) describes power and resistance as operating as part of the complex web of relations linking actors in everyday organisational life (cited in Thomas et al, 2011, p.24).

In the re-working of his seminal text in 2005, Lukes discusses resistance by defending his three-dimensional view of power. To do so he draws on the work of Scott (1990 cited in Lukes, 2005) but also provides a critique of Scott's approach. In his consideration of domination and resistance, Scott (1990) highlights the 'hidden transcripts' of the lives of the dominated which take place behind the scenes and which are different to 'official' or 'public transcripts'. He suggests that instead of overtly resisting, the dominated create an appearance of consent and unanimity. Further, Scott (1990) argues that the dominated engage in this disguised compliance to appeal to the expectations of the powerful and uses examples of relationships between "wardens and prisoners, teachers and students and bosses and workers" to exemplify his point (cited in Lukes, 2005, p.127). Lukes (2005) supports this position but also argues that the interpretation of quiescence remains unanswered in Scott's work. From the perspective of Lukes, Scott's (1990) approach fails to consider the impact of latent conflict or 'false consciousness', which he argues is often widely at work in shaping preferences, beliefs, and desires (Lukes, 2005, p.130), and exists when the dominated do not participate. In Foucault's (1980) later work the relationship between power and resistance led to a re-conceptualisation of this relationship insofar as power and resistance are seen as diffuse, co-constitutive, and multidimensional. There "are no relations of power without resistances: the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (Foucault, 1980, p.142). He argued that "power relationships open up a space in the middle of which the struggles develop" (1989, p.187), and described resistance as being the hole in power, but also that only power and resistance can form a whole. Therefore, resistance is not marginal to power but constitutive of power (cited in Foote and Frank, 1989, pp.172 – 173). For Foucault (cited in Flyvberg, 1998, p. 223), resistance and struggle, in contrast to consensus, is the most solid basis for the practice of freedom. Clegg (2002) also supported views on the interrelation between power and resistance, by arguing that "implicit to the conception of episodic agency power is the assumption of resistance" (2002, p.258) and concludes, like Foucault, that power and resistance stand in relationship to one another - one rarely has one without the other (ibid, p.258). Thomas et al (2011, p.36) elaborate on these positions by proposing that "change emerges at the intertices of power-resistance relations in which both senior and sub-ordinate actors are implicated". Haugaards' (2002) focus on resistance in the power literature is useful for this study because it views resistance or conflict as a normal part of the change process.

The discussion of the literature has focused on power structures, relations, and processes from sociological and political perspectives, and not specifically on aspects of personal and inter-personal

power, to which I now turn. These are important to consider because aspects of personal power have an impact on power in organisational contexts or systems.

3.4.6 Personal and interpersonal power

As Lammers and Stoker (2019, p.270) propose, "positions of power can be experienced in many different ways", and it is therefore important to consider perspectives on the psychology of power here. Personal power has been described as "the ability of one person to ignore the influence of others and independently get what she wants" (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006, cited in Lammers & Stoker, 2019, p.270) whereas interpersonal power involves both "power over and freedom from others' influence and the right to decide one's own fate" (Fehr et al., 2013; Lammers, Stoker, & Stapel, 2009 cited in Sturm & Antonakis, 2015). In organisational terms it can be seen as the potential influence that one employee has over another (Treadway et al, 2013).

The work of French and Raven (1959) provides a significant contribution to the conceptualisation of personal power in the literature. They identified five types of power which were: reward power; coercive power; legitimate power; referent power and expert power. They characterise the first three types as "formal or positional power bases because they are connected to the holding of a formal position of authority, whereas expert and referent power stems from a leader's personal attribution and appearance" (Haller et al, 2018, p.4). They define reward power as that power whose basis is the ability to reward and use the example of a piece-work rate in the factory as an incentive to increase production. Coercive power is related to reward power and is a punishment if a person fails to conform to the influence attempt and is the only power base with negative influence in their model. Legitimate power is the legitimate right some people have to influence others and that their influence be accepted, such as those in leadership positions in organisations. Referent power is based on the respect and admiration an individual earns from others over time (Kovach, 2020). For instance, charismatic leaders can induce followers to do things that they would not do otherwise, and celebrities can sell products on social media by endorsing them. Expert power is based on a person's high levels of skill and an example of this is accepting an attorney's advice in legal matters (1959, pp.259 – 269). According to French and Raven (1959, p.259), "the processes of power are pervasive, complex, and often disguised in our society" and are not limited to intentional acts of the power holder (such as administering a punishment) (cited in Sturm & Antonakis, 2015, pp.141 – 142). Their typology is presented in most major textbooks in the field, and according to Mintzberg (1983) and others, is frequently used in power research. Critiques of their framework put forward by Patchen (1974) and Yukl (1981) argue that "the power bases lack conceptual consistency regarding the source or origin of influence" (cited in Hinkin and Schriesheim, 1989, p.561).

While aspects of personal and interpersonal power are connected with gender, the literature on power, it is interesting to note, had limited focus on gender outside of gender specific theories, such as Chris

Weedon's post-structuralist feminism. Amy Allen (2009, p.293), in her scholarship on gender and power, emphasises the centrality of the concept of power in feminist theorising about gender specifically, relations of power connected with gender domination and subordination. Yet, despite its significance in gender relations, Allen (2009) highlights several issues related to gender and power (2009). These include her argument that power is rarely explicitly explored by feminists; the variety of different theoretical strategies used when it is explored and a lack of agreement on the definition of power (ibid., p.293). She argues that approaches to the study of power can be described as having characteristics of 'power over', 'power to' and 'power with', which she describes as "the ability of a collectivity to act together for the attainment of a common or shared end or series of ends" (Allen, 1998, p.35).

3.4.7 Summary

In this section I have considered key features of the literature on power structures, relations and processes that inform this study. Approaches to the exploration of power proposed by Lukes (1974; 2005), Foucualt (1977; 1979; 1980), Clegg (1989; 2009) and Haugaard (2002), among others, which all emphasise the ubiquitous nature of power, albeit in slightly different ways, offer a useful way of exploring power in collaborative contexts. Lukes (1974; 2005) approach which emphasises the influence or potential of the capacity for power or 'power over' even when not overtly used, provides a useful framework from within which to explore issues regarding power in collaborative contexts. Foucault's (1980) emphasis on the presence of power dynamics in all social relations, and the links between power and knowledge and Clegg's (1989; 2009) consideration of organisational contexts and where power exists within these, also offer interesting perspectives. I have put forward theoretical approaches to the study of consensus and conflict, and resistance, and approaches to the study of personal power. So, aspects of social, organisational, and personal systems influence how power is perceived and experienced, emphasising the complex and multi-layered nature of power structures, relations, and processes. All of these perspectives provide useful lenses with which to explore power from the perspective of strategic or organisational collaboration and can contribute to a critical understanding of collaboration.

3.5 Synthesis of literature on collaboration and power

I want to now summarise the conclusions arrived at in this literature review. This chapter has set out and considered the literature on strategic collaboration alongside the literature on power. The purpose of the literature review was to deepen my understanding of the topics under consideration and provide a frame for my study methodology, and in particular my study questions. The chapter has considered each of these sets of literature separately and I want to now integrate both sets and summarise what is important from the combined sources.

The review draws attention to the varying conceptualisations of collaboration in the extensive body of knowledge on collaboration towards children's wellbeing and outcomes. Approaches broadly propose various levels of cooperation and support to address improvements in service provision and problem solve for complex or 'wicked issues'. The review shows that conceptualisations of collaboration do not, in the main, contain much about power. Where features of power are included in the collaborative literature, they are mostly associated with aspects of leadership and conflict, and risks related to tensions regarding shared power among stakeholders. Further, the collaborative literature highlights tensions related to the need for a specific approach to leadership which is facilitative, but which also avoids 'collaborative inertia', as conceptualised in the work of Huxham and Vangen (2003, 2005). In terms of conflict and risks for collaborative contexts, the review draws attention to tensions regarding power disparities among participating members and organisations along disciplinary, organisational, and cultural lines. Because of the limited theoretical focus on power structures, relations, and processes in the collaborative literature, there remains much that is yet unknown about the nature of power in collaborative contexts, or the extent to which power impacts strategic collaboration.

I then focused on the debates, preoccupations, competing positions and controversies in the discourse that have resulted from examinations of power and how it impacts many contexts. The review draws attention to the value of conceptualisations of the ubiquitous nature and impact of power, which is part of all social and organisational relations. The power literature highlights risks for collaborative processes for members who may experience 'power over' or conflict or participate in structures which may value certain types of knowledge over others. However, the literature also highlights positive aspects of the 'power to' act collectively and the productive nature of power. Among the power ideas in the literature is the concept of the circular nature of power and knowledge creation which has the potential to be significant for strategic collaborative contexts, which involve multifarious stakeholders, who bring many different types of knowledge to the table. Further, the concept of governmentality informs the linking of the work of strategic collaboration with its wider context. The concept reminds us of how professionals hold positions of power regarding the population in general, while also having their own interests and priorities, which leads to risks for the development of unwieldly and non-integrated policies and practices. Ideas connected with governmentality emphasise the many dimensions and complexities of service provision to children, young people, and families. The structures being explored in this study have responsibility for government policy regarding the health and wellbeing of their (local) populations, while being situated in and associated with wider systems which have statutory responsibilities for social services. The concept of governmentality highlights risks that CYPSC initiatives may be experienced by some members of the population as disciplinary in nature. Approaches to organisational power and flows in the literature help us to think about how levels or degrees of power are influenced by aspects of structure and organisation. They also offer a useful way with which to explore engagement and functioning when applied to strategic

collaborative contexts. Both sets of literature highlight risks for collaborative structures which may give specific powers to some which are denied to others, and risks associated with defined power positions of leadership. Aspects of the literature on personal and interpersonal power provide an important reminder regarding the role of formal or positional power versus referent or expert power. The literature on power and gender emphasises how aspects of gender impact power structures, relations, and processes in strategic collaboration, and in particular, the potential for differences in the perspectives of male and female members.

In this chapter, I have described the collaborative literature, which is in many ways under theorised in relation to power and demonstrated the theoretical aspects of the power literature, which can help us consider the nature of collaboration and strengthen our understanding of strategic collaborative processes. The historical and contemporary debates and perspectives on power presented in this literature review provide a set of themes for exploring the impact of power structures, relations, and processes in collaborative contexts. I have selected this set of linked debates or themes from several power theorists because of the clear potential they have in offering relevant approaches to drive my analysis of collaborative contexts. These were used in the design of the study and are reconnected with in the discussion in chapter seven. It is important to acknowledge here the complexity and range of the power literature, from which I have selected relevant ideas presented in this chapter. My unique contribution is in considering how the theoretical power literature can inform and influence collaborative processes. In order to understand more about collaboration, we need to understand more about power. I am therefore using the power literature as a scaffold to enhance an understanding of collaborative processes. Why is this important? It is important because CYPSCs are structures which are working towards and have responsibilities for the wellbeing of children and young people, and the understanding of aspects of power structures, relations, and processes and how these impact, can ultimately lead to better outcomes and wellbeing for children.

While the empirical exploration for this study will occur in the context of CYPSCs, the intended contribution is that learning from this study will also be applicable to other collaborative structures focused on children and young people's wellbeing. I will return to this in the discussion chapter and with the empirical findings, consider how understandings of collaborative processes may be strengthened by developing an understanding regarding the impact of power structures, relations, and processes.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Methodology is considered as both "the collection of methods or rules by which a particular piece of research is undertaken" and "the principles, theories and values that underpin a particular approach to research" (Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p.346). Having located this research in the context of policy and relevant literature in the previous two chapters, this chapter outlines the key theoretical and methodological positions in social science research relevant to the study. The chapter describes the design and implementation of the methodology to address the overarching aims and objectives of this study and is laid out as follows: the rationale, aim and objectives of this study are reiterated, which will deepen an understanding of the relationship between the research questions and the methodological approach selected; theoretical and methodological underpinnings are considered which include ontological and epistemological considerations; the study methodology and design are elucidated, including a detailed description of the data collection and analysis processes; ethical considerations and study limitations are considered; and the chapter concludes with a summary.

4.2 Background - rationale, aim, and objectives

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the overall aim of this research study is to explore the operation of power in collaborative working, within the specific context of CYPSCs. To further an understanding of the impact of power on collaborative contexts, the research objectives are:

1. To explore the operation of power in collaborative working within the specific context of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs).

2. To design a preliminary framework to support collaborative working, which reflects the operation of power, as discovered, in the study.

3. To develop recommendations for CYPSCs and other collaborative structures which will address issues of power in structured collaborative processes working towards improved outcomes for children.

4.3 Theoretical underpinnings

This study is built upon conceptual underpinnings in bodies of literature focused on collaboration and power, as discussed in detail in the last chapter. These conceptualisations helped in moving from the overall research question to the empirical work, and when engaging with the data, as reported across two findings chapters. Further, they influenced the data analysis, as they provided me with a means of

understanding the data and working through the analytical process. This is elaborated on further in this chapter. By adopting conceptual themes towards power and applying them to the strategic collaborative contexts under investigation, an understanding of the impact of power structures, relations, and processes in strategic collaboration was built.

4.4 Methodological underpinnings

The study was influenced by aspects of interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which both acknowledge the links between the investigator and participants, and the importance of the experiences of research participants. Thomas Kuhn, (1962) first used to term 'paradigm' to mean a philosophical way of thinking, and "in educational research the term 'paradigm' is used to describe a researcher's worldview" (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006 cited in Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p.26). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p.26) explain the term as "the perspective or thinking or school of thought or set of shared beliefs that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data". The term also provides an acknowledgement that all researchers approach research differently and here I will elaborate on the way in which I approached methodological aspects of this study. Guba and Lincoln (1985) proposed that the term paradigm has four elements, which include ontology, epistemology, methodology and ethical considerations. Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, which influence methodological considerations that then effect data collection choices (Cohen et al, 2007), and in this chapter I use these elements as headings to explain my research stance.

4.5 Establishing a research position/ontology

A researcher's worldview or ontology relates to assumptions made about reality or the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon under investigation (Scotland, 2012). Ontological issues invite us to consider the nature of social phenomena – are they relatively inert and beyond our influence or are they very much a product of social interaction? (Bryman, 2016, p.4). My ontology or view of reality is broadly subjective, socially constructed and contains multiple realities. This ontological position assumes that multiple and diverse interpretations of reality exist, rather than one overarching reality (Guba, 1990), and shaped my approach to the development of the research questions and design of the study. My positionality as a researcher and practitioner required incorporation of two perspectives: first the view of social constructions as those which are built up from "the perceptions and actions of social actors" (Bryman, 2016, p.28); and second, that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Due to the explorative nature of this study in which there was a need for greater understanding of the issues associated with collaboration and power relations, and my position as a researcher and practitioner, my ontological position draws on aspects of both interpretivist and constructivist

approaches. I was interested in establishing how participants interpret and construct membership and leadership of CYPSCs and in developing understandings and learning points from this exploration. My study was primarily concerned with the experiences of members and leaders of strategic collaborative contexts, and their understanding of the impact of power, influence, and conflict in these contexts.

4.6 Epistemological considerations

In research, the term 'epistemology' is used to describe the researcher's view on how we come to know something. It is concerned with the "very bases of knowledge - its nature and forms; how it can be acquired; and how it can be communicated to other human beings" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p. 27), alongside perspectives about how research should be conducted. In order to understand my own epistemological position, it is necessary for me to provide a brief history and description of the development of different approaches and their application to research topics. Three of the most common theoretical approaches or research paradigms to conducting research are positivism, interpretivism and constructionism. In this section, I describe these approaches and the rationale for adopting aspects of interpretivist and constructionist stances for this study, drawing on the framework of Guba and Lincoln (1994) and the perspectives of other theorists.

Positivist and post-positivist paradigms

Developed by Auguste Comte in the wake of the French Revolution, a positivist approach to research encouraged a scientific approach to the study of human behaviour. The approach attempts to "put the study of human social life on a scientific footing" (Benton and Craib, 2001, p.28). It further "places a premium on the early identification and development of a research question and methodology" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.368). A positivist paradigm assumes that the investigator and the investigated "object" are independent entities, and the investigator to be capable of studying the object without influencing it or being influenced by it, thus leaving values and biases aside (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.110). Using this approach, "knowledge is gathered using quantitative research techniques and knowledge generated is accepted as facts or laws" (ibid, p.113).

Greater ambiguity and flexibility are associated with post-positivist designs (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), which were developed to support inquiry in more natural settings. Post-positivist designs regard knowledge as "non-falsified hypotheses that can be regarded as probable facts or laws" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.113). Post-positivist paradigms emphasise the "value of views of those being researched, but also propose that the researchers' position is that of the "disinterested scientist" (Guba and Lincoln, pp.113 -114).

This emphasis of positivism and post positivism approaches on the objectivity of the researcher was not possible to adopt for this study. As a researcher and practitioner in a social field, I cannot observe and record as someone who has no connection with the entities being studied. This position is emphasised by Carr (2000) who indicates that very little research in the social or educational field is or can be value-free. Positivist and post-positivist designs attempt to anticipate all the problems that may arise in a research study, something which was not possible for this study, and I would argue in most researcher/practitioner contexts. Further, positivist approaches do not support a mixed methods orientation towards inquiry, but post-positivist approaches do. Using a survey is more associated with a post-positivist epistemology than interpretivist or constructivist epistemological positions, and I will discuss the use of a survey in the context of this study in Section 4.9.2.

Interpretivist paradigms

A more flexible approach to investigation is associated with interpretivist paradigms, which posit the existence of multiple realities which arise through human interaction and differing interpretations of reality (Silverman, 1998). An interpretivist paradigm acknowledges that reality is perceived by individuals as they make sense of the world, so reality is a "holistic structure that is continuously changing and more than the sum of its parts" (Darby and Fugate, 2019, p.397). The primary goal of interpretive research is "empathetic understanding to generate meaning and expand boundaries, which is more of a process than an end product" (Denzin, 1984). This approach acknowledges that phenomena are studied in a particular time and place (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Within this epistemological position, theory follows rather than precedes research and is grounded in the generated and analysed data of the research process (Bogdan and Biklen, 1997). In this study, an exclusively interpretivist approach was not possible because I wished to explore participant experiences using a particular set of theoretical literature and develop greater understanding regarding collaborative contexts. For this study, a purely interpretivist approach might have focused more on participants experiences of participation, as opposed to their perspectives on power in strategic collaboration. While positivism has been criticised for lacking the appreciation of humans' voice, interpretative methodologies are primarily criticised for lacking objectivity due to the influence of researchers' own opinions and experiences in the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Constructivist paradigms

Adopting a constructivist epistemology results in the aim of inquiry being "the understanding and reconstruction of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming towards consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve. The inquirer is cast in the role of participant and facilitator" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.113). The investigator and the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are created as the investigation proceeds. This approach sees "knowledge as created in the interaction

among investigator and participants" (ibid, p.111), an approach which is very much aligned with the position of researcher/practitioner. Using this perspective, individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and participants with the "final aim being to distil a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.111). The benefits of constructivism are the acknowledgement of the impact of values, which have pride of place; (ibid, pp.113-114) and the inquirer's stance as being that of "passionate participant" (Lincoln, 1991) actively engaged in facilitating the "multi-voice" reconstruction of his or her own construction as well as those of all other participants (cited in Guba and Lincoln, p.115). It is an approach therefore that is compatible with the researcher/practitioner positionality, which "reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study" (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.71). Limitations of a constructivist approach are primarily associated with the lack of objectivity due to the influence of researchers' own opinions and experiences in the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

My Position

The positions outlined above may be described as ideal types, and the approach of this study reaches across or into different positions. My study was primarily concerned with the perspectives of members and leaders of collaborative contexts which have as their focus wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. At the centre of the study was a diverse cohort of participants drawn from a range of different professional backgrounds and disciplines representing many organisations and agencies. Turning my thoughts to epistemology, I was aware that I would have to pay attention to my position as researcher and practitioner at all stages of the research process. For this reason, this study draws on aspects of interpretivism and constructivism. An interpretivist epistemology which acknowledges the multiple realities which arise through human interaction, is one that is closest to my worldview. Interpretivism accommodates the differing interpretations and perceptions of reality by individuals as they make sense of the world, as outlined by Darby and Fugate (2019). In this study I have sought perspectives from study participants but made my own interpretation of these perspectives and positions, while also making clear my role as practitioner and researcher. Further, an interpretivist approach acknowledges time and place, and I acknowledge that this study provides an account of participants views in a particular time and context.

However, in this exploratory study, which was seeking meaning related to the topics of collaboration and power, that meaning was influenced by my researcher and practitioner position in the structures under investigation. What this means for me, for this study, is that I am both a participant and facilitator, who is invested in the structures under scrutiny. This position results in a lean towards a constructivist epistemology which acknowledges the links between the investigator and the object of investigation. Further, a constructivist epistemology holds that multiple perspectives are needed to

respond fully to a research question, and this study sought and received responses from a variety of CYPSC stakeholders, which included membership and leadership. As the coordinator of a CYPSC structure, I am heavily invested in this initiative. At a professional and personal level, I regard it as important that this research has practice and policy significance and contributes to understanding and learning for the strategic collaborative contexts under investigation. My position may also be described as that of an 'insider' to the culture under investigation (Darwin Holmes, 2020, p.5), or a "passionate participant" (Lincoln, 1991) because I coordinate one of the collaborative structures under investigation. I will return to issues regarding positionality in Section 4.7 below.

It is important to acknowledge here that a survey methodology is more often associated with positive and post-positivist approaches than with interpretivist or constructivist stances. My rationale for carrying out a survey, which brought in some early concepts related to power, was to establish a general understanding or interpretation of power issues, which I could then probe during the interview phase of data collection. The aim of the survey therefore was to establish the features or characteristics of strategic collaboration and power because both topics are not often explored together in the literature. Further, the survey created an opportunity for CYPSC members and leaders to comment on a sensitive area, which I felt was important for those who chose not to participate in a study interview. It should be noted that originally the aspiration was for a much larger survey response rate, with an aim of 120 survey responses. Further, in terms of reporting the findings of this study, the original plan was that two findings' chapters would separately report on the quantitative findings followed by the qualitative findings. Instead, the findings are presented in an integrated fashion and with greater emphasis on the qualitative interviews. This was because the survey response rate was lower than expected. It is possible that moves towards remote and online working following the announcement of Covid 19 pandemic restrictions in Ireland in March 2020 were a factor in the response rate. Reflecting on it at the time with study supervisors, a further follow-up campaign was decided against due to the monumental changes in work life that were taking place.

4.7 Study methodology and design

This research was carried out using a mixed methods sequential design. Mixed methods research has emerged as an approach where researchers explicitly integrate quantitative and qualitative research approaches to best understand a research problem by capitalising on their complementary strengths and differences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). It is compatible with both interpretivist and constructivist epistemologies. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.17) define mixed methods research as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study". They propose that mixed methods research should be regarded as the third research paradigm and that "researchers should move beyond quantitative versus qualitative research arguments, because both

research methods are important and useful" (ibid, p. 14). Creswell et al, (2003) classified mixed methods designs into two major categories: sequential and concurrent. In sequential designs, either the qualitative or quantitative data are collected in an initial stage, followed by the collection of the other data type during the second stage. An explanatory sequential design was used in this study, which entails the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in order to elaborate or explain the quantitative findings. This approach is used when the "broad patterns of relationships uncovered through quantitative research require an explanation which the quantitative data on their own are unable to supply or when further insight into the quantitative findings is required" (Bryman, 2016, p.640). My rationale for using this approach is that I decided that quantitative data collection alone would not explain the impact of power on the workings of CYPSCs and that the use of a mixed methods approach would provide "a more complete answer to the research question" (Bryman, 2016, p.644).

4.9 Phases of data collection

4.9.1 Phase 1 Piloting data collection tools and sampling

In this section, I set out my approach to purposive sampling and recruitment of participants for the study and discuss my experiences of employing the selected methodology in the field. Purposive sampling involves identifying potential participants from within the population who are knowledgeable of or experienced with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), and is a type of non-probability technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher in identifying the sample. It supports the identification and selection of 'information-rich participants' who can be defined as: "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p.230). Three populations were sampled for this study, and I undertook a sequential sampling and recruitment process. Therefore, there are variations in the sampling methods that I employed across participant populations. Participants in the pilot study were selected because of their membership of the two CYPSC I was most familiar with, and where I had existing relationships with the CYPSC membership. The reason for including these participants in the pilot study only was agreed with study supervisors to ensure objectivity in relation to the study findings. After the pilot study was completed, CYPSC members and leaders were invited to participate in a population survey of CYPSCs in Ireland. Therefore, the overall sampling method for the study is combination or mixed purposive sampling. This method employs a combination of two or more purposive sampling techniques, allows for triangulation of data, has flexibility, and meets multiple interests and needs (Patton, 2002).

Phase one of the data gathering for this research involved the development and piloting of a survey instrument which was distributed electronically to CYPSC membership in Galway and Roscommon. This instrument was designed using the online Survey Monkey format and included a selection of

open and closed questions, focusing on questions of membership, motivation to attend, influence on CYPSC work, power sharing, disagreements, and the role of chairpersons and coordinators in the process. The survey requested job description details to ensure that responses were received from a variety of participants working in disciplines or agencies. The pilot survey was administered to members of Galway and Roscommon CYPSCs in October 2019, with two follow up reminders issued. Potential participants were provided with the pilot information pack and pilot consent form (see Appendices 1 & 2). Overall, the pilot survey was issued to thirty-six members and responses received from seventeen of these, giving a response rate of 47%. This is a positive response rate which is within the high normal range for a study. Of those who participated in the survey, thirteen agreed to a follow-up telephone interview, which reflects a high response rate of 76%.

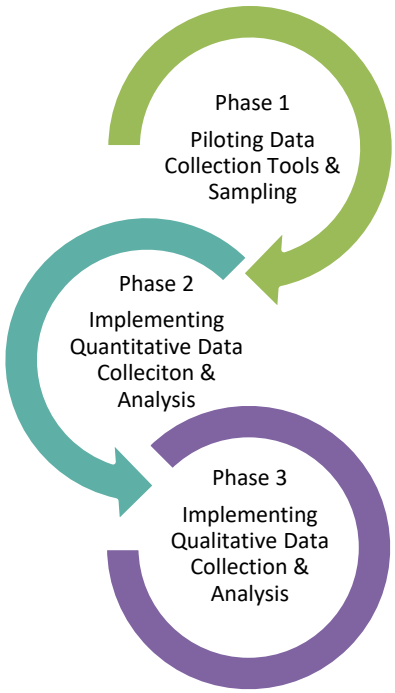
The rationale for the pilot was to establish if the questionnaire was fit for purpose and if participants found it easy to follow and respond to. I provided participants with the opportunity to make any observations in relation to the questions and suggest improvements which I could make to the final survey instrument. I inputted the data from this aspect of the study into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To ensure anonymity, I allocated participants with an identification number that only I had direct access to. After analysis of and reflection on the pilot survey data, I made the following amendments to the final survey instrument to:

- capture frequency of attendance at meetings, to ensure that feedback was based on experience of attending and being involved in meetings,
- ensure that questions were not leading in their nature,
- establish the opinion of the influence of the chairpersons and coordinators following feedback that their roles are regarded as being very powerful,
- provide clarity regarding the content of a capacity building session[14] on power. A number of participants stated that they were 'unsure' of this question, possibly because it lacked clarity in relation to the proposed content of such a session.

I invited participants in the pilot survey to provide contact information if they were willing to participate in phase two of the pilot, which was the qualitative component of the pilot. The phases of data collection are presented in Figure 4 overleaf:

[14] One of the anticipated outputs for practice from this study is a capacity building session for CYPSC members and leaders on the topic of collaboration and power. Views were sought regarding suggested content for this session from study participants.

Figure 4 Phases of Data Collection



4.9.2 Phase 2 Quantitative data collection

I used quantitative data collection tools in the form of a survey in this exploratory study to establish initial views on opinions, attitudes, and experiences from CYPSC members and leaders in Ireland. It is important here to acknowledge there were several potential challenges for this study, which were considered during this phase. The study of power with higher level managers may be regarded as a sensitive topic involving an over-studied population, who receive frequent requests to participate in research and who have low response rates to survey requests (Baruch and Holten, 2008). For this reason, the final version of the survey was succinct and informed by learning from the pilot.

The chosen method of administration was the online Survey Monkey platform. This provided me with a way to engage a geographically dispersed survey population. I designed an accompanying email and consent form to support survey participation (see Appendices 4, 5 and 6). As in the pilot survey, I included a selection of open and closed questions to establish a profile of the survey sample, focusing on membership, motivation to attend, influence, power, and conflict as they related to participants membership of CYPSCs. Preparation for the distribution of the final survey instrument took place in December 2019. I presented details of the study at a meeting of my colleagues in Ireland, including the National Coordinator for CYPSC, also in December 2019. In a PowerPoint presentation I outlined the research question, objectives and methodology, the survey topics, and what was required of

CYPSC co-ordinators to support the study. My colleagues agreed to support a population survey of CYPSC membership in Ireland by circulating study details to their local CYPSC committee members and leaders. I circulated the study information pack and survey link, via email, to twenty-five CYPSC coordinators in January 2020 with a reminder issued two weeks later. By March 2020 thirty-five responses had been received and I undertook a personal email and follow-up telephone campaign with CYPSC coordinators to boost responses. This was completed at the end of March 2020 and resulted in seventy complete responses being received. This process is presented in timeline format in Figure 5 below:

Figure 5 Timeline of Quantitative Data Collection Process

Analysis of the data was facilitated by the migration of data to the SPSS software package. I undertook basic statistical analyses which included frequency analysis and comparison analysis using Chi-square tests. Responses were analysed by agency, gender, and length of CYPSC membership to establish a profile of participants. Data on attendance and motivation to attend CYPSC meetings was analysed. I also analysed responses to consider participants perspectives on the level of influence they felt they had on the CYPSC agenda and decision-making processes. Perspectives on power-sharing, conflict and CYPSC leadership were analysed. I analysed relationships between variables to establish similarities and differences among different categories of participants. For example, I considered comparisons between statutory and C&V membership which related to decision-making, power sharing and conflict. Analysis of the qualitative survey data was combined with the analysis of the qualitative interview data under the themes which emerged from the thematic analysis of the qualitative data, which is discussed in Section 4.9.3 below. I report on both data sets together across a range of themes in chapters five and six.

Participants in the survey self-selected for participation in a telephone interview related to the study topic. Of the seventy responses to the survey, twelve participants indicated that they did not wish to participate in a follow-up interview, meaning that 83 % of survey participants agreed to interview.

4.9.3 Phase 3 Qualitative data collection

Qualitative research is associated with research which takes place in natural settings and is most likely to involve small numbers of people or situations (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Its focus is on developing meaning and understanding, usually within a specific context. In this exploratory study, I wished to build on the results of the quantitative data analysis by explaining them in more detail using qualitative research. I decided that a telephone interview methodology was one which would facilitate

participation in the study by a geographically dispersed population. A number of researchers highlight the advantages of telephone interviews, including Stephens (2007). He found telephone interviewing to be a productive and valid methodological tool, which reduced concern about low response rates because of an increased availability of potential participants which telephone-interviewing offered for geographically dispersed samples. In their research, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) resorted to telephone interviews to increase response rates during their research on correctional officers and visitors to county jails. Their comparison of the interview's transcripts revealed no significant differences between face-to-face and telephone interview data (2004, p.108). Telephone interviews were regarded by Holt (2010, p.114) as useful in dealing with some of the inherent difficulties of doing sensitive research with hard-to-reach populations.

Findings from the pilot and survey instruments which pointed to views of the powerful position of CYPSC coordinators were considered in the interview instrument design. I designed the interview schedule to start with some reflective questions regarding the benefits and challenges of collaborative working to settle participants into the interview and used open ended questions to encourage participants to feel able to talk and contribute in an honest way.

Semi-structured interviews are defined by Bryman (2016, p.201) as "a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview guide but is able to vary the sequence of questions". I designed and piloted the semi-structured interview schedule for this study following the analysis of quantitative data and aimed to provide participants with an opportunity to expand and elaborate on survey responses. For example, survey responses provided important information on emergent and unexpected themes, such as views of CYPSC coordinators having powerful roles, and these perspectives were further explored in the interview component of the research. Three pilot interviews were carried out in July 2020 with members of Roscommon and Galway CYPSCs, who had indicated in the pilot survey that they were happy to participate in pilot interviews. I transcribed and analysed these in August 2020. Changes were made to the final research instrument based on emerging themes and recommendations from participants. One of the significant recommendations from the pilot interview phase was that the receipt in advance of the questions would assist participants with interview preparation. As a result, I ensured that all participants in telephone interviews received the interview schedule in advance of their interview (see Appendix 10).

I carried out purposive sampling to ensure that telephone interviews were held with a mix of representation from both the statutory and voluntary sectors, from a geographical perspective and from a professional perspective. I also considered having a gender balance in the qualitative sample. Invitations to participate in the interview aspect of the research were issued in October and November 2020 via email (see Appendix 7). I assured participants that their anonymity would be protected, and that I would be the only person who would have direct access to their data. To support the interview

schedule, I developed a prompt sheet which was used if certain topics did not naturally emerge (see Appendix 11).

Twenty-two participants agreed to participate in the interview phase of this study and interviews started in October 2020. I recorded telephone interviews using a telephone recording devise. I transcribed and analysed interview data using a thematic analysis approach, (Braun et al, 2019). I utilised the NVivo software package to manage the data.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.18) suggest that we create our world with words, and thus, in qualitative data analysis and presentation "the task of the researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect". I adopted the data analysis methodology of reflexive thematic analysis, as first proposed by Braun and Clarke in 2006 and updated in 2019 and 2020. In most recent versions of their model, Braun and Clarke (2020, p.3) conceptualise the approach, such as used in this study, as reflexive thematic analysis (TA), which emphasises the "importance of the researcher's subjectivity as analytic resource, and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation". They also emphasise the importance of researchers "acknowledging and specifying their particular orientation to TA" (ibid, p.6).

I selected the reflexive thematic analysis model because it offers a clear and systematic framework for undertaking thematic analysis, which is not related to one single epistemological stance, and is compatible with interpretivist and constructivist stances. It also provides a structured method to analyse and synthesise a large amount of data, through either an inductive or deductive data analysis process. Using this approach, the researcher does not apply a hypothesis to the data to be tested, but instead approaches the data with open-minded curiosity, akin to going on a mystery tour with the data. Thus, an inductive approach was used, where the researcher "starts the analytic process from the data, working "bottom-up" to identify meaning without importing ideas" (Braun et al, 2019, p.853), while all the time, considering the research questions. This approach allows for unpredicted participant perspectives and provides a way of avoiding or negating biases. In this way, I hoped to avoid or negate biases or assumptions from the literature or the researcher's own opinions or beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this way, I became a storyteller, who became "immersed in the data and who actively engages in interpreting the data through the lens of their own cultural membership and social positionings" (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p.848).

The rationale for using an inductive approach to the development of research themes is that this is the first exploration of the impact of power on CYPSC processes in Ireland, and as such it could not be informed by previous findings from similar studies. Research outcomes from studies using this approach are not typically broad generalisations but contextual findings, which are transferable from context to context rather than generalisable.

Following the exploratory phase, the next step is to break down the data into discrete 'incidents' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or 'units of meaning' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) and to move on to coding them into categories. Categories arising from this stage generally take two forms: those that are derived from the participants' customs and language, and those that the researcher identifies as significant to the project's focus-of-inquiry. The goal of the former "is to reconstruct the categories used by participants to conceptualise their own experiences and world view" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.334). In this study, these categories are found in chapter five, which details the meaning of participation in CYPSCs for study participants. These categories are then developed into themes that illuminate the social processes under study, thus "the process stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp.334-341). Understanding of the themes and the relationships between them are developed and refined over the course of the analytical process as explained in more detail below. To support this approach, I used a qualitative data analysis software package, which I will now describe before detailing the phases of reflexive TA of this study.

Using Qualitative Data Analysis Software

I selected the NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software package to support the analysis of the large amount of interview data gathered and because it fits appropriately with a reflexive thematic analysis methodology (Brooks et al, 2015). It also provides the capacity to "code and categorise various data formats" (Feng and Beher-Horenstein, 2019, p.564), search for patterns, and develop codebooks and mind maps, to reflect all stages of analysis. In this study, I allocated each interview participant a category, based on whether they were from statutory or C&V organisations, and whether they were members or leaders of the strategic collaborative contexts under exploration. It is important to emphasise that in using a qualitative data analysis software tool, the researcher uses the computer as a data management tool and aid to analysis, and not as a tool which in and of itself conducts analysis and draws conclusions. The use of NVivo software supports the researcher in the analysis phase while also supporting research transparency, as clear and transparent records of the various phases and processes are created. Lists of codes and themes can be produced at the end of each phase, in the form of a codebook, which would be a challenge if manual mapping of this complicated process was used.

Phases of the Analytical Process

I conducted analysis of the qualitative data across six phases as defined by Braun and Clarke, 2020. These are namely: data familiarisation; systematic data coding; generating initial themes; developing and reviewing themes; refining, defining, and naming themes and writing the report. All phases were characterised by a reflexive process that was deepened by my increasing depth of knowledge throughout the analysis process (Finlay, 2003), and are described and explained in this section. As part of this processes, I used the emerging thematic framework as a way to review and engage with

earlier data collected from the survey, in particular the open-ended or qualitative survey data. I reflected on incorporating both sets of qualitative data under the themes developed during this phase of the project. In this way, I started to consider the amalgamation of the three data sets, namely quantitative survey data, qualitative survey data and qualitative interview data and how these would be presented in the final write up of the findings.

