Participatory Design with Young People: exploring the experiential, relational and contextual dimensions of participation

Thesis

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Abstract

Within the field of Participatory Design, whilst there is rich debate on the participation of children, there lacks an explicit knowledge-base focused on the specific participation of young people in the teenage years. There is a need for a more in-depth and person-centred understanding of how young people participate in and can be transformed by Participatory Design. In this practice-based PhD I apply my Participatory Design practice in a research context and build upon my interests of empowering young people in an adult-centric society through design. In this explorative study, I ask: how can a Participatory Design process engage young people and lead to an understanding of their sense of agency?

To answer this, I draw on evidence from my fieldwork where I collaborated with a group of fifteen young people over the course of two years. Implementing a five-phase approach, presented as a single case study, I was able to incrementally build trust and rapport with the group. By transporting the filmmaking technique of direct animation into a Participatory Design context, the young people explored and expressed their experiences of education through experimental and abstract imagery and narrating their films with song lyrics. Here I was able to learn about their localised social and educational practices, motivations, and ambitions – observing what I term *agency-in-action*.

My four contributions to knowledge are based on my understanding and experience of the experiential, relational, and contextual dimensions of participation. Through examining the process of participation, I suggest Participatory Design practitioners develop flexible approaches that support young people to collaborate in both an independent and collective capacity, as well as seek out opportunities to bond with participants to build a relationship based on trust. I also propose a need for practitioners to critically engage with the role of

context and the impact localised discourse can have on participation. In seeking to protect the participants' anonymity whilst at the same time exploring the situational, interactional, and tacit aspects of participation, I developed a novel approach to visually documenting, reflecting, and reporting the findings. I constructed a 3D scale model box of the fieldwork setting and, using my field notes, recreated and re-lived significant and meaningful moments; presenting these as the accompanying Portfolio of Practice.

These contributions provide the field with both theoretical and methodological insights that are more relevant to the teenage years. My aspiration is that the findings and approaches developed in this study will be harnessed by, give confidence to, and inspire other Participatory Design practitioners by candidly depicting the journey the young people and I went on, the relationship that developed, the challenges I had to negotiate, and the transformative impact of participation.

Presentation of Submission

This practice-based PhD submission is presented as a thesis and portfolio, with four appendices containing additional supplementary information. As a practice-based study, and so to locate myself as the practitioner, this thesis has been written in the first person. The practice element of this research is not detached from me as a researcher. Presented as a critically reflective account through a reflexive approach, writing in the first person enabled me to maintain a degree of autonomy. Located philosophically within a participatory paradigm, I present the participants' voices as well as my own, providing an authentic account through a narrative that acknowledges both of these.

The portfolio of practice (PoP) is presented independently from the thesis, and should be viewed in tandem with it where indicated. A physical distinction has been made between the thesis and portfolio so to give equal attention and weight to both the theoretical and practical components of this study.

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Chapter Seven: Concluding Reflections and Future Research

Appendices:

Appendix 1 contains an overview of the search criteria I applied when undertaking the literature review in Chapter Two.

Appendix 2 contains documents supporting the ethical procedure implemented in this study. This includes parent/guardian information sheets and consent forms; participant information sheets and consent forms; and professional participant information sheets and consent forms; and a service and support information sheet for the participants.

Appendix 3 contains interview topic guides.

Appendix 4 contains the entire coded data set. This includes field notes and transcripts from the interviews and evaluation events, which were analysed by a thematic coding system.

List of Publications

Broadley, C. and McAra, M. (2013) *Making, Using and Interpreting Design Probes: How Subjective is Participation?,* DRS//CUMULUS, 2nd International Conference for Design Education Researchers, Oslo.

McAra, M. (2016) *Bonding through Designing; How a Participatory Approach to Videography can Catalyse an Emotive and Reflective Dialogue with Young People*. Proceedings of DRS 2016: Design + Research + Society – Future Focused Thinking, Vol: 1, pp. 3213-3228.