Phase 1: Data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes

I began this phase by listening to interview recordings and moved on to the transcription of audio recordings, which started immediately after the first interview. I transcribed all interview recordings, aiding with the "familiarisation with the data and assisting the researcher to become immersed in the data" (Braun, Clarke et al, 2019, p.852). When all interviews were transcribed, I printed them out in hard copy, and using a highlighter, began to identify potential codes. I noted these in the margins. I then started to compile my database in NVivo by importing all transcriptions and categorising each transcription into certain headings or cases. For example, I categorised transcriptions depending on whether they came from members, coordinators, or chairpersons of the structures under investigation.

Phase 2: Systematic data coding (open coding)

This phase started with the further categorisation of transcriptions according to whether responses were from statutory or community and voluntary (C&V) CYPSC members or leaders. This was followed by the creation of initial codes, or nodes in NVivo language. A code refers to a broad descriptive category or to a more interpretative or analytical concept (Richards, 2009), and at this stage codes are open or free, in that they are "non-hierarchical and not bound by the research question" (Bonello and Meehan, 2019, p.488). Codes can evolve throughout the coding process and an "initial code might be "split" into two or more different codes, renamed or combined with other codes" (Braun et al, 2019, p.848). The aim is to provide a "coherent and compelling interpretation of the data, grounded in the data" (ibid, p.848).

This stage involved the identification of topics and factors revealed in participants narratives, which I interpreted. The development of codes involves focusing on deconstructing data from original transcripts and coding it under particular headings. For example, all codes relating to 'influence' were noted, ranging from the influence of larger organisations to the influence of subgroups. From this, a list of factors related to 'influence' was created. A list of codes on all topics and factors identified during the process was developed in this phase, which was exported from NVivo in the format of a codebook. The codebook related to Phase 2 consisted of pages of nodes in alphabetical order, which were not categorised under headings at this stage. It is presented in Appendix 12. I considered this with study supervisors in advance of the next stage of the process.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes from coded and collated data (developing categories)

Phase three of this process starts when the researcher is ready to generate initial themes from coded and collated data. Themes in reflexive TA are patterns of shared meaning, united by a central concept or idea, and are multifaceted (Braun et al, 2014). Braun and Clarke think of themes as stories – "stories we tell about our data" (Braun and Clarke, 2020, p.14). Themes are regarded as reflecting a pattern of shared meaning, organised around a core concept or idea (Braun et al, 2014), which "capture the essence and spread of meaning". They therefore unite "data that might otherwise appear disparate", (Braun et al, 2019, p.845), and are built from smaller meaning units called codes. Braun et al further explain that "good themes are those that tell a coherent, insightful story about the data in relation to the research question" (ibid, p.854).

This phase involved re-ordering codes identified and coded into categories of codes by grouping related codes under these categories and organising them into coherent clusters of meaning that tell a story about a particular aspect of the dataset (Braun, Clarke et al, 2019, p.855). Categories could be described as a halfway house between organising initial codes into logical groups and generating themes. For example, a theme called 'power' was created and under it all the references to power were placed as subthemes, such as power and the agenda, power and decision making and power and subgroups. This phase also included the merging and renaming of data. For example, one participant's coded reference to CYPSC assisting in identifying emerging needs was merged with five other coded references to identifying geographical gaps. This subtheme was then placed under of theme of 'benefits' in this stage.

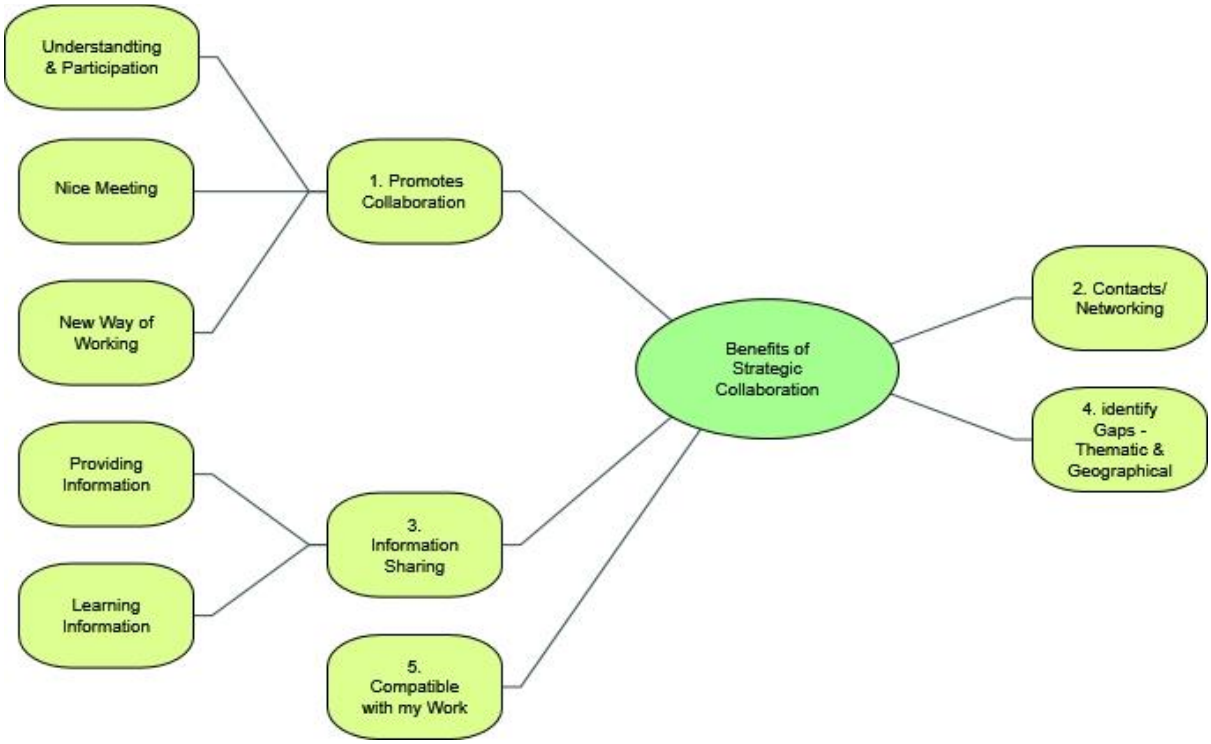
I considered frequency of coding when creating themes, but frequency was not of vital importance, as a single occurrence of data could be as useful as many when investigating an underexplored area. This is because qualitative research is concerned with meaning, as opposed to making generalised statements (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). At this stage, some nodes which were only mentioned once were deleted or inserted into a miscellaneous folder. An example of data which was transferred into the miscellaneous folder includes references to national CYPSC structures, including the National CYPSC Steering Group. This structure was not under investigation here, as the focus was on individual CYPSCs.

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes (coding on)

This phase involves the breaking down of restructured categories into sub-categories to offer more in-depth understanding of the data under scrutiny and to consider divergent views, attitudes, and beliefs. It is concerned with "compiling all coded data for each of the candidate themes and reviewing them to ensure that the data relate to a central organising concept" (Braun, Clarke et al, 2019, p.855).

During phase four, I developed themes which I then refined. Quotes were reviewed to ensure they related specifically to the theme under consideration, and those which did not were re-coded. Thematic maps of the different themes and subthemes which I identified were created and arranged in hierarchies, based on the frequency of the theme or subtheme. An example of this is, if promoting collaboration was the most mentioned benefit of CYPSC structures, that became the first subtheme under 'benefits'. However, as noted in phase three, significant information not mentioned frequently was also retained. These were reviewed in advance of phase five. An example of an initial thematic map is provided in Figure 6 below, to explain the processes involved in developing a theme regarding the benefits of strategic collaboration. One of the most frequent benefits mentioned by study participants is the fact that participating in these strategic structures promoted opportunities for collaboration, so this became the first subheading under this theme, at this stage. Under this subtheme, participants referred to opportunities provided to increase their understanding of services and structures, that CYPSC meetings were 'nice meetings' to participate in and that strategic collaboration provided an opportunity for new ways of working. These topics became subthemes of the subtheme of promoting collaboration, and so on.

Figure 6 Sample of an Initial Thematic Map



Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes (developing a thematic framework)

This analytical step is characterised by the consolidation of codes and themes from all the earlier phases, which are influenced by both their relevance to the research question and issues emerging in the literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I renamed codes and themes or consolidated them to reflect

more conceptual underpinnings, as opposed to initial naming which reflected participants' use of terminology. An example of this is the subtheme of 'promotes collaboration' under the benefits of strategic collaboration became the subtheme of 'creating a platform and capacity' for collaborative working at local level. During this phase I developed a narrative account of the themes, which provided a detailed in-depth description of the findings, supported by indicative quotes from participants. I reviewed the narrative presenting the main points to ensure it reflected the quotes provided. Where appropriate, I reduced longer quotes to ensure that they accurately supported each theme. This process led to the generation of five broad themes, which ran across the entire data set and were: benefits of collaborative working, challenges of collaborative working, and the impact of power on collaborative working, and influence and conflict in collaborative contexts. At the end of this phase, I had an in-depth understanding of the central organising concept, its subthemes, and its overlap with other themes. These themes reflected and captured what was "meaningful about the data, related to the research question" while also "answering the research question well" (Braun, Clarke et al, 2019, p.857).

Phase 6: Writing the Report (analysis and write up)

This phase involves presenting the data under relevant themes in a report format but is also characterised by continuing analysis and review. Under each theme and subtheme, I presented individual data extracts which illustrate dimensions and perspectives of study participants. It is therefore a circular, as opposed to linear process, and is a further stage in conceptualisation (Braun and Clarke, 2020). I organised the broad themes from the data analysis across two findings chapters. During this phase I realised that it was not possible to report findings under the 'benefits' and 'challenges' headings, as there was some overlap related to participants perspectives. This is an example of the continued conceptualisation and reflection that is part of this phase. Instead, I reported perspectives on collaborative working, which I characterised as the 'tip of the iceberg' or those visible aspects of collaborative working in chapter five. The second findings chapter details participants' perspectives on the impact of power, influence, and conflict on CYPSCs. Quantitative findings are reported on first, followed by supporting qualitative survey and interview findings, which provided deeper insight into each theme. For the convenience of the reader, I categorised findings arising from the analysis of survey data as 'Survey', allocated a number, and distinguished as either statutory or community and voluntary (C&V) responses. The distinction between statutory and C&V responses is made to provide the reader with a context for the comment, and not to provide a direct comparison between statutory and C&V agencies. An example of this as it appears in the text is "Survey 10 Statutory". Identifiers of the interview participants follow a similar pattern. I decided on this method as a way of preserving anonymity of participants. There was a risk that identifying participants by job description and region would make them easily identifiable and reassurance by the researcher that participants would not be identifiable was important to participants. This phase was also characterised

by continuing analysis to ensure a coherent picture was painted for the reader, through the amalgamation of a large body of both quantitative and qualitative data. This will also be further discussed in the Section 4.9, which is concerned with the topic of ethical considerations.

Benefits and limitations of Thematic Analysis approach

The approach to TA outlined in Section 4.9.3 provides a clear systematic way to analyse and synthesise a large amount of data, through either an inductive or deductive approach. It also has the advantage of being a flexible method, enabling the researcher to establish patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these to address the research question. It assists in interpreting and making sense of the data from phase one, which is early impressions to phase four, which involves ensuring that the data supports the theme. As an early career researcher, combining the revised reflective analysis approach of Braun and Clarke (2020) with the NVivo software package provided me with a structured but flexible way to reflect on a large amount of data. It allowed for the immersion of the researcher in the data, while also providing a coherent picture of the analysis process. An often-cited criticism of qualitative research is that the researchers' personal viewpoints may unduly impact the ways in which they analyse data (Castellen, 2018; Creswell, 2012). For this study, this was counteracted by careful reflection and discussion with study supervisors at all stages of the analysis process. The advantage of using the approach to TA reflected above ensures a transparent record of each stage exists for readers.

4.9 Ethical considerations

This section considers aspects of ethics, as they relate to this study. In it, I set out the ethical issues which arose during my study, and ethics application processes.

Principles of Ethical Research and their application to this study

Any research involving human subjects needs to be carried out to the highest ethical standards, and these standards need to address the many complexities that may arise during a research project. A number of historical factors influence current emphasis on carrying out social research in an ethical fashion. The Nuremburg Code (1949) and the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) both provide the foundation for international ethical standards for protecting human subjects in research (Wang and Huch, 2000). Ethics in social science research is about addressing crucial issues of respect for all those involved in research, upholding their rights, and ensuring their protection. Social science research is characterised by many complexities because it concerns the "study of human beings by human beings, where the circumstances of research, the background of the participants, the kind of study, the issue being researched, the value system of the participants and that of the researchers themselves" (Barai et al, 2001, p.196) hold sway. This section will continue with an exploration of their relevance for this study, under various headings.

Autonomy and Consent. The principle of autonomy implies that research should never be carried out 'on' people but always 'with' people (Hammersley and Traianou, 2014, p.227). Connected with this is the importance of treating research participants with respect. Barrow et al., (2020) outline a number of principals related to consideration of autonomy for research participants. They advise that to demonstrate that the principle of respect is upheld, researchers must ensure they are protective of participants while being respectful of participants' autonomy. Barrow et al (ibid.) further advise that participants must have the ability to ask the researcher questions and the ability to comprehend questions asked by the researcher. They emphasise that researchers must inform participants that they may stop participating in the study at any time without fear of penalty. Finally, Barrow et al (ibid.) emphasise the responsibility researchers have to ensure that they fully disclose all the factors involved in the study, including any potential risks and benefits that may arise for participants.

Connected with the principle of autonomy is the principle of consent. The provision of informed consent ensures that participants have the capacity to withdraw as well as participate, which is essential for the respect of participant autonomy (Cuskelly, 2005). In the research ethics literature, four principles underpin how the researcher navigates consent. These principles require:

(i) informed consent to be active, involving verbal or written agreement from the participant

(ii) consent must be voluntarily given

(iii) consent must be based on the provision of information so that the participant understands the research

(iv) consent must be renegotiable so that participants can withdraw from the study at any stage of the process (Gallagher, 2009).

Participants in this study were given clear information about its nature and purpose and what was expected of them in the Study Information Pack (see Appendix 3). This pack provided potential participants with information on the aims, methods, and potential outcomes and encouraged participants to pose questions seeking clarity on any matter. Study information was clear that non-participation in the research would not have an impact on CYPSC membership. In this study, I sought the informed written consent of all participants, who were advised that they could cease participating if they wished to do so at any stage (see Appendix 4).

Doing Good and Minimising the risk of Harm. A further ethical concern is the extent to which a research project can 'do good' and benefit participants and wider society. The research ethics literature highlights a risk that a perception of personal benefits can undermine a research project if participants respond in a manner which they think will please the researcher, rather than expressing honestly their perspectives (Patton, 2002). This was a particular risk for this study, which was being

carried out by a practitioner and researcher who coordinated one of the structures under investigation, and who could therefore be regarded as a powerful stakeholder by some participants.

To counteract this risk for this study, I made no offer of inducements for participation. I advised participants that their participation in the study would potentially benefit their respective sectors and areas of practice by adding to the knowledge base on strategic collaboration. I further advised that by the development of preliminary framework and policy recommendations to inform strategic collaborative practice, future benefits for participants were possible.

From the perspective of minimising the risk of harm, it was not anticipated that there would be any serious adverse risk or harm to participants, who were all adults and not considered members of vulnerable populations. However, in the context of my dual roles of researcher and practitioner, the management of roles and boundaries and the potential for role conflict becomes a prominent ethical issue (Tickle, 2001). I was very aware of this likely conflict and provided clear advice on the separation of both roles in the study information pack (see Appendix 3). This aspect of the researcher/practitioner position was also constantly reflected upon in my reflective journals and in supervision sessions with study supervisors.

Another risk for this research was that the target population of senior managers, who are CYPSC members, are a population who are often requested to participate in research, and for whom CYPSC membership is a small aspect of a broad brief. To encourage participation, immediate and long-term benefits needed to be clear to participants. These were articulated as the immediate benefit in allowing participants an opportunity for reflection on their CYPSC membership, and the long-term benefit to potentially improve the operation of these strategic collaborative structures with the learning garnered. Also, learning from this study has the potential to be applicable for other collaborative structures. Wang and Huch (2000) highlight that there are times when a direct benefit for an individual participant does not accrue from proposed research. The author anticipates that it is likely that CYPSC members and leaders in the future will benefit more from the knowledge generated from the study than members and leaders who participate in this study. Wang and Huch (2000) also highlight the importance of "all potential participants needing to be included unless there are very specific reasons for eliminating some" (ibid, p.295). To this end, all CYPSC membership and leadership in Ireland were given an opportunity to participate in this research.

I needed to consider the risk of treating participants who come from the agency I am employed by or who had the same professional identity more favourably to other participants. This risk was mitigated with clear survey (see Appendix 6) and interview guidance (see Appendix 10) and discussed on an ongoing basis in study supervision sessions.

Confidentiality and Data Management. Respecting the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants in research is a crucial ethical standard. The researcher must assure participants that their anonymity is respected, and that they are not identifiable in the research report or the dissemination of findings. Participants in this study were assured of their anonymity in a number of ways. I informed them in the study information pack (see Appendix 3) that I would be the only person who had direct access to the data and that any identifying features provided in questionnaires or interviews would be removed in the analysis and reporting of the data. To assist with this, participants were allocated numbers and codes in data analysis and reporting. Also, I provided feedback to interview participants regarding the quotes from their interview transcriptions which would be published in my thesis. In doing so, I assured participants that their quotes were anonymous from my perspective but gave them an option of also reviewing them. A sample of this feedback is provided in Appendix 15. To further protect confidentiality, all quantitative and qualitative data was stored and analysed on a password protected computer on drives that only I, as the researcher, had access to. Printed transcriptions were kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Benefit for participants. Very little, if any, research has been undertaken into CYPSC structures since they were piloted in four areas in Ireland in 2007 and this research will add to the body of knowledge on collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people. Participation in this study provided an immediate benefit to participants in offering them an opportunity to reflect on their CYPSC membership and leadership. It is likely that future membership and leadership will benefit from the learning and preliminary framework associated with this research.

Ethics application processes

Prior to any data collection, and because of my position as researcher and practitioner, the University of Galway, and my employer Tusla required that I submit ethical applications for assessment to ensure that they met with ethical standards for the conduct of research. University of Galway required an application for ethical approval to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the university, and Tusla required an assessment by the Ethics Review Committee (ERC). Both assessment processes involved scrutiny of my intended study, a review of the research questions and objectives, the study design, study instruments, and the potential risks and benefits of the research project to participants. Ethical approval was granted in the first instance by the REC of University of Galway, and subsequently by Tusla's ERC. The feedback I received from the ERC included a number of suggestions relating to seeking national approval for my study from structures within Tusla, and also seeking the inclusion of chairpersons and coordinators as possible research participants. Because of their positions of power, I had omitted them from my original design, but following this recommendation, they were included. It also recommended the development of specific pilot information (see Appendices 1 and 2).

Applying for and receiving ethical approval from two institutions allowed me to consider all the ethical issues arising in the research. However, both processes had different requirements and recommendations, which was challenging from a practitioner/researcher perspective. The study shows the complex inter-play of power relations in doing this study. This included attention to the power and decision making of those involved in the organisational REC and balancing autonomy of the research and gatekeeping.

4.10 Impact of Corona Virus - Covid 19 pandemic on study

On 12th March 2020, Leo Varadkar, Taoiseach of Ireland, announced a country-wide lockdown as a response to the Corona Virus Covid 19 pandemic, which resulted in all early year's education settings, schools and colleges closing alongside the implementation of redeployment of staff and remote working measures.

Overall, because my data collection was based on survey and telephone interview methods, and had therefore no face-to-face interactions, data collection was not significantly impacted by pandemic restrictions. However, I was undertaking recruitment for the quantitative phase of this study at the beginning of these public health restrictions and found myself engaging with potential participants who were undergoing significant changes to their work practices. These restrictions may have had an impact on survey participation but given the stressful context of the work environment for potential participants, a decision was made with study supervisors that further efforts to get more survey responses would not be made. It is possible however, that participation in the qualitative phase of the research was aided by public health restrictions, as participants continued to work remotely while interviews were taking place. I considered changing the qualitative methods from telephone interviews to Microsoft Teams or Zoom interviews, as potential participants became used to new technologies. However, because the study information specified telephone interviews, and because the pilot phase of telephone interviews was well received, I decided to continue with the original telephone interview plan.

4.11 Limitations of the study

I identified my positionality as a practitioner and researcher as both a strength and a limitation for this study, and will return to this topic in my concluding chapter. My position as researcher and practitioner is characterised in the literature as 'research in practice', which sees the process of evidence generation and professional practice as intimately involved (Steen et al, 2018) or 'researcher in the middle' (Breen, 2007, p.165). This position offers many advantages to the researcher. For my study it is evidenced in the strong support I received from CYPSC colleagues in relation to the distribution of information on the study and participation. This may not have been possible for an outsider reseracher but not to the same extent. However, I was also conscious of a number of

disadvantages related to my positon.

Firstly, it is possible that participants may have felt that they could be more honest with an outsider researcher. I was conscious of my dual positions as researcher and CYPSC coordinator, when asking questions regarding views in relation to the positions of power coordinators had. I expressed these dual positions clearly in the Research Information Pack (Appendix 3) and verbally to each interview participant. I acknowledged that my role as practitioner researcher may lead to some hesitancy but reassured participants that for the purposes of their participation, I was conducting an academic inquiry and not engaging with them as a practitioner.

Secondly, there was a risk that I would over-identify with my colleagues who particiated in the study. However, this was countered by recording in my reflective journal, where I was able to "critically reflect on the responsibilities of both myself and others" (Bos, 2020, p.18). As a reseracher and practitioner, it was important to record my reflections on the interchangeability of both roles so as to ensure a robust research process, and throughout this study it was an on-going challenge to maintain clarity on roles.

Thirdly, there was a risk of a perception of bias on my behalf, as I was professionally integrated into the processes under exploration and had an interest in positive conclusions arising from the collaborative processes being explored. Again, the risk of this was mitigated by the presentation of clear information in the study information pack.

Finally, another limitation of the practitioner researcher role related to my aspiration to produce useful policy and practice information for my CYPSC colleagues, membership, and leadership as an acknowledgement for the support I received from them, but this was not a core purpose of the research study. This was a point that study supervisors had to remind me of, and I was conscious of retaining a constant focus on theoretical and conceptual objectives.

Overall, I argue that these risks were mitigated through the semi-structured interview format which was welcomed by participants as an opportunity to reflect on their CYPSC membership and leadership with an experienced practitioner. Also, I offered participants an opportunity to stop the interview at any stage.

Possible limitations to survey-based research are highlighted in the literature. In their study of questionnaire-based articles, Baruch (1999) and Baruch and Holten (2008) found an average response rate of 56%, with senior managers tending to produce a poorer response. This was an anticipated challenge for this study. Senior managers are a population that are frequently surveyed and are likely to suffer from survey fatigue. Being a member of a CYPSC for them, in the main, is one small part of a very wide range of their responsibilities. To mitigate against this potential limitation, a focused

survey was designed and administered via Survey Monkey, and two reminder emails were issued. The support of my colleagues in the distribution and participation in the survey was probably a significant factor in receiving responses from all CYPSCs invited to participate. It is likely that the relatively high number of survey participants who were willing to also participate in the qualitative aspect of the research (83%), reflects a study population which has a significant commitment to CYPSC. It might be assumed that those who did engage were most committed to the CYPSC initiative and findings may not be generalizable to the full population of senior managers involved in CYPSCs. It was not possible to consider if factors relating to power play a part for those who do not attend CYPSCs or did not participate in the research. It is also important to note the limit that this research did not specifically focus on gender dimensions, but these did arise, as discussed, in the research.

All aspects of the study limitations were carefully considered with study supervisors and I will return to reflections on this topic in my concluding chapter.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has set out my methodological approach to my study. The chapter opened with an outline of my research question and supporting objectives, which was followed by a discussion on the key issues in relation to the ontological and epistemological considerations underpinning the research design. This study was concerned with an exploration of power structures, relations, and processes within the specific context of CYPSCs. Employing a mixed methods sequential approach, I designed survey and semi-structured interview schedules, which were influenced by aspects of both interpretivist and constructivist methodologies. I reflected on the steps I took to ensure that participants identities were protected. I utilised figures and a thematic map to illustrate the research process as it unfolded along its various stages and presented an outline of the different phases of my thematic data analysis process**.** In setting out my analysis process, I indicated the influence of theory to the overall research project, including the research question and objectives and research design in addition to data analysis. I also referred in the chapter to several appendices which provide further information and clarity on actions taken and decisions made during the research process. I set out a consideration of the ethical issues encountered in this project alongside an acknowledgement of study limitations.

In the following two chapters, I set out my findings arising from the analysis of data collected during the data collection processes.

Chapter 5 The tip of the iceberg - Perspectives on Strategic Collaboration

5.1 Introduction

The next two chapters present findings arrived at from the data analysis processes undertaken. To begin, this chapter provides a profile of the participants and focuses on participants' experiences of involvement in CYPSC, using a number of overarching themes to conceptualise what membership of CYPSC is like for study participants. The purpose of this chapter is to report on findings related to the nature of collaboration. These findings inform the more detailed consideration of power within a collaborative structure set out in chapter six by providing insights into the core features of collaboration, perceived benefits, and limitations that exist in the CYPSC structure. In doing so, key aspects of the operation of CYPSCs are presented. While the findings in this chapter are not about 'power' specifically, many power processes relating to networks, structures and relationships are articulated. Further, these findings on collaboration provide a basis to critically understand and evaluate the impact of power on these structures in more depth in chapter six. Commentary on the findings in this chapter identify themes specific to power that are developed further in chapter six. I describe the themes set out in this chapter as the 'tip of the iceberg' – the visible aspects of strategic collaborative processes, and the themes of the next chapter as those which 'lie beneath the surface' for this reason.

As discussed in chapter four, to maximise the use of the mixed methods approach, the three data sets from the research are reported on across both findings' chapters. These are: quantitative survey data, qualitative survey data and qualitative interview data. While my key data set was the qualitative interview data, the quantitative and qualitative survey data provided important information on emergent themes. Under each subtheme, relevant quotes are presented in quotation marks and italics. Short quotes are presented in the text and those longer than three lines are presented on a separate line and indented. Quotations from surveys are categorised as Survey, allocated a number and a descriptor in terms of statutory or C&V members, coordinators or chairpersons, for example (Survey 70 Coordinator). Quotes from interviews follow the same pattern, distinguished as interview, allocated a number and a distinction in terms of membership, leadership, coordinator or chairperson, for example (Interview 3 Statutory). For some themes, data was only collected from the semi-structured interview phase, and where this is the case, it is highlighted in the discussion on the theme.

This chapter starts by presenting an overview of the profile of study participants and continues by reporting on the themes which emerged inductively during the in-depth analysis of the qualitative data. These are namely: creating a platform and capacity for collaborative working; networking; information and knowledge; gaps and innovation; the impact of having a positive context on

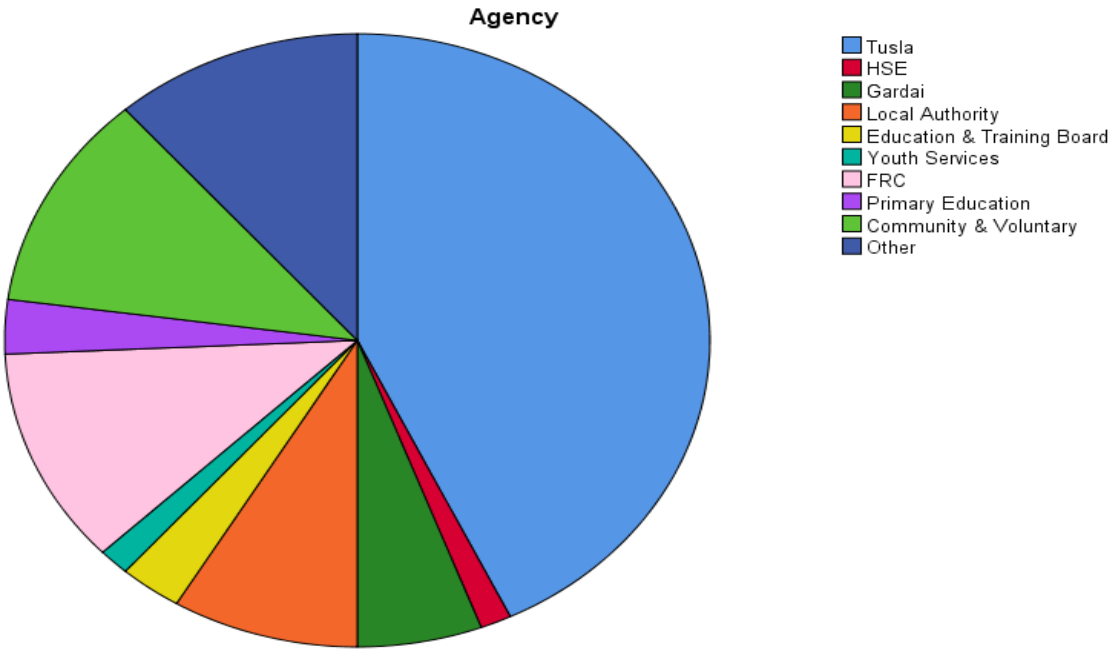
collaboration; membership and attendance; lack of recognition and support for collaborative working; breath and relevance; time as a resource and the statutory basis of CYPSCs.

5.2 Brief profile of study participants

Survey Responses

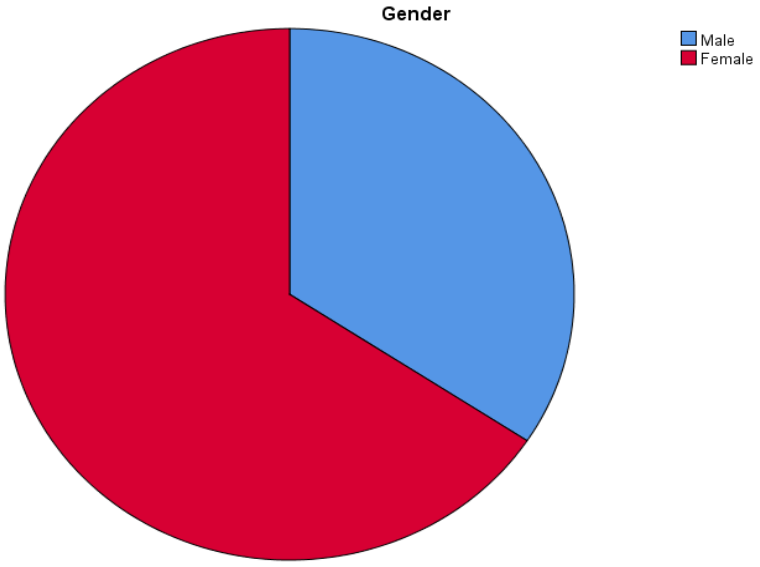
Figure 7 below presents details of responses to the survey by agency. Responses from Tusla came from CYPSC membership and leadership, including CYPSC coordinators and chairpersons. Responses in the "other" category included two County Childcare Committees, an Education Centre Manager, a School Completion Co-ordinator, two third level lecturers, and a Community and Voluntary Youth and Family Service Manager.

Figure 7 Survey Responses by Agency



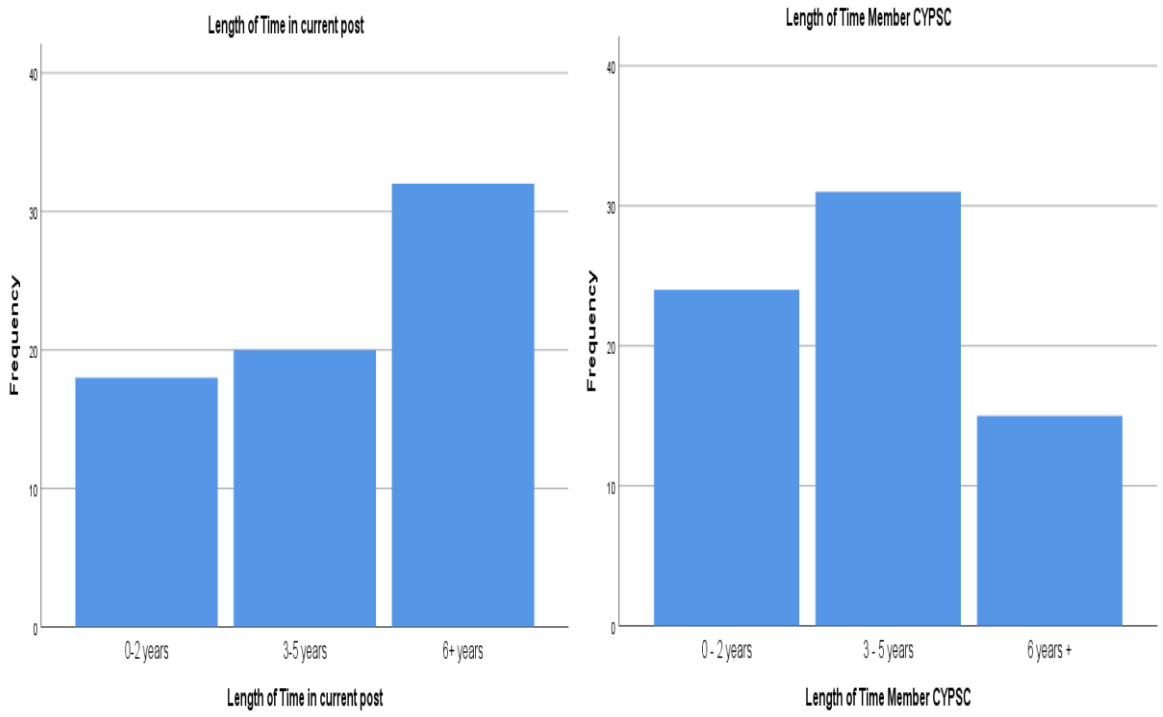
When analysed from a gender perspective, Chart 2 shows that the majority of survey responses came from female participants (66%).

Figure 8 Survey Responses by Gender



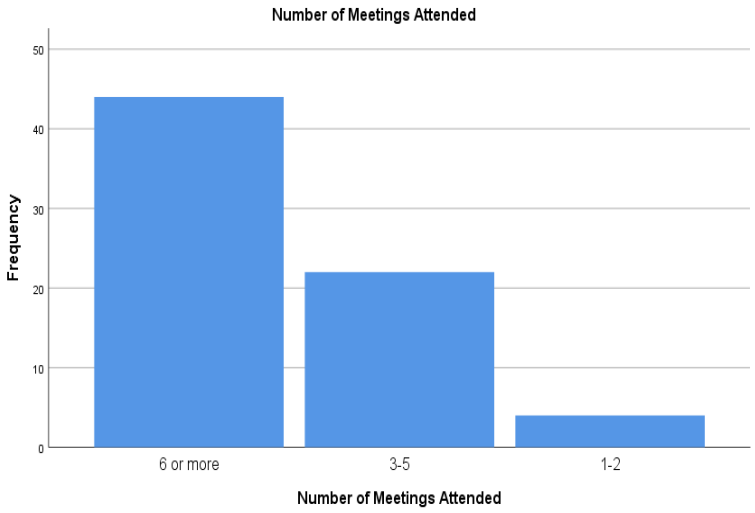
Out of the 70 responses received, 32 (46%) were from those who had six or more years in their current post, reflecting a survey population with significant professional experience. In terms of the length of time that participants were members of CYPSCs, 66% (n.46) had three years or more experience of being a CYPSC member. This information is displayed in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9 Length of Time in Current Post and Length of Time in CYPSC



A majority of survey participants, 63% (n. 44) reported that they had attended six or more CYPSC meetings in the year before the survey. This information is presented diagrammatically in Figure 10 below:

Figure 10 Meetings Attended in the last year



Interview responses

Of the seventy survey participants, fifty-eight agreed to do a follow up semi-structured interview. As set out in chapter four, from the overall numbers who indicated they were interested in the interview phase, an inclusion criterion considered the following: statutory and C&V membership, leadership, geographical and gender criteria. As a result, twenty-two participants took part in interviews, which included seven statutory members, eight C&V members, five coordinators and two chairpersons.

5.3 Findings related to the characterisation of collaborative working

Having presented a brief profile of survey and interview participants, this chapter will continue with a presentation on findings related to the characterisation of collaborative working, as described by study participants.

5.3.1 Creating a platform and capacity for collaborative working

Under this first theme, findings are drawn from study interviews only. When asked the central question on the positive impact of CYPSCs , the majority of interview participants discussed ways in which CYPSCs provided a platform for collaborative working in a local area. Findings related to this theme are presented below under three interrelated headings: the promotion of understanding and

participation; having a welcoming and respectful athmosphere, and providing participants with an opportunity for innovative collaborative practices and goal development.

a Promoting understanding and participation in collaborative working

The findings highlighted the potential CYPSCs create for promoting understanding of, and participation in, collaborative working to improve outcomes for children and young people. Some participants made reference to this, with one advising that being a CYPSC member gave him *"a better understanding of the system"*, which helped him realise that *"there are an awful lot of very good people working very hard, every day"* (*Interview 1 Statutory)*, in the interests of children and young people. He was able to provide a specific example of learning about the work of his local Family Resource Centre, where he was then able to refer children and families he was in contact with.

A participant who was a CYPSC coordinator also exemplified this perspective:

> *"I think it is the CYPSC, which is set up to bring interagency working to the fore in relation to outcomes for children. So, the benefits are that you are bringing a broad spectrum of agencies together in order to, I would say, focus the mind on the approach that's being taken to improve the outcomes for children"* (*Interview 18 Coordinator)*

b Welcoming and respectful atmosphere

The importance of creating a safe space which supports members to express their opinions openly was a finding in the study. Having a welcoming and respectful space lead one participant to conclude that a CYPSC meeting was *"a nice meeting to go to" (Interview 6 C&V)*. There were also references made to a *"good group of genuinely invested people" (Interview 10 C&V*) and *"the meetings are very respectfully managed and, you know, I think generally people do listen to each other"* (*Interview 15 C&V)*. It is noteworthy from the perspective of power, that all of these comments came from the C&V sector. These views of CYPSC members were also reflected in interviews with CYPSC chairpersons, one of whom stated *"I think there's great relationships on CYPSC and there's great respect between the different members" (Interview 21 Chairperson).*

c Innovative collaborative practices and goals

The findings show the importance of CYPSC structures in introducing innovative collaborative practices and goals. Opportunities to approach their work with other agencies and their clients in a different way was evidenced by one participant as: "*being part of looking at new creative ways of developing programmes" (Interview 12 C&V).* This was also made clear by a CYPSC coordinator, when she expressed the benefits as *"looking at creative ways of trying to address the gaps, the barriers, the challenges, the issues on the ground" (Interview 11 Coordinator).*

However, under this theme, the findings show that there are also challenges to creating a platform and capacity for collaboration. These were noted in particular by both participating CYPSC chairpersons, who mentioned boundary or structural challenges. For them, these related to varied catchment areas for member services, exemplified in this quote:

> *"I have one particular kind of structural challenge in that my CYPSC area doesn't co-exist with my Tusla area…it's just the general issue we have, you know, the way all statutory agencies have their boundaries structured, whether it's the Gardaí, the Councils, you know that it's still, it's an overall challenge, and particularly, it's a challenge for data" (Interview 19 Chairperson).*

Another chairperson also expressed a challenge related to structure:

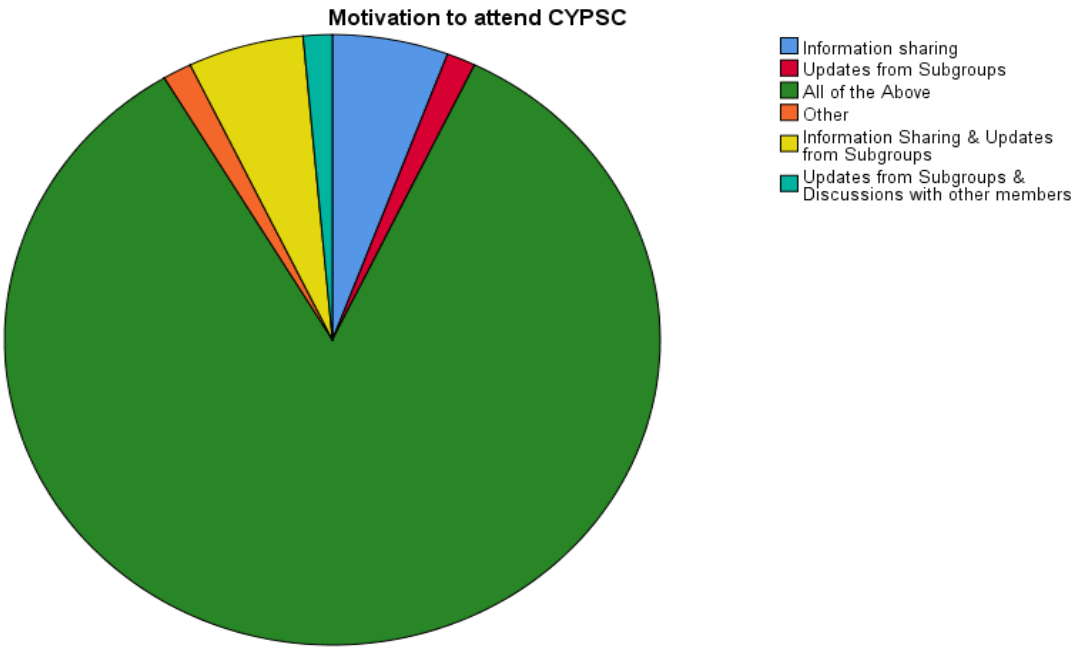
> *"I think that the challenges are structural I think for CYPSC, so far example, if you're talking about trying to get, who you think should be the most senior managers around the table, we struggle to achieve that. And that's largely because CHO …, which is the area of the HSE that I work in, has its own internal management structure, which is much bigger than what we are in terms of just being County (name) and County (name) being an area in its own right, within Tusla, but if you're a senior manager in CHO … you encompass all CYPSCs within CHO …, which covers all its counties. And basically, I think it's unrealistic to expect senior managers in the HSE, to actually sit around a table, all the CYPSC tables" (Interview 21 Chairperson).*

It is noteworthy that while these boundary, agency, or structural challenges for CYPSCs were identified by CYPSC chairpersons, CYPSC chairpersons do not have the power to address such challenges.

5.3.2 Networking and relationship building

It is a clear finding that participants valued the benefits of networking and relationship building with other members, which were reported as benefitting participants themselves, their agencies, and those that they provided services to. Survey participants were given a number of options to report on the positive aspects of CYPSC membership for them, including information sharing, updates from subgroups or working groups, agency presentations and discussions with other members. Findings related to this question show that the majority (83% or n.59) reported that all of these represented their motivations to attend meetings, as expressed diagrammatically in Figure 11 on the next page:

Figure 11 Motivation to Attend CYPSC



Responses to this question indicated that there was a level of motivation to attend CYPSC meetings as a way of assisting in better co-ordination of services. This benefit was referenced by one participant who outlined a positive reason for their participation in CYPSC: "*Co-ordination of services, minimising duplication"* (*Survey 16 Statutory).* Another aspect of networking and relationship building was the way in which participation ensured participants voices and those of the agency they represent are heard: *"Ensure representation of the FRCs on CYPSC" (Survey 23 C&V).*

When given an opportunity for a more open-ended consideration of benefits of CYPSC membership in interviews, a majority of participants referenced the importance of networking opportunities provided by CYPSC. One participant highlighted the importance of formal and informal networking as follows: *"it's essential for us to have an opportunity to be at that table to meet and network with the other members".* She added *"I suppose to have the opportunity to meet representatives from Tusla, in a formal way and to make informal connections afterwards, it's been really important" (Interview 10 C&V).* Many advised that CYPSC membership provided them with an opportunity that they would not normally have: *"you get access to people that sometimes you know you wouldn't necessarily get to see very much of" (Interview 15 C&V).* One coordinator expressed an awareness of this, advising that members have *"built relationships with organisations that normally they wouldn't have had in everyday life" (Interview 17 Coordinator).* One chairperson said:

"… it certainly gives me an opportunity to build relationships with people that are required both in running the CYPSC but also in my area manager role, so there's a good cross over there in terms of engaging with other agencies, particularly the other statutory agencies and building those relationships" (Interview 19 Chairperson).

5.3.3 Information and knowledge opportunities

Having access to information or knowledge and the impact of this at a personal, agency, and service user level was a reoccurring theme in the findings, which was articulated from two perspectives by participants. The benefits of hearing information from other agencies were referred to, alongside the ease with which members could seek information and knowledge from others. Some referred to hearing up-to-date information at a CYPSC meeting, and the positive impact this has on service development and provision. The following quote exemplifies this position:

"you're hearing first hand what's going on within the county. I think it's very important if you're going to run a successful service and provide the best quality care you can for families and children, then you need to be sitting at all the relevant tables within the county or the country, whether it's locally, regionally, or nationally" (Interview 13 C&V).

This point is further supported by another participant: *"I had no idea how many resources and how many groups were out in the community around us"* (*Interview 1 Statutory).* CYPSC leadership expressed an awareness that staff from participating agencies *"find a huge ease in contacting each other for pieces of information, relevant to some pieces of work they're doing within their own agencies" (Interview 17 Coordinator).*

The significance of having this information and knowledge while working through unprecedented Covid 19 pandemic restrictions was also referenced. A chairperson advised that a CYPSC meeting at the start of the first lockdown in March 2020:

"… was really just an opportunity for people to just share information about what was happening in their services. Particularly, you know, it was good to hear what the statutory organisations were doing in terms of continuing to deliver service, but also the kind of initiatives and innovation that was pulling from the C&V sector to try an meet children's needs, so you know, that first one or two meetings after lockdown, were very much about using that network to get information out about how we continue to deliver services" (Interview 19 Chairperson).

However, information and knowledge-related challenges were also referenced, in terms of the lack of formal structures to disseminate information from CYPSC to other structures in the area. CYPSC members should be able to disseminate information from CYPSC to their teams or agencies, but some members do not have an obvious structure in place to facilitate this. This issue was a finding across

statutory and C&V membership. For example, if a Primary School Principal, representing the Irish Primary Principals network is a member of a CYPSC, they do not have a local structure in place to share information from CYSPC to all primary schools in the County or Administrative area[15]. This challenge is exemplified in the following quote: *"... you're brought in and you're representing a group of people, but unless you're meeting as a group of people there's no forum to share the information" (Interview 13 C&V*).

5.3.4 Gaps and innovation

The important role of CYPSCs in developing evidence related to local gaps in service provision for children and families is a finding in the interview data. One member highlighted thematic gaps *"around disability services"* (*Interview 13 C&V)* which were addressed by CYPSC. However, she also pointed to geographical gaps for service coverage: *"... all of the east of (County) is really well represented with loads of services, but the west and the south of (County) are quite deplete. There's huge gaps in those areas by services" (Interview 13 C&V)*. The importance of identifying gaps in service delivery was expressed by a CYPSC coordinator:

> *"... being able to identify those needs so even if we can't address them, we're able to highlight them to organisations who can develop that, I suppose, weight of evidence and weight of demand from multiple agencies to address an issue that might be arising within a local area" (Interview 16 Coordinator)*

It was also referenced by a chairperson, who emphasised the importance of having *"... a multi-agency approach to the identification of need"* (*Interview 21 Chairperson)* that is provided by CYPSC, as well as providing a context within which gaps in service provision can be raised and addressed.

It is noteworthy that a small number C&V participants referred to innovations they had expressed at CYPSC, which were subsequently taken by other member organisations, and not credited to them. This resulted in feelings of frustration and hurt being expressed by these participants, exemplified in the following quote:

> *"... I think if you don't respect the work of all the services out there, you just can't come and piggyback on somebody else's work. Yes, I will share anything and everything that we have with other services but acknowledge where it came from" (Interview 13 C&V).*

[15] In Ireland, while the State is responsible for governance, funding, and education standard setting, the majority of primary schools are owned and operated independently by religious denominations and recognised organisations https://education-profiles.org/europe-and-northern-america/ireland/~non-state-actors-in-education accessed 13/06/2023

While these observations were only made by a small number of participants, it is a noteworthy observation for membership and leadership of these structures, in terms of having a sense of fairness and influence for all.

Further, under this theme challenges were also expressed regarding the duplication of work, and in particular collaborative plans. The many plans developed by different structures in all areas, including County Councils and City and County Childcare Committees was referenced as a challenge:

> *"… when you look at what's happening in the country, we have CYPSC, we have the CFSNs, then we have the county childcare committees, they're all developing their own plans, and it's a lot of the work. We need to be bringing these plans into one concise piece of work for the county that everybody's involved in. And I just think they're all too separate" (Interview 13 C&V).*

5.3.5 Membership and attendance

While CYPSC membership is currently not legislated for[16], findings of this study indicate that challenges exist under the theme of membership and attendance, regarding absent agencies, having appropriate representation and retention of membership for CYPSC.

a Absent Agencies

This study shows that participants had concerns about the non-representation of some agencies and identified gaps in membership and representation from education, health, social protection, and criminal justice sectors. Gaps in the representation of organisations and agencies who are concerned with the education of children and young people were pointed to by this participant:

> *"… when you look at like the ETB (Education and Training Board), they're very much a part of CYPSC at all levels, but they are not the only authority over schools in the country. So, what about the other secondary schools and all of the primary schools? I would say education is really badly represented" (Interview 13 C&V)*

A gap in HSE representation was highlighted by one C&V participant: "*I suppose a big deficit that we see is the HSE" (Interview 6 C&V)*. This view was supported by a CYPSC coordinator: *"within the HSE there are significant senior practitioners or professionals and I think if they were on CYPSC there would be … much better participation by the … HSE" (Interview 17 Coordinator).* This quote references the importance of leadership providing an example of participation in and commitment to

[16] Following a review of the Child Care Act, 1991, the DCEDIY have presented updated legislation to the Houses of Parliament in Ireland, which includes a recommendation to place CYPSCs on a statutory footing, to include mandatory participation.

collaborative working. Many commented on the gap of Department of Social Protection membership: *"the Department of Social Protection -we've always had difficulty in having them represented" (Interview 14 Coordinator).* A CYPSC chairperson also expressed awareness of gaps from the criminal justice perspective in her CYPSC: *"I have a few specific gaps in my CYPSC, particularly on the Garda side, and the probation side, so that kind of whole criminal justice element is a bit lacking on my CYPSC" (Interview 19 Chairperson).*

Solutions were suggested by participants, in terms of the importance of having support and guidance for different agencies at national level: *"you need to have buy in at national level and all the organisations sitting around the table need to be told that it's important that they're there and given permission to be there" (Interview 5 Statutory).* From a power perspective, this observation reflects the connections between national and local organisations, while also noting the power differentials between them.

An interesting finding related to the tension between 'seniority' and 'fit' in CYPSC membership was noted. While this point was only made by one coordinator, it is worth noting. Policy guidance is that members "will be of sufficient seniority to represent their agency and to exercise decision-making powers" (DCYA, 2019, p.43) to support decision-making processes at CYPSC level. A CYPSC coordinator pointed to the challenge of having the best person from an organisation, as opposed to the most senior person, who might not be able to commit to CYPSC: *"I would prefer to get the right person as opposed to the highest person" (Interview 18 Coordinator).*

b The challenge of maintaining ongoing participation in CYPSC

A finding of this study is the challenge of maintaining ongoing participation, which also overlaps with the theme of membership and attendance. This leads to feelings of frustration from committed members regarding the lack of commitment to CYPSC from some agencies and organisations. The following quote illustrates:

> *"… there is a very disparate membership, people come and go, you know, some people and some agencies do really just, you know, dip in, don't really sort of actively get very involved in the work and so therefore, you know neither benefits particularly from it, but certainly don't contribute much to it and you know that's just the nature of interagency working, that's a challenge" (Interview 15 C&V).*

These views were supported by coordinators: *"I struggled to get some bodies, where a member has stepped back because of changed posts or they've changed direction or they're resigned or retired or whatever, I sometimes struggle to get a replacement person from an agency" (Interview 17*

Coordinator). Participants expressed an awareness of these challenges for CYPSC coordinators, while also highlighting the importance of membership for themselves:

> *"…retaining membership sometimes for the CYPSC coordinator can be difficult, but that's not a challenge for me or my organisation, because we make it our business to be there and to be as informed and make sure that we buy into as much of the actions as we possibly can" (Interview 10 C&V).*

5.3.6 Recognition and support for collaborative working

Findings related to recognition and support for strategic collaborative working occurred in the interview data, in which positive and negative comments were expressed by CYPSC membership and leadership.

The significance of CYPSC membership in supporting collaborative working goals of member organisations was expressed. For example, one participant stated that: *"Well its quiet compatible with (my role) and very complimentary. We all see it as a very good opportunity and we all quite enjoy it. It's one of the pieces of our work that we find the most rewarding and valuable" (Interview 4 Statutory).* It is also expressed by a participant from a large C&V sector organisation:

> *"From an organisational perspective it's key that we are part of CYPSCs, I think we are on six…So we definitely see CYPSC as a core part of the work that we do in order for us to be able to fulfil our strategic objectives and the mission of the organization. So, it's important from an organisational perspective" (Interview 9 C&V).*

However, challenges were also expressed under this theme, regarding the number and frequency of different structures and meetings in which members were expected to participate, and a desire for national policy to support strategic collaborative working. Findings also indicate the importance of supporting these structures in terms of preparation and training for membership. The following quote is indicative of many responses:

> *"… at local level, we choose how much or how little we can participate but it's recognition of that, in terms of those who fund the services we provide. So, there are those expectations that we engage in collaboration, we engage with CYPSC, we engage with LCDC, we engage, you know, in a variety of different structures, but sometimes in terms of being able to allocate sufficient time, the funders aren't so understanding of that. There are certain calculations of like 80%/20% in terms of direct work versus indirect work and sometimes, the competing demands don't match, and that can be challenging" (Interview 20 C&V).*

A participant from the statutory sector expressed the view that collaborative working and attending meetings relating to it: *"is seen as a pleasant add-on but maybe something that they (her*

organisation) can't commit to" (*Interview 4 Statutory).* She described the challenge of the work of her agency being measured by how many service users are seen or groups are run, and not how many collaborative working meetings staff are attending *"... so it isn't valued in a quantitative way in terms of how they return their work and account for their time".* She also referred to the complex nature of collaborative working, due to the lack of preparation and training offered to members: *"People think that partnership working can happen easily and it's hugely complex" (Interview 4 Statutory).* Connected with this point, CYPSC leadership also referenced feelings of powerlessness regarding the lack of resources and support allocated to CYPSC from the perspective of administrative and project support. The following quote from a CYPSC coordinator exemplifies this perspective:

> *"... challenges are also lack of administration, the lack of a development worker or the lack of time, the expectations of national level without consideration of time, the time it takes to do our day-to-day work, and to keep people on side, that takes an awful lot of energy" (Interview 17 Coordinator).*

An awareness of these issues was expressed by a CYPSC chairperson

> *"... we found a way of providing admin support into the coordinator. That is key as well, because if you don't have that admin support then you know the coordinators time is spent doing a lot of admin, whereas really they should be out there making connections, you know, making sure the plan is on track and dealing with road blocks" (Interview 21 Chairperson).*

5.3.7 CYPSC breath and relevance

While some participants welcomed the broad scope of CYPSCs, in terms of aiming to address the five national outcomes for children and young people from birth to twenty-four years of age, findings highlighted challenges related to the breath and relevance of CYPSC. These were expressed by participants from both statutory and C&V sectors, and by CYPSC leadership. The broad scope of CYPSCs results in structures that are only relevant to their members some, and not all the time. As highlighted by this participant: *"... at meetings you are only interested in what catches you and what influences your own service ... sometimes I'm sitting at the main meeting wondering what in God's name am I doing here?"* (*Interview 13 C&V).* Another participant agreed with this position, advising that they go to CYPSC because they must, not because they want to: *"... you're sitting there for two hours, thinking this is kind of relevant but I'm very busy. In terms of a hierarchy of relevance, my time would be far better spent elsewhere" (Interview 22 Statutory).* This participant had a regional role and was a member of more than one CYPSC. They advised that all committees they were a member of tended to lean towards work that was social work or social care focused when their focus was on other aspects of child wellbeing and outcomes.

Challenges were also expressed by members in terms of the focus on children and young people, when the remit of their service is much broader. This participant from the C&V sector highlighted:

> *"… if you take the work of a Family Resource Centre, which works right across the life course from pregnancy to older age, and you're interacting with people on any one day on a number of fronts…you're not just focusing on one aspect, you're focusing on human beings, you're focusing on the social aspects of life and so on. But we do so many things, and they're not represented at the table" (Interview 8 C&V).*

These sentiments were also expressed by CYPSC coordinators, one of whom described the challenge of the broad scope: *"So you can feel like the plate spinner at the circus trying to keep all the plates horizontal and live and going at the one time, so that's just that juggling, sometimes with an egg on top" (Interview 11 Coordinator).* Another coordinator expressed this in terms of the idealism of having objectives to improve outcomes for all children and young people: *"it's a very idealistic thing to say that we're going to improve outcomes for children, in that broader sense" (Interview 18 Coordinator).*

5.3.8 Time to dedicate to collaborative working

Connected with other challenges referred to above in Section 5.3 was the frequently mentioned issue of the lack of time as a resource to dedicate to collaborative working. Half of the interview participants shared the perspective expressed by one participant: *"I would love to be able to give it more time" (Interview 3 Statutory)* and by another, who was also a subgroup chairperson:

> *"It's time to be honest, it's just actually time to read documents and plan, to stay up to speed with what's, you know, what people are bringing and different initiatives that people are talking about. I really found that difficult…I think people are genuinely committed to the idea of coordination and promotion and the idea of CYPSC and myself included, but it is really difficult to prioritise your time for committees. When you've got your own workloads and stuff like that. That is a big challenge" (Interview 5 Statutory).*

This challenge was amplified if participants were members of more than one committee, if they had area-wide or regional briefs. Those participants who reported dedicating staff to CYPSC substructure membership, highlighted the conflict some CYPSC members had in dedicating time and staff as resources to CYPSC. However, the findings also point to the positive payoff for staff and the service, which ultimately benefits children and young people, made clear in this quote:

> *"… the challenge of being a PPFS manager is the number of meetings you need to be going to. And obviously, it's more of a challenge if you're on two of them. Having said that, the benefits outweigh the challenges. But if you're involved in the committee and then I'm involved in one of the subgroups in (my area) –I'm co-chairing that but my staff are involved*

in other subcommittees of both CYPSCs actually. Again, that's probably more useful than not in terms of, you know, building connections and relationships with other agencies in the community" (Interview 7 Statutory).

5.3.9 Statutory basis of CYPSCs

When research interviews were nearing completion, information began to emerge from the DCEDIY regarding proposals to place CYPSCs on a statutory footing. The exact implications of this proposal were unclear, but because it had come up for discussion at some CYPSC meetings, it emerged in interviews also. Some interview participants referred to this, and overall, findings related to this topic point to mixed feelings regarding the impact of mandated participation in strategic collaborative processes, which had achieved so much through voluntary participation. These concerns were voiced by C&V participants particularly: *"I suppose one thing I would be concerned about is the review of the Child Care Act…just in terms of where CYPSCs may be going" (Interview 9 C&V).* This participant elaborated on fears regarding a focus for CYPSCs on child protection and welfare, when "*I don't think that's something that the CYPSCs were set up for" (Interview 9 C&V).* Included in commentary on the Child Care Act, CYPSC chairpersons both articulated different views:

> *"I think there's a danger now for CYPSC in terms of the review of the Child Care Act, that might seem like a good idea on paper, but I think there's a danger that CYPSC will be taken away from a lot of the good work that it does, by being assigned a whole lot of statutory responsibilities, so I think that's going to be a very telling type of process and there's a lot of fear about that" (Interview 21 Chairperson).*

However, the potential of having statutory responsibility and connected to this, more power was welcomed by another chairperson: "*I don't have the authority to say to the HSE you know, why don't you have more speech and language therapists in the area? Those conversations just don't happen at CYPSC, but if CYPSC had more teeth or was on a statutory basis, is that the kind of question that it would be asking?" (Interview 19 Chairperson).*

5.4 Summary

Overall, in this chapter I have presented findings related to perspectives and meaning of participation in CYPSCs. I have presented these findings under subthemes, which were developed inductively from data analysis processes. Overall, study participants were enthusiastic collaborators, who described several positive aspects related to collaborative working. These included: the significant role of CYPSCs in providing a platform for collaborative working in local areas: the benefits of networking with membership and leadership; the associated knowledge development; and the ability to develop understandings related to gaps in service provision and develop innovative responses to these gaps. However, challenges were also expressed related to duplication of work; agencies who did not enrol;

and the broad remit of CYPSCs, which was reported as being a positive and negative feature of CYPSCs for study participants.

I have used the symbolism of an iceberg to describe the contents of this chapter as being the 'tip of the iceberg' or what is visible in terms of strategic collaborative working. This chapter provided a sense of what it is like to be sitting around the table, from different members and leaders' perspectives and describes for the reader and those not familiar with CYPSCs what it is like to be part of this structure. It is necessary to have this understanding as a foundation to the next chapter, which is concerned with findings regarding power, influence, and conflict which I characterise that that which 'lies beneath'.

Chapter 6 What Lies Beneath: Perspectives on Power, Influence, and Conflict in Strategic Collaborative Contexts

6.1 Introduction

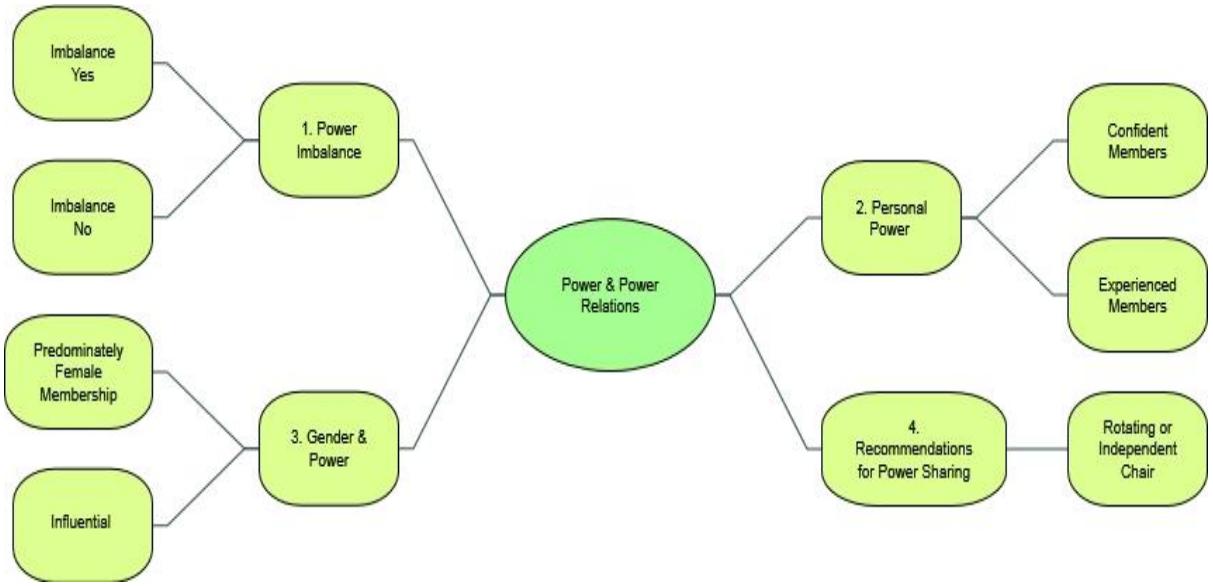
In the preceding chapter, I set out findings related to perspectives on participation in CYPSC structures for study participants, presented as the visible aspects of participation or 'the tip of the iceberg'. In this chapter, I present findings on the overarching themes of power, influence, and conflict and how they impact strategic collaborative contexts which are focused on outcomes for children and young people. I continue to draw from the analysis of data from three sources, but the most substantial findings are from study interviews. The first theme concerns the ways in which participants perceive power as impacting on CYPSC. In this conceptualisation, power was found to be ubiquitous and multifarious, and experienced differently by members of strategic collaborative contexts over time. The second theme concerns influence, which is conceptualised in terms of "a way of having an effect on the attitudes and opinions of others" (Parsons, 1963, p.38) or the enactment of power. The third theme concerns conflict, as it manifests when disagreement arises, and how it is resolved in the context of strategic collaboration. In the final section of this chapter, I summarise key points made throughout for the reader.

6.2 Perspectives on power in CYPSCs

In this section, I present findings on the theme of power, as it impacts strategic collaborative processes, under the subthemes of power imbalance, personal power, and gender and power. The way in which these themes and subthemes were arrived at has been detailed in the methodology chapter. The section starts with the reporting of the findings arising from the analysis of the quantitative data on power and is followed with the reporting of the qualitative survey and interview findings. As discussed in Section 4.9.3, the structure for the themes came from the qualitative analysis, and this structure was then used as an overall framework for reporting the findings. The perspectives on power in Section 6.2.1 below, show the complex and nuanced nature of power at multiple levels. The amount of power that members had or felt they had is significant. A further notable finding concerns the different perspectives on power that existed between many C&V and statutory participants. The structure of the section is represented in the following thematic map: Figure 12 Thematic Map on Perspectives on Power in CYPSCs, representing the main themes of power imbalance; personal power; gender and power and recommendations for power sharing[17].

[17] Recommendations for power sharing arising from the findings are presented in Section 8.2 of the concluding chapter

Figure 12 Thematic Map on Perspectives on Power on CYPSCs



6.2.1 Power imbalance in CYPSCs

When survey participants were asked to consider if power was shared equally among the membership, responses were mixed – 44% (n.31) of participants reported that power was shared equally, but a total of 56% (n.39) advised that it was not fully shared or that they were unsure about this question. This information is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Is Power shared equally among CYPSC membership?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	31	44.3
	No	23	32.9
	Unsure	16	22.9
	Total	70	100.0

Some notable differences between C&V and statutory participants' views on power were found. To examine this in more depth, a statistical analysis of the quantitative data was carried out. When a cross tabulation was carried out related to C&V membership and the feelings of powerlessness an interesting pattern can be noted in the findings. 53% (n.26) of participants from

statutory agencies reported that from their perspective, power is shared equally, while 16% of participants from statutory agencies were unsure about this question. When C&V participants answered this question a different picture emerged, with 24% (n.5) of C&V participants advising that they felt power was shared, while 76% (n.16) of participants said that power was not shared or that they were unsure regarding this question. To further analyse the data, I carried out a chi-square test of independence, which determines whether there is a statistically significant relationship between variable categories. Results of these tests have either a null hypothesis, meaning that there is no relationship between variables or an alternative hypothesis, which means that there are relationships between variables. A p-value of less than 0.05 suggests a significant relationship between two variables. When a cross tabulation chi square test was performed on this data to explore if there is a statistical significance between being a C&V CYPSC member and feeling power is shared equally, a score of .046 was achieved. This means that there was a significant relationship between these two variables indicating that many, but not all C&V participants felt that power was not shared. This information is presented in tabular format in Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test on C&V membership and Power Shared

Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.138[a]	2	.046
Likelihood Ratio	6.228	2	.044
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.030	1	.014
N of Valid Cases	70		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.80.

Analysis of the qualitative survey and interview data shows that there were several different dimensions which influenced views on power imbalance, some of which relate to an imbalance of power between statutory and C&V membership. While this study did not set out with an aim of comparing statutory and C&V experiences or members, noteworthy differences between both did emerge. There were a number of positions in relation to this topic, with participants from

statutory agencies saying that the C&V sector have more power, because they can respond to identified needs in a swift and innovative way. This section will continue with a discussion of these positions, namely: an ability to collaborate or share power; the accumulation of power through participation; organisational and funding status; tokenism; power derived from the capacity to be creative; those with least power doing most of the work; and responsibility for staff for C&V participants.

Ability to collaborate or share power

A finding is that skills regarding collaborative working varied, with many study participants emphasising the importance of such skills, alongside the importance of training in collaborative skills. Having an ability to collaborate or share power was described as a continuum by one survey participant, who pointed to members of strategic collaborative structures having varied skills regarding interagency working: "*I find that people are at different points along the continuum of power sharing. Some people have very good skills in the area of interagency and collaborative working and others don't" (Survey 1 Statutory).* This participant also expressed the view that members may be unable to combine their power with others to achieve common goals: "*Some people can see that cross-sectoral working in a County brings value and others struggle with their own agency agenda versus the needs of people using the services" (Survey 1 Statutory).* The importance of structures to support working in a collaborative way and their absence is noted by an interview participant, in a context where she is representing these funded agencies, but there is a lack of structure for her to disseminate information.: *"... we need some sort of an alliance between the funded agencies in the County" (Interview 13 C&V).* That the ability to collaborate or share power was challenged in particular by pandemic restrictions and online working contexts was raised by a participant *"... it's more difficult now when you're meeting remotely" (Interview 19 Chairperson).* Perspectives on factors which impact an ability to collaborate or share power were very much connected with organisational or funding status, discussed below. Some participants from the C&V sector advised that this organisational or funding status affected their participation.

Accumulation of power through participation

The impact of accumulating power through participation is a finding. Study participants reported that while participation was a pathway to power, their organisational contexts were still significant. This was expressed by one participant; *"Different levels of engagement with CYPSC can also have an impact" (Survey 29 Coordinator),* and supported by another CYPSC coordinator:

"From my perspective, real power on the CYPSC is directly related to how involved an organisation is willing to get to support CYPSC initiatives. Some organisations get involved to the extent that they then have influence and power with regards to a CYPSC initiative. However more don't get involved and so have little or no influence or power with regards to the CYPSC initiatives. Certainly, all members have been offered the same opportunities to get involved" (Survey 70 Coordinator)

Organisational or funding status

A finding relates to the impact of organisational or funding status on power sharing, which is connected with statutory organisations having positions of power, and the power positions associated with leadership status. As laid out in the context chapter, CYPSC leadership is prescribed, with Tusla holding the chairperson positions and City or County Councils holding the deputy chairperson positions. Findings show that defined leadership positions impact power structures, relations, and processes in collaborative contexts. This perspective is exemplified in the following quote: *"The disparity of status among the CYPSC members, particularly as members representing Tusla and the Local Authority are at senior managerial levels and also have the Chair & Vice-Chair positions, has to have an impact" (Survey 29 Coordinator).* Further, findings reveal that having these leadership roles tips the balance of power towards statutory membership, although different dimensions related to this emerged and will be discussed in Section 6.3.7 under the heading of collaborative leadership. Participants who were CYPSC chairpersons also expressed an awareness of a power imbalance as being inherent feature of the process: *"I wouldn't be of the view that power is shared because there is a power imbalance" (Interview 19 Chairperson).* Another chairperson also described ways in which Tusla were attempting to address the issue of perceived power imbalance:

"We're certainly trying to work on it in Tusla in terms of taking the more commissioning partnership type approach. But that doesn't mean that all statutory agencies are taking that approach, you know, other statutory agencies could continue with that kind of more power imbalance kind of relationship" (Interview 19 Chairperson)

Connected to these findings were observations on funding where some member organisations fund others. That only some member organisations had access to funding resulted in feelings of power imbalance being reported by participants: "*Those who fund have more power over those who are funded" (Survey 30 C&V).* A consciousness of this imbalance is exemplified in the following quote from a C&V sector member: "… *look I won't rock the boat now I'm here. I am*

relying on them for funding, so I won't be too critical" (Interview 6 C&V). One CYPSC coordinator expressed an awareness of this position:

> *"That has come up, a few years ago, that a number of C&V members who would be funded by Tusla, would be, I suppose, reserved in some of their comments because Tusla hold the purse strings in relation to their service level agreements. It has been mentioned to me" (Interview 14 Coordinator)*

An awareness of how funding streams impact C&V sector employees, who do not have security of tenure, in relation to their employment, was expressed. It is exemplified in the following quote:

> *"I have to remember that I have (X amount of) staff that I'm responsible for, so I have to be mindful of that when I'm going to speak out. You know, so I find that you're probably not challenging some of the decisions that have been made, because you can't be seen to do so" (Interview 13 C&V).*

Involvement in CYPSC tokenistic

That some C&V participants had a sense that their involvement was tokenistic is a finding, exemplified in the following quotation: "*... so, it's tick the box to say yes we're there, but we really don't have any power" (Interview 13 C&V*). However, participants from the C&V sector also articulated views that they were the ones responsible for implementing CYPSC actions: *"The statutory agencies have the power at CYPSC…but when you look out on the ground, 90% of the work that's been done on the ground is by the community and voluntary sector" (Interview 13 C&V).* This view is acknowledged by a participant who was a chairperson:

> *"So in a funny sort of way, they (the C&V sector) might not hold a lot of power financially, but in terms of implementation, we're very much dependent on them… so you know that's why this is an interesting piece of research because when you talk about power, you know, power comes in many different forms, we're very big agencies but we're actually constrained by our statutory role and function" (Interview 21Chairperson)*

Power derived from the capacity to be creative

A finding is that some statutory participants felt that they did not hold powerful positions because they were unable to respond to need in creative, flexible ways, unlike the C&V sector. The findings show that while Tusla has the power to convene, chair and coordinate these strategic

collaborative processes, it may not have the power to respond to emerging need in a timely way. A participating CYPSC chairperson expressed an awareness of this:

> *"…we can talk ad nauseum, ourselves (Tusla), the HSE and the Council about the need out there, but actually when it comes to identifying it and delivering it there's only so much we can do within our own agencies, because of our statutory responsibilities, so if there's creative things that need to happen, a lot of the delivery actually happens by the community and voluntary organisations" (Interview 21 Chairperson)*

Power being shared

That perceptions of a power imbalance among membership were not shared by all participants is a finding. Some participants, including those from the C&V sector, advised that they did hold positions of power in the CYPSC they were a member of: *"I feel we all (CYPSC members) have a good level of influence, and that the voice of the FRCs[18] is being heard and acted on when relevant and suitable" (Survey 23 C&V).* This perspective was supported by a coordinator: "*I do put a lot of energy to ensure that power is shared equally and that CYPSC be seen locally as an autonomous inter-agency vehicle" (Survey 33 Co-ordinator).* Another coordinator indicated:

> *"All decisions are reached on a unanimous basis, CYPSC members each play an important role representing their organisation or sector. Members are encouraged to do so as each one of them bring a valuable insight into issues for children, young people and their families. (Survey 67 Coordinator)*

These views were also reflected in study interviews. Although they were in the minority, some participants reported having no concerns regarding power imbalance at CYPSC. One participant from the statutory sector stated:

> *"They (the C&V sector) are all very vocal because I think they see it as an opportunity to sell where they are coming from in order to ensure that they can get that funding down the line. They are always willing to listen to the other agencies coming from the same perspective as themselves to think about opportunities to join up and do something together" (Interview 3 Statutory).*

[18] Family Resource Centres

Findings related to the positive impact of having secure relationships with funders for some C&V members, and the way these assisted them in having the confidence to speak out, were identified. This is articulated in the following way by a C&V participant:

> *"I'm very fortunate that I and (my organisation) have a very positive working relationship with Tusla as our funder. I don't, I wouldn't, personally, have concerns about saying something unpopular at the meetings. I don't have concerns that that might impact on my relationship with my funder, but that's because the Area Manager and the PPFS manager who are our main contacts, are both very open to hearing what's not popular and they both have great respect for our work" (Interview 15 C&V).*

It is notable that C&V sector participants who are not dependent on funding from partners at CYPSC are less concerned regarding the impact of funding on power. A participant from the C&V sector, who does not receive funding from any of the agencies on CYPSC advised *"I mean you never feel a massive power imbalance, like you don't ever feel like I've been disenfranchised. Our funder is Pobal[19] so I don't ever really feel that" (Interview 10 C&V).*

Study participants made suggestions for balancing power, which are connected with the theme of collaborative leadership, discussed in Section 6.3.7. Many of these suggestions related to both the role of the chairperson, and members experiences of power relations in other structures. These related to having a rotating or independent chairperson, and were made particularly, but not exclusively, by the C&V sector. This Deputy chairperson asked:

> *"I wonder how many groups I would have sat on where the chair is predetermined and not rotated. I certainly wouldn't want to be the chair but maybe there are others who would. The LCDC changes at least every three years and that's a long time. Maybe a recommendation would be to consider a rotating chair" (Interview 2 Statutory)*

A participant from the C&V sector supported this view: "*I think it should be a rotating chair, number one. I don't think one service should hold the chair position for that length of time" (Interview 13 C&V).* This perspective is supported by a CYPSC coordinator: *"I think if we had a rotating chair, it could be very different" (Interview 17 Coordinator),* and a chairperson: "*I've often thought it would be better to have an independent chair in there, now who that would be or what they would be I don't know, but it certainly then would stop people thinking that CYPSC is a Tusla construct"*. However, another participant who was a chairperson cautioned:

[19] An intermediary body which manages national and EU funding on behalf of the Irish Government

"… whoever chairs a meeting needs to have a good global view of how this stuff works and how the different agencies fit together… So, you need somebody with a good strong background in CYPSC to actually come forward and chair these meetings" (Interview 21 Chairperson).