McAra, M. (2016) *Sustained Engagement to Create Resilient Communities: How a Collaborative Design Approach can Broker and Mobilise Practitioner-Participant Interaction*. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 35(3), pp. 369-376.

McAra, M. (2015) *A Conduit for Conversation: Animating through Animation*. Scottish Justice Matters: Poverty, Inequality and Justice, Scottish Consortium for Crime and Criminal Justice, Vol: 3, pp. 15.

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Glossary of Terms

Agency: Following The Sage Dictionary of Sociology (Bruce and Yearley 2006) and The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (Scott and Marshall 2005), I define the term *agency* to mean a person's active sense of personhood, free thought and self-realisation, and self-efficacy.

Child/ Children: As described by The Scottish Government in the National Guidance for Child Protection (2010), there are varying official definitions of a *child* in relation to different contexts. Whilst the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, becoming law in Scotland in 1991) states that a child is any individual below the age of 18, for the purposes of the thesis I have made a distinction between those experiencing childhood (children) and those in between childhood and adulthood (teenagers). I have defined a child to be anyone aged 12 or below.

Collaboration: Whilst many discipline-specific definitions exist for this term, in the context of Participatory Design (and this thesis), when I refer to *collaboration* or collaborative ways of working, I am referring to the relational and social nature of participation.

Co-design: Whilst this term can be seen as a distinct practice in its own right (see Steen 2008 for example), as a Participatory Design practitioner, I use this term to denote when design is used in a collaborative sense within a Participation Design process.

Design-research(er): A design practitioner who also takes part in research and/or employs their practice for the purposes of research.

Participation: The act of anyone choosing to voluntarily participate. This may or not may be in a collaborative sense. Again many discipline-specific definitions exist for this term. In the context of Participatory Design (and this thesis), participation is underpinned by a democratic ethos that seeks to empower participants through the process and activity of (co-)design.

Practice-based Research: The thesis has followed The Glasgow School of Art guidelines on *PhD by Research Project* (2016). Here I have also followed Candy's (2006) definition of practice-based research, which she describes as an 'investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice' (2006: 3).

Young person/ teenager: As described above, I have made a distinction between children and young people. There are varying official definitions of a *young person* in relation to different contexts, with an age range fluctuating between 12 to 24 (although in the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, a young person over the age of 16 can be considered an adult). In the case of this thesis, I have narrowed this range down more specifically to a teenage demographic, defining a *young person* to be anyone between the ages of 13 and 19.

Glossary of Acronyms

SA: Supervisor A

SB: Supervisor B

CBPD: Community-based Participatory Design

CfE: Curriculum for Excellence

DoDR: Doctor of Design Research

GSA: The Glasgow School of Art

NEET: A young person Not in Education, Employment or Training

PoE: Professor of Education

PD: Participatory Design

PoP: Portfolio of Practice

ScotGov: The Scottish Government

SI: Symbolic Interactionism

SNP: Scottish National Party

SPR: Social Policy Researcher

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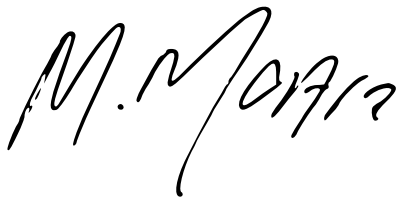
This work is dedicated to the memory of my aunty, Eileen Hunter, who passed away during my PhD studies. A life that touches others lives on forever.

Declaration

I, Marianne McAra declare that this submission of joint thesis and portfolio for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy meets the regulation stated in the handbook for the mode of submission, and has been approved by the Research Degree Committee.

I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.