6.2.2. Summary

This section set out findings related to the different expressions of power between CYPSC membership and leadership, in terms of statutory organisations who have status and funding, and C&V organisations who have power derived from their ability to respond to emerging need in a timely manner and be creative. While the study was not directly comparing statutory and C&V membership, the findings do show that there were notable differences in perspectives between the sectors with statutory members more likely to be of the view that power is shared when compared to C&V membership. I will return to this topic in my discussion chapter.

The chapter will continue by considering dimensions of personal power which have an impact on strategic collaboration.

6.3 Personal power

Of note for this second main theme is that while the focus of this study was on power in organisational contexts, much of what was discussed by study participants can be framed within the context of personal power. This is described by some as informal power associated with personal traits, and not status, and includes respect or admiration an individual has earned from others over time, which can be described as charisma or strong reputation (Kovach, 2020). French and Raven (1959) describe five different types of personal power which are: reward power; coercive power; legitimate power; referent power and expert power. They associate the first three types with formal or positional power bases because they are connected to the holding of a formal position of authority, whereas expert and referent power are associated with personal attribution and appearance (cited in Haller et al, 2018, p.4). One of the main themes shows the interrelationship between organisational and personal power. The findings indicate disparities in the exercise of personal power, and identified a number of dimensions connected to this, related to confident members and experienced members. Overall, the findings indicate that there is not a clear distinction between the views of statutory and C&V members under this theme.

Confident Members

The findings show that participants described naturally confident members, who were not afraid to express their opinion. One survey participant referred to strong characters: *"There are naturally stronger people in the group, and they strive to take the lead" (Survey 6 Coordinator).* A small number of references were made to naturally confident members in the interview data: "*there are some strong characters as you would expect, and they are listened to as well" (Interview 1 Statutory).* This perspective is exemplified in the following quote: "*we're all strong characters, and I would be able to hold my own, so I don't feel pressurised. I suppose you have strong characters that all have a different agenda" (Interview 12 C&V).*

One interview participant described a positive experience of bringing an idea to the table, which was implemented, as exemplified in this quote: *"… the next minute we decided we would put together a task group to do it" (Interview 12 C&V),* reflecting the importance of members using their personal power.

Experienced Members

A further finding related to personal power concerns the impact of being an experienced CYPSC member, and the positive impact of this on feelings of personal power and confidence over time. This finding relates to the links between participation and power reported earlier in the chapter.

As reported by study participants, feelings of possessing personal power within CYPSC develop incrementally. This is articulated well by a participant: *"I've been there quite a long time and earned the credibility and everything" (Interview 15 C&V).* It is also referenced by another participant: *"I have grown in confidence myself over the years, and I think, you know, there are certainly people in the C&V sectors who are well able to speak. They've been around a while and they're, you know, confident" (Interview 6 C&V).* While a participant from the C&V sector expressed personal confidence, they also expressed caution:

> *"I am confident enough and assertive enough in my own way as an individual and as an organisation to say my tuppence worth but also been around the block long enough to know that there's a way of saying, you know, if you want to keep relationships positive, you know, then, diving into conflict, my approach will be that diving into conflict anyway, isn't gonna get you very far" (Interview 20 C&V)*

It is noteworthy that many of the examples provided for this section are provided by CYPSC members from the C&V sector and exemplify how they use their personal power in the absence of organisational power.

6.2.3 Gender and power

Given what is well established in the literature about gender relations and power, it was important to consider the part gender plays in experiences of power in strategic collaborative contexts. Findings indicate that gender does have an impact on collaborative contexts, with the main finding related to gender being that CYPSC contexts are female dominated contexts. A further finding related to gender and power is that more males than females thought that power was shared equally. Further, participants reported that aspects of gender were linked to aspects of leadership; reflective of gender issues in society; and not discussed in the main. This topic was not explored directly in the quantitative aspect of data collection, but I did notice a difference in perspectives between male and female participants. Because of this I carried out some comparisons relating to gender and power in the quantitative data and included a question on gender and power in the semi-structured interview schedule. For this section only, I identify quotes as coming from either male or female participants.

When I carried out a cross tabulation on the survey data related to the topic of gender and power, I found that fourteen out of twenty-four males (58%) were clear that power was shared equally, while seventeen out of forty-six (37%) females said that power was shared equally, which is significant. Further, a significant finding shows that only 5.7% (n.4) of males were unsure about questions related to power being shared, whereas 17.1% (n.12) of females were unsure, which indicates that more females than males had doubts in relation to this topic. This information is presented in tabular format below:

Table 3: How power is shared when gender is considered

Is power shared equally * Gender Crosstabulation

			Gender		
			Male	Female	Total
Is power shared equally	Yes	Count	14	17	31
	No	Count	6	17	23
	Unsure	Count	4	12	16
Total		Count	24	46	70
		% of Total	34.3%	65.7%	100.0%

When provided with an opportunity to elaborate on aspects of gender and power in interviews, a majority of participants reported that gender did not play a role in power sharing, while over half of the participants referenced gender having an influence. This finding suggests that some participants had differing opinions regarding this question. Many participants reported that CYPSC membership consisted of more female than male participants A female participant advised: "*I suppose it's strongly female, because in this sector there's more females than males" (Interview 8 C&V)*. A male participant shared a similar view: *"Membership is predominantly female and therefore, there isn't any gender bias that I would see in terms of who has control or who has influence"* (*Interview 22 Statutory).* Another male participant, who is a member of a number of CYPSCs in his region said:

> *"… the large percentage (of membership) are female…If there are things going on (in relation to power and gender), I haven't seen them. I would say as well the people who are in the positions that they're in, regardless of gender, appear to me to be, you know, well entitled to the roles that they hold" (Interview 22 Statutory).*

A female participant reported that: *"At the moment CYPSC is probably dominated by women, which is probably why they are doing such a good job" (Interview 15 C&V).*

From the perspective of CYPSC coordinators, a male coordinator advised: *"I think there's probably more females than males, but I think it's a nice balance. It's not heavily weighed on one side over the other. And I do think for the most part, that, you know, gender is not an issue" (Interview 14 Coordinator).* A female coordinator with significant experience advised that the domination of CYPSCs by female participants was not always her experience: *"I would say that looking back …. there were days that I was the only woman in the room" (Interview 18 Coordinator).* A female chairperson agreed with this position:

> "*I suppose at my level in Tusla, you know, is where you start getting more men than women, whereas below this level, you will have majority women, although there is change happening for sure in Tusla… Maybe that's happening in other organisations as well as the women are pushing up into this level particularly, you know, in terms of director of services or, you know, whatever in the C&V sector or, you know, Garda superintendents, there's a few more women" (Interview 19 Chairperson)*

A female participant referred to the role of chairpersons in managing a gender balance: "*Most of them have a majority membership of women. So actually, there's more women on the CYPSCs, in my view, than men, and no, I think the chairs again manage that (gender) extremely well in terms of making sure everyone has a voice" (Interview 9 C&V).*

Those participants who were of the view that gender was influential, referred to it in a number of ways. Some referenced the impact of having a male chairperson and deputy chairperson, including a female member: *"I would see gender power struggles definitely with the main CYPSC. I think you know you have the area manager who's male, who is chair, you have the head of the council who's male, you know, and they seem to dominate the decisions that are made" (Interview 13 C&V).* Another female participant described a 'boys club':

> *"Yeah, for sure, like all the CYPSCs I've ever been a member of had a male chair, I think there's a bit of a boy's club still. Definitely, coming into the room in (the CYPSC I'm a member of), there are three or four males who've all been in Tusla or Tusla funded services for a very long time, who would be seen as senior people around the table" (Interview 6 C&V)*

It is noteworthy that a male coordinator referenced 'lads talk': "*there'd be lots of lads talk happening. You know before the meeting with (the male Chair) and the men, like talking about sport and stuff and that kind of pally informal relationships, you know, but they're more than that, well they're exclusionary" (Interview 16 Coordinator).*

A male CYPSC chairperson also expressed awareness of the potential of leadership to be male dominated, which requires influence to be exercised in a gender-conscious way:

> *"… the Council guy is male and the Tusla chair is male, so, you know, there's quite a lot of influence there, maybe you could argue held by males. But it's how we exercise our influence, I don't think we do it in a combat sort of way, we wouldn't be allowed do that anyway. I don't think it's an issue for (name of county) CYPSC" (Interview 21 Chairperson).*

A small number of participants' referenced gender playing a part in CYPSC, as it does in society in general:

> *"And I think it does because it does everywhere. If I'm looking around the table, there are, we would have probably majority women in our, in the group. But having said that, …there probably is a sense that the male voices may get heard more...that would be my sense anyway" (Interview 5 Statutory).*

Another female participant agreed with this position: *"Gender always plays a role…the CYPSC isn't any different from our normal, everyday lives so I think it does" (Interview 7 Statutory).*

One female member's views were that gender had an influence and that women were more powerful because they were part of the majority: *"Well the majority of us are women … I would say that the*

women are more powerful than the men, that might be to do with numbers, you know what I mean" (Interview 12 C&V).

Some stereotypical views on the roles of men and women were shared and developed, as indicated in the following quote:

> *"I think in the past it has been an issue where the Chair and vice chair were men, and you know men work in a very different way and I think men find it harder to work in an inclusive way whereas it comes more naturally to women. So, I think gender can be an issue … and I think … just generally men find it harder to kind of share power. At the moment it's not an issue because …we've a lot of really articulate and confident women who also work in an inclusive way." (Interview 15 C&V)*

An interesting finding is that only one interview participant, a coordinator, advised that issues regarding gender had been raised with him by a female CYPSC member:

> *"I do feel that the chair does give everybody an opportunity to speak. But one person in particular felt that any time she raised anything she was not given the time others were afforded. She had remarked to me that there's no issues there when a male member talks" (Interview 14 Coordinator).*

Perspectives on gender and power will be considered in the discussion chapter which follows, to consider power relations in contexts where women are more equally represented, as is the case in some of the examples above.

6.2.4 Summary

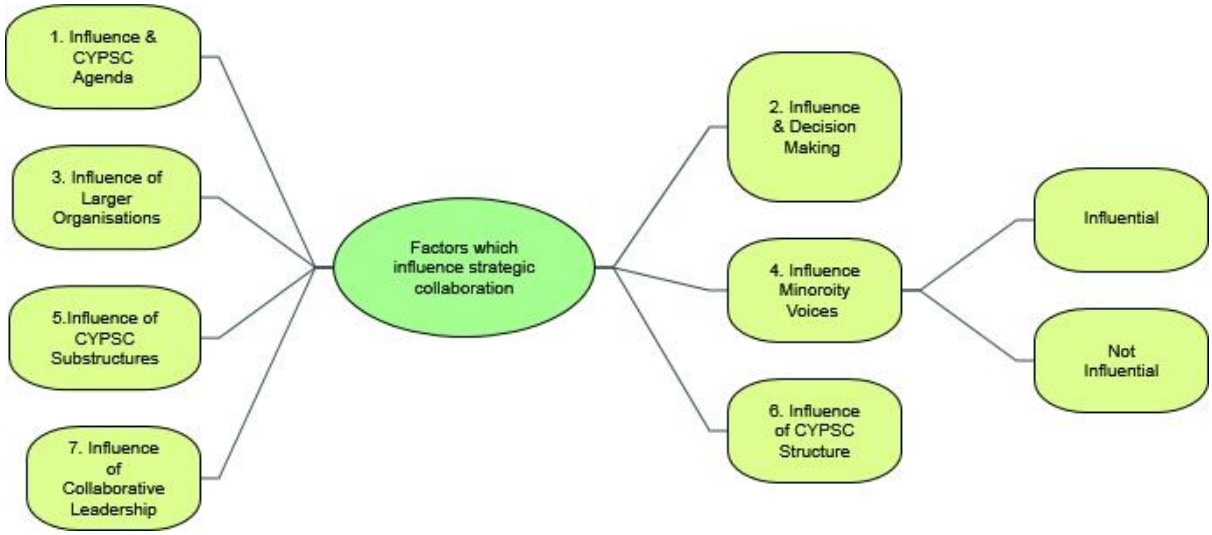
This section has considered perspectives on power at CYPSC, as expressed in quantitative and qualitative findings by study participants. Findings have been reported under the subthemes of power imbalance, personal power and gender and power. Findings indicate that power plays a significant part in the operation of these strategic collaborative structures. Also, factors related to power are impacted by issues related to structure, personal power and experience, and gender and leadership roles. These themes will be developed in the discussion to follow. The next theme which will be reported on is the theme of influence as it related to CYPSCs.

6.3 Perspectives on influence at CYPSC

This section is concerned with reporting findings related to the second theme emerging from data analysis, which is influence in strategic collaborative contexts. Here 'influence' is conceptualised in terms of "a way of having an effect on the attitudes and opinions of others" (Parsons, 1963, p.38) or the enactment of power. The main themes that emerged from the data analysis processes were

influence and the CYPSC agenda, influence and CYPSC decision making, influence and minority voices, the influence of substructures, influence of CYPSC structure, and influence of collaborative leadership. These are presented in the following thematic map:

Figure 13 Themes relating to Influencing the Operation of CYPSCs



6.3.1 Influence and the CYPSC agenda

The findings in relation to influence show that a majority of members felt they did not influence the CYPSC agenda, and dimensions related to this are reported in this section. Responses to questions about influence and the CYPSC agenda were framed from both the perspective of the broad CYPSC work plan or agenda and the perspective of CYPSC meeting agendas.

When survey participants were asked about their influence on the CYPSC agenda, a slight majority of participants 54% (n. 38) reported that they either had no influence, some influence or were unsure about this question, while the qualitative survey and interview data suggests that a majority felt they had limited influence. These views are exemplified in this quote: "*The agenda is generally the same each meeting, but I feel I can add to AOB if I need to" (Survey No. 24 C&V).* One participant was of the view that the agenda was set by the coordinator and chairperson: *"Already set by the CYPSC coordinator with the chairperson" (Survey No. 22 C&V).* Participants who were leaders of these strategic collaborative contexts also expressed an awareness of those in leadership positions influencing the CYPSC agenda: "*The coordinator role means that I can influence the agenda of the CYPSC significantly" (Survey 32 Co-ordinator).*

These views were elaborated on and supported during the interviews with some participants presenting the view that the agenda was set by the coordinator and chairperson, and that members could add to it. The following quote typifies responses to this question:

> *"I suppose in terms of the agenda setting for the CYPSC in (my County), that's generally done in a partnership with, I would say, the chair and coordinator, so in terms of influence, obviously, we can bring up stuff if we need to, or to raise issues if we need to under AOB, but I suppose the trajectory of the meeting is very much defined by the chair" (Interview 10 C&V).*

Some interview participants expressed an awareness of an open meeting agenda: *"I mean you have the opportunity to contribute to the agenda. I definitely think people are heard around the table and people have the opportunity to say stuff and it's taken on board" (Interview 4 Statutory).* Another agreed with this position: *"I would say it is an open agenda and open-ended and people can bring their items into the discussion and influence how that discussion is going to go" (Interview 2 Statutory).* Those who did not feel influential expressed views that the CYPSC agenda was tilted towards certain members or roles. The chairperson and coordinator *"would set the agenda, so it follows a fairly standard format every time we meet" (Interview 10 C&V).* A participant expressed her view that the agenda was *"controlled by the chair" (Interview 15 C&V).* The impact on the agenda of having a very influential chairperson, who used that influence was a view reported by one coordinator as impacting the CYPSC agenda: "*The agenda was quite tight and very much directed by the chairperson" (Interview 16 Coordinator).* One participant was of the view that CYPSC structures were *"too social work/social care focused" (Interview 22 Statutory)* when a broader focus is expected.

CYPSC coordinators described a standard agenda for meetings, which is prepared in advance by them and approved by the chairperson: *"I would have reports from any of the working groups and any other pieces of significant work that we have" (Interview 17 Coordinator).* Another coordinator stated: *"So between the chairperson and myself the agenda is, I suppose controlled in inverted commas. It is being very mindful of the issues that people are concerned about or whatever…that we're looking at live issues not just minutes and matters arising" (Interview 11 Coordinator).* Chairpersons expressed an awareness of their potentially influential position and the potential for this to be problematic: *"As Chair I feel centrally involved - along with the co-ordinator and other members in setting the agenda" (Survey 52 Chairperson).* A chairperson who participated in interview elaborated:

> *"I suppose I do get the say, I would hope I'm not doing that in a way that's problematic but I suppose there's an opportunity for it to be problematic,… so there maybe is a potential there. No, other than the fact that I kind of have veto's over things, I don't think it is. I think it's fairly balanced, would be my take on it" (Interview 19 Chairperson)*

The challenge of developing a common agenda was also expressed, where participants were expected to prioritise collaborative goals over their individual agency or service goals, exemplified in this quote:

> *"Sometimes I think that the groups that are around the table, are coming with agendas, and actually don't see that it's not about your agenda, it's about the overall needs. And I think that some of the groups around the table, either strategically don't want to shift or politically don't want to shift or don't see the actual value of being part of CYPSC" (Interview 9 C&V).*

6.3.2 Influence and decision making

With regard to the amount of influence participants felt they had on decision making at CYPSC, a finding is that a significant number of members felt that they were not influential when decisions were made at CYPSC, but there was a divergence of views on this topic. Those in leadership positions reported that decisions were reached by consensus more often than members. Generally, participants considered themselves more influential on decision making than agenda setting.

Influence on Decision Making

Analysis of the survey data showed that 46% (n.32) of participants reported that they had no influence, some influence or were unsure about questions regarding their influence on decision making at CYPSC, while 54% (n.38) reported being either influential or highly influential on decision making of CYPSC. This information is presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Influence on Decision Making

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No Influence - Unsure	32	45.7
	Influential - Highly Influential	38	54.3
	Total	70	100.0

Among those who reported feeling influential in relation to decision-making, some survey participants provided qualitative responses supporting this point: *"Decision making is taken as a group at meetings" (Survey 9 Statutory).* It is also exemplified in this interview response from a CYPSC coordinator:

> *"If a decision is taken on a matter or on a proposal, it's reached by consensus. And people are given the space to express their views but whether people agree with it or not, this is*

noted in the minutes…At the end of the day when it comes to power and decisions, it rests with the committee and I think that's really the best way forward, because if coordinators are making decisions then why would we have a committee?" (Interview 14 Coordinator).

One of those who did not feel influential commented: *"My opinion is valued but I don't feel I am involved in final decisions" (Survey 35 C&V).* Related to this point, one participant pointed to a lack of decision making at CYPSC: *"I don't think we make a lot of decisions as a CYPSC therefore I don't feel I have much influence particularly" (Survey 44 C&V).* The influence of the substructure of CYPSC on decision making was referred to by one participant and is elaborated on in Section 6.3.5.

Ability to be responsive and flexible

The findings offer another perspective on decision making, with a focus on the ability to be responsive, flexible, and action-oriented reported by study participants. It is noteworthy that a statutory participant was of the view that the C&V sector had more influence on decision making than the statutory sector, due to their ability to be responsive and flexible when issues arise, as exemplified in this quote: *"if there's creative things that need to happen, a lot of the delivery actually happens by the Community and Voluntary organisations (Interview 21 Chairperson).* Another participant shares this perspective:

"I think with the likes of Tusla and the HSE, there is very little they can do. Like, national policy is national policy and they are big organisations that are going to struggle to make any changes within the organisation or get big decisions made…the community organisations…they are probably a bit more agile in their ability to make decisions" (Interview 1 Statutory).

These perspectives link back to perspectives on the ability of the C&V sector to respond creatively, discussed in Section 6.2.1.

6.3.3 Influence by a single agency or larger organisations on CYPSC

The findings indicate that CYPSC processes are influenced by large organisations who have a variety of representatives at CYPSC (for example, the HSE), and/or single organisations who have specific leadership roles (for example, Tusla and City and County Councils).

Of the 69 survey participants who answered the question "To what extent is the agenda for CYPSC determined by any single agency?" 27% (n. 19) of participants reported "Not at all", 26% (n.18) reported this happened occasionally and 19% (n.13) reported that this happened often. A substantial proportion of the sample were unsure about this question (27%; n.19). This information is represented in tabular format overleaf:

Table 5: Influence by a Single Agency on CYPSC

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not at all	19	27.1
	Occasionally	18	25.7
	Unsure	19	27.1
	Often	13	18.6
	Total	69	98.6
Missing	System	1	1.4
Total		70	100.0

Views on influence by a single agency or larger member organisations were expressed in the survey by members and indicate that large organisations or single organisations had greatest influence. One participant from the C&V sector advised: *"I try to bring the voice of the community, but it is led mainly by Tusla managed staff" (Survey 35 C&V).* The impact of having leadership provided by a single agency and funding for many of the organisations who are members from that agency was also referenced: *"Chair is from Tusla, Co-ordinator is from Tusla. Most agencies funded by Tusla" (Survey 55 C&V).* This view was also expressed in interviews and reflected in this response: "*I suppose they're (Tusla) very much leading on it and it seems very much, like a Tusla initiative. Tusla are the Chair, they provide the admin support to the CYPSC coordinators, they host the meeting so, it is very much a Tusla thing" (Interview 6 C&V).* A participant who was a Tusla employee stated:

> *"I think it's just inevitable that influence isn't shared when we are the statutory funder and also we've been given the role to be the chairs and coordinators. Once you have set that up there is the differential from the beginning no matter how hard you work to share that power" (Interview 5 Statutory)*

A participant who was a Tusla manager, expressed an awareness of the influence of statutory agencies:

> *"I mean, usually the statutory services like ourselves, I think, I suspect we probably do have greater influence, because people are looking to how we're going to respond to different issues. And again, because we're funding lots of other services around the table" (Interview 7 Statutory).*

Coordinators expressed an awareness of the lack of influence C&V members may feel, if they are from funded agencies: *"people view the role of Tusla as being very significant, and if they are being*

funded by Tusla they are inclined not to be too contentious at CYPSC" (Interview 17 Coordinator). The importance of chairpersons being aware of and managing this was expressed: *"there's a bit of a skill for chairs to battle that and push that back, you know, like, this is more about being a good chair than about being a part of Tusla in my mind" (Interview 21 Chairperson).* Coordinators also expressed an awareness of statutory partners having more influence and the delicate balancing act they are part of in countering this "*the statutory partners certainly have more influence, obviously the Tulsa area manager as a chair, we have a senior level representative from Tusla" (Interview 16 Coordinator).* They explain how they describe the role Tusla has on CYPSC:

> *"When I'm introducing CYPSC to a new member I say, I'm employed by Tusla, but I take my direction of work from the committee. That being said, I'm a colleague of my Tusla colleagues so it is understandable that I come from that perspective, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm married to it, you know so people know that I don't take the Tusla line, and some people don't see me as Tusla, but others do" (Interview 16 Coordinator).*

The challenge of being employed by one of these large organisations, Tusla, but being responsible for a strategic collaboration of many partner agencies was expressed by all participating coordinators and is well characterised in this quote:

> *"So I would say this, that Tusla being the chair of CYPSC, that sometimes a Tusla agenda can be put forward or across through the CYPSC but, it's important to remember that even though it's led by Tusla, CYPSC is about improving outcomes for children, young people across all sectors and not just Tusla" (Interview 14 Coordinator).*

Views that the largest organisations have the most influence on CYPSCs were expressed: "*Tusla and HSE are the best represented statutory agencies on the CYPSC so feel they have the strongest voices" (Survey 24 C&V).* Connected to this position were views on the influence of coming to the CYPSC table with a broad remit and area of responsibility and this leading to greater influence. One chairperson commented on this:

> *"I think a lot of it depends on again, say I'm coming from the Tusla side, like I'm bringing in knowledge from social work, from PPFS, from foster and aftercare … so I can wield a lot of influence, based on the breadth and depth of what I cover as an agency and the HSE is the same, it crosses disability, CAMHS, primary care, adult mental health. It funds things like Jigsaw for example. So, like, the big agencies come with a lot of information, and they can gather a lot of information, and they have a fairly good global picture of what's going on" (Interview 21 Chairperson).*

When asked to consider the influence of larger organisations on CYPSC, one participant who was a coordinator used the imagery of a telescope:

> *"it depends on which end of the telescope you're looking a … if we look at an action or an outcome or a need or … wherever we want to get to … if we start with the high end, Tusla have a huge amount of contribute. When you spin it the other way around and you're starting with looking at something from a universal, you know, Tusla obviously have a lot to contribute, but maybe not as much as some of the other organisations" (Interview 18 Coordinator)*

Findings show that there was a divergence of views on the influence of a single agency or larger organisations. A small number of participants reported that all perspectives were taken into account, exemplified in the following quote: *"I think while Tusla chair the meeting, in general, there is a very strong sense that everyone's perspective is taken into account" (Interview 9 C&V).* Further, some study participants expressed support for Tusla being the lead agency, because of its focus on services to children and young people. This view is expressed by a participant from the statutory sector: *"It has to be them, no one else because that's the national agency, the whole thing is going through them such as Children First you know, and Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, there is no better way than doing it through them" (Interview 3 Statutory).* Another quote exemplifies support for the role of Tusla in CYPSCs: *"I think the role of Tusla is a positive one" (Interview 20 C&V).*

6.3.4 Influence of minority voices on CYPSC

When considering aspects of influence in strategic collaboration, findings show an awareness among study participants of weaknesses related to the representation of minority voices. Findings emphasise the important role of the C&V sector in representing minority voices. Further, an acknowledgement that this was not direct representation of minority groups at CYPSC was found. There was a consistent response from participants across all data on this point.

When asked to consider how well voices of minority or vulnerable populations are represented at CYPSC meetings, the majority of survey participants, 61% (n.43), answered not at all, somewhat or unsure, while 39% (n.27) reported that they were represented well or very well. This information is presented in Table 6:

Table 6: Representation of minority voices

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not at all - Unsure	43	61.4
	Well - Very Well	27	38.6
	Total	70	100.0

Commentary on this question points to the important role the C&V sector play in representing these voices: "*It is really the three community and voluntary members who represent these voices" (Survey 24 C&V).* However, an acknowledgement that this is in an indirect way of having minorities participate is a finding: "*They are represented through the agencies working with these groups, not directly" (Survey 27 Statutory).*

These views were supported and elaborated on in the qualitative data, which also provides evidence of the complexities involved. The majority of interview participants advised that they did not feel the voices of minorities were well represented at the CYPSC table. A participant from the C&V sector advised: *"It is me who is representing minority voices. There's nobody representing minorities directly" (Interview 12 C&V).* Another participant acknowledged the challenges associated with hearing minority voices: *"it's hard to bring minorities around the table, there are certainly people there who would, you know speak on behalf of minorities" (Interview 6 C&V).* Some acknowledged the universal nature of this challenge, indicating that minority voices are heard: *"not as much as probably they should, but that is not just an issue for CYPSC. In many of the groups I have been in over many many years I would say minorities are not represented" (Interview 2 Statutory).* Some highlighted the lack of dedicated services having an impact on representation of minority voices in rural areas, exemplified in the following quote:

> *"it would be ideal if we could encourage representation from as many minority groups as possible and also other minority organisations, but our biggest problem in (County) is that we have the absence of dedicated services, like a Traveller group, or asylum seekers group. We have organisations that look after them, generally, but not specifically" (Interview 10 C&V)*

Where there are dedicated services, challenges also exist in relation to representation of minority voices, as expressed by a CYPSC coordinator: *"they are usually a small operation, who are much more hands on in delivery and don't have the luxury of time for meetings to talk about need" (Interview 18 Coordinator).*

Some participants expressed an awareness of attempts to get minority voices represented, as reflected

in this response: *"there is an effort made to get the voice there but whether that voice comes to the table or whether that's the right way to do it I'm not sure"* (*Interview 4 Statutory).* Another approach to hearing minority voices is expressed in this quote: *"they'll bring people in to do presentations on the work that's been carried out, but there's no one actually sitting at the table" (Interview 13 C&V*). However, concerns were expressed regarding the need to have minority voices represented in a meaningful way, that is not tokenistic. This perspective is exemplified in the following quote: *"… we don't really have organisations on the CYPSC who specifically work with those sort of minority groups. And we don't … invite people in. And whether that's an effective way of doing it anyway I don't know (Interview 15 C&V)*. These concerns are also referenced by this participant:

> *"… that whole tokenistic thing of having somebody on the committee because they are from a particular minority group, even if that is not in any way …beneficial for them to be at a meeting. I find that difficult, so I think there does need to be other ways of proofing, whether it's proofing the actions that are taken, or even proofing, like I know in our case, proofing materials that are produced in terms of minority groups, and even things like young people voices, you know, young people consultation and things like that. I'm not sure having people on the committee is always the best way to do that" (Interview 5 Statutory)*

A CYPSC coordinator cautioned against CYPSCs expanding to incorporate many different perspectives or views when representation of minority voices or positions may best take place at substructure level or coordinator level. This perspective is exemplified in the following quote: *"You can only have so many members, and the larger they (CYPSC) get, the more cumbersome they become, but I think a lot of that (minority representation) happens at subgroup level, you know, and a lot happens at coordinator level, for example relationships with local migrant agency" (Interview 16 Coordinator).* When considering the issue of minority representation, a CYPSC chairperson raised concerns regarding the lack of systems in place to address needs of minority groups:

> *"I don't think we have good systems in place to actually consider how we might be meeting the needs of those minorities. And as I say it did come up in our last CYPSC and we are going to look at it, because we're doing a planning session at our next one, to see if there's a way that we can get better at that" (Interview 19 Chairperson).*

This section has considered the extent or nature of the influence of minority voices on CYPSC and set out a number of findings for discussion around power, influence, and minority voices. Findings highlight a weakness in the CYPSC structure when issues of minority representation are considered. Findings emphasise the importance of the C&V sector in representing minority voices, while providing an acknowledgement of the lack of direct participation from minorities on CYPSCs.

6.3.5 Influence of CYPSC substructures on CYPSC processes

A finding shows the important role CYPSC substructures play, as spaces where members feel they have more influence and experience less of a power differential. A majority of participants reported that the substructure of CYPSC provides a context for collaborative working which is less hierarchical, less formal, and more action focused, which facilitates participation and influence. These views are shared across both data sets and among all types of participants, including statutory and C&V members, and CYPSC members and leadership. For example, in the qualitative survey data the following comments are representative: *"As I participate in the subgroup structures, I feel I can influence the work to some extent" (Survey 40 C&V).* Another participant advised: *"All agencies participate and contribute throughout the sub-group system" (Survey 36 C&V).*

In interviews, a large majority of participants referred to the importance of subgroups as spaces where dimensions related to power differentials are felt to a lesser extent. This perspective is well articulated by C&V participants:

> *"Definitely the subgroups are where stuff gets done... It's definitely a more welcoming space but very productive as well. And the fact that you have that mix of people who are implementing the work on the ground. So, they bring a real-world perspective which is very important…There is no real conflict, there's no real, no one really dominates the meetings and there's opportunity to say what you want to say" (Interview 10 C&V).*

Another participant outlined:

> *"I see that people are far more comfortable at the subgroup level, they feel they have the freedom to speak, and you don't have that hierarchy where it has to be x y or z that is going to be chairperson, the chairperson tends to rotate, you know and I suppose, people are more comfortable" (Interview 13 C&V).*

A participant from the statutory sector described the work of the CYPSC substructure in the following way:

> *"there are less people around the table, people around the table are probably more comfortable in that space, you're down to the bones, you've cutting off the fat and the meat and now you are actually talking about what your organisation has investment in and a part to play, as opposed to having nine other items on the agenda on CYPSC, before you get to something that you are in any way interested in" (Interview 22 Statutory)*

CYPSC leadership expressed an awareness of the part that subgroups play in the sharing of power and influence: *"if someone has a strong opinion about a matter that they wouldn't necessarily raise in the main committee, then it can be raised at working group level" (Interview 14 Coordinator).*

Coordinators were attuned to the sense of collaborative working that is created at substructure level, as exemplified in this quote:

> *"The working groups are where the work gets done. The main CYPSC is the helicopter view. And that just keeps it all on track, tracks the progress…whereas the working groups are getting all of the grunt work done, and it's generally people with common interests…the working groups are very very safe shared spaces, the power dynamics are not at play at all I would say, in a working group, and generally you won't have the most senior managers there, you'd have the people that are actually rolling up their sleeves and getting involved" (Interview 11 Coordinator).*

An awareness of the influence of substructure chairpersons was expressed by this participant: "*I chair the early years sub-committee and I feel I am very much delegated the power"* (*Interview 4 Statutory).* This view was supported by another participant who chaired a subgroup: *"I do think that probably myself as chair (of a Subgroup) and probably (name) as the coordinator would probably have, if we're honest, the most influence on the Subgroup" (Interview 5 Statutory).* Coordinators agreed with these views, as expressed in this quote regarding C&V members chairing substructures: *"there is a sense that because they are chairs of the working groups, I would think to a certain extent, they have an influence" (Interview 17 Coordinator).*

6.3.6 Influence of CYPSC structure

When asked to consider influence as it related to CYPSC membership, some interview participants considered the influence of CYPSC itself from a macro perspective, in terms of a vehicle to deliver actions at a national or policy level. Participants considered the positive outcomes achieved by CYPSCs, alongside a sense of frustration that there were few other opportunities to influence decisions at national level.

While an interview participant expressed the view that: *"… so much has been achieved, the work rate is phenomenal"* they did question the *"sphere of influence"* of CYPSC in the overall picture regarding children's wellbeing and outcomes. They elaborated by asking: *"where do you (CYPSC) fit in the overall structure, what is the role, but it's actually where CYPSC fits into the overall picture?"* (*Interview 10 C&V*). Another participant expressed their view in this way: *"I think that they actually have very little power to be fair".* They elaborated further:

> *"… people around the table can't make the decisions that are needed…people around the room can't action it, because they're not decision makers at that level. And if you're not, then what are you really affecting? I think you are just involved generally in kind of powder puff pieces and I'm not trying to be disrespectful, but you're not going to really affect the really big*

problems, and I'm sitting there thinking, get me out here like, so I can actually get back to work" (Interview 22 Statutory).

A sense of frustration regarding the lack of influence of CYPSC is reflected upon by this participant:

"… what power does the actual CYPSC have? Are we actually making a difference, other than locally on the ground? I think on the ground locally and in frontline services, mostly we're doing well, talking with each other and the relationships are good, but I'm not sure where it's having the positive influence at the interdepartmental level, and maybe that's too high an expectation but I thought actually that's what CYPSC was supposed to be about" (Interview 7 Statutory)

These perspectives are shared by those in leadership positions: *"In terms of the local agenda, I suppose, how we get stuff escalated from a local issue to a more regional or national issue, that's the piece that's missing I think" (Interview 11 Coordinator).* A CYPSC chairperson agreed with this position and expressed support for placing CYPSC on a statutory footing:

"I don't have the authority to say to the HSE … why don't you have more speech and language therapists in the area? Those conversations just don't happen at CYPSC, but if CYPSC had more teeth or was on a statutory basis, is that the kind of question that it would be asking, and on what authority, and you know, how would it really work as a Tusla area manager asking those questions? (*Interview 21 Chairperson).*

One example of a CYPSC using its "sphere of influence" was highlighted by a participant: *"This year we (CYPSC) wrote to the Taoiseach to highlight the needs in (County) because of Covid, and we got a good response and it was just fabulous that we all came together and all agreed and everyone was of one voice and that's when I think it can work really well" (Interview 6 C&V).* This is a clear example of a collaborative goal being achieved, but an outcome of this action was not expressed.

These findings point to the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of power and influence. On one hand, the earlier section shows the scope for more power and influence at subgroup level to be able to 'feed into' CYPSC, but the findings in this section also point to questions regarding the power and influence of the CYPSC structure itself to deliver actions or change. These contradictions will be discussed in further chapters.

6.3.7 Influence of collaborative leadership on CYPSC processes

As detailed in the context chapter, the DCEDIY provide national leadership for the CYPSC initiative, and have allocated operational leadership to Tusla Child and Family Agency. The findings show that participants viewed the CYPSC coordinator role as being very influential. The influence of the coordinator was, from the perspective of participants, derived from the breath of their local

connections and their "helicopter view", which I describe as those broad relationships they have with many services offered to children and young people in the area for which they have responsibility. A finding emphasises the importance of their approach to leadership and disparities between a sense of their perceived power by members but a sense of a lack of power from participating coordinators. CYPSC coordinators expressed a consciousness of their influence and leadership and the use of this in a positive way. Findings related to this topic will be reported in this section under the headings of leadership and the coordinator and leadership and the chairperson.

Leadership and the CYPSC Coordinator

Findings related to the influence of the CYPSC coordinator indicate that a significant majority 86% (n.60) regarded this role as being either very influential or influential. This information is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Influence of CYPSC Co-ordinator

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very Influential - Influential	60	85.7
	Somewhat Influential - Not Influential	10	14.3
	Total	70	100.0

Qualitative survey responses to this question supported these views. As reported by one participant: "*… the role of the coordinator is very influential" (Survey 7 Coordinator).* While the level of influence that coordinators have on CYPSCs is regarded as significant by study participants, they also expressed an awareness of the disparity between perceived power and real power. This is highlighted in the following response: "*They bring knowledge and information to the meeting; however, they have no influence over the participation or engagement of members" (Survey 16 Statutory).* Of the twenty CYPSC coordinator survey responses a total of 95% (n.19) reported that they felt they were either very influential or influential in terms of their positions of leadership. This is indicated in the following response: *"I am conscious that I have a very influential voice at the table and am careful about how I use that influence. For example, I would offer the facts on an issue rather than an opinion" (Survey 32 Coordinator).* The data to support this finding is presented in Table 8 on the next page:

Table 8: CYPSC Co-ordinators responses to their influence

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very influential	9	45.0
	Influential	10	50.0
	Somewhat influential	1	5.0
	Total	20	100.0

When participants had further opportunity to express views related to the leadership role of coordinators in qualitative data collection processes, a number of subthemes emerged, which will be discussed in this section. These subthemes are interpersonal skills, the coordinator as influential and the role of the relationship between coordinators and chairpersons.

Interpersonal skills

A finding regarding the collaborative leadership approaches of the CYPSC coordinator point to significant support among membership for their role, and the way that coordinators utilise their positions of influence in these complex collaborative structures. This finding was reflected across all statutory and C&V members and is exemplified in this response from a statutory participant: "*the coordinator role is the glue that brings it all together. It's a very important but very difficult role"* (*Interview 4 Statutory).* Further, a C&V member observed:

> *"I find the coordinator to be key to the CYPSC, they are coordinating you know like, funding and programs and stuff like that. I have found the coordinator to be excellent and I think she has a background in the C&V sector, so she's very understanding as well, I guess, of where we're coming from. And she works really hard, and she builds good working relationships with people individually. I probably think they're key to it" (Interview 12 C&V).*

Coordinator as influential

A finding is that some of the influence of coordinators comes from the 'helicopter view' they have of services related to children and families, exemplified in this quote: *"They are in constant touch with all agencies and have the helicopter view" (Survey 27 Statutory).* One participant, who had experience of the CYPSC coordinator role being vacant recalled a huge challenge in keeping the CYPSC initiative going without the coordinator. The findings emphasise the importance of the coordinator having good interpersonal skills: "*So much of the influence is based around relationship building; therefore, this role can be very influential" (Survey 21 Coordinator).*

A finding indicates the very influential role coordinators play in CYPSC. A participant who was a deputy chairperson described the coordinator as being *"the face of CYPSC"* and elaborated on this:

> *"… the coordinator is the most influential person around the table because, I'm not sure if she'd agree with me, but absolutely in terms of setting the agenda, setting the topics for discussion, the range of interaction she has between various agencies and individuals around the table… you influence the influencers" (Interview 2 Statutory).*

Chairpersons also expressed an awareness of the influence of the coordinator. This is exemplified in the following quote:

> "*I think they're quite an influential person in a positive way. I think that they're able to engage with people in a kind of, a real problem solving kind of way because … they're not strictly in the Tusla structure … people do see them as someone who can be of assistance in coordinating services better, and maybe people do perceive them as having lots of power, but then people probably think I have lots of power as an Area Manager, and I don't … I'd say it's that whole perception thing" (Interview 19 Chairperson)*

Findings show that responses related to the topic of the influential role of the CYSPC coordinator were not unanimous. This is exemplified in the following quote from one participant:

> *"… the coordinator having that title and having that position on a committee, they are highly thought of by a lot of people, they may have an influence with certain people at a certain level, but it's more perceived than they actually have, and I think that places an unrealistic or undue pressure on them at certain times, and they feel a need to deliver on certain things that they really can't without greater power" (Interview 22 Statutory).*

Some coordinator participants in this study were aware of their influential position regarding CYPSC, as expressed by this participant:

> *"I do think we have quite an influence on what goes on. I think we go out of our way as coordinators to be very well informed of what's going on in each of our counties. So, we use that information to inform at meetings what's going on in other projects, or areas...so I would think that we are seen as influential but in a positive way" (Interview 17 Coordinator).*

Another coordinator expressed her views about members' relationships with coordinators:

> *"I do think the relationship is with the coordinator. So, in itself, there is a power generated by the relationship which the coordinator has with different members. And I do think there is a kind of sense of loyalty in that. I think if this was a diagram, a Venn diagram, we're the piece*

in the middle… there is power in the CYPSC coordinator's role, but it's not what you would think of in terms of, you know, Boris Johnson or something, it's not like it's not like an overarching power, but it's a relationship power" (Interview 18 Coordinator)

Having a structured way of carrying out the work was an important factor for a participant who was a coordinator, in reducing the potential of coordinators to dominate CYPSC processes: *"we've such a structured way of doing our business, every three years we develop our work plan, we identify the actions that we're going to work on, we have to report on those actions, and the progress, and the barriers and the issues and address all of those" (Interview 11 Coordinator).* Another coordinator emphasised the value of their influential position in terms of having knowledge of what was happening in their area: *"if we don't know who might be the person to talk with, we will usually be able to link you in with someone" (Interview 16 Coordinator).* They also describe a delicate balancing act where the coordinator is *"in a position where some stakeholders see us as having power and influence and others see us as not high enough or strong enough or having as much influence to make any significant change. And so we're kind of caught in that middle place" (Interview 16 Coordinator).* Like other coordinator comments, expressed in Section 5.3.7, they referred to their role in terms of juggling *"it just kind of like juggling those balls in the air and trying to make sure none drop, and on occasion some do, and that's an ongoing challenge" (Interview 16 Coordinator).*

Findings indicating that the majority of CYPSC members viewed the coordinator role as being powerful and influential, were not necessarily shared by CYPSC coordinators, who described feelings of their lack of influence, in terms of their overall position within Tusla. This was expressed in this quote: *"the need of the structure that we're in now to understand us and be confident that we're more part of the system, that maybe they invest a little bit of additional resources in terms of admin support to kind of strengthen the CYPSC role" (Interview 16 Coordinator).*

Role of the relationship between coordinators and chairpersons

A small number of interview participants referenced relationships between the chairperson and coordinator and an awareness of the impact of the relationship between both roles. One response pointed to an awareness of the coordinator being directed by the chairperson: *"I think that (coordinator) is very careful about how she does her work, and everything is passed by the chair, which it should be, but I just don't know if she has the autonomy to do what she needs to do" (Interview 13 C&V).* An awareness of the need for the coordinator to manage the relationship between coordinator and chairperson is exemplified in this quote:

"I think, the other bit of the extent to which the coordinator seeks to influence the work is in their relationship with the chair. I would imagine, if that was a difficult relationship that would make the work of the CYPSC very difficult. So, a good coordinator is probably able to

very gently influence the agenda setting, and how the chair manages the meetings and prioritizes time, so yeah, I mean I think it probably depends on the personality of the coordinator" (Interview 15 C&V).

Influence of CYPSC Chairperson

Findings related to the influence of the role of CYPSC chairperson on CYPSC point to the significant level of influence they have and the important role their approach and attitude towards strategic collaboration plays. When survey participants were asked to consider the influence of the CYPSC Chairperson, the following picture emerged; 71% (n.50) of participants regarded the CYPSC chairperson as being either influential or very influential, while 26% (n.18) reported that they felt the CYPSC chairperson was either somewhat influential or not influential. Two participants did not answer this question. This information is presented in tabular format below:

Table 9: Influence of CYPSC Chairperson

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very Influential - Influential	50	71.4
	Somewhat Influential - Not Influential	18	25.7
	Total	68	97.1
Missing	System	2	2.9
Total		70	100.0

Commentary related to the role of the chairperson indicates the importance of the role in terms of facilitating a collaborative approach and discussion, while also providing leadership and developing positive relationships. This perspective is outlined in the following quote:

"The chair's ability to facilitate the discussion and try to guide and impact on the responses has an influence on how the process is guided/supported. The leadership and direction in this local case, is very positive and has developed positive relationships and good oversight of the overall understanding of CYPSCs work; its capacity to respond and its limitations" (Survey 17 Coordinator)

A chairperson who participated in the study shared these views relating to the importance of a collaborative approach which encourages discussion, as exemplified in the following quote: *"I am the chairperson and facilitate informed discussion to enable strong discussion using an evidence-based approach" (Survey 38 Chairperson).*

Not all responses reflected an influential role for the chairperson, as outlined in this response from a coordinator:

> *"The chairperson is a very busy Tusla Area Manager and has not been very involved in the development, planning and operation of the CYPSC. Of course, the chairperson of the CYPSC does have influence in terms of chairing the interagency discussion of the county level CYPSC main structure, but the real work to date has taken place through the Subgroups who are planning and implementing the CYPSC plan" (Survey 70 Coordinator)*

In interviews, when participants had an opportunity to reflect on the role of the chairperson, findings pointed to the chairperson being a very influential person in strategic collaborative processes. Many participants had experienced a number of different chairpersons and different styles of chairing. One expressed very clear expectations of the role of chairperson in their interview: *"their role is to bring the different people around the table together and get them, encourage them and facilitate their conversation" (Interview 10 C&V).* Those who had experienced a change in chairperson commented on the different styles or approaches to collaboration used, with one participant advising of the current chair: *"she's very good, straight up, no messing. So, I don't know how the others feel, I have just found her very good at facilitating the meeting",* which was not their experience of a previous chairing style: *"the current (chair) probably delegates better and respects the roles of other key workers around the table, that's what I get so far" (Interview 12 C&V).*

The importance of having a committed chairperson was expressed by this participant:

> *"… having a chair who takes the role seriously, who understands the purpose and function of the CYPSC, obviously who is able to, you know, put their own ego aside, you know, their own interests, and those of their own agency or whatever, you know, so somebody who can work inclusively is important, and inevitably, you know, not everybody can work in that way" (Interview 15 C&V).*

This perspective is emphasised in the following quote:

> *"So, I've had experience of three or four different CYPSCs now where there has been different chairs and it's been very interesting to see when a chair is extremely committed and passionate about CYPSC and doesn't just see it as something that they have to do, but actually sees the benefits of it and really brings it to life, and actually what can be achieved is outstanding, in comparison to the leadership that may view CYPSC as something that they have to be part of but don't necessarily see a huge amount of value in because of other priorities" (Interview 9 C&V).*

A participant who was a coordinator also commented on the importance of having a committed chairperson: *"I do believe that if you have a chair that's interested in the work of CYPSC and wants to drive the initiative forward I do think it's half the battle and I do think that we have a chair that does that" (Interview 14 Coordinator).* Participants' ability to sense a chairperson's commitment to the process was expressed as follows:

> *"I think certainly I would feel that has been a difference in terms of the buy in of some one individual versus another, you know, in terms of them buying into CYPSC as the concept, in terms of their commitment to it, whereas you get the impression with some others, in my experience that, it's a task they have to do, but in the scheme of all the other tasks they have to do, it's one they would prefer not to do" (Interview 20 C&V).*

Different chairperson styles were identified by coordinators. These styles are exemplified in the following quotes: *"I find he's very even-handed, I think he can influence to a certain extent, but I don't think he would ever be dictatorial in his approach, that's not my experience. I have had a very good experience of him to date" (Interview 17 Coordinator).* Another described a good chairperson in terms of being a consensus builder and compared experiences of chairpersons:

> *"… she was a lot more of a consensus builder, and a lot more of a listening to people's points and taking them on board and responding in a conciliatory way, even if she didn't agree with them, you know, by far the best area manager and chair I've ever had. And maybe matches my own approach in terms of trying to build relationships rather than to, you know, dominate them" (Interview 16 Coordinator).*

Findings show that chairpersons' perspectives on their role diverged with members perspectives. Participating chairpersons advised that their role may be perceived as being more powerful than it is. This is exemplified in the following quote: *"people probably think I have lots of power as an area manager, and I don't like. I'd say it's that whole perception thing" (Interview 19 Chairperson).* They elaborated:

> *"I don't carry that power with me, like in a heavy way. I try to, you know, I'm quite conscious of trying to carry it in quite a light way. So, I don't, I'm not imposing that power, that would not kind of be my style, whereas other people who get the big boss job, feel they do need to show people that they are the big boss, but I don't like that approach" (Interview 19 Chairperson)*

Another participant who was a chairperson expressed the importance of good skills at chairing meetings:

"… this is more about being a good chair than about being a part of Tusla in my mind, so anybody, an experienced chair could chair CYPSC if they knew what it was about, and could come in and chair it and Tusla could just be one of the parties that were on the table, and in some senses that would be better because you know, it would put us on a more level playing field… So, you know, I've often thought it would be better to have an independent chair in there, now who that would be or what they would be I don't know, but it certainly then would stop people thinking that CYPSC is a Tusla construct" (Interview 21 Chairperson).

6.3.8 Summary

This section has presented findings related to aspects of influence in strategic collaborative structures, including agenda and decision-making processes and the influence of collaborative leadership. It is interesting to note in this section and throughout the thesis, how participants express power themselves, such as carrying power and influence 'lightly'. The different expressions and interpretations of power and influence implicit within some of the quotes will be expanded on in the discussion chapter. The final section of this chapter is concerned with aspects of conflict as they manifest in CYPSC.

6.4 Conflict in strategic collaborative processes

In this study, I wished to explore aspects of conflict in strategic collaborative processes, in particular perspectives on how conflict emerges in CYPSCs, and whether it is resolved or not. I was also interested to establish what factors related to power structures, relations, and processes, contributed to conflict or the lack of conflict in strategic collaborative contexts. Overall, the findings show that conflict in CYPSCs is managed and as a result, is not a serious issue. There was a consistent response from all participants in relation to conflict and CYPSC participation. These perspectives will be the focus of this section.

In the survey, participants were invited to reflect on aspects of conflict from the perspective of the frequency of disagreement. Participants reported that disagreements arise some of the time (60%), not at all (23%), or that they were unsure about this question (12%). Some of those who were unsure about this question explained that they were new CYPSC members. This information is presented in Table 10 on the next page:

Table 10: Frequency of Conflict at CYPSC meetings

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Some of the time	42	60.0
	Not at all	16	22.9

	Unsure	12	17.1
	Total	70	100.0

While 60% of survey participants reported conflict arising sometimes at CYPSC, the analysis of the qualitative survey data points to a strategic collaborative landscape which is characterised by a lack of disagreement: "*Disagreements never arise; differences of opinion sometimes do but these are resolved by discussion either at CYPSC or after as appropriate" (Survey 7 Coordinator).* This perspective regarding lack of disagreement is further exemplified in the following quote: *"I have never been present at a meeting where there has been a disagreement - we discuss topics and share ideas and knowledge and work respectfully with one another to achieve the best outcome for the children and families in and around our communities" (Survey 8 C&V).*

Views regarding little or no conflict in CYPSC contexts were supported by the majority of interview participants, who described being part of strategic collaborative structures where little or no conflict was the norm, and these perspectives were found to be consistent in data collection processes. These views are elucidated in this interview: "*There's never any serious conflict at meetings themselves" (Interview 13 C&V).* They are supported also by this quote: *"That's interesting because I'm struggling to think of any conflict. It's been quite a while, I don't know if that's good or bad, I think conflict can be a good thing" (Interview 15 C&V).* One participant referenced an example of a conflict which arose as a result of having a vacant coordinator post but could not think of any other scenario where conflict emerged. This stance regarding a lack of conflict was shared by another participant:

> *"I think where there are differences of opinion, generally, it hasn't led to conflict in my experience, but, you know, things have been teased out, and then a consensus arrived at. I can't think of an actual example where I thought things were getting a bit heated here. I don't recall an example of that" (Interview 20 C&V)*

Participants who were CYPSC coordinators reported low levels of conflict. This position is exemplified in the following quote: "*I've never experienced direct conflict"* as in *"somebody is going to get up and walk out and slam the door" (Interview 18 Coordinator).* However, they continued by questioning that perhaps a more acceptable way for senior managers to express their dissatisfaction is that *"people just don't turn up, or they leave, walk away, you know, their attendance changes or something like that" (Interview 18 Coordinator).*

The following quote regarding the importance of the approach of chairpersons from a participant who was a CYPSC coordinator underscores a style that is facilitative, which may contribute to a lack of conflict in CYPSC contexts:

> *"I would find that they're (chairperson) very open to honest and open discussion, that if people don't participate, they would encourage them to offer an opinion, if they have one. And very often they would say so there's a consensus on this, so we agreed to go ahead and do this, or do we need to propose and second it, and I don't experience huge conflict" (Interview 17 Coordinator).*

A participant who was a coordinator advised: *"As far as I'm concerned it's an open and safe forum for thrashing out these things and we haven't had a whole pile of conflict" (Interview 11 Coordinator).*

Study participants referenced robust discussions, as opposed to conflict: "*I've never witnessed conflict but there is good robust discussion" (Interview 3 Statutory).* This position regarding robust discussions is further exemplified in the following quote:

> *"I don't think I've ever seen conflict, like you know if someone says oh I don't agree with that at all and I'll tell you why, you're often kind of laughing at it at the end, you know, and it's done in a nice way. I don't think I've ever witnessed conflict, maybe a bit of frustration or passion I suppose, people come and they're very passionate about an issue that's coming up in their organization" (Interview 6 C&V)*

Across the data, those who did describe times when disagreements arose pointed to these being caused by the allocation of funding and differing priorities of different members, reflected in the following response:

> *"Disagreements can arise in terms of funding priorities from time to time or in respect of prioritisation of actions. However, in my time on the CYPSC I have never experienced a time when there were serious fall outs or upset. Matters are normally sorted by consensus after a full discussion on relevant issues" (Survey 3 C&V).*

A participant pointed to the possibility that topics which may potentially cause conflict do not get airtime:

> "*But one or two occasions when "unwanted topics/issues" were raised, there was a quick sense of impatience and a hurried move on to the next topic. So, it felt like it was being swept under the carpet. When this was challenged, it was either moved on directly (and impatiently) or completely blanked and not addressed (Survey 20 Statutory).*

Study participants also wondered about conflict taking place 'behind the scenes'. An awareness of conflict 'behind the scenes' was expressed by this participant: *"It doesn't come up particularly in the CYPSC committee, but I would be aware of different bits and pieces behind the scenes, as there has to*

be as you're trying to bring a whole pile of people together who all have different agendas" (Interview 4 Statutory). An awareness of conflict 'behind the scenes' was expressed by a chairperson who speculated that conflict may emerge at subgroup level, possibly because of a greater sense of shared influence and power at subgroup level. They thought that perhaps coordinators see conflict more than chairpersons, and expressed an opinion that a lack of conflict is not necessarily a positive feature of CYPSCs:

> "*… in general, it's interesting that there's no conflict, because really, like there's huge issues about the way that services are provided, particularly by the statutory organisations, there are deficits, you know, serious deficits that have impacted children in statutory provision, yet it doesn't get raised" (Interview 19 Chairperson).*

A participant who was a deputy chairperson, shared an awareness of meetings occurring outside of CYPSC meetings to prevent conflict arising at committee level, suggesting a more indirect than direct approach to conflict in CYPSC contexts:

> "*Conflict is rare. We generally work by consensus and the discussions are usually cordial, there are never really any outbursts or strong disagreements between members. There might be some stuff that we need to work through. I would say bi-laterals outside of the meeting will ease a lot of concerns or issues that might be working up between people" (Interview 2 Statutory)*

When asked how disagreement was resolved, a majority of survey participants reported that disagreement was resolved by verbal debate, 60% (n.42), while a significant number of participants reported that they had not observed disagreement 25.7% (n.18). This information is presented in tabular format in Table 11 on the next page:

Table 11: How is disagreement resolved?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Verbal debate	42	60.0
	Vote taking	1	1.4
	Have not observed disagreement	18	25.7
	Unsure	9	12.9
	Total	70	100.0

Some study participants provided examples of conflict not being dealt with adequately at CYPSC level, including this one:

> *"In another CYPSC meeting, I suppose, there was a discussion around something – a decision had been made and a member wasn't happy with it, and kept coming up for about three meetings, and it wasn't actually dealt with, effectively, in terms of being shut down and closed. It had to be given airtime, even though the decision was going to be the same" (Interview 9 C&V).*

One participant had experienced conflict between the chairperson and coordinator: *"the only time there's conflict is where one person has a very clear idea of the direction, and it's my way or the highway and there needs to be kind of a change in direction then for someone else. And it's generally the coordinator and the chair" (Interview 10 C&V).* An interview participant described an experience of outright conflict: *"In (County), there was one instance where like I left a meeting because I felt it was just a waste of time, and I told everybody there that, which isn't like me really, usually I'm more controlled than that" (Interview 22 Statutory).* In another interview, the healthy nature of conflict was expressed: *"no one should be ostracised because there was a particular view on whatever, you know, that they should be able to express it and listen to the other side of the argument and come to somewhere in the middle. So, I don't worry too much about conflict" (Interview 8 C&V).* Another participant agreed with this stance: *"I think, there is conflict, but as far as I have seen it is positive conflict. Things are challenged and questions are asked but there is a high level of respect for the people around the table, among the people around the table" (Interview 3 Statutory).*

In this section I have reported on views relating to conflict in CYPSCs. Overall, findings indicate a lack of conflict, but also that conflict may be managed in more subtle than overt ways, such as outside of or in-between meetings. It is possible that in terms of power and influence, this links back to earlier findings regarding CYPSC members from Tusla funded agencies being reluctant to challenge decision

making processes. This has implications for collaborative working will be elaborated on in the chapter that follows.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored aspects of power, influence, and conflict in CYPSCs, which are strategic collaborative processes established to improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families. Across both findings' chapters, several contributions to the knowledge regarding aspects of power structures, relations, and processes in strategic collaborative structures are reported. Many conceptualisations of collaborative working have neglected to consider how power impacts this type of working. By theorising the role of power, I have shown how power shapes and impedes collaborative working. Overall, the findings point to the significant impact of power structures, relations, and processes on CYPSC structures and functioning. Some members reported feelings of powerlessness related to their membership of CYPSCs. The effect of personal power and gender was considered. The complex nature of these strategic collaborative structures and the many factors which impact who or what organisations have influence were discussed in the second part of this chapter. It appears that these feelings of powerlessness and lack of influence contribute to structures which are relatively free from conflict, as expressed in the third section of this chapter.

Overall, the findings drawn from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data show a divergence of views on power, influence, and decision-making at CYPSC, which is problematic for these strategic collaborative structures which have the responsibility of agreeing common goals to improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families. The implications of these findings for collaborative structures will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider how the findings, alongside the literature on collaboration and power can address the research question and objectives. The chapter aims to show how the integration of both the collaborative literature and the power literature and a critical analysis of these can be used to address the research objectives. This, in turn, informs the development of the preliminary framework designed to address issues of power in strategic collaborative contexts.

The first objective of this research study was to explore the operation of power in collaborative working within the specific context of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs). This mixed methods study sought the views of CYPSC membership and leadership in Ireland and applied the lens of power on these strategic collaborative contexts. The aim of the study was to generate an understanding of how power structures, relations, and processes impact strategic collaboration. The intention was to use this critical understanding to develop a preliminary framework and recommendations that could support strategic collaboration. The rationale for conducting the study was that, despite moves towards strategic collaborative working which focuses on improving outcomes for all children and young people, there is a dearth of research and literature relating to consideration of the impact of power in these contexts.

This chapter will have as its focus the relevance of the research findings to the study aim and objectives, or why they matter, and will demonstrate the extent of the contribution to the area of study. To do so, I follow a structure to address the research questions which facilitates the building up of a general understanding of power. To start with, I focus on the literature and findings related to the concept of 'power over', which emphasises the capacity of power and its significance, even when power is not being used in an obvious way. I continue with a consideration of the exercise or use of power or 'power to', which builds on aspects of the productive nature of power, generally considered in a positive light. The section then considers the literature and findings related to the concepts of power, knowledge, and governmentality and what these may mean for strategic collaboration towards wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. I discuss the findings related to the literature on aspects of organisational power and flows. This is followed with consideration of the literature and findings on personal power and leadership because my findings indicate that issues related to personal power and leadership have a significant impact on strategic collaborative contexts. Finally, the findings and literature related to the social bases of power, within which aspects of gender and minority representation, are considered. The structure of this chapter supports the discussion of the findings, in light of the extant literature. The headings are:

1. ‘Power over’ and conflict
2. ‘Power to’ and productive power
3. Power, knowledge, and governmentality
4. Organisational power and flows
5. Personal power and leadership
6. Social bases of power, to include gender and minorities.

Broadly speaking I am using these headings as a scaffold, while also acknowledging that the categorisation of themes is necessarily a “loose fit”. For example, while much of the literature links the concepts of ‘power over’ and ‘power to’, I have separated them here to highlight the distinction between the capacity for and exercise of power.

The chapter concludes with the presentation of a preliminary framework for strategic collaborative processes, which supports reflection on how power structures, relations, and processes impact strategic collaboration. It addresses the second objective of this study: To design a preliminary framework to support collaborative working which reflects the operation of power, as discovered, in the study.

7.2 ‘Power over’ and conflict

In the literature, the concept of ‘power over’ is described by Gohler (2009, p.28) as that which means “power over other people, enforcement of one’s own intentions over those of others, and is thus only conceivable in a social relation”. The findings of this study add to this understanding of power by locating the concept within a specific example of organisational relations expressed through collaborative structures. Gohler (ibid, p.28) argued that exercising ‘power over’ in a social (or organisational) context produces a “negative result for those subjected to it because it narrows their field of action”. In his three-dimensional approach to power, Lukes (1974, 2005) emphasises the impact of ‘power over’ by highlighting difficulties with those aspects of power which cannot be observed, or those issues which do not make it to agenda or decision-making processes. When the concept was explored in this study, findings indicated that aspects of ‘power over’ had a significant impact on collaborative functioning.

In this study, experiences of ‘power over’ were found to be interconnected with deeper and broader structural and organisational experiences. I have presented findings that show this interconnectedness when participants outlined their experiences of the CYPSC agenda being influenced by statutory organisations which had a variety of representatives on CYPSC such as the HSE and Tusla. Experiences of ‘power over’ were also connected with those organisations who had specific leadership roles, such as Tusla and City or County Councils. Many participants, especially those from the C&V sector, expressed a view that statutory organisations or those in positions of leadership had

'power over' the CYPSC agenda and work plan. This highlights the capacity for power described by Lukes (1974, 2005) which is possessed by those statutory organisations who participate, but which is denied or not available to C&V organisations. These findings support the scholarship of Haugaard (2002, p.309), who commented that "structures do not confer power equally across the system" but instead confer "large amounts of power upon some individuals and none upon others. The findings are also in line with those of other writers, who conclude that stakeholders with little power may not collaborate voluntarily and may be pressured into agreements they do not want (Alamgir and Banerjee, 2019: Gray and Purdy, 2018). The inclusion of C&V membership in CYPSCs is important to support the development of flexible responses and goals. However, their membership and participation need to be valued. Further, consideration should be given as to whether they are collaborating voluntarily or not. My findings highlight risks that collaborative contexts may "restrict the participation of low-power stakeholders", who may also disproportionately bear the costs of implementing whatever agreements are reached during deliberations, as found by Gray et al (2022, p.15). It is interesting to note that Lukes concept of 'false consciousness' (1974, 2005), where the less powerful are not aware of their real interests, was not supported by the findings of this study. Many C&V study participants expressed awareness of a power imbalance, and the lack of awareness of these views was more likely to be expressed by statutory agencies, and some in leadership positions. To use the terminology in the literature, a finding is that C&V sector members expressed an experience of 'power over' alongside 'power to' or 'power with'. This finding regarding the interconnectedness between aspects of structure and aspects of power implies that beyond skills, structures are needed to facilitate power-sharing.

Findings from this study show that the capacity for or potential of power is as important or influential as the exercise of power. Tusla Area Managers who hold the position of CYPSC chairpersonship, have the perceived capacity to alter funding for other member organisations, and even if this is not exercised, the capacity of that power position is highlighted. This finding connects with aspects of Lukes three-dimensional model, which encourages consideration of those aspects of power which are least visible. The finding also connects strongly with Gohler's (2009, p.37) conclusion that structures "open up certain options to act and close off others", overlapping with approaches to the study of organisational power, which are discussed later in the chapter.

Lukes' model encourages the consideration of those items or goals which do not make it to the agenda. Findings in this study show that a participant identified a challenge related to a focus on social care and social work sectors, when their role had an education focus. There are two points to make related to this perspective. The first is that it is possible that this imbalance relates to aspects of representation, where representation from social care and social work is stronger than representation from the education sector, and that those who influence are those who participate. That the best

represented agencies have the strongest voices is not a surprising finding but is confirmed empirically here. Further, this finding is connected with Foucault's conceptualisation of knowledge, and emphasises the possibility that forms of knowledge related to social care and social work may be most powerful when compared with educational or community development knowledge. Policy guidance for CYPSCs (DCYA, 2019) allocates equal 'power' to all five national outcomes for children and young people, and therefore requires CYPSC structures to have a balanced, broad focus, which value all representation and knowledge. If work towards one of the five national outcomes is more prominent or holds more power, this has implications for an unbalanced project, as highlighted by Flyvberg (1991) in his Aalborg project study. That it is a challenge to value all knowledge equally is acknowledged in both the collaborative and power literatures. The collaborative literature acknowledges a complex context where there are "multiple actors and multiple interests" (Swartz, 2007, pp.104-105), and risks that some interests dominate.

Findings from this study suggest the possibility that those who have not been in a position to contribute to the agenda from sectors such as health and education, do not attend CYPSC meetings. However, as this study was an exploration of the capacity for and exercise of power, there is no concrete way of establishing the views of those who do not participate. Further research on this topic is needed to tease out these positions.

In applying Lukes' concepts of 'power over' and 'latent conflict', participants in this study were asked to consider those agencies which should participate, which do not. In asking this question, I wished to establish whether aspects of latent conflict were connected with a lack of representation of some agencies. Participants confirmed gaps related to health, education, social protection, and criminal justice fields. However, unlike Lukes' suggestion that there were issues of power at play in blocking the participation of some, participants in this study suggested that those who do not participate do so by choice. In not engaging in CYPSCs, agencies which should participate miss out on opportunities to represent the perspectives or needs of children, young people, and families that they represent or work with. Further, they miss out on the opportunity to contribute to strategic wellbeing goals for children and families.

The findings show that study participants had experiences connected with the concept of 'power over', with many participants indicating that they were not influential regarding decision-making. These findings are supported by the literature on collaboration which has found that collaborative processes can bias decisions towards those participants with greater resources (Huxham and Vangen, 2000, 2005, 2012). While the findings show diverse perspectives related to this topic, generally there was a distinction made between views of statutory and C&V members. The findings indicate that some statutory participants were of the view that C&V sector participants were influential in terms of

decision-making, due to an ability to be responsive and flexible when issues arise, which they are not always in a position to do. Findings show that some C&V sector participants reported feelings regarding a lack of influence arising from the external allocation of the positions of chairperson and deputy chairperson to the statutory sector, reflected in concerns raised in the collaborative literature that collaborative structures are often not within the control of their members (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). Lukes' model combined with aspects of the collaborative literature encourages reflection on non-participation in collaborative contexts. Findings of this study reveal the significance of organisational contexts, external to CYPSC buttressing or hindering participation. These will be discussed in more detail in section 7.5.

Another dimension of Lukes' model is the examination of the concept of conflict and his contribution in acknowledging both observable and latent conflict in collaborative contexts. He argues that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent conflict from arising in the first place (2005, pp.25-27). The study findings indicate a strategic landscape which is characterised by a lack of observable disagreement or conflict, and there was a consistent response from all participants in relation to this perspective. Differences of opinion, when they arose, were described in the findings as being teased out by discussion and a consensus approach. Only a small number of participants referenced but provided no examples of conflict "behind the scenes" or latent conflict, to use Lukes's terminology. References to conflict being a "good thing" were expressed, alongside references to conflict at CYPSC meetings not being dealt with adequately. These findings are in line with Flyvberg's (1991) conclusions for the Aalborg project in Denmark, where stable power relations were more common than open, antagonistic confrontations. Findings imply that conflict does not arise, possibly because of organisational factors or contexts external to CYPSC, such as some of the member organisations funding other member organisations. However, it is possible that senior managers may not engage in observable conflict but may instead resort to the use of latent conflict, which in this context results in their non-engagement or lack of attendance, as referred to by one coordinator.

In the debates regarding conflict and consensus Haugaard (2002) emphasises the cyclical and normal nature of consensus and conflict. His concept of 'consensual conflict', first put forward by Arendt, is important for CYPSCs, because it implies "an ability to act in concert in the pursuit of common goals through the mobilisation of practices which meet the approval of all" (Arendt cited in Haugaard, 2002, p.315). However, for CYPSCs, common goals create the necessary points of connection or 'nodal points', as characterised by Clegg (1989), which will be discussed later in this section. Because the aim of CYPSCs is to "agree goals that are beyond the reach of individuals" (Scott, 1998 cited in Vangen and Huxham, 2012, p.734), it is important that all members feel they can contribute and are given the opportunity to contribute in contexts where they do not experience 'power over' but 'power

to', discussed further below. The complex nature of collaborative goal development in strategic contexts is emphasised by Huxham and Vangen (2012) who describe a "tangled web" of individual, organisational, and collaborative goals that are partly congruent and partly diverse and that change over time.

The normative nature of conflict in the development of such goals needs to be acknowledged in the literature and policy guidance for strategic collaboration. CYPSCs are required to 'add value' by creating collaborative goals, which individual member organisations would not be able to achieve on their own. These are 'publically declared' (Huxham and Vangen, 2012, p.741) in Children and Young People's Plan's. However, while participants were able to point to positive examples of collaborative goals, the literature and findings from this study show that there is a risk that contributions from smaller organisations are, as I characterise them, 'powered out'. I use this term to refer to the degree or level of power afforded to the C&V sector, and the risk related to the lack of space provided to C&V members to contribute to collaborative goals.

In this section, which focuses on the concepts of 'power to' and productive power, findings show that participants had diverse views regarding the significance of some outputs, which may be limited or not productive regarding better outcomes for children and young people. Some participants cited "power puff pieces" and "developing leaflets", which were not, for them, meaningful collaborative outputs, or goals. It is important that this finding is reflected upon by policy makers to ensure that collaborative goals and actions are productive and have the support and approval of all CYPSC members.