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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

This practice-based thesis makes a set of contributions to the field of Participatory Design (PD). Undertaking this PhD has enabled me to apply my PD practice methodologically in a research context, and build upon my interests in the empowerment of young people through design. I believe this demographic to be amongst the most oppressed in an adult-centric society, often lacking voice and having limited platforms of representation. My contributions to knowledge are for PD practitioners who want to collaborate with young people, and are based on my understanding of the interdependency of the experiential, relational, and contextual dimensions of participation, and how these can be documented. This is an area in the PD literature that is under-developed in terms of studies that focus on the specific participation of young people. In this chapter, I will outline my design practice before introducing the context in which this study is set. I then set out my research questions, the aims and associated objectives, before providing an overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 My Design Practice

Design, according to Herbert Simon, 'is to devise courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones' (1996: 111). Victor Papanek, highlighting design's intentness, describes the essence of a design process as 'the planning and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end… the conscious effort to impose meaningful order' (1972:1). Whilst these definitions appear ingrained in contemporary design discourses, the types of 'wicked' and 'ill-defined' socio-political, and economic problems and contexts (Rittel and Webber 1973: 160) designers are having to respond to, and work in, have greatly

expanded. This has prompted the need for different approaches, methods, and tools that enable designers to work in spaces of uncertainty, where complex problems and infinite trajectories can co-exist (Dorst 2005, Buchanan 1992, Cross 1993, Binder et al. 2011). The practice of PD emerged in response to this new generation of wicked problems; a practice which recognises users and potential users of design and other project stakeholders as experts of their own indigenous knowledge and 'experience domain' (Sleeswijk Visser 2009: 5), and their repositioning in the design process as equal collaborative partners with the designer (Sanders, Brandt and Binder 2010).

Unlike traditional forms of design, which typically situate creative authority with the designer, PD enables the designer(s) and collaborators to enter into a creative dialogue and achieve reciprocal understandings together (Bratteteig et al. 2013, Broadley and McAra 2013, Kensing and Blomberg 1998, Sanders and Stappers 2008, Simonsen and Robertson 2013). Underpinned by a democratic ethos, PD is often viewed as a creative discourse that emphasises the value of collaborative learning, which has been built upon the Scandinavian socio-political workplace interventions of the 1970's (Bøder 1996, Bratteteig et al. 2013, Binder et al. 2011, Frauenberger et al. 2014, Greenbaum and Kyng 1991, Kensing and Blomberg 1998, Simonsen and Robertson 2013).

Departing from the collaborative redesign of system technologies for the workplace (Halskov and Hensen 2015, Kensing and Greenbaum 2013), during the last 40 years, PD has expanded its scope and permeated many disciplinary and contextual boundaries (Greenbaum and Loi 2012). Today PD practices are being used in business, management, education, healthcare, public services, urban planning, by community groups, and third sector organisations (Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren 2010, Bødker 2010, Bratteteig et al. 2013, DiSalvo, Clement and Pipek 2013, Halskov and Hensen 2015, Frauenberger et al. 2015, Muller et al. 1993). Within this expanding field is also the practice of Community-based

Participatory Design (CBPD). As opposed to the work-based contexts traditionally associated with PD, CBPD practitioners collaborate with groups that are socially and culturally linked by a voluntary 'belongingness' (DiSalvo, Clement and Pipek 2013: 184), and who are united by a common interest, discourse, or practice. As described by design-researchers Carl DiSalvo, Andrew Clement and Volkmar Pipek, CBPD seeks to 'wrestle with contemporary socio-political challenges' (2013: 204), through exploring social constructions, relations, and identity, mostly outside the context of employment.

Within both PD and CBPD, I align my practice with that of designers Pelle Ehn, Liam Bannon, Erling Björgvinsson, Per-Anders Hillgren, Eva Brandt, and Thomas Binder. As shall be discussed further in Chapter Two, these designers focus their practice on the participatory generation of sustainable solutions that seek to address contemporary societal problems.

1.3 The Research Questions

My research questions were developed iteratively throughout the course of this study. I began with a focus on the role PD could play as a means of informing policy surrounding young people at risk of falling through the educational-net. In doing so I identified the need for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the complexity that surrounds young peoples' individual circumstances and the formation of agency in relation to their future societal participation. However it was not until I had spent time in the field with a group of young people that certain aspects pertaining to my PD practice became more apparent. Whilst initially I had set out to research young people's sense of agency in relation to their aspirations, motivations, and expectations for the future through PD, I found that fundamental challenges surrounding the person-centred aspects of participation began to arise. In particular, building trust and rapport in establishing an authentic relationship with the young people in a research context. Upon returning the PD literature I found there to be a lack of studies that focused specifically on the participation of young people, and which candidly

dealt with these experiential, relational, and contextual dimensions. This led me to readjust the premise of this study in order to make more focused contributions to the community of PD whilst retaining my central aspiration of empowering and giving voice to a group of young people. In response to this identified gap in knowledge, I intended to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how a PD process can catalyse agency in action. As such, my over-arching research question asks:

How can a Participatory Design process engage young people and lead to an understanding of their sense of agency?

This question was deconstructed into a further three sub questions:

1. *How do young people experience a Participatory Design process?*

2. *What are the relational dimensions within a Participatory Design process?*

3. *What can be learned about the local context and how can it affect a participatory process?*

1.4 Aims and Objectives

These questions guided the development of my aims and objectives for the study as set out below:

Aim 1: to cultivate a safe space and conduit through which the participants could explore, translate, and narrate their individual experiences, emotions and stories.
Objective 1: harness my PD practice within a research context, and through creative collaboration, engage with a group of young people.

Aim 2: to develop an authentic relationship with this group of young people based on establishing trust and rapport.

Objective 2: implement a series of iterative phases of engagement over a prolonged time period.

Aim 3: to understand the contextual factors that can influence and impact young people and their sense of agency.

Objective 3: explore the interrelationship between context and participation.

1.5 The Context for this Study

Positioned in the context of the current Scottish socio-economic landscape, the local problem-setting for this PD project focuses on the revolving cause and effects of marginalisation, which studies have shown can impact young people's perceived opportunities and choices in terms of their participation in education, employment or training beyond compulsory education (see Furlong 2006). I became interested in this area during my Masters degree (completed in 2012) where I investigated, through PD, young peoples' emotional experiences of urban environments. Engaging with different groups of young people aged between 12 and 19, I began to apprehend the extent to which young people can be limited by their socio-economic status, particularly those most marginalised. Here I also began to explore the implications and impact of the, arguably, deficit-based discourse surrounding marginalised young people, examining how political discourse can have a camouflaging effect, such that the vulnerabilities of many individuals are overlooked and they become excluded from service interventions. The three-month time scale of my Masters dissertation project only allowed me to scratch the surface of such issues but this research inspired me to write the proposal for this three-year doctoral study.

Throughout their educational journey, young people navigate many critical transitions and

face complex decisions that can affect their future and aspirations for the future. This is particularly the case when they decide whether or not to remain in compulsory education. There are many social, cultural, and economic factors that inform this choice (Grant 2015), such as the role and guidance of teachers and parents/ guardians; the influence of peers; family circumstances; the role a young person plays in the home; and financial pressures. Those who choose to leave school may go on to participate in other forms of education, or enter into employment, training or an apprenticeship. However, routes from full time education to post education destinations can be fragile, unstable, and uncertain – particularly for early school leavers.

Young people who do not participate in education, employment or training are often referred to as NEET (an acronym standing for Not in Education, Employment or Training). The NEET status encompasses many sub-categories, which can include young people who are also carers; care leavers; those with additional support needs such as a disability; ethnic minority groups; asylum seekers; those with a long term illness; young offenders; low-income family households; those living in deprived areas; young people suffering from drug or alcohol abuse; and teenage parents (Scottish Government 2015, Thompson, Russell and Simmons 2014, Furlong 2006). Although indexed individually, these statuses are, characteristically, not mutually exclusive, presenting a challenge in locating, measuring and assessing the status of individuals and groups to identify their needs (Nudzor 2010, Furlong 2006). Recently, the Scottish Government (2015) estimated that around 21,000 Scottish young people aged between 16 and 19 fell under the NEET label. In discourse surrounding young people and participation in education, employment or training beyond compulsory education, this blanket term is one of many that have been adopted to stratify and represent, what is fundamentally, a highly diverse demographic.