To conclude the discussion on the theme of 'power over' and conflict, the approach of Lukes' and others to the concept of 'power over' and conflict emphasises the significance of the capacity for power, even when it is not exercised. These were useful conceptual tools with which to explore agenda-setting and decision-making processes in strategic collaborative contexts. Having 'power over' the agenda and decision-making processes at CYPSC is highlighted in the collaborative literature as a fundamental component of an effective collaborative relationship (Darlington et al. 2005) and is facilitated by respecting and having a positive view of the role and the workers of other agencies. Findings related to the theme of 'power over' and conflict show a notable difference in perspectives between statutory and C&V membership. Generally, C&V members do not experience 'power over' as "productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity", as Lukes' (2005) suggests. This is an important message for both statutory agencies and those in leadership positions who must create space for contributions by C&V sector members. The findings set out in this section support Huxham and Vangen's (2000) conclusion that there are risks for collaborative contexts which may increase the risk of bias in decision making towards those participants with

greater resources. The challenging role for collaborative leaders is acknowledged in a context where government agencies act as both conveners and participants in collaborative processes (Broome, 2002 cited in Purdy and Jones, 2012, p.410), as is the case with CYPSCs.

The significant finding is that power matters and power affects, whether exercised or not. The way in which issues associated with power structures, relations, and processes are understood and responded to by participants in different positions in collaborative contexts appears to relate to a complex array of internal and external factors. This section has highlighted the findings that show different levels or systems of power, which are influenced by organisational, professional, and personal systems. Not paying attention to these creates the risk of unbalanced collaborative contexts, which the literature suggests is likely the case for many collaborative contexts.

7.3 Power to and productive power

The concept of 'power to' is described in the literature as the "capacity of an agent to act in spite of or in response to the power wielded over her by others (Allen, 1998, p.34). It is generally considered favourably as 'power to' is concerned with "the resources needed to make power relations effective" (Gohler, 2009, p.31). 'Power to' therefore is associated with the exercise of power. While Lukes and others use the term ´power to', Foucault (1991) uses the term 'productive power' to describe the concept of 'power to'. Both terms will be used in this section for the purposes of considering the findings of this study in relation to 'power to' and productive power. When these concepts were explored in this study, findings indicate that they provided a useful framework with which to explore the exercise of power in collaborative settings. It is important to reiterate the overlap between the concepts of 'power over' and 'power to', and that I have delineated them here for the purposes of this discussion. I have done so to emphasise the differences between 'power over' which is a capacity for power, and 'power to' which is the exercise of power.

In this study, experiences of 'power to' and productive power were evidenced in relation to the membership and leadership in a number of significant ways. The importance of CYPSCs having the 'power to' provide a platform for collaborative working in local areas, towards improving outcomes for children, young people, and their families was frequently referenced by study participants. Specific examples were provided of families being referred for supports to other agencies because of knowledge exchange and learning facilitated through CYPSC. The findings also provided examples of CYPSC initiatives producing innovative practices and approaches, as found by Lawrence et al (2002). Study participants made reference to the introduction of new ideas or approaches to working, which were taken on by member services. The creation of common goals, improving working relationships and joint working arrangements, as Cornforth et al characterise (2015) were also noted in the findings of this study, alongside the development of initiatives which have as their focus early intervention and

prevention. Findings indicate that much of the improved working relationships is based on the 'power to' share information, knowledge, and ideas at CYPSC level. This sense of productive power, coupled with an ability to problem solve, as highlighted by Agranoff and Maguire (2003), is emphasised in findings which reflect communication facilitated through CYPSC at the start of Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. Findings also indicate that the aims of interagency working, as described by Canavan et al, (2009, 2014) of strategic or high-level activities, have been achieved. Findings show that there is a sense of adding value in the development of collaborative goals and clarity about what partners can achieve together through both CYPSC substructures and CYPSC itself. As a result, a strong commitment to CYPSC and its associated structures is represented in the findings of this study.

Interesting and conclusive findings are provided which show how a sense of 'power to' and productive power was developed within CYPSC substructures. This is expressed from those who both participate in and lead substructures of CYPSC. CYPSC substructures are described by all categories of participants as being spaces where they experienced 'power to' or productive power as opposed to 'power over'. These contexts were found to be 'welcoming' and 'where stuff gets done', which are not dominated by any one member or members, providing participants with the 'freedom to speak' in a non-hierarchical context. This sense may be facilitated by discussions on specific themes, as opposed to the broad themes that provide the focus for main CYPSC meetings. To exemplify this point, a CYPSC substructure concerned with gaps or challenges related to health has health partners around the table, including HSE Health Promotion and Public Health Nursing, Tusla Family Support, Family Resource Centre staff and Local Development Company staff. Discussion and goal development on health is therefore relevant to all present, facilitating contributions and providing the necessary 'nodal points', as characterised by Clegg (1989). This is a challenge at full committee CYPSC meetings, where, for example, conversations related to early years issues are not central for those providing services to teenagers and young people.

In this study I have also presented findings that reveal the significance of having flexibility in terms of the chairpersonship of substructures. Findings reveal examples of C&V members chairing substructures, which provides them with an opportunity to contribute, not offered to them by main committee membership. This transforms their 'point of connection' as Clegg (1989) characterises in his framework of organisational power. Also, participants referenced rotating chairpersons as an enabling factor in the context of CYPSC substructures. This flexibility seems to enhance the context for strategic collaboration. Findings show how a sense of 'power to' connected with substructures is facilitated by flexible leadership and relevant, focused conversations and decision-making for all members in substructures of CYPSC. While factors related to power are still at play at substructure level, a more supportive, informal, and flexible context may facilitate participatory practices. Substructure contexts which have stakeholders with relatively similar levels of power, which facilitate

a sense of "balanced power" are an important infrastructure for these strategic collaborative contexts and are a positive support for the work. The significance of substructures is not explored in the collaborative literature, but the findings of this study indicate that this is a topic worth further exploration.

Another aspect of 'power to' or productive power which has been highlighted in this study are feelings of powerlessness associated with the role of CYPSC coordinators as they relate to their host organisation, Tusla. CYPSC coordinators hold responsibilities for interagency and collaborative working structures which have as their focus early intervention and prevention, while being employed by Tusla, an agency which has statutory responsibility for child protection and welfare. Interventions or initiatives developed for children, young people, and their families provided through CYPSC are, in the main, provided using universal and preventative methodologies, at levels one and two of the Hardiker scale (Hardiker et al, 1991). Meanwhile the focus for Tusla remains within a narrower child protection focus (Canavan et al, 2022), although the continuum of need and harm does cover all levels for Tusla. Participating CYPSC coordinators expressed feelings of not having 'power to' influence the direction of work of the organisation which employs them, because their roles do not easily fit in with the roles of others within the organisation. However, the findings show that the role of the CYPSC coordinator occupies a key space for Tusla in terms of acknowledging the interrelationship between support and protection. This interrelationship is exemplified in the literature on support and protection and arguments that many families require supportive protection and protective support at different times across their lifespans (Devaney and McGregor, 2022). The complex and contradictory role of support-protection is well established in the literature (Gilbert et al, 2011: Merkel et al, 2018; Devaney and McGregor, 2022) and this discussion on how support-protection is articulated in the CYPSC context is a good illustration of this complexity. The findings show that CYPSC coordinators occupy that space between protective support and supportive protection, where broad consideration of practice based on protective support and supportive protection, incorporating an ecological model and networking approach, is the main approach used in the work. While in Ireland, there has been a shift to greater attention to support, prevention, and early intervention since the establishment of Tusla (McGregor and Devaney, 2020), findings of this study, particularly as the relate to the position of CYPSC coordinators, show that there is more work to do on the supportive aspects of working with children and families.

To conclude this section, findings from this study clearly indicate the collaborative advantage developed by CYPSCs and conceptualised by Huxham and Vangen (2000). They further reveal the challenges associated with developing this sense of collaborative advantage. These findings overlap with the earlier discussion on 'power over' and conflict in Section 7.2, but the development of an understanding of these issues that this study has created could facilitate a move towards a stronger

sense of 'power with' where everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute. Overall, the discussion of findings in conjunction with the literature highlights that CYPSC structures have the 'power to' provide a platform for collaborative initiatives and innovative practices. This sense of productive power is felt particularly in CYPSC substructures, probably facilitated by the sense of a more 'level playing field' and flexible approaches to chairpersonship associated with substructures.

7.4 Power, knowledge, and governmentality

Foucault's analytics of power, provides a flexible conceptual toolkit with which to interrogate power relationships (Gilbert and Powell, 2010), and this section has as its focus, his contribution to the study of power, knowledge, and governmentality. This work and related literature is set out in this section. Foucault's approach is distinctive in terms of his emphasis on the ubiquitous nature of power, and his challenge of associations between sovereignty and power (Foucault, 1998, p.63). He also emphasised the productive nature of power, discussed above in Section 7.3. Findings in this study strongly support his position that "power is everywhere and comes from everywhere" (ibid, p.63), and these findings, in conjunction with the literature will be discussed in this section.

Foucault's emphasis on the ubiquitous nature of power and how it interweaves with social and organisational relations and/or systems was strongly supported by findings of this study, which also underline the complex and non-linear nature of power. The findings show that for some, and in particular C&V participants, possessing power in a CYPSC context was associated with membership of large organisations or leadership roles. That statutory agencies have been allocated both chairperson and deputy chairperson roles tips the balance of power towards those statutory organisations and members. A finding is that some C&V participants described a zero-sum power context where statutory members and organisations had power, but other findings are more nuanced beyond zero-sum. A previously reported finding now being discussed relates to some statutory participants noting clear examples of C&V members possessing more power than them in certain circumstances, which was associated with the ability of the C&V sector to respond in a flexible and creative way to emerging issues. Some C&V members reported that they held positions of power, which for them were associated with aspects of personal power, which will be discussed in section 7.6. A further finding was that when C&V members reported having power positions these emerged through participation, highlighting the links between participation and power. While this is a positive finding for those who attend and participate, it raises questions regarding those who do not participate. Perhaps they do not participate because they feel they have little power or influence on CYPSC? However, my findings related to participation and power, referenced in Section 6.2.1, show the inter-relationship between participation and power. They show that the more members participated, the more feelings of power and influence develop over time. Of note also, is the finding that study participants had not directly considered aspects of power and their impact on strategic collaboration

until they were participating in this study. In this study I have presented findings which show that all members from all categories have power and influence, albeit in different guises, and to different degrees, thus supporting Foucault's (1998) views on the range of dimensions of power and the ubiquitous nature of power. Foucault's argument that relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations and interactions, in his analytics of power (1980), was strongly reflected in the findings of this study.

As discussed in the literature review in Section 3.4.2, Foucault explored the concepts of knowledge and power in the context of unequal relationships between individuals and emphasised the binary or circular nature of the relationship between both concepts (1977, 1980). For him, the concepts were inseparable: "there couldn't be any knowledge without power; and there couldn't be any political power without the possession of a certain special knowledge" (cited in Faubion, 1994, p.31). Foucault argued that "power is reinforced by the production of knowledge" (Winter and Cree, 2016, p.1176). This perspective is borne out in findings of this study which indicate that some types of knowledge were privileged. They further indicate that CYPSC contexts appear to emphasise statutory 'knowledge' at the cost of C&V 'knowledge'. The findings show that for some participants, the omission of the C&V sector in the piloting of the CYPSC initiative in Ireland, was a factor in privileging certain types of knowledge. These findings link strongly with aspects of Foucault's (cited in Faubion, 2001) work on governmentality where government departments and/or statutory agencies have the power to decide who participates, a conceptualisation that will be elaborated on further below.

Another finding related to power and knowledge is that social work or social care knowledge or goals are privileged over educational knowledge or goals. This overlaps with the earlier discussion regarding 'power over' and conflict in Section 7.2. In his work, Cohen (1985, p.101) describes professional contexts which are characterised by distinctive bodies of "specialists, experts and professionals" who each have responsibility for their own category of deviants. While some of this language is problematic for present-day contexts, the points made remain relevant. Strategic collaboration requires that these 'bodies' come together to park their 'expert' knowledge and agree common goals to create a balanced collaborative context. The findings of this study highlight tensions between different types of expert knowledge and show that within expert knowledge there are hierarchies and differences of power relations. This adds to Cohen's (1985) conceptualisation, which treats experts as a collective body. My findings emphasise the need to break down the 'expert knowledge' that Cohen talks about and recognise within that, power differences and tensions. In sum, it is not just about expert knowledge, it is about the hierarchies within that expert knowledge. That this is a challenge is acknowledged in my findings and the literature, which show that "power determines what counts as knowledge", as Flyvberg found (1991, p.226). Members of collaborative

processes need to adapt their view of 'expert knowledge' and/or be open to learning about other forms of knowledge or 'collaborative knowledge'. An awareness of these issues, created by the findings of this study, is important for the further development of CYPSCs.

Raffnsoe et al (2019), describe Foucault's consideration of governmentality as part of his third wave of work, in which he combined the concepts of government and rationality. Foucault used this concept as a means of facilitating consideration of the "government of oneself" and the "government of children" (cited in Faubion, 1994, p.201), emphasising that government has as its purpose the welfare of the population (ibid. p. 217), and the 'conduct of conduct' (Dean, 2010, p. 20). Foucault offered the concept of governmentality as a useful framework with which to consider the impact of government policies on individuals and populations. Aspects of this work have relevance for this study of CYPSCs, structures charged with implementing national government policy regarding children, young people, and their families at local level. In this study I have presented findings which indicate that some CYPSC members are concerned with aspects of the "government of oneself" at CYPSC meetings. While the terms 'supervision' or 'surveillance' were not used by study participants, the findings show that for some participants, there was a feeling of being under observation by those large statutory agencies who had responsibility for allocating funding to their services. Findings indicate that participating C&V sector members were conscious that their contributions may impact on funding, even though there were no examples of this occurring. These findings indicate the impact of the capacity for power, discussed in section 7.2 of this chapter. The findings show an awareness for C&V study participants of their own governance positions or responsibilities for staff teams who were dependant on some statutory member organisations for their salaries. That these views or fears are not associated with substructures of CYPSC discussed in Section 7.3 on 'power to' and productive power, is a constructive finding for these collaborative contexts.

In terms of the 'government of children' or the 'conduct of conduct', the work of CYPSCs reflect responsibilities of governments, as laid out by Foucault, for the regulation and welfare of their population and improvement of its condition (Faubion, 2001, p.217). CYPSC initiatives have as their focus wellbeing and improvement across five broad outcomes for children and young people. While they are concerned with early intervention and prevention, and universal provision in the main, the concept of governmentality reminds us of the way in which CYPSC initiatives involve the 'monitoring' or 'surveillance' of children, young people, and their families. For example, while engagement with CYPSC initiatives usually occurs on a voluntary basis, CYPSC structures sit within Tusla Child and Family Agency, which has a statutory responsibility towards child welfare and abuse. CYPSCs are connected to wider systems of health, welfare, and education, which have aspects of service delivery which are disciplinary in nature. To exemplify this, some CYPSC members are responsible for regulating school attendance and have the power to bring legal proceedings against

parents, if they fail to meet these statutory requirements related to their children's education. While this work is connected with the welfare of children and young people, it can be experienced as disciplinary by parents. This position of duality between support or welfare and protection is reflected in the literature on supportive protection and protective support and discussed in Section 7.3. My findings and literature review show how 'governmentality' offers a useful tool for further analysis of CYPSC initiatives.

Another position of duality highlighted in the literature and connected with the discussion on governmentality, concerns the tension between surveillance and partnership related to CYPSC initiatives. So, on the one hand, CYPSCs are promoting partnership and participation with children and parents, while on the other, children and parents are not members of CYPSCs. Further, children and parents who participate in CYPSC initiatives, may be under 'observation' or 'surveillance' as Foucault's concept of governmentality proposes. These perspectives are contradictory and complex. From my own point of view, the idea that there are elements of being 'under observation' linked with CYPSC initiatives is problematic, but the Foucauldian perspective on this is accepted, because these initiatives are provided in the context of disciplinary systems. To counteract these views or positions, attempts have been made to make CYPSCs more participatory in their membership and approaches in policy guidance, such as recommending that a young person sits on CYPSC. It is noteworthy that none of the participants in this study reported that they were a young person who was a CYPSC member. Further, parents or parent bodies are not represented at main committee level and as Winter et al (2022, p.11) conclude "*appropriate* family support services are more likely to be better designed with the input of parents". So, at present, despite the commitment to partnership and participation, the current structures may be reinforcing a sense of 'surveillance' and 'power over' by not having representation from parents' bodies at the table.

Connected with Foucault's concept of governmentality are his concepts of regimes of practice, biopolitics and pastoral power. Foucault argued that regimes of practice are formed and shaped by various forms of knowledge and expertise (Dean, 2010, p.32), and their exploration focuses on the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate, and are transformed (ibid, p.33). Regimes of practice therefore emphasise 'how' questions. Foucault defined the concept of biopolitics as that which concerned "the administration of the processes of life of populations (ibid, p.117). He defined pastoral power as "a power of care. It looks after the flock, it looks after the individuals of the flock, ensuring as shepherds do, that members of the flock do not suffer, treating those who are injured and searching for those who have strayed" (Elden, 2016, p.96), forging a "link between new ways to 'govern' children, family, the domain and the principality" (ibid., p.97). CYPSC structures in Ireland provide 'links' from broad national government policy and aims for wellbeing of children and young people, to local implementation of these policies. CYPSC initiatives aim towards a pastoral

approach and are developed based on an analysis of population needs and gaps, which include consultations with children, young people, and families. Those who participate in CYPSC supported initiatives do so by consent. However, they are provided in the context of disciplinary systems, reflecting the complexity of structures focused on child and family welfare, protection, and regulation as highlighted in the work of McGregor and Devaney (2020) and others. They also provide a context which supports the "capacity of the state to legislate and regulate broader and broader areas of social life", as Swartz suggests (2007, p.108). Further research on how CYPSC initiatives are experienced by those who participate in them would be useful and interesting. It would encourage reflection on the wider critical issues regarding the role of the state and family, as suggested by Parton (1991).

Overall, the idea of governmentality and its connected concepts are reflected in the findings, as illustrated and discussed thus far, have the potential to be very significant, as the work of CYPSCs involves the observation of populations. Foucault's concept of governmentality offers the basis of a critique of such bodies. Further research which would involve an exploration of how CYPSCs implement government policy relating to children and young people, using Foucault's concept of governmentality would be interesting. Garnering the views of children, young people, and parents regarding how they experience CYPSC initiatives from the perspective of governmentality would be interesting and useful. I conclude this section by highlighting that the findings of this study support the argument that "the issues Foucault wrote about are still recognisable and relevant" (Faubion, 1994, p.xiii), and his approach to the study of power, knowledge and governmentality remains very relevant for present-day contexts. It gets to the heart of the themes of governance and the family and shows the contradiction between the 'good intention' of the structure and the underlying complex power structures that shape it. Foucault's approach offers a detailed framework for analysing power, practices of government, and the use of expertise.

In summary, dimensions or relations of power are interwoven with other relations or systems and are also underscored by the interplay between knowledge and power. The findings give depth and meaning to conceptual understandings of power, knowledge, and governance. They show the complexity and contradictions, for example between the intent (collaboration) and the actual nature of the collaboration (power and power relations). When it comes to relationships and power of children and families, it shows that 'regimes of truth' and 'governance structures' that Foucault (and others) identify are more continuous with traditional established power relations even though framed in discourses of collaboration and power sharing. Further, this research has shone a light on how the concept of governmentality could be used to explore how children, young people, and families experience CYPSC initiatives. Are CYPSC initiatives experienced as pastoral or disciplinary in nature for those who participate in them? It is also noteworthy that those 'at the table' influence and have more power than children, young people, and parents who are mostly represented from a distance or

not at all. In presenting my preliminary framework, in Section 7.8, I contribute to the creation of greater awareness of power and power relations to open space for these observations and discussions to occur.

7.5 Organisational power and flows

So far, the focus has been on the concepts of 'power over', 'power to', knowledge and governmentality. This section builds on this critical analysis by focusing on one element of the collaborative system, which is that of organisational power and flows, based on the work of Clegg (1989; 2002) and others. As discussed in his analytics of power, Clegg (1989, p.101) provides a 'circuits of power' framework in which he describes power as flowing through circuits within organisations. Clegg (1989) proposed a model of episodic power located within a general framework of circuits of power (ibid, p.202), which included three phases of episodic power relations as a way of thinking about power within organisational contexts. The first of these concerns the 'enrolling' of another agent to one's own agency, which seeks to achieve the 'locking in' of membership and meaning (ibid, p.205). In the CYPSC context, enrolling can be linked to how organisations and members participate, and meaning is 'locked in' (Clegg, 2002, p.271). The next phase involves the 'stabilising' of a network of power centrality, alliance, and coalition among agencies within the field (1989). The final phase is concerned with the 'fixing' of common relations of meaning and membership and reflection on the constitution of the organisation or organisational context as a field. Clegg (ibid) emphasised the relationship between organisational and structural power and flows and the collective agency of organisations, which provide the focus for this section. While CYPSCs cannot be described as organisations, they do provide examples of specific structures that bring a range of organisations together through representation, which are "formal and purposeful goal-oriented entities" (Clegg, 1989, p. 188) and provide "necessary nodal points" (ibid, p.199), where power is present.

Clegg's (1989) phase of 'enrolling' of other organisations and agencies is well revealed in the findings of this study, which point to committed participants, who value approaches to strategic collaborative working. In chapter five, this study revealed the significance of participation in and membership of CYPSCs, and an understanding of the essential value of strategic collaboration from personal, agency and service-user perspectives. The significance of such perspectives and attitudes is also emphasised in the collaborative literature (Martin-Misener et al, 2012, p.335). However, findings also highlight absences of those organisations and agencies who are not 'enrolled', and possibly choose not to be. Clegg (ibid) does not provide guidance in his framework regarding absent agencies. Other literature does provide examples of methodologies for addressing absences and non-engagement in the form of mandatory enrolling. This is exemplified by Devaney et al, (2021, p. 76).

who cite the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland as an example of a collaborative structure which places a statutory obligation to participate on a variety of representatives including social care, health, justice, education, and the C&V sector.

Interestingly, under an ongoing review of the Child Care Act, 1991, being undertaken by the DCEDIY, is a proposal to place CYPSCs on a statutory footing, thus addressing issues regarding non-attendance and gaps in representation. These issues link back to the concepts of governance and governmentality also, discussed in Section 7.4. Where this proposal emerged as a finding, mixed views were expressed. A sense of achievement which is reliant on voluntary participation and power as opposed to mandated organisational power and fears related to mandating for participation were expressed by some. Again, this links back to issues connected with power and governmentality, discussed in Foucualt's approach earlier and his explorations of the "conduct of conduct" (cited in Faubion, 2001, p.xxix). It is possible that gaps in membership could be addressed by mandating attendance, but this also brings up complex issues relating to power and power relations. Implications of mandated versus voluntary attendance or membership are important for the future of CYPSCs. Questions related to this topic arise from this study, such as: Does mandated participation work? Does it reinforce power hierarchies? Looking to the literature, mandated collaboration is defined as occurring when a third-party organisation attempts to impose collaboration on other organisations within its range of influence (Halpert, 1982). Risks for mandated collaboration are highlighted by Goold et al (1994) who raise concerns regarding collaborative contexts where partners may feel forced into relationships that appear suboptimal. Alternative ways to addressing issues of engagement could emphasise the importance of power sharing for collaboration highlighted in the findings of this study. This study has highlighted the need for generating research which would establish the views of those who do not participate and their reasons for not 'enrolling', to facilitate learning and understanding regarding their perspectives and experiences.

Thus far, I have focused on the constructive aspects of Clegg's concept of 'enrolling' in terms of engagement, but Clegg also highlights risks for organisational contexts regarding enrolling. These risks relate to the concept of 'enrolling' having a one-dimensional purpose of forcing of one's views, opinions and goals on others, and the risk of organisational outflanking in organisational power contexts (1989, p. 221). The concept of organisational outflanking was first put forward by Mann (1986) and emphasises how those who possess organisational advantage will always succeed over those who lack organisational resources. Discussing this concept, Clegg argues that frequently "those who are relatively powerless remain so because they are ignorant of the ways of power" (cited in Clegg, 1989, p.221). My findings show that all CYPSC members have power, but these levels or degrees of power vary. While Clegg (1989) suggests that this can occur due to a lack of awareness of power positions, or the lack of power positions, as discussed earlier, my findings suggest that those

C&V members are very aware of the positions of power and the implications of these positions held by statutory member organisations.

The second phase which Clegg emphasises is the 'stabilising' of a network of power centrality, alliance, and coalition among agencies within the field (1989, p.225). This phase is concerned with developing those stable conditions within which agencies can secure preferred outcomes. There are many clear representations of this phase in the findings, including the promotion of an understanding of the responsibilities of all agencies in a local area towards children and young people, and the opportunities provided to share knowledge and develop new approaches to working. However, findings indicate a risk for these structures, which may "stabilise" in favour of statutory membership, at the expense of C&V membership during this phase. It appears that this risk is influenced by those resources that empower some member organisations in terms of having access to funding streams, which are not available to all member organisations. Given the nature of services in Ireland, both statutory and C&V services are always going to be part of CYPSC structures, and while this study did not set out to compare statutory and C&V membership, the question or challenge is how all types or categories of membership are fostered and balanced. That these collaborative structures have a mix of membership from statutory and C&V membership is a positive aspect of the CYPSC model, as statutory bodies should not be charged with planning for children and young people alone. However, in light of the findings of this study, this membership needs to be fostered and supported to participate and develop. Further, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence of the impact of structural and external power processes or systems, which are difficult to address or change.

Connected with this phase is the emphasis Clegg places on the "sanctions that are threatened by non-compliance" (Clegg, 2006), which some C&V sector participants expressed awareness of. In this study, these were mainly expressed in terms of fears about funding, and for some a consciousness of having responsibility for a staff team which relied on funding from larger member organisations for their employment. While these fears were expressed, it is important to reiterate that no examples of funding being amended, which related to CYPSC contributions or lack thereof, were provided by study participants, emphasising the significance of 'power over' discussed in section 7.2. Conversely, others, who were not dependent on funding from large member organisations or those organisations with leadership roles, expressed an awareness of an ease regarding participation. These findings underscore the impact of the wider organisational context or system on power flows in CYPSC contexts and the risk of smaller member organisations experiencing "power over" as opposed to "power to" as discussed in Sections 7.2 and 7.3.

The importance of structures in buttressing these strategic collaborative contexts is significant, and of note for policy and decision-makers. Currently, and in the CYPSC context, commitment to these

structures is provided in the context of voluntary membership, discussed earlier in this section. The literature highlights that challenges regarding engagement are not unique to CYPSC or an Irish context. This is exemplified in an evaluation of the operation and impact of Children's Trusts in England and Wales from 2004 – 2006, which found that Trusts had difficulties at times engaging key partners (cited in Devaney et al, 2021, p.21). However, the literature does not address how to engage those who cannot or do not want to engage in collaborative working. Those who do not participate may have significant views on strategic collaboration, and an understanding of their perspectives would enhance knowledge regarding participation.

The third part of Clegg's framework is concerned with the 'fixing' of common relations of meaning and membership and reflection on the constitution of the organisation or organisational context as a field (1989). Findings indicate that CYPSC members reflected on the importance of knowledge sharing and development of new work approaches, and the meaning of these at personal, agency, and service-user levels. This is exemplified by the manner in which CYPSCs provided for sharing information at the start of Covid 19 pandemic restrictions, referenced by both membership and leadership of these collaborative contexts. While information and knowledge sharing are important, the collaborative literature stresses the importance of collaborative structures going beyond this (Keast and Mandell, 2014), and fulfilling their potential to achieve goals at different levels to motivate partners participation (Vangen et al, 2015). It is clear from the literature and findings that there inevitably will be power differences in collaborative contexts, but in highlighting issues related to collaboration and power in this study, I aim to create contexts which discuss and acknowledge the impact of power structures, relations, and processes.

Alongside these three phases, Clegg (1989) also considers other aspects of episodic power and in particular 'structure', where structure means the wider organisational context or macrosystem from within which these strategic collaborative contexts exist and members and leaders come from. Findings from this study have shown that organisational and structural contexts play an important role in the effective support and implementation of strategic collaborative contexts. They also show the significance of structure in buttressing membership and participation, which reflects the literature strongly in relation to the complex processes of power and power relations from individual to wider organisational and systemic levels. This needs to be acknowledged to further embed strategic collaborative practices towards children and young people's outcomes in Ireland and elsewhere. In this study I have presented findings in which participants described a strong commitment to the strategic collaborative structures that are CYPSCs. However, participants also provided examples of cultural and organisational barriers to participation for individuals and organisations. These include lack of acknowledgement of collaborative working in agency returns which focus on counting direct work with clients and not participation in collaborative working initiatives; the number of

collaborative structures in local areas members are expected to be involved in; and a lack of training on collaborative working and the meaning of participation in these structures.

A supportive organisational structure and environment was found to be preferable, if not essential, for participation in strategic collaboration and power sharing. From an organisational and structural perspective, participants in collaborative processes need to be allocated the power from their organisations towards their participation in collaborative structures. This means that the considerable investment in time and resources, which is acknowledged in the literature by Atkison (2007, p.8), needs to be recognised by all member organisations of CYPSCs. This recognition is needed to facilitate active participation and sustain collaborative activity, as Atkinson emphasises (ibid, p.8). Findings also reflect the time it takes to develop strong partnerships, in line with Statham (2011), in findings related to the emerging nature of power positions. For some, collaborative working was compatible with their own service context, while others provided examples of fitting in collaborative working in addition to other work commitments. The finding that there is a lack of recognition and support for collaborative working was expressed by all categories of members and leadership, in many forms. From the perspective of power, the importance of policy support for strategic collaborative working at the highest levels of government and policy development is a finding, alongside the importance of having organisational and structural support for collaborative working. This is reflected in the literature in the views of Price-Robertson et al (2020). In their research they concluded that having an organisational culture which values and supports relationship building and collaborative learning is important. The literature and my findings on strategic collaboration describe an "organised and structured process through which inter-organisational and multiplayer groups, both public and private, develop and implement collective strategies", which are reflected in the work of Favoreu et al. (2019, p.439). The findings emphasise the importance of promoting better understanding of the systems within which CYPSCs operate as characterised by Bryson et al (2015). Acknowledging and accommodating organisational and structural differences in policy and practice has the potential to enhance these and other strategic collaborative contexts.

To conclude this section, the findings show that participants in this study invested considerable time and resources in CYPSCs, displaying a strong commitment to their concept and work. This is exemplified in findings related to 'enrolling, stabilising and fixing' of participants who were members of more than one CYPSC, who chaired substructures, and who allocated staff to substructure membership. However, this study has also shone a light on the variations in levels of or degrees of power and those resources which empower some members, which are not available to others. In this study I have presented findings which suggest that the operation of power processes in CYPSCs is bracketed and influenced by aspects of organisation and structure, which do not always create enough

space for all categories of voices or members. The findings support the value of Clegg's (1989) circuits of power approach and how this aids the development of research into power in collaborative contexts. So, everyone has power, but the levels or degrees of power vary, and are influenced by aspects of structure and organisation. Further, assumptions that all professionals have the skills to work collaboratively, and that organisations and structures automatically support this need to be put aside and training provided on organisational and individual aspects of collaborative methodologies. Finally, my findings show that while structures are key in terms of power, this does not mean the individual or personal power is not significant. I now turn to a discussion of the theme of personal power and leadership.

7.6 Personal power and leadership

This section is concerned with the conceptual areas of personal power and leadership, as they relate to power in strategic collaborative contexts. Personal power is described in the literature as the ability to influence people and events, which comes from individual characteristics rather than formal authority (Lammers et al, 2009). As outlined in the literature review chapter, French and Raven (1959), identified five types of power. In this study I have presented findings which highlight the inter-relationship between aspects of organisational, structural, and personal power, but there are many specific references to personal power in the data, as described in French and Raven's model (1959), which are presented in this section.

The findings show that some C&V participants expressed an awareness of their lack of personal power related to their CYPSC membership, and a consciousness of the impact of reward power and coercive power, as described in French and Raven's (1959) model. French and Raven associate reward power with the ability to reward, which is held by some in positions of leadership and connect it with coercive power which is punishment if a person fails to conform. These power types are associated with legitimate power, which is the right some people have to influence others (ibid). Findings show that participants were aware of the need to communicate in a certain way, to ensure positive relationships with those in positions of power were sustained and to allay fears around funding streams and staff being impacted by negative contributions at CYPSC. This emphasises the overlap between personal and organisational power and flows.

Findings indicate that fears regarding contributions towards meetings were allayed by feelings of emerging power at CYPSC, which were associated with participation and increased confidence in making contributions. These appear to develop incrementally and link to feelings of earning credibility in these strategic collaborative contexts. Participants described those members who were not in leadership positions, who possessed and used their personal power. Findings show that aspects of referent power (French and Raven, 1959), in which some members described those naturally

confident members who are not afraid to express their opinions, and 'strong characters' were of significance. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for CYPSCs, because if all members of CYPSCs held positions of significant personal power and influence this may impact the space available for integrated goal creation.

Connected with these findings are others which suggest that the role of leadership is very influential, yet conceptualisations of power developed by Lukes (1974, 2005), Foucault (1980) and Clegg (1989, 2002) do not consider the impact of leadership on power to a great extent. Therefore, it is necessary to broaden our focus for this section, in order to consider aspects of leadership in the literature from other theorists, namely Parsons (1968), Barnes (1983) and Williams (2002, 2012). Talcott Parsons (1968, p.262) draws our attention to several aspects of leadership and power which are significant. In his article "On the Concept of Political Power", he argued that "in any type of group, the existence of defined "leadership" positions does "generate" power, which may be used to achieve aims desired by the majority of the members of the group". Findings show that this legitimate power, to use the terminology of French and Raven, (1959) of CYPSC leadership is not used in an overtly coercive way. As the findings show, a participant who was a CYPSC chairperson, describes attempts to carry their power or perceived power in a "light way". However, a divergence of views of leadership and membership of CYPSCs on the topic of leadership was expressed by study participants.

Parsons (1968) describes two aspects of the responsibility of leaders. The first is to build consensus and the second emphasises the crucial agency of leadership in transforming the sentiment that something ought to be done into a commitment to implement actions. Study findings indicate that this is a delicate balancing act for CYPSC chairpersons and coordinators, who must balance participation with the achievement of aims and goals of collaborative structures. This complexity is highlighted in the collaborative literature, where Huxham and Vangen (2012) emphasise challenges for collaborative leaders, who have a responsibility to have an inclusive, participatory approach, but also have responsibility to achieve collaborative aims and goals and avoid 'collaborative inertia'. Findings support the significance of the notion of 'perceptions of power', as highlighted in the work of Barry Barnes, who argues that the power which a leader has is not derived from him or her, but from the perceptions of those who perceive them to be powerful (cited in Haugaard, 2002, p.114).

My findings show that leaders and members views diverge on this topic. While some members felt CYPSC chairpersons and coordinators had significant power and influence, others expressed an awareness regarding the gap between perceived and real power, in examples of those in leadership positions having no influence or power over participation or engagement. Meanwhile, CYPSC coordinators expressed feelings of powerlessness, which related to their overall position in Tusla, and feelings of not being part of the system, linked to the discussion on the power that comes from supportive organisational structures. The majority of Tusla staff at a similar level to CYPSC

coordinators have teams of staff to support their work, but CYPSC coordinators operate single-handedly, with little or no administrative or project support. This finding is reflected in the literature on views of the power positions social workers hold from the perspective of parents and society, not felt by social workers themselves (Smith, 2010; Tew, 2006).

Strong support for coordinators was a finding of the study and reflected across all membership categories of study participants. References were made to the coordinator being "the glue that brings it all together" and "the face of CYPSC". Admiration was expressed regarding the range of interactions they have with a vast array of organisations and individuals, and the influence which is developed from this. Findings show that coordinators generate power through their relationships and connections with a broad spectrum of organisations and agencies in an area, described as the piece in the middle of the Venn diagram, by one coordinator. This reflects an intersection between the ideas of productive power, personal power, and the collaborative literature, and in particular the literature on boundary spanners, which is conceptualised by Williams (2002) and is well characterised in the findings. Williams (2002) emphasises the importance of focusing on those with responsibility for implementing collaborative processes, which for this study are CYPSC coordinators. He also emphasises the positions of power held by 'boundary spanners' in "cultivating interpersonal relationships, communication", trust, and their need "to acquire an understanding of people and organisations outside their own circles" (ibid, pp.109 - 110). Other writers on collaborative leadership use terms such as 'sponsors', 'champions', and characterise a collaborative leader as a 'tireless, process-savvy organiser and promoter of the change effort' (Bryson et al, 2010). Furthermore, Weber and Khademian (2008) refer to the reputation of leaders in collaborative contexts as an 'honest broker' and one participating coordinator characterised their role as being just that. Core messages arising from this research for CYPSC coordinators underline how influential their approach to collaborative working is and the importance of having an awareness of their perceived positions of power. These are important learning points for coordinators of other strategic collaborative structures.

The formal, positional, or legitimate power of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons is both acknowledged and questioned in the findings of this study. The challenge of having an externally imposed leadership structure is highlighted in the collaborative literature (Huxham and Vangen, 2000, p. 1166), and is a finding of this study. Some participants believed that Tusla should be the lead agency because of its responsibilities towards children and young people, while others questioned the decision to have chairperson and deputy chairperson roles permanently assigned to statutory agencies. Many who had experience of membership of other structures where leadership roles are selected by vote, and for a specified term, recommended this model for CYPSC contexts. A suggestion regarding chairpersonship came from a participating chairperson who suggests that Tusla should be a member around the table like other members and the chairperson role should be one allocated to a person with significant experience of strategic collaborative contexts. It would be useful to carry out a review of

CYPSC leadership structures, among leaders and members of these structures, which would have, as its focus, aspects of CYPSC leadership.

Further, the findings show that chairpersons need to role-model collaborative approaches to working and reflect a genuine interest in and value for the information and knowledge brought by all, to the table. That participants can tell whether a chairperson values meetings and processes related to collaborative working is clear from the findings, when participants compared their experiences with different chairperson approaches, styles, and commitment. Also of interest is the question as to whether there are those without formal leadership roles who influence, as Vangan et al (2015) suggest. CYPSC members who participated in this study had significant experience and wisdom related to aspects of collaborative working. It is possible that they hold significant referent or expert power positions and influence on the CYPSCs that they are a member of.

Key characteristics of personal power in strategic collaborative contexts are presented in the findings, which point to the importance of leadership skills for CYPSC coordinators and chairpersons. The need for collaborative structures to have enthusiastic local leaders has been identified by Bachmann et al (2009), and findings indicate that CYPSCs have these in their coordinator role. Collaborative leaders play an important part in developing a vision and mission, and in communicating these, to members and a wider audience. They also have a responsibility to mobilise actors and resources as Sorenson et al characterise (2021, p.269). To conclude this section, many tensions and contradictions have been uncovered in this study regarding collaborative leadership. Collaborative leaders need, on one hand, to be facilitative and reflective to build consensus at many different levels, while also having responsibility for ensuring collaborative actions and goals are developed and achieved on the other. By working in a reflective way or adopting a reflective stance, leaders have an important role to play in buttressing participation by all. Further, this study has shone a light on the sense that allocated or fixed positions of leadership may not facilitate a sense of shared power, while highlighting gaps between perceived and actual power positions.

7.7 Social bases of power, to include gender and minorities

While the research questions did not specifically examine aspects of inequality based on income, class, gender, race, disability, and other social categories, this emerged within the research findings. As a result, the final theme of this chapter will focus on findings related to the social bases of power and in particular, aspects of gender and minority representation. A number of dimensions related to these topics are worthy of further, if limited, discussion here. Findings show the unique context provided by CYPSCs from a gender perspective as contexts which may be dominated by female membership, the impact of gender on actual and perceived social power, and differences in perceptions of power sharing between male and female members. Findings indicate how the operation of gender and power in CYPSC contexts is reflective of how gender and power operate in society,

alongside stereotypical views related to gender. From the perspective of minority representation, the discussion will focus on how minority voices are represented.

A lack of focus on aspects of gender and power outside gender specific theories was noted in the literature. That it is difficult to find current research on gender, collaboration and power is a noteworthy finding. However, even though it is addressed less than one might expect, power and gender dynamics are interlinked. Where gender and power are addressed in the literature, a number of approaches are noted which have characteristics of 'power over', 'power to' and 'power with' (Allen, 2009). Findings from this study highlight the unique context provided by CYPSCs from a gender perspective as contexts which may be dominated by female membership. All study participants advised that CYPSC membership was dominated by female as opposed to male membership. A cursory exploration of CYPSC leadership and membership for six randomly selected CYPSCs did reveal that over half of all leaders and members were female[20]. This is not a scientific conclusion, but worthy of note, and in line with Badura et al (2017, p.358), who found that the gender gap in leader emergence is slowly shrinking over time but has not disappeared. For example, in 2020, although women represented almost half of all employed persons in the EU (46%), they are underrepresented amongst senior managers (34%)[21]. Contexts where women outnumber men at senior management level are rare (Catalyst, 2011; UN Women, 2014; Eurostat, 2020), and worth analysing from a gender perspective.

Further, findings from this study highlight the impact of gender on actual and perceived social bases of power. Significant differences in perceptions of power sharing were found between male and female participants, with male participants reporting more confidence that power was shared, when compared to female participants. Therefore, it appears that while CYPSC contexts may be dominated by female membership, findings from this study show that "lads talk" which was based on "pally informal relationships", was exclusionary towards women. Also, participants reported that "the male voices may get heard more". Findings indicate that where participants thought that aspects of gender did have an influence, they did not generally challenge or air these feelings, as there is only one example in the data of issues related to gender being aired with a coordinator. It would be interesting to establish if CYPSC contexts are dominated by women, by carrying out an analysis of CYPSC membership in Ireland from the perspective of gender. An important consideration for these structures is that all members hold positions of legitimate and expert power, and all voices – male and female - must be facilitated to emerge or sought, if they are not forthcoming.

Another noteworthy finding related to gender was that some female participants referenced the way in which power and gender relations operate within CYPSC contexts being reflective of the way in

[20] Based on membership details of six CYPSCs, accessed on https://www.cypsc.ie on 30/06/2022
[21] ec.eurpoa.eu/eurostat accessed 02/05/2022

which they operate in society. This overlaps with the earlier discussion on the topic of power relations being part of all social relations, as Foucault (1977) describes. Aspects of gender overlap with aspects of structure discussed in Section 7.5, and other factors outside of CYPSC contexts, including existing external relationships. This is exemplified in the findings with references to managers of particular services working together for a number of years, which facilitates the development of good relationships. Some stereotypical views on gender were expressed, where for example, a female member, advised that CYPSCs were "doing such a good job" probably because they were "dominated by women".

Preliminary findings related to gender in this study provide important information or reminders for members and leaders of these structures, in terms of ensuring balanced contributions and participatory behaviour for all. The concept of participatory behaviour has been defined in the literature as referring to the amount that people contribute during group discussions and includes behaviours such as providing suggestions to the group and offering opinions (Bales, 1950). Bales describes the strong relation between an individuals' amount of participation in the group discussion and his leadership or influence in that group (ibid, p.161). While CYPSCs appear to be female dominated in terms of membership, there remain issues related to male culture or domination. It is difficult to disentangle gender dynamics from power dynamics as Gaughan and Bozeman highlight (2016, p.538). That young girls and women now have leadership role models is positive for gender relations into the future, but for this study, it is important that findings related to the impact of gender are noted and reflected upon, from the perspectives of equality, inclusion, and power. Another point of note for this study, is that it was carried out by a female researcher and practitioner, while I noticed in reading the literature, that much of the theorising of power is done by men. One of the critiques of Foucault's work is that of the lack of attention to women in his work (Elden, 2016, p.65), and this study of power, carried out by a female researcher/practitioner on contexts where females are prominent, provides an important contribution and perspective on aspects of gender and power. Had I reflected on the prominence of women in CYPSC structures at the start of this study, perhaps aspects of gender and power would have featured more. So, CYPSC structures provide a unique context for gender relations, where female membership is apparently prominent, but issues related to gender still emerged. Again, some differences in perceptions of power are highlighted between male and female membership. However, as this was not examined in depth here, we need further studies to help us to understand more about gender and power in collaborative contexts and CYPSCs. This could also incorporate consideration of the intersectionality of gender and other bases of social difference. The approach of intersectionality would facilitate an open-ended investigation of the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities, as described by Lykke (2011 cited in Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013).

This study gives some contribution to aspects of gender and power in strategic collaborative contexts, which are dominated by female membership. On reflection, aspects of gender should have been a stronger consideration from the outset.

Another aspect of the social bases of power lies in the consideration of minority community perspectives or representation in CYPSCs. The term minority has been defined by Capotorti (1979) as "[a] group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members, being nationals of the state, possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language". Findings related to this topic suggest that minorities are represented at a distance or remotely, and a number of factors related to this were highlighted in the findings. Findings show the legitimate power of the C&V sector in representing minority voices, alongside an acknowledgement that where they do this, they are representing from or at a distance. Some of the complexities related to this topic highlight the fact that some minorities do not have specific agencies which represent them. For example, Galway CYPSC has a Traveller organisation which represents the voice of Travellers on it, but there is no equivalent structure in County Clare for Traveller representation. Often, where organisations do exist, they are small organisations which may find it difficult to justify attending collaborative meetings over meetings with clients or service users. On the other hand, where services do exist, involving them in a way that is not tokenistic is a challenge for CYPSC leadership and membership.

Again, reflecting the importance of substructures and leadership, findings indicate the importance of CYPSC substructures and coordinators in representing minority voices or perspectives. This is a power issue in itself in terms of the level at which minority voices or views are heard. This could be experienced by those members of minority populations as being either a positive or negative feature of the collaborative structures under investigation. The focused and less formal nature of the substructure of CYPSCs may make participation more possible, and findings of this study highlight perceptions regarding a productive nature of CYPSC substructures. Participation of minority, ethnic, and cultural voices is recognised as an issue worthy of further consideration in the findings because this representation seems to occur more by chance than design. While policy guidance exists for involving young people in CYPSCs (DCEDIY, 2019), robust systems for representation of minorities need to be developed.

While the literature on power informs best practice in conceptualising aspects of power structures, relations and processes, there is little by way of advice on best practice in engaging or hearing minority voices in the literature and policy guidance reviewed for this study. My findings highlight the important role of the C&V sector vis-à-vis minority voices, and in turn emphasise the complementarity between statutory and C&V membership, an important aspect of CYPSCs. The

CYPSC initiative, in the main, is not based on a co-production model or a model that is based on direct contributions from members of the public or service users, as an initiative which bases its membership on services. My findings highlight the challenges and complexities related to minority representation in collaborative contexts, which is a topic worthy of further exploration. The development of guidance on involving minorities in CYPSC, which would consider "empowerment strategies" (Allen, 1998), which may mean increasing the voices of underrepresented groups in partnership deliberations (Gray et al, 2022, p.16), would be welcome to further support the operation of these strategic collaborative structures.

7.8 Preliminary framework to support participation in strategic collaborative processes

This study was an academic enquiry concerned with an exploration of the impact of power on strategic collaboration. The findings of the study highlighted the significance of power for strategic collaboration and call for attention to be paid to these processes by those in positions of membership, leadership, and policy development. My analysis of power and collaboration prompts questions for members and leaders of collaborative contexts, which consider how to manage power imbalances and how to advance participation for all. It is clear from these findings that members of strategic collaborative contexts need robust structures to facilitate and support their participation, and that commitment to strategic collaboration is enabled by structural and organisational factors. This is essential for the success and further development of these collaborative contexts.

My preliminary framework to support strategic collaborative contexts which considers the impact of power, introduced here, is based on the findings of this study. It is designed to support and enhance strategic collaborative contexts for all, addressing the impact of power on these contexts. Such a framework should have theoretical as well as practice implications and intentions, and in designing it, my intention was that it would be accessible for practitioners, policymakers, and academics who are concerned with strategic collaboration. The framework presents key conceptual and theoretical messages from the study, alongside key questions related to aspects of power for members and leaders involved in strategic collaboration in any context. It is presented as a way to enhance the collaborative working already ongoing in CYPSCs and encourage a culture of reflection. In a specifically Irish context, the framework is being presented at an important time regarding current legislative changes that are suggested relating to CYPSCs, and at a point where it is possible that CYPSC membership may become mandated. However, whether membership is mandated or not, learning from this study can inform the future work of CYPSCs and other collaborative fora working towards outcomes for children. Findings from this study have shown that the nature of power structures, relations, and processes is fluid and complex, and irrespective of current legislative proposals, there is still a need

for a framework which considers aspects of power in these structures to enhance future work. This framework is illustrated in Table 12 below:

Table 12 Preliminary Framework to support the participation for all in strategic collaborative processes

Theme and Theory	Key Messages from Study Findings	Examples of Key questions
Power over and Conflict **Lukes 1974, 2005; Power over; observable versus latent conflict; and capacity of power.** **Gohler, 2009; Enforcement of intentions.** **Haugaard, 2002; Consensual conflict.** **Huxham and Vangen, 2002, 2012: Influence on decision-making towards those with greater resources.**	Power influences strategic collaborative processes whether it is exercised or not. Members and leaders of collaborative contexts understand and respond to issues regarding power in different ways. Where members and leaders come from organisationally, professionally, and personally influences how power works in CYPSCs. Conflict is a normal part of working towards the development of collaborative goals. Not paying attention to issues associated with power and conflict creates the risk of unbalanced collaborative contexts. Lack of representation of certain voices affects the power dynamics.	Am I aware of how my position of power is perceived? Am I aware of whether I exercise my position of power or not? Do I wield power over others? Do others wield power over me? Are there some members who have power over the agenda? Are there some members who have power over decision-making? Are all members provided with the space to contribute? Are contributions from female and male members equally valued? Why do some organisations not participate? What does non-participation of some organisations tell us about power relations? What action can be taken in relation to non-participation? Are all contributions welcome even if they may give rise to disagreement or conflict? Are the voices of those I represent heard?

		Is there space provided for contributions about or on behalf of minorities? Can I collaborate with other members to address issues affecting those I work with?
Power To and Productive Power **Allen, 1998; Power to; exercise of power.** **Lukes 1974, 2005; Power to; Exercise of power.** **Foucault, 1991; Productive power.** **Clegg, 1989; Organisational power and flows.** **Huxham and Vangen, 2000; Collaborative advantage**	CYPSC structures are an important mechanism for collaborative initiatives toward children's wellbeing in local areas. Different perspectives regarding senses of perceived and real power exist among and between membership and leadership. CYPSC substructures are associated with a flexibility regarding chairpersonship not open/available to CYPSCs, which enhances the context for strategic collaboration. CYPSC substructures consist of stakeholders with relatively similar levels of power which facilitates a sense of balanced power relations. This in turn provides members with the power to share information, knowledge, and ideas and problem-solve. CYPSC substructures are associated with a sense of productive power and provide necessary 'nodal points' for participation.	Am I given the 'power to' share information, knowledge, and ideas? Am I encouraged to bring problems or challenges to the table for discussion, reflection, and action? Can I contribute to collaborative initiatives or goals? If not, what are the blocks? Are there aspects of gender that are influencing participation? Can I participate in CYPSC substructures that have relevance for me and those I represent? Have I allocated power to my staff to participate in CYPSC substructures? If not, what are the blocks? Is there a clear pathway for substructures to feed into CYPSC meetings? Are we ensuring all the issues get heard, including issues related to minority populations/perspectives? How can wellbeing for children and young people be improved by my participation? Are there built-in reflection or evaluation mechanisms for CYPSC and substructures?

Power, Knowledge, and Governmentality **Foucault, 1980; 1998; Ubiquitous nature of power; productive power; and analytics of power.** **Foucault, 1977; 1980; Knowledge/power.** **Cohen, 1985; Expert Knowledge.** **Flyvberg, 1991; Unbalanced collaboration; Knowledge/power.**	Power relations are part of all personal, social, and organisational relations and are complex and non-linear in nature. All CYPSC members have some power and influence, but dimensions or degrees vary. Links between participation and power have been identified, where those who participate develop their power, influence, and knowledge over time. Risks that some types of knowledge are more valued than others have been highlighted. The concept of governmentality offers a way of critiquing CYPSC supported initiatives, which are provided in the context of wider social service systems. Unbalanced collaboration can happen where attention is not paid to power structures, relations, and processes.	To what extent do I have power? What are the limitations of that power? How do I use my knowledge effectively? How does the difference of knowledge affect my ability to influence? Is the knowledge and expertise I bring to the table given space to emerge and valued? Who/what organisation brings knowledge regarding minorities to the table? How are CYPSC initiatives experienced by the children and families who participate in them? How can the understanding of governmentality help analyse CYPSC within its wider context? What power do I have to influence other governance structures that provide the wider context for CYPSCs? How do I use my position and/or power within CYPSC to influence wider power structures or contexts of CYPSC? What 'frameworks' can I use to understand power relations between CYPSC and other structures?
Organisational Power and Flows **Clegg, 1989, 2002, 2006; Circuits of power; and episodic power.**	Dimensions or degrees of power are influenced by aspects of structural, organisational, and personal power. Organisational and structural contexts have an important role to play in supporting the work of CYPSCs.	What position of power does my organisation hold? Can this be changed? How does where I come from organisationally and professionally influence my power or position on CYPSC?

Martin-Misener et al, 2012; Value of strategic collaboration. **Mann, 1986; Organisational outflanking.** **Atkinson, 2007; Organisational investment in strategic collaboration.**	Organisational resources which empower some members but inhibit others lead to risks of 'stablising' in favour of certain collaborative members. Risks related to organisational outflanking in collaborative contexts exist and need to be reflected upon. A sense of power equality will support a balanced collaborative project and the achievement of balanced goals and actions.	Do members from particular organisations dominate agenda and decision-making processes? Can I improve my 'point of connection' through substructure membership? Does my organisation support participation in this collaborative structure? Can I/we promote an understanding of the value of strategic collaboration for those agencies that have not "enrolled"? Can members and leaders' avail of training on individual and organisational aspects of collaborative working?
Personal Power and Leadership **Lammers et al, 2009: Personal power.** **French and Raven, 1959; Personal power.** **Parsons, 1968; Consensual collaborative leadership.** **Barnes, 1983; Perceptions of power.** **Williams, 2002: 2012; Boundary spanners.**	There is significant intersection between aspects of organisational and personal power. Feelings of personal power are associated with participation – the more members participated the more feelings of personal power increased. Collaborative members expressed a consciousness of aspects of reward and coercive power. Aspects of referent power also impact, in those naturally confident members who are influential without having specific leadership roles. Aspects of gender influence aspects of personal power. The formal, positional, or legitimate power of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons is both	Am I aware of my position of power or perceived position of power? Are the strengths of all partners acknowledged and given space to emerge? Am I able to increase my participation to enhance feelings of personal power? Are all contributions or perspectives valued, including along gender and minority lines? Are there collaborative actions which have relevance for all members? Can aspects of reflective practice be incorporated? Am I using my power to influence leadership? Can I bring aspects of power and power relations into the discussion?

	acknowledged and questioned in the findings. CYPSC coordinators generate power through their relationships and connections, conceptualised as boundary spanners in the literature. The gap between perceived and real power of leadership was emphasised, particularly as this relates to CYPSC coordinators. Tensions and contradictions for collaborative leadership were highlighted, where leaders must balance participation with the achievement of collaborative goals and actions.	How does where I come from personally influence my power or position on CYPSC? Can I challenge particular types of power? I am a leader of my colleagues – how do I express this through my membership/leadership of CYPSC?

This preliminary framework is proposed as a guide, which aims to support a "power with" approach. This approach is described in the literature as "the ability of a collectivity to act together for the attainment of a common or shared end or series of ends" (Allen, 1998, p.35). The questions are not provided as an exhaustive list, but rather as a guide to encourage reflection on aspects of power structures, relations, and processes in strategic collaborative contexts. They may be used in training or workshops on aspects of strategic collaborative working. Each CYPSC member or leader will have to consider how to adapt the framework from their own perspective, depending on their position and their contribution to outcomes for children and young people, from their organisational, professional, and personal context.

I exemplify it's use for a manager of a Family Resource Centre, who is a CYPSC member, who represents five Family Resource Centres in their area, who has concerns regarding a client group which includes ten Roma children who are living in poverty, in overcrowded and insecure accommodation:

Table 13 Application of Preliminary Framework for a CYPSC member

Power over and Conflict	Am I provided with the space to contribute to highlight the complex/systemic needs of those children I work with from the Roma community? How do I understand the lack of power these children have? How can I use my position of power to address the inequalities experienced by these children? Do others wield 'power over' me, which prevents me from making contributions on behalf of these children? How do I understand power from different cultural perspectives?
Power To and Productive Power	What is the best way that Roma children could be given the 'power to' contribute, so that their issues are heard? Am I given support from other members/organisations to develop collaborative initiatives or goals? Could these initiatives or goals be improved if Roma children were supported to contribute to CYPSC?
Power, Knowledge, and Governmentality	Am I able to share information, knowledge, and ideas about possible responses to the needs of Roma children that I work with?

	To what extent can my knowledge influence actions related to improving their wellbeing and outcomes? Do I exercise my position of power, as it relates to what I know about the needs of these children? How are CYPSC initiatives experienced by those who participate in them? Can CYPSC members deepen their understanding of how CYPSC initiatives are experienced by children and families from minority communities?
Organisational Power and Flows	What position of power does my organisation hold? Can this position be changed? Can I use my organisational or professional position to change my position of power? What position of power do these children have, and what can CYPSC do to improve that position?
Personal Power and Leadership	Am I aware of my position of power or perceived position of power in relation to my colleagues in the County, who I represent on CYPSC? Am I aware of my position of power or perceived position of power in relation to those children I represent? How can I use my position of power on CYPSC to influence responses to these children?

	Do those in leadership positions acknowledge the strengths of all partners, including my ability to represent the experiences of those children from minority communities? If not, what can I do to change this?

How is the framework pointing towards outcomes for children? The importance of thinking about the impact of power is emphasised in both the literature on collaboration and the literature on power. Both sets of literature emphasise risks of unbalanced collaborative contexts when members are unable to 'park' their personal, professional, or organisational goals for collaborative goals. By encouraging a focus on the impact of power structures, relations, and processes, my framework has the potential to achieve actions which are balanced, inclusive of all views, and value all types of knowledge and/or expertise. This better understanding of the impact of power on collaboration will, in turn lead to better outcomes for children and young people because collaborative goals will be developed based on all, and not just some, perspectives. However, alongside the focus on shared professional or organisational goals, needs to be a consideration regarding participatory goals. Issues around child and parental participation and voice need to inform this work and need to be considered as part of a review of the operation of CYPSCs.

7.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a discussion on the thematic findings from chapters five and six, in conjunction with a reflection on the literature on collaboration and power. This thesis has contributed to a greater understanding of strategic collaborative structures by using the theoretical power literature, and some of the ideas therein, as a lens or scaffold with which to explore the operation of collaborative structures. The chapter introduced a preliminary framework that can be employed to support participation for all in strategic collaboration. The chapter presents several unique contributions to the knowledge and literature on the topic, which include:

- Emphasising the significance of the capacity of power even when it is not used in an obvious way.
- Highlighting aspects of the productive nature of power associated with the collaborative structures under investigation.
- Stressing how the concept of governmentality can be used to further an understanding of collaborative processes.
- Accenting the significance of structural and organisational contexts in supporting participation, alongside the significance of aspects of personal power.

- Offering a model to support participation for all in strategic collaborative contexts.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Approaches which support strategic collaboration across a range of service provision contexts for children, young people, and families have grown exponentially in recent decades. Yet the significant impact of power on such processes, is under-explored in the literature. This thesis has explored power and its influence on strategic collaborative processes within the specific context of CYPSCs in Ireland and illuminates the power differences among collaborative actors or stakeholders. In this concluding chapter, I present a summary of the entire research project and explain the contribution that this study makes to the body of knowledge on power in strategic collaborative contexts.

Firstly, I set out a reminder of the structure of this thesis, which was developed over eight chapters, beginning with an introductory chapter that presented the background to the study, declared the research aim and objectives, and set out the rationale for the research study. Chapter two highlighted the context within which the study is located and detailed approaches to children's wellbeing. Chapter three presented the literature pertaining to strategic collaboration and power structures, relations, and processes, with a specific focus on the literature informing the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter four outlined the influence of aspects of interpretivist and social constructivist epistemologies, and the methodology which guided the study. Chapters five and six set out the research findings arising from the data analysis process undertaken. Key findings of this study show that power plays a significant role in the operation of the strategic collaborative structures investigated and highlight differing perspectives on power and influence in strategic collaboration, which are in turn influenced by complex and multi-layered personal, professional, and organisational contexts or systems. The discussion chapter and preliminary framework call for attention to be paid to power by practitioners and policymakers associated with CYPSCs and other collaborative structures which have, as their focus, wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. This concluding chapter examines the extent to which I have answered the research question and fulfilled the objectives of the study. A reflection on my positionality as researcher and practitioner is presented, alongside a reflection of my experiences of employing the methodology in the field, in terms of strengths and limitations. The chapter lays out questions for future research and concludes with my overall reflections on the study.

8.2 Conclusion on the research question and objectives

This section of the chapter sets out a reflection on the findings in response to each of the research objectives. The research question which this study aimed to address was: *How does power operate in collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people?* As a result of the empirical research that I conducted for this thesis, I have concluded that power plays a significant part in strategic collaborative working, and that this is not something that is reflected in a substantial way in the literature, research, or guidance on collaborative working. The study sought to provide an answer to the overarching question by responding to three research objectives which are set out below.

Objective One: To explore the operation of power in collaborative working within the specific context of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)

The main purpose of this research connected with this first objective, was to examine how aspects of power structures, relations, and processes affect strategic collaborative contexts, which are working towards children's wellbeing and outcomes. My primary contribution is in demonstrating the nature of these aspects of power in strategic collaborative contexts. This study has highlighted the value that members and leaders of collaborative processes place on participation in CYPSCs, and the idiosyncratic nature of how membership is experienced by all. A large majority of participants were enthusiastic collaborators, and their participation in CYPSCs was particularly meaningful for them, their services, and those client groups that they engaged with in service delivery. However, while participants were enthusiastic collaborators, inhibiting or constraining factors were highlighted in my findings. This study has found that power is significant in many ways, reflecting the positions of many power theorists. That members and leaders of these collaborative contexts have different views on power has been revealed. The importance of supportive contexts which consider and address issues of power structures, relations, and processes to buttress participation in strategic collaborative contexts has also been shown.

The conceptualisation of power as that which is ever-present and part of all social relations and interactions, as Foucault (1998) and others conceptualise, best explains the operation of power in strategic collaborative contexts. Some power issues were associated with aspects of 'power over' and conflict or the lack of conflict, as highlighted in the scholarship of Lukes (1974. 2005), Flyvberg (1991) and Gohler (2009), which is also reflected in the collaborative literature (Gray, 1996; Mitchell, 2015). Findings show that CYPSC structures have the 'power to' (Lukes, 1974; 2005) provide a platform for collaborative initiatives and innovative practices, with a sense of 'productive power' (Foucault, 1991) associated particularly with CYPSC substructures. This study has highlighted different levels or systems of power, which are influenced by organisational, professional, and personal systems, and how these are of significance in the operation of strategic collaborative

processes. How dimensions or relations of power are interwoven with other relations or systems has also been revealed. These dimensions or relations are underscored by the interplay between knowledge and power, as Foucault (1980) postulated, and findings reveal how important it is that all knowledge is facilitated to emerge. Further, findings emphasise how Foucault's (in Faubion, 2001) concept of governmentality offers a useful framework with which to explore the experience of CYPSC initiatives from the perspectives of children, young people, and families.

It seems that in the CYPSC context, everyone has power, but the levels or degrees of power vary, and are influenced by aspects of structure and organisation, as Clegg (1989; 2002) argues. Findings challenge the narrative that collaborative working is something that everyone has an innate capacity for. Further, my findings highlight the need for training on organisational and individual aspects of collaborative methodologies. In line with the work of Sorenson et al (2021) and others, tensions and contradictions for collaborative leaders have been identified, who have, on one hand, to be reflective and facilitative, and on the other, are responsible for mobilising actors and resources to build and keep momentum.

Aspects of personal power were found to be significant and were aligned to French and Raven's (1959) model. Feelings of personal power were linked with participation and reported in two ways: the more members participated in the main CYPSC structure, the more powerful they felt; and participation in CYPSC substructures was associated with feelings of power. A strong awareness from participants was expressed in relation to reward and coercive power, as described by French and Raven (1959), with divergent views between leadership and membership on this topic. That members of strategic collaborative contexts value the support they receive from collaborative leaders is clear, alongside the need for these leaders to have a reflective approach to buttress participation for all. The strengths and skills of CYPSC coordinators or 'boundary spanners' need to be acknowledged, valued, and harnessed to support further development of the CYPSC initiative. The findings indicate that allocated or fixed positions of chairpersonship may not facilitate a sense of shared power. Findings related to gender show the need to understand more about gender and power in collaborative contexts, and CYPSCs offer a unique setting within which such an exploration could take place. Challenges and complexities related to meaningful minority representation are highlighted, alongside the powerful role of the C&V sector vis-à-vis minority voices or representation. The development of guidance on the meaningful involvement of minorities in CYPSCs would be a welcome addition to CYPSC guidance and practice.

Addressing issues related to power structures, relations, and processes, identified in this study, alongside encouraging a culture of reflection, should encourage a balanced project and associated balanced goals. These should ultimately benefit children and young people.

Objective Two: To design a preliminary framework to support collaborative working which reflects the operation of power, as discovered, in the study.

From my first main objective, this objective arose. I have developed a preliminary framework which is presented in Table 12. The purpose of the framework is to be used as a starting point for implementing the recommendations, set out under objective three below. The framework offers a set of perspectives on, or lenses through which, the operation of power can be understood theoretically and responded to or managed practically. My framework builds from the key insights and distinct contributions to the body of knowledge on the implications of power structures, relations, and processes in collaborative contexts. It encourages a reflective approach to CYPSC membership and leadership but is not presented as a manual. The framework instead presents suggested thoughts or ideas that members and leaders should apply to their own positions on CYPSC. An example of how a member might apply particular aspects of the framework to their own context is provided in Table 13.

Objective Three: To develop recommendations for CYPSCs and other collaborative structures which address issues of power in structured collaborative processes working towards improved outcomes for children and young people.

The findings of this study have influenced the development of a number of recommendations related to practice development for strategic collaboration towards outcomes for children and young people. This study has demonstrated the clear impact of power on strategic collaborative working, despite limited consideration of this in research, policy, and practice contexts which buttress collaborative working. Findings show the significance of interactions and structures which support collaborative working, alongside approaches of collaborative leaders or boundary spanners and their impact on collaborative structures. Approaches to strategic collaboration which take aspects of power structures, relations, and processes into account could lead to the development of participatory practices for all members of collaborative processes. As a result of my findings, the following recommendations are offered to policymakers and practitioners concerned with participation in or support for strategic collaborative contexts:

1. Undertake review of national policy and practice guidance for CYPSCs, at DCEDIY level, which acknowledges the role of power structures, relations, and processes in strategic collaborative contexts and their impact on participation for all. In particular, a detailed consideration of the relationships and interfaces between CYPSC and wider Tusla structures; relationships between statutory and C&V membership; and relationships between CYPSC and wider policy and socio-economic issues, such as marginalisation, would be worthwhile.

2. CYPSCs commence an analysis at local level, of non-engagement in CYPSCs, through a power lens, to establish if there are barriers related to power, and consider ways to address these.
3. DCEDIY undertake a review of the leadership model of CYPSCs, in light of legislative changes, paying particular attention to power structures, relations, and processes.
4. CYPSCs integrate reflective practices and training processes to enhance understandings of the impact of power on strategic collaboration. This opportunity could be offered in the testing of the preliminary framework offered in this study in a facilitated session with CYPSC leaders and members.
5. Tusla considers CYPSCs in the context of the wider systems they operate, including systems of surveillance and support and/or protection.
6. CYPSCs undertake a reflection on how each individual CYPSC, with its structure, substructure, and wider relationships, can enhance the inclusion of children and young people generally, but especially those who are experiencing marginalisation.
7. Develop an academic module at qualifying level, which would incorporate understanding of the impact of power on collaborative working for all health and social care students.

8.3 Methodological reflections including strengths and limitations

This study was concerned with the perspectives of a range of CYPSC members and leaders across Ireland, and how they experienced their membership and leadership from the specific perspective of power. The research explored participants' experiences, perspectives, and interactions with other members and leaders over the course of their involvement in a specific collaborative context. In this section, I reflect on the extent to which my positionality, methodology, and research design were effective in answering the research question.

I firstly reflect on my positionality, which is described by Holmes (2020) as both the researchers world view and their position within the study including its social and political contexts. Positionality influences how research is conducted, its outcomes, and results (Rowe, 2014). My positionality as a researcher and practitioner with responsibility for implementing one of the structures under investigation can possibly be described as 'insider'. However, Boner and Tolhurst (2002) use this term to describe perspectives related to participant observation, and this methodology was not used for this study. Neither can my position be described as an 'outsider' (Bridges, 2017), so perhaps the terms 'associate' or 'researcher in the middle' (Breen 2007, p.165) more accurately describes my positionality. In conducting this research, I had an understanding of the workings of Roscommon and Galway CYPSCs, while being conscious of the idiosyncratic and localised nature of the way these structures have developed in Ireland. My position as 'researcher in the middle' gave me significant insight into the operation of CYPSCs in Ireland, which was an advantage for this study, but it also

created a risk as the data collection activities could be viewed by participants as part of my professional practice or position.

The study operated across several levels and moved between research and practice paradigms at many points in the research process. This occurred in particular at times of seeking support for participation in the study by my colleagues. During the recruitment phase of this study, I made the initial invitation to participate and contribute to my colleagues by presenting a synopsis of the study to them at a national meeting. I believe that this process or step was influential in garnering support for the research. This step supported my colleagues to engage in and distribute the research information and allowed me an opportunity to explore the attitudes of my colleagues to the study aim and objectives. My existing relationship with them supported their participation and allowed me to get a sense of the support I would have for the distribution of study instruments. My collaboration with my colleagues in achieving support and participation for this study was crucial. I reflected on the added value of their contributions in my reflective journals and speculated that this may not have been achieved by an 'outsider researcher'. I also reflected on how grateful I felt for their contributions and support, in circulating my research information and participating in the data collection processes. This support assisted with managing my anxieties around participation.

I was able to use my supervision notes and reflective journals to record and reflect on the act of balancing the researcher and practitioner stance. My approach needed to be articulated and explained in an accessible way to all study participants, who had a wide variety of training, backgrounds, and experience. This necessitated many drafts and re-drafts of the aim, objectives, and study process in the study information pack. This pack needed to provide absolute clarity on the separation of my researcher and practitioner position. Precise information on all the components of the study needed to reassure participants that their involvement was voluntary and was totally independent of their membership of the structures under investigation. Participants also needed to be reassured that data would be treated with confidentiality and anonymity due to my position as a Tusla employee, and the risk of being perceived as a powerful stakeholder in the processes under exploration.

The challenge of over-identifying as practitioner or researcher was reflected upon in my study journals and supervision sessions throughout all stages of the research process. As an early career researcher, it was extremely important that these reflections on the interchangeability of the role took place to ensure a robust research process. However, the risk of cross-over between roles was a constant challenge. From a positive perspective, study participants used some of the interview questions as opportunities to compare and contrast CYPSC approaches to various topics or themes, which shows the advantages of interactions between the research and practitioner roles. However, participants may have perceived a bias or position of power on my behalf, as I was professionally

integrated into the structures under investigation. In articulating the parameters of participation, I was clear with participants that involvement in the study would be treated with confidentiality, and I would ensure anonymity in reporting. By employing a mixed-methods design, I hoped to validate the approach by acknowledging that the potential for the perception of researcher bias exists but was accounted for within the research design and data analysis. Nevertheless, it is not possible to claim that the data collection and analysis processes were entirely objective or value-free, but neither could this claim be made if this research was carried out by an outsider-researcher.

Some of the strengths of this study are because of my dual position as researcher and practitioner, while some of the limitations also relate to this dual role. I continue this section with a consideration of the strengths of the study methodology.

The effectiveness of my methodology can be seen in the robust and transparent nature of the data collection and analysis processes. This is evidenced by the use of specific research tools for data collection and analysis. The fieldwork process of this study was characterised by the following: a robust and worthwhile pilot phase; the commitment and support of my national colleagues to the study; the successful application of a mixed methods sequential design, and the quality of the outputs generated by the fieldwork.

It is important to acknowledge here that power is a sensitive topic which is not easy to research. However, for this study I was able to pilot my research instruments with participants, with whom I had a close relationship, who were able to report to me how aspects of power affected strategic collaboration, from their perspectives. Views of the perceived powerful role of the CYPSC coordinator emerged during the pilot phase, which I had not considered previously. The final quantitative and qualitative instruments were developed to reflect outcomes of the pilot phase and included questions on the powerful positions of coordinators and chairpersons as a result. Further, study participants were very forthcoming at all stages of the data collection processes, providing very clear and specific descriptions related to the topic of power, with positive and negative views articulated. Again, my pre-existing relationship with some participants, in particular my CYPSC coordinator colleagues, appeared to be a facilitative factor in data gathering. So, despite the sensitive topic, and pre-existing relationship with some participants, I have generated significant data on how power effects strategic collaborative working.

The effectiveness of my methodology is demonstrated in the level of data generated and the analysis it allowed. By taking a considered and sequential approach to designing the data collection activities, I ensured that members and leaders of these strategic collaborative processes were all able to contribute in a meaningful way to the data collection process. Following a sequential research design, the analysis of the quantitative data and qualitative survey data provided me with a clear pathway for

further exploration of power issues in the interview aspect of data collection. The use of established packages such as SPSS and NVivo, supported the presentation of a coherent account of the data analysis processes. In terms of answering the research question, my design allowed me to bring together all the dimensions of how power structures, relations, and processes impact strategic collaboration. For example, my quantitative data allowed me to analyse the impact of power from statistical perspectives and develop an understanding of the issues related to power. I was then able to add to this with my qualitative data, which helped me create a deeper understanding of the nature of power in strategic collaborative processes. Twenty-two purposively sampled interviews generated a wide range of power-related thematic data. My sampling process ensured a broad range of membership and leadership participation, who were selected to ensure variety along organisational, geographical, gender and leadership lines. Based on one-to-one engagements, the semi-structured interview aspect of the study provided members and leaders with an opportunity to compare and contrast the ways in which CYPSCs approached aspects of membership and developed responses to identified needs. Many participants reported their interest in hearing about the approach of the CYPSC I coordinated and welcomed the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of their membership of CYPSC for them. While semi-structured interviews all followed a set format, interviews needed flexibility to allow for reflection on practice which the interviews provided for participants. The semi-structured format allowed space for the sharing of practice and approaches, which was appreciated by participants. It is likely that the need to share perspectives on practice and approaches was influenced by the lack of space provided to share between CYPSCs during the pandemic.