Whilst current Scottish policy, such as *Opportunities for All* (2012), which includes the

Curriculum for Excellence and *16+ Learning Choices*, is attempting to remove obstacles and provide opportunities for young people to access smoother transitions from education to work, arguably issues of vulnerability, poverty, and disadvantage are not being addressed. Indeed commentators have suggested that the Scottish Government's agenda appears to be focused on reconditioning the individual rather than their adverse circumstances. These commentators include social and educational researchers Ruth Levitas et al. (2007), Andy Furlong (2007), Hope Nudzor (2010), and Lisa Whittaker (2010), who have called for far more inclusive and participatory approaches to representation that empower a demographic that have been synthesised under negative labels, situating young people at the centre of research processes about them. NEET statistics as indicators of levels and patterns of vulnerability, arguably, bypass those who, because of their vulnerable circumstances and/or with the threat of losing their benefit, can be pressured or pushed into low paid, low skilled, unstable, and exploitative work. Young people in this situation are viewed by policy makers as having made a successful transition, and, thus, can become excluded from pro-participation interventions. This focus on making positive transitions, therefore, fails to acknowledge those who either have already transitioned but into poor working conditions, placing them at increased risk of becoming NEET in the future, or those of a pre-transitioning age, still at school but who are under pressure to leave early or are disenfranchised by a perceived lack of opportunities.

A key dimension is the impact such discourses can have on the agency of young people themselves (Grant 2015: 60), as well as how adverse conditions and circumstances experienced by disadvantaged young people can affect how choices and opportunities are perceived and embraced. Disillusioned perceptions, generated and fuelled by factors such as lack of parental encouragement, can dismiss, in their eyes, the presence of available opportunities and choices. Here education researcher Sandra Sweenie refers to Swift's (2003) term *adaptive preferable formulations*, whereby:

> a person may not achieve an outcome that they have the opportunity to achieve and may not even try to achieve it... They make the rational choice to pursue different strategies… adapting preferences to the perceived opportunity set because of perceived obstacles (2009: 25).

As Sweenie explains, these recalibrated perceptions of self-capability can become barriers to enabling and equipping young people to actively seek out and take advantage of opportunities to flourish. In order to understand how young people participate in a PD process, the context for this study will focus on the critical stages of the young person's educational journey. In accordance with my aims and objectives, I seek to provide a meaningful participatory platform for a group of young people through PD, which is centred upon their own sense of personhood and grounded in their lived experiences.

1.6 An Overview of the Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this study took place between April 2014 and June 2016 in a high school located in an area known for high levels of poverty and deprivation in Glasgow. Situated on the outskirts of the city, the local area is fragmented by clusters of social housing, large expanses of under-developed areas and industrial estates, in between and around the crossing circuits of the inter-city motorway system. The fifteen young people with whom I collaborated were aged between fourteen and fifteen and in a Prince's Trust class, completing their Youth Achievement Award. The Prince's Trust is a UK wide charity that supports young people in and into education, employment and training. The Youth Achievement Award itself provides an alternative means to gain a qualification, which is certified by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, with a curriculum that supports the development of teamwork, leadership, self-esteem and confidence (Youth Scotland 2016). It is based on a two-year course consisting of five classes per week, replacing the time

participants in my study would have spent in a social subject studying at National 3, 4 or 5 level. Visiting the class on a weekly basis, I implemented a five-phase research design, which led me to produce a single, in-depth, case study.

The young people were active participants in this research. Over the course of the study, their participation shifted in terms of how they chose to collaborate as individuals – both with me and with each other. Although the young people did not explicitly recognise their behaviour as being akin to that of a co-researcher, at certain points, I observed individuals implicitly adopt the actions and role of a co-researcher. Conversely, on other occasions individuals chose not to collaborate or participate at all. Self-identified as a practice-based researcher, my role also fluctuated throughout the fieldwork, adopting roles such as observer, facilitator, collaborator, and co-researcher. The fluidity of these roles will be traced and discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