While not planned with pandemic restrictions in mind, the study methodology did not have to change due to Covid 19 restrictions. However, it is likely that more engagement would have been achieved in the survey aspect of the study if it did not coincide with efforts to adapt to redeployment and remote working measures. My supervision notes and reflective journals were useful tools as they provided me with a means of revisiting and reviewing the methodology employed, in light of ongoing restrictions as well as providing space for commenting on the effectiveness of the research process.

This section will continue with a reflection on the limitations of my study, under the following headings: biased sample and generalisability; participation rates; gender imbalance; anonymity, ethics application processes.

Participating CYPSC members and leaders were interested in the topic power in strategic collaborative contexts and said that power matters and power effects. We cannot know for those who did not come forward, whether power is an issue or not, but it is possible that there is a certain amount of CYPSC membership and leadership who did not come forward because there were issues related to power which they were either not willing, or unable, to discuss. Those who responded and participated were probably already positively disposed to the concept of strategic collaboration and

may not be typical of all CYPSC members and leaders. Further, the majority of study participants had significant experience of participation in CYPSCs. It is possible that those who did not participate have significant views on power structures, relations, and processes, which would be interesting to establish. This may represent somewhat of a limitation to the generalisability of the findings. However, even though the sample might be biased, it still allowed significant power issues to be raised and articulated, and I drew on the findings to develop a framework on the topic of power in collaborative contexts.

As set out in chapter four, I distributed my request to participate in this study through CYPSC coordinators in Ireland and it is my opinion that my colleagues support in this distribution played a significant part in study participation. However, it is possible that the participation rate would have been different if a direct email to all CYPSC members and leaders in Ireland was possible. These details are publicly available on the website connected with the initiative, but CYPSC coordinators have the most up to date and accurate contact lists. It is difficult to speculate if this would have led to increased participation, as I believe my colleagues played a significant role in the recruitment and participation aspects of this study. According to the CYPSC National Progress Report 2020 there were 575 individual committee members[22] on CYPSCs in Ireland the year I carried out the survey aspect of my research. If seventy members responded to the survey, this indicates a response rate of approximately thirteen per cent, assuming all members received the invitation to participate in this study.

It seems that the gender imbalance of participants is also reflected in the profile of membership of CYPSCs in Ireland, making them unique structures which are dominated by female participants who hold senior positions in their fields or organisations. This is to be expected as health and social services staff tend to be predominantly female (Callaghan et al., 2018) but leads to the possibility of more gendered data being collected and analysed. Preliminary findings related to gender and collaboration in this study are worthy of further exploration. In hindsight, a stronger focus on inequality, based on aspects of gender and culture would have strengthened this work.

Another possible limitation relates to the fact that the survey was not truly anonymous. It was distributed by my colleagues nationally, to their CYPSC members and leaders. So, while I did not directly contact participants, responses were received from participants email addresses, and only one participant did not provide their full name. Further, I had existing relationships with those survey

[22] CYPSC National Progress Report 2020 Part 1, which notes that some individuals can be engaged in more than one CYPSC, accessed on https://www.cypsc.ie 17/04/2023. This figure includes approximately 35 members of Galway and Roscommon CYPSCs who did not participate the full study. My calculation of a 13% response rate is based on a CYPSC population of 540 which reflects this.

participants who were my colleagues. However, I was the only person who had direct access to the data. The large amount of study participants who provided their details for follow-up interviews suggests that participants were happy to be identifiable to me and assured of anonymity in study reporting. A further layer of protection of identity was added with the checking back regarding reporting with study participants (see Appendix 15).

To conclude this section on methodological reflections, I describe the role of researcher and practitioner as one which is a challenge and a privilege. As a practitioner, I was constantly drawn to the implications for practice, while as a researcher I had to consider the theoretical and conceptual meaning at all stages of the project. This study process underscores for me the importance of practitioner-led research, which blends theoretical and conceptual considerations with policy and practice considerations.

8.4 Programme of future research

This study has revealed several areas and concepts that could be further explored and investigated in future research projects. These projects could clarify and develop our understandings of the role of power structures, relations, and processes in strategic collaborative processes. I put forward the following five areas for future research:

- Develop an understanding of the importance of reflective practice in collaborative working, which would take into account the impact of aspects of power and leadership.

- Harness the preliminary conclusions related to gender and strategic collaborative to develop a research project that considers how aspects of gender effect collaborative contexts, in the particular context which is female dominated.

- Consider the need for more robust structures which represent or consider voices from minority cultures and further research into this topic which would add to an understanding in terms of the best way to include these perspectives.

- Research participation of children, young people, and parents within structures such as CYPSC, using participatory methodologies from the outset.

- Progress a study of mandated collaboration, power, and its implications.

Therefore, further study of these topics is recommended to build on the findings of this research project.

8.5 Concluding reflections

In this study my overarching question was to explore how power operates in collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people. Using CYPSCs as an example, this study has illustrated how important it is to explore and think about these structures through a power lens. The study makes a unique contribution to knowledge in the way in which the theoretical literature on power was used to enhance the understanding of strategic collaborative contexts, which have as their focus, outcomes for children and young people. Key research findings stress the significance of structural and organisational power and flows in participation in CYPSCs, and that where members come from organisationally, professionally, and personally influences how power works in strategic collaborative contexts. Challenges in achieving collaborative goals and outcomes are highlighted if organisational contexts or systems do not buttress this way of working. Further, findings show the sense of productive power associated with CYPSC substructures, where issues of power are not felt to the same extent as on CYPSCs. Tensions and contradictions for collaborative leadership have been highlighted in the study because leaders have responsibilities for facilitating participation on one hand and developing collaborative goals and actions on the other. Links between aspects of personal power and participation are emphasised, where feelings of personal power increased through participation. The study offers a preliminary framework to support participation in strategic collaborative contexts, which has theoretical and practical application. The study calls for attention to be paid to aspects of power by practitioners and policymakers associated with CYPSCs and other collaborative structures which have, as their focus, wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people.

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Appendices

List of Appendices

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement Ireland

CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

Institute for Lifecourse and Society

Appendix 1

Information Pack for Pilot Phase of Research for CYPSC Members

The CYPSC you are a member of is being invited to take part in the pilot phase of a research study by Caroline Duignan, carried out as part of a PhD degree at NUI Galway. The title of the research study is: *to explore how power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes.*

This is an information sheet that aims to address any concerns/questions you may have about the pilot and your involvement in the study. Please feel free to ask other questions if you wish.

Who am I?

Caroline Duignan is a part time PhD research student from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, at the National University of Ireland, Galway. This research centre works with children, young people and the people involved in their lives to reveal the things that matter to children, and what can be done to improve their childhood. Caroline also works with Tusla, Child and Family Agency as a Co-ordinator of the Children and Young Peoples Services Committees in Galway and Roscommon.

What is this research study about?

This study intends to explore how power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes. To do this Caroline will survey CYPSC membership but not involve the CYPSC's that she directly works with. These committees are instead being asked to participate in the pilot phase of the research and your participation in this phase is very important to the success of this study. This is why Caroline is seeking your consent to participate in this phase of the research.

As part of the study Caroline will:

- Invite CYPSC membership to participate in a survey on the issues of power in the context of collaborative working, which will be anonymous.
- Request those members who are interested to participate in a telephone interview on the topic of power in the context of collaborative working.
- Develop a capacity building session for CYPSC's and other collaborative structures working towards outcomes for children on the topic of power.
- Develop a Train the Trainer for CYPSC Co-ordinators to deliver this session to CYPSC members.

If you decide to take part what does this involve?

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to:

Sign a consent form indicating your agreement to participate in the pilot phase of the study; complete a questionnaire on issues regarding power in the CYPSC you are a member of (which will take approximately thirty minutes); participate in a telephone interview with the researcher should you consent to this (approximately one hour); provide feedback to Caroline on the survey and interview instruments. Caroline will conduct all interviews and audio record them to help her remember what has been said for analysis purposes.

Will the information be confidential?

Caroline will be the only researcher who will distribute and analyse the survey findings and conduct and analyse the interviews. The findings of the pilot phase will influence the final survey instruments but will not be published. Data collected during the pilot phase will be stored on a secure server in NUI Galway and will only be accessed by the researcher. In order to ensure that the input remains confidential, real names will not be used. People and places involved in the study will be assigned an identification number and pseudonyms will be used. The only exception in relation to confidentiality will occur if any child protection concerns arise. This information will be reported to Tusla Child and Family Agency in line with Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).

Do you have to take part?

You do not have to take part in the pilot phase of this research. However, by taking part you will have an opportunity to influence the development of survey instruments for the first ever national survey of CYPSC membership and therefore contribute to the body of knowledge regarding CYSPCs. This may impact on future practice in the area and potentially inform government policy regarding collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes. Your input is valuable. If you agree to take part in this phase of the research, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will also receive a copy of this information sheet and a consent form to keep for your records. Please remember that you can change your mind at any point without needing to give a reason.

What if you have any further questions about this or want to talk about this?

Caroline will gladly answer any of your questions or talk you through the study. If you would like to do so please contact her at:

Caroline Duignan

Doctoral Researcher,

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,

School of Political Science and Sociology

National University of Ireland Galway

Email c.duignan8@nuigalway.ie

If you have any reservations or complaints about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee

C/O Office of the Vice President for Research

National University of Ireland Galway

Email ethics@nuigalway.ie

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

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Appendix 2

Consent form for Pilot Phase of Research for CYPSC Members

Title of Study: *To explore how power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes.*

Name of Researcher: Caroline Duignan

Name of CYPSC Member:

_____

Please initial box if in agreement with statement

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided to me regarding the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information. ☐

3. I agree to take part in a pilot survey and may provide my consent to take part in a pilot telephone interview with the researcher. ☐

4. If I participate in the pilot telephone interview, I agree to this interview being audio recorded. ☐

5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

6. I understand that my input will be anonymous and that the findings will be published as a thesis by the researcher and may also appear in research journals or in other publications. ☐

7. I understand that data collected for this research will inform the development of a capacity building session on the topic of power, power relations and collaboration. ☐

Name:

Signature:

Date:

For researcher's use only:

Participant Identity Number ☐

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CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

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Appendix 3

Information Pack for CYPSC Members

The CYPSC you are a member of is being invited to take part in a research study carried out as part of a PhD degree at NUI Galway. The title of the research study is *to explore how power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes.*

This is an information sheet that aims to address any concerns/questions you may have about the study and your involvement in the study. Please feel free to ask other questions if you wish.

Who am I?

Caroline Duignan is a part time PhD research student from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, at the National University of Ireland, Galway. This research centre works with children, young people and the people involved in their lives to reveal the things that matter to children, and what can be done to improve their childhood. Caroline also works with Tusla, Child and Family Agency as a Co-ordinator of the Children and Young Peoples Services Committees in Galway and Roscommon.

What is this research study about?

This study intends to explore how power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes. To do this Caroline will survey CYPSC membership nationally. Therefore, your participation in this research is very important to the success of this study. This is why Caroline is seeking your consent to participate in this study.

As part of the study Caroline will:

- Invite CYPSC membership nationally to participate in a survey on the issues of power in the context of collaborative working, which will be anonymous.
- Request those members who are interested to participate in a telephone interview on the topic of power in the context of collaborative working.
- Develop a capacity building session for CYPSC's and other collaborative structures working towards outcomes for children on the topic of power.
- Develop a Train the Trainer for CYPSC Co-ordinators to deliver this workshop to CYPSC members.

If you decide to take part what does this involve?

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to:

Sign a consent form indicating your agreement to participate in this study; complete a questionnaire on issues regarding power in the CYPSC you are a member of (which will take approximately thirty minutes); participate in a telephone interview with the researcher should you consent to this (approximately one hour); participate in a capacity building session for your CYPSC. Caroline will conduct all interviews and audio record them to help her remember what has been said for analysis purposes.

Will the information be confidential?

Caroline will be the only researcher who will distribute and analyse the survey findings and conduct and analyse the interviews. The findings will be published in a thesis and may also appear in research journals or other publications. They will also be available to any other interested person, organisation, or service. In order to ensure that the input remains confidential, real names will not be used. People and places involved in the study will be assigned an identification number and pseudonyms will be used. The only exception in relation to confidentiality will occur if any child protection concerns arise. This information will be reported to Tusla Child and Family Agency in line with Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).

Do you have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this research. However, by taking part in this study you will have an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding CYSPCs. This may impact on future practice in the area and potentially inform government policy regarding collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes. Your input is valuable. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will also receive a copy of this information sheet and a consent form to keep for your records. Please remember that you can change your mind at any point without needing to give a reason.

What if you have any further questions about this or want to talk about this?

Caroline will gladly answer any of your questions or talk you through the study. If you would like to do so, please contact her at:

Caroline Duignan

Doctoral Researcher,

Child and Family Research Centre,

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National University of Ireland Galway

Email c.duignan8@nuigalway.ie

If you have any reservations or complaints about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

Institute for Lifecourse and Society

Appendix 4

Consent Form for CYPSC Members

Title of Study: *To explore how power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes.*

Name of Researcher: Caroline Duignan

Name of CYPSC Member:

_____

Please initial box if in agreement with statement

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided to me regarding the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information. ☐

3. I agree to take part in a survey and may provide my consent to take part in a telephone interview with the researcher. ☐

4. If I participate in the telephone interview, I agree to this interview being audio recorded. ☐

5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

6. I understand that my input will be anonymous and that the findings will be published as a thesis by the researcher and may also appear in research journals or in other publications. ☐

Name:

Signature:

Date:

For researcher's use only

Participant Identity Number ☐

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Appendix 5

Email Recruitment Script Quantitative Data Collection

Dear Committee Member,

I am a part time Doctoral Researcher in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre in NUI Galway and I also Co-ordinate Roscommon Children and Young People's Services Committee. I am getting in touch seeking your participation in my research study, which aims to explore how issues of power influence collaborative working among agencies towards children and young people's outcomes. I plan to carry out a survey of CYPSC members and I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

I attach the study information sheet and consent form for your consideration. If you would like to find out more about this study and discuss your possible involvement, please email me at c.duignan8@nuigalway.ie

If you are interested in participating in the study, please sign and return the attached consent form electronically or by post and access the survey via the link below.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JTRSPBB

Your contribution to this study will be very valuable but is also completely voluntary.

Kind Regards,

Caroline Duignan

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement Ireland

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Appendix 6

Survey of CYPSC Membership

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the survey phase of this research project. Please ensure that you have read the accompanying information sheet about the research before completing this survey. This survey includes questions that establish your profile and continues with a number of questions on power as they relate to your membership of a Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC). This study is important, and the information gained from your participation will help us all do our work better. The information you provide for this research will remain anonymous unless you volunteer to participate in an interview on this topic. This survey should take 15 – 20 minutes to complete.

1. Your Profile:
Please enter the following information:

Name	
Organisation	
Tusla	☐
HSE	☐
An Garda Siochana	☐
Local Authority	☐
Probation	☐
Education and Training Board	☐

Youth Services ☐

Mental Health ☐

Family Resource Centre ☐

Primary Education ☐

Post Primary Education ☐

Community and Voluntary Sector ☐

Please specify your job title within your organisation

Gender

Male ☐ **Female** ☐ **Other** ☐

Length of time in your current post

0 – 2 years ☐

3 – 5 years ☐

6 years or over ☐

What CYPSC are you a member of?

Length of time you are a member of CYPSC

0 – 2 years ☐

☐

3 – 5 years

6 years or over ☐

How many scheduled CYPSC meetings do you estimate you have attended over the last twelve months?

6+ ☐

3 – 5 ☐

1 -2 ☐

0 ☐

What motivates you to attend CYPSC meetings?
Please tick all boxes that are relevant.

Information Sharing ☐

Updates from Subgroups/Working Groups ☐

Agency Presentations ☐

Discussions with other members ☐

All of the above ☐

Other (please specify)

Thank you. This survey will continue with questions on power.

Power in CYPSC's

How much influence do you feel you have on the work of the CYPSC?

1 .....2.....3.....4.....5

No influence Highly Influential

Please explain your answer

How much influence do you feel you have on Decision Making for the CYPSC you are a member of?

1 .....2.....3.....4.....5

No influence Highly Influential

Please explain your answer

How much influence do you feel you have on setting the agenda for the CYPSC you are a member of?

1 .....2.....3.....4.....5

No influence Highly Influential

Please explain your answer

To what extent is the agenda for CYPSC determined by any single agency?

1 .....2.....3.....4.....5

Not at all Completely

Please explain your answer

In your opinion, is power shared equally among the membership?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure** ☐

Please explain your answer

How would you describe the role of the CYPSC Chairperson in terms of influence? Is the role:

Very Influential ☐

Influential ☐

Somewhat influential ☐

Not influential ☐

Please explain your answer

How would you describe the role of the CYPSC Co-ordinator in terms of influence? Is the role:

Very influentail ☐

Influential ☐

Somewhat influential ☐

Not influential ☐

Please explain your answer

In your opinion, is there equality between statutory and voluntary services at CYPSC?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure** ☐

Please explain your answer

Can you identify a CYPSC initiative which has focused on outcomes for children, young people and their families relevant to your role/in your area?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure** ☐

Please explain your answer

How well are the voices of minority groups and/or vulnerable populations (for example, people with disabilities, or from the Travelling Community) represented at CYPSC meetings?

Not at all ☐

Somewhat ☐

Unsure ☐

Well ☐

Very well ☐

Please explain your answer

Are issues that are important to you and the children and young people you work with or groups you represent adequately dealt with by CYPSC?

All of the time ☐

Some of the time ☐

Not at all ☐

Unsure ☐

Please explain your answer

Do disagreements arise at CYPSC meetings?

All of the time ☐

Some of the time ☐

Not at all ☐

Unsure ☐

How does disagreement manifest itself during the CYPSC meeting?

Please explain your answer

How is disagreement resolved?

Verbal debate ☐

Vote taking ☐

Have not observed disagreement ☐

Unsure ☐

Please explain your answer

Would you find a capacity building session on the topic of power for CYPSCs useful? This could address issues such as developing a shared understanding/building consensus, solving problems, and making decisions.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

If yes, have you suggestions regarding the content of such a session?

If you are happy to participate in an interview with the researcher as part of the next phase of this study please enter your contact details below:

Name:	
Email Address	
Telephone Number	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, which aims to establish the impact of power on the work of CYPSCs in Ireland.

If you have opted to participate in a telephone interview the researcher will be in contact with you following analysis of the survey data.

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Appendix 7

Email Recruitment Script Qualitative Data Collection

Dear (name)

Many thanks for participating in the survey aspect of my research.

I am now moving on to the interview phase of my research and you expressed a willingness to participate in an interview related to the study. I appreciate that the professional landscape has changed since you completed the survey but hope that you are still in a position to participate.

Interviews will take between 30 – 60 minutes and if you can participate, I would be grateful if you could respond to indicate a time that is convenient for you.

Your contribution to this aspect of the study will be very valuable but is also completely voluntary.

Kind Regards

Caroline

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement Ireland

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Appendix 8

Pilot Interview Schedule

All interviews will start off with the following introduction:

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this part of my research study, which is a follow-up to the survey. I am very grateful that you expressed a willingness to participate in an interview on the topic of power as it relates to your membership of ..... CYPSC. This part of the research is all about your thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and is an attempt to gain a more in-depth insight into the impact of power on the operation of CYPSCs in Ireland.

I will record the interview so that I can remember exactly what you said by using an audio recorder or by taking notes or both. The interview may take up to an hour. If you do not want to answer any questions you can just say 'pass' or if you would like to end the interview, please say 'stop'. Have you any questions you would like to ask me before we get started?"

Name of Participant:

Date of Interview:

Participant Identity Number: [ ]

Introductory Questions:

1. Tell me about the benefits of being a CYPSC member for you and your team/agency?

2. Tell me about the challenges of being a CYPSC member for you and your team/agency?

Reflective Questions:

3. Tell me a little bit more about influence in your CYPSC?

4. Can you tell me from your perspective, how power relations operate within your CYPSC?

5. Tell me a little bit more about conflict as it arises in your CYPSC? If it arises, how is it resolved?

6. Tell me a little bit more about your perspective on the power/influence of the Co-ordinator? Is this a little leading and could this be asked in another way?

7. Tell me a little bit more about your perspective on the power/influence of the Chairperson? As above.

Recommendations

1. Do you have recommendations for improvements in relation to the sharing of power at the CYPSC table?

2. Do you have recommendations for a capacity building session which would address the issue of power in CYPSC structures?

3. Is there anything else you would like to add/say that you feel you haven't had a chance to?

Many thanks for taking the time to participate in this pilot interview. Your information will contribute to the design of the final interview instrument for this study. I am very grateful for your time this morning/this afternoon.

Appendix 9

Prompt Sheet for Pilot Interview Schedule

Question 3

Prompt questions: Are there some agencies/organisations that have more influence than others?

How is this expressed?

How does this impact collaborative working?

Question 4

Prompts questions: Do some agencies/opinions get heard more than others? If the answer to this question is yes, what voices don't get heard?

In your experience, when somebody speaks do all committee members listen?

I have found in my survey that statutory agencies are more likely to say power is shared than the community and voluntary sector. Tell me a little bit more about your view on this.

I have found in my survey that statutory members are not expressing an awareness of their perceived power by voluntary and community members and voluntary and community members are not experiencing 'power over others' as being productive, transformative, authoritative, and compatible with dignity –Lukes. Tell me a little bit more about your view on this.

Question 5

Prompt questions: Some theorists conclude that structures do not confer power equally across the system and that sometimes there is consensus, sometimes conflict and, most frequently, there is both (Haugaard, 2002, p.308). Tell me a little bit more about your view on this.

Question 6

Prompt questions: I have found in my survey that CYPSC members view the role of the Co-ordinator as being powerful. What would your comment be in relation to this finding?

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Appendix 10

Interview Schedule

All interviews will start off with the following introduction:

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this part of my research study, which is a follow-up to the survey. I am very grateful that you expressed a willingness to participate in an interview on the topic of power as it relates to your membership of ..... CYPSC. This part of the research is all about your thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and is an attempt to gain a more in-depth insight into the impact of power on the operation of CYPSCs in Ireland.

I will record the interview so that I can remember exactly what you said by using an audio recorder or by taking notes or both. The interview may take up to an hour. If you do not want to answer any questions you can just say 'pass' or if you would like to end the interview, please say 'stop'. Have you any questions you would like to ask me before we get started?"

Name of Participant:

Date of Interview:

Participant Identity Number: [ ]

Introductory Questions:

8. Tell me about the benefits of being a CYPSC member for you and your team/agency?

9. Tell me about the challenges of being a CYPSC member for you and your team/agency?

Reflective Questions:

10. Tell me a little bit more about influence in your CYPSC?

11. Can you tell me from your perspective, how power relations operate within your CYPSC?

12. Tell me a little bit more about conflict as it arises in your CYPSC? If it arises, how is it resolved?

13. Can you talk about your perspective on the influence of the Co-ordinator?

14. What's your opinion on the influence of the Chair?

Recommendations

4. Do you have recommendations for improvements in relation to the sharing of power at the CYPSC table?

5. Do you have recommendations for a capacity building session which would address the issue of power in CYPSC structures?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add/say that you feel you haven't had a chance to?

Many thanks for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your contribution is important and will be reported anonymously in the research study. Should I use direct quotes from this interview I will contact you to ensure you are happy with this. I am very grateful for your time this morning/this afternoon.

Appendix 11

Prompt Sheet for Interview Schedule

Question 3

Prompt questions:

Are there some agencies/organisations that have more influence than others?

Is the agenda or decision making controlled by particular members? How is this expressed?

What's your opinion on the role of Tusla in the CYPSC you are a member of?

In your opinion, are the voices of minorities heard? How does this impact collaborative working?

Question 4

Prompts questions:

Do some agencies/opinions get heard more than others? If the answer to this question is yes, what voices don't get heard?

Are there agencies which should be around the table that are not?

Are there issues that should be on the agenda which are not?

In your experience, when somebody speaks do all committee members listen?

I have found in my survey that statutory agencies are more likely to say power is shared than the community and voluntary sector. Tell me a little bit more about your view on this.

I have found in my survey that statutory members are not expressing an awareness of their perceived power by community and voluntary members. Tell me a little bit more about your view on this

Do you think that gender plays a role in power sharing?

Question 5

Prompt questions: Tell me a little bit more about your view on this.

Question 6

Prompt questions: Tell me a little bit more about your view on this.

Appendix 12

Thematic Analysis Phase 2 Systematic Data Coding (Open coding) Codebook

Name	Name	Name
Absence of Joint Commissioning	Co ord Facilitator	Differences between urban and rural CYPSCs
Absent Agencies	Co ord Powerful	Different relationships bet members in diff contexts
Assists in identifying emerging needs	Collaborative Working	Dual Role of Area Manager & CYPSC Chair
C&V Knowledge Experience	Commitment to CYPSC	Duplication of Work
Can do attitude	Common Goals	Equality of Positions
Capacity Building	Compatible with My Work	Expectation of CYPSC
Challenge Agreed Vision	Competitiveness between players	External Facilitator
Challenge Broad Scope	Conflict behind the scenes	Feedback to Agencies
Challenge Keeping Members	Conflict dealt with effectively	Frustration
Challenge of Representing Agency Work	Conflict none	Funding
Challenge of Responsibilities	Conflict not dealt with effectively	Gender influential
Challenge of Selecting Best Representative	Conflict Positive	Gender No influence
Challenge Plan Development	Conflict Rare	Getting more out of it than putting in
Challenge Reps feeding back CYPSC work	Contacts Networking	Helicopter view of Services for Ch & YP
Challenge Stat Agencies Boundaries	Contribute Info Knowledge	Idea credited to someone else
Co ord Community Development Approach	Critical Incident Responses	Identify Gaps Thematic & Geographical
Co ord Drives Initiative	CYPSC focus on children & YP	Impact of Covid

Name	Name	Name
Independent Chair	Influence Young People	Personal Commitment
Induction	Information sharing	Personal Power
Influence Balanced	Lack of National CYPSC Communication Strategy	Pilot did not include C&V
Influence CYPSC	Lack of Recognition for Collaborative Working	Potential to Make Difference
Influence funding	Lack of Support Structure for CYPSC	Power & Agenda
Influence Larger Orgs	Learning	Power & Attendance
Influence National Coord Group	Local Approach	Power & Decision Making
Influence of Attendance Participation	Meetings with Dept	Power & Stat v Vol
Influence of Chair	Member Power	Power & Subgroups
Influence of Coordinator	Minorities Not heard	Promote Collaboration
Influence of Deputy Chair	Minority Proofing	Relevance
Influence of Experience	Misc	Representing Vast Org
Influence of Member Changes	National Event	Review of CCA 1991
Influence of National Coord	New way of working	Review of Membership
Influence of National Steering Group	Nice meeting	Rotating Chair
Influence of Orgs Dedicated to Children	No absent agencies	Seat at decision making table
Influence of Subgroup Chair	Non-attendance	Small organisation
Influence Statutory Organisations	Opportunity to Reflect	Some doing all work
Influence Subgroups	Outside Conversations	Subgroup Chair Benefits
Influence Tusla	Personal Benefits for Chair	Subgroup Chair Challenges

Name	Name	Name
Time		
Understanding		
Vision		
Voice		
Voices of Minorities Heard		

Appendix 13

Thematic Analysis Phase 3 Generating Initial Themes from Coded Data

Name	Files	References
Benefits	22	94
Capacity Building	21	88
Challenges	21	150
Collaborative Leadership Chair	19	67
Collaborative Leadership Coordinator	22	97
Commitment to CYPSC	6	8
Conflict	22	41
Funding	1	1
Gender	22	36
Impact of Covid	10	17
Influence	22	148
Misc	3	3
PhD Interview opportunity to reflect	5	6
Power	21	132
Urban V Rural	5	5
Voices of Minorities	22	74

Appendix 14

Thematic Analysis Phase 4 Developing and Reviewing Themes (Coding On)

Name	Files	References
Benefits of Strategic Collaboration	22	85
Compatible with My Work	4	5
Contacts Networking	17	23
Different relationships bet members in diff contexts	1	2
Identify Gaps Thematic & Geographical	6	10
Information sharing	10	11
Contribute Info Knowledge	1	1
Potential to Make Difference	3	4
Promote Collaboration	13	28
Can do attitude	2	2
Collaborative Working	4	5
Common Goals	4	4
New way of working	3	4
Nice meeting	6	7
Understanding	1	2
Vision	1	1
Voice	1	1
Seat at decision making table	2	2
Capacity Building	21	72
Capacity Building	19	49

Name	Files	References
External Facilitator	1	1
Induction	9	13
National Event	3	5
Review of Membership	1	4
Challenges of Strategic Collaboration	21	157
Absence of Joint Commissioning	1	1
Challenge Agreed Vision	1	1
Challenge Broad Scope	5	9
Challenge of Representing Agency Work	2	2
Challenge of Responsibilities	1	3
Challenge Reps feeding back CYPSC work	1	1
Challenge Stat Agencies Boundaries	2	4
Competitativeness between players	2	2
CYPSC focus on children & YP	3	4
Duplication of Work	1	4
Expectation of CYPSC	1	1
Feedback to Agencies	2	3
Frustration	1	1
Getting more out of it than putting in	2	2
Idea credited to someone else	2	5
Lack of National CYPSC Communication Strategy	1	2

Name	Files	References
Lack of Recognition for Collab working & Support	7	15
Membership & Attendance	21	66
Absent Agencies	20	43
Challenge Keeping Members	4	5
Challenge of Selecting Best Representative	5	8
Equality of Positions	1	2
Non-attendance	2	2
Outside Conversations	1	1
Relevance	3	5
Review of CCA 1991	5	8
Small organisation	2	2
Time	11	15
Collaborative Leadership	22	164
Collaborative Leadership Chair	19	67
Dual Role of Area Manager & CYPSC Chair	1	3
Influence of Chair	19	63
Personal Benefits for Chair	1	1
Collaborative Leadership Coordinator	22	97
Co ord Community Development Approach	2	3
Co ord Drives Initiative	5	8
Co ord Facilitator	2	2
Co ord Powerful	1	3

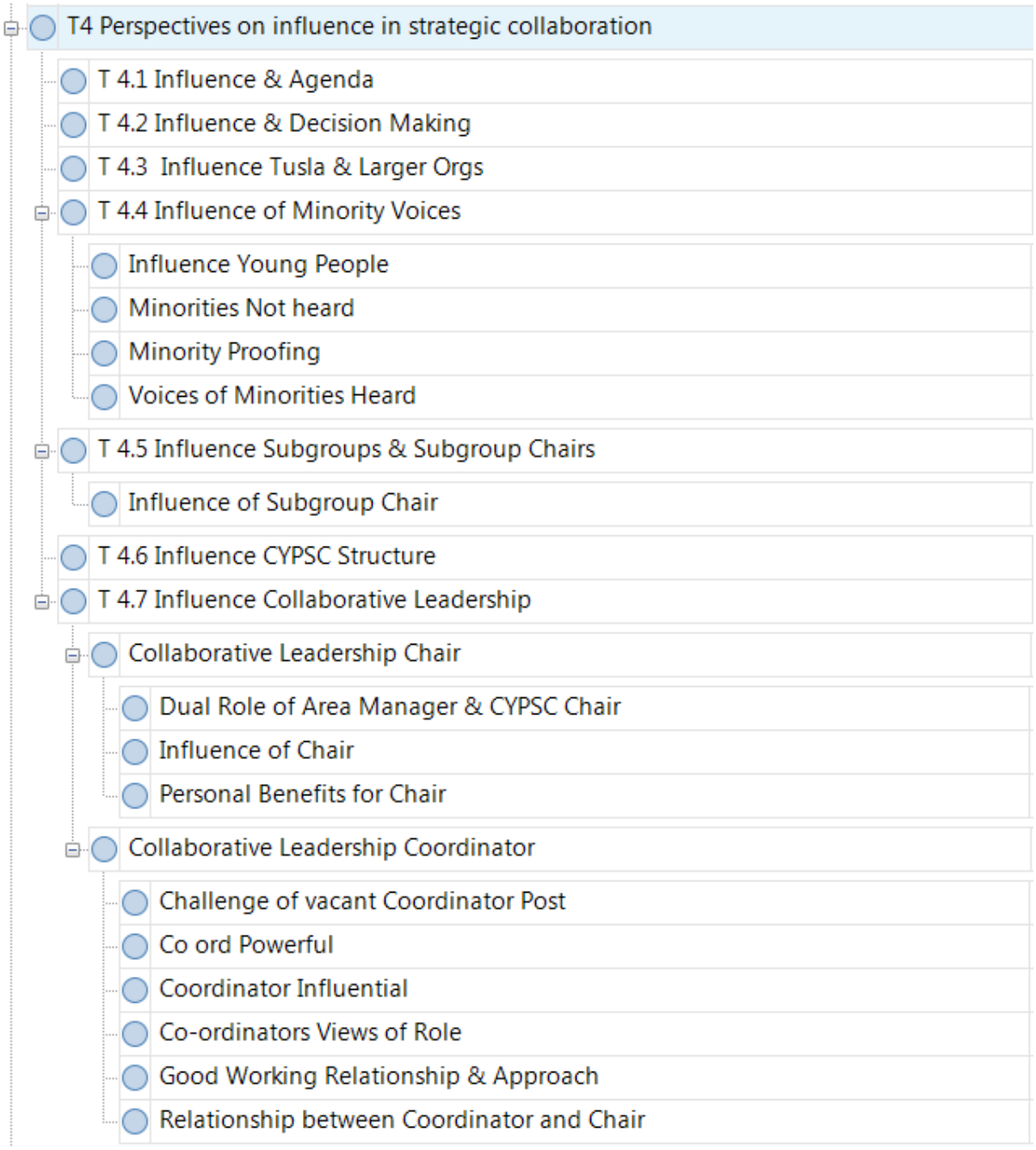
Name	Files	References
Influence of Coordinator	20	79
Meetings with Dept	1	2
Commitment to CYPSC	6	8
Commitment to CYPSC	6	8
Conflict	22	42
Conflict behind the scenes	3	4
Conflict dealth with effectively	2	3
Conflict none	9	11
Conflict not dealt with effectively	2	3
Conflict Positive	3	4
Conflict Rare	12	17
Funding	1	1
Influence funding	1	1
Gender	22	36
Gender influential	11	16
Gender not influential	15	20
Impact of Covid	10	17
Negative	8	13
Positive	3	4
Influence	22	148
C&V Knowledge Experience	2	2
Influence Balanced	9	16
Influence CYPSC	9	22
Influence of Deputy Chair	3	3

Name	Files	References
Influence of Experience	3	3
Influence of Orgs Dedicated to Children	1	3
Influence Statutory Organisations	4	4
Influence Subgroups	17	38
Influence of Subgroup Chair	6	11
Influence Tusla & Larger Orgs	22	57
Misc	7	11
Critical Incident Responses	1	1
Helicopter view of Services for Ch & YP	1	1
Influence National Coord Group	1	1
Influence of National Coord	1	1
Influence of National Steering Group	1	2
Local Approach	1	1
Misc	2	2
No absent agencies	1	1
Personal Commitment	1	1
PhD Interview opportunity to reflect	5	6
Opportunity to Reflect	5	6
Power	22	182
Independent or Rotating Chair	7	15
Personal Power	10	15
Pilot did not include C&V	2	5
Power & Agenda	16	35

Name	Files	References
Power & Decision Making	8	11
Power & Stat v Vol	21	101
No power Imbalance	4	5
Power Imbalance	14	36
Some doing all work	3	3
Urban V Rural	5	5
Differences between urban and rural CYPSCs	5	5
Voices of Minorities	22	74
Influence Young People	14	25
Minorities Not heard	17	32
Minority Proofing	1	1
Voices of Minorities Heard	11	16

Appendix 15

Phase 5 (Sample) Perspectives on Influence at CYPSC Theme 4



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Appendix 15

Sample of Interview Feedback to Participant

Interview 1 Statutory

Dear Study Participant,

I am very grateful to you for your participation in my research study entitled:

An exploration of power and its influence on strategic collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people

I have now written up my work and these are the quotes from your interview transcript that I have used in my thesis:

"a better understanding of the system", which helped him realise that *"there are an awful lot of very good people working very hard, every day"* (*Interview 1 Statutory),*

"I had no idea how many resources and how many groups were out in the community around us" (*Interview 1 Statutory)*

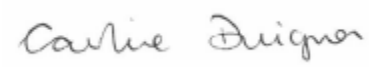
"*…there are some strong characters as you would expect and they are listened to as well" (Interview 1 Statutory)*

"I think with the likes of Tusla and the HSE, there is very little they can do. Like, national policy is national policy, and they are big organisations that are going to struggle to make any changes within the organisation or get big decisions made…the community organisations…they are probably a bit more agile in their ability to make decisions" (Interview 1 Statutory).

I can assure you that these are completely anonymous and that there is no risk to you of identification. However, I wish to revert to all participants to provide you with an opportunity to review quotes before publication.

If I don’t hear back from you on or before 31st January 2023, I will assume that you are happy for them to be published as part of my thesis.

Kind Regards,



Caroline Duignan

PhD Candidate