1.7 The Thesis Structure

The thesis begins with a review of the PD literature with a specific focus on processes surrounding the participation of young people (in Chapter Two). Looking beyond the boundaries of PD, I discuss the relation of PD to collaborative arts-based practices, as well as draw methodological inspiration from the fields of Education, Youth Studies, and the Social Sciences. My strategy for reviewing the literature, an overview of which is provided in Appendix 1, was initially explorative in nature. I filtered my searches through focusing on key authors and key terms until I had reached a point of saturation and could identify the relevant gaps in knowledge. My search criteria, drawing from primary and secondary sources, were based on a series of search terms derived from my research questions. I included sources based on their relevance to these search terms, as well as their prevalence and quality (peer reviewed) in the field. After I had completed the fieldwork, I revisited the literature to update it in relation to advances in the field and in relation to my refined research questions.

In Chapter Three, I outline my research design and describe how this study was practically implemented. I begin by locating my practice within a research context. Next, and drawing on the practice of avant-garde filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage (1961-2003), I position the technique of direct animation within a PD context. Locating this within a participatory paradigm, and stemming from a social constructivist epistemological stance, I then provide a rationale for adopting a Participatory Action Research approach. Within this, I describe the five-phase single case study, where I employed a range of methods and interventions in the field. This included a period of observation; participatory design workshops; semi-structured interviews; an activity-based focus group; and evaluation events. I conclude this chapter by explaining how the resultant findings were thematically analysed.

In Chapter Four I set out the ethical procedures that were required for this study, referring to the key institutional and legislative codes of conduct that were adhered to. I then philosophically address various discourses of power through a Foucauldian lens (1984, 1990). Following this, I position Wearing's (2015) notion of the *experiential bond* within the context of a reflexive approach to this study.

In Chapter Five, the five-phase case study is chronologically presented. Here I invite the reader, when advised, to refer to the Portfolio of Practice (PoP). I begin this chapter by introducing the gatekeepers and participants before describing, in turn, each fieldwork phase. For each phase, I present an overview, highlight the critical incidents, and summarise the key findings that emerged.

In Chapter Six I analytically discuss the case study findings in relation to my research questions. Through a process of thematic analysis, these findings are distilled and augmented into themes before theoretically drawn together to answer my research

questions. I conclude this chapter by retuning to the surrounding literature and positioning my contributions to knowledge in the field.

In Chapter Seven I reflect upon the whole study and identify directions for future research. Acknowledging the limitations of this study, I highlight the practical challenges I encountered in the field and offer potential solutions, as well as suggest areas that were under-explored due to contextual and ethical constraints. I conclude the thesis by returning to my research questions and presenting my findings as my original contributions to knowledge.

Chapter Two

Literature Review: Participatory Design Practices with Young People

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will review the literature surrounding current understandings and debates in the field of Participatory Design (PD) on processes and experiences that specifically focus on the participation of young people. Defining participation in the PD community ranges widely, with studies describing numerous and diverse forms, combinations, types, approaches, and degrees of participation (Halskov and Hansen 2014). As will be explored, over the past 40 years PD has expanded its scope beyond the traditional workplace setting, to the application of its principles and practices in addressing contemporary needs in diverse contexts and with different demographics (Bratteteig and Wagner 2016). Whilst there are many PD studies that have involved the participation of children (see for example Druin 1999, Guha et al. 2004, Iversen 2005, Iversen and Smith 2012), which have provided an array of methods, techniques, and recommendations, there is a relative lack of studies that focus specifically on the participation of young people in the teenage years (Bell and Davis 2016, Iversen, Dindler and Hansen 2013, Fitton, Read and Horton 2013, Read et al. 2013, Sustar et al. 2013).

Within this review, I draw upon the concept of *communities of practice* (Wenger 1998) in relation to the use of *design things* (Binder et al. 2011) and *boundary object* theory (Star and Grisserman 1989). Uniting these perspectives is not novel in the PD literature (see for example Binder et al. 2011, Bell and Davis 2016, Brandt et al. 2013). However I will utilise these recognised positions as a point of departure and, through reviewing the debates surrounding the participation of young people in PD, build upon and extend this existing

knowledge on practice. Aware of established participatory practices with young people in other fields outside of PD, I also discuss the relation of PD to collaborative arts-based practices, as well as explore approaches and debates in the fields of Sociology, Education, and Youth Studies. I conclude this review by uniting the key insights and outline the gap in knowledge this study will address.

2.2 The Participatory Design Process, Tools and Outcomes

Often within reported PD studies, attention is equally given to the participatory activity and processes of designing as it is to the final designed output (Bannon and Ehn 2013, Greenbaum and Loi 2012). To support this activity PD practitioners have developed, appropriated, and adapted tools and techniques for engagement and collaboration, taking inspiration from fields such as Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Philosophy, and Fine Art (Koskinen et al. 2011, Sanders 2002, Swann 2002, Zimmerman, Stolterman and Forlizzi 2010). Used to catalyse the construction and exchange of knowledge, such tools and techniques can enable collaborators to articulate abstract, experiential, and emotive concepts such as identity, values, social and culture practices, and sense of agency (Sleeswijk Visser 2009, Stappers and Sanders 2005). In turn, this can support the PD practitioner in gathering empathic and authentic accounts and insights.

Participatory designers Eva Brandt, Thomas Binder and Elisabeth Sanders contend that creativity can become a site for knowledge production, outlining that '[w]hen making we use our hands for externalising and embodying thoughts and ideas in the form of (physical) artefacts' (2013: 155, original emphasis). Examples include: group idea generation activities; the use of scenarios and role-playing (Carroll 2000); story boarding (Mazzone, Read and Beale 2008, Sleeswijk Visser 2009); model making, sketching and prototyping (Koskinen et al. 2011); mapping activities such as drawing up service blueprints (Spraragen and Chan

2008); mood boards and forms of collaging (Stappers and Sanders 2005); and written, drawn, photographic or video diaries (Hannington and Martin 2012).

Recognising that knowledge is often contained within action, also common in PD studies is the appropriation of ethnographic methods such as observation and contextual immersion (Blomberg and Karasti 2013, Kensing and Blomberg 1998, Le Dantec and Fox 2015, Suchman 1995, Suchman and Trigg 1991). Seeking to gain an authentic understanding of meaning inferred in and by action, which can be difficult to articulate, many designers embed themselves within a setting in order to understand context-specific practices (Malinverni and Pares 2016). As advocated by design-researchers Jeanette Blomberg and Helena Karasti, this can enable PD practitioners to gain first-hand experiential and situated insights, reflecting the PD practitioner's commitment to mutual learning (2013: 90-91).

In accordance with the democratic ethos of PD, studies have reported on the use of tools and techniques to stimulate collaborative thinking and making. Here a shared language can be forged that traverses disciplinary, sociocultural practices, and hierarchical boundaries (Brandt et al. 2013, Sanders 2002). This can be seen to relate to the concept of *boundary objects* (Binder et al. 2011, Brandt 2006). As Susan Star and James Griesemer explain, *boundary objects* can communicate across and connect diverse social worlds whilst retaining distinct and idiosyncratic meanings, as 'their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognisable' (1989: 393). Positioning *boundary object* theory in the context of PD, I draw on the work of Etienne Wenger (1998) and his explanation of how communities are predicated on practice. Here Wenger theorises the social and collective dimension of learning through the forming and sustaining of a community and suggests that different communities can intersect and converge with one another when their practices require the use or sharing of the same phenomena such as artefacts, systems, codes or

rules. As Star and Griesemer suggest, *boundary objects* are not always tangible. Resonating with Wenger's theory, this can also be the case in a community established through PD practices where the value of PD can lie not only in tangible outputs but also in the, often intangible, processes of collaborative participation. Participatory designers Thomas Binder et al. suggest that one of the challenges facing the designer today is the 'increasingly ambiguous boundaries between artefacts, structure and process' (2011: viii). In response to this, these designers frame design discourse around the notion of *design things* (2011). As described by Binder et al. *design things* can be physical and metaphorical conduits as well as spaces for fostering interactions and dialogues (2011: 158). Within and through *design things*, which are commonly used as tools for participation, designed outputs can be collaboratively generated.

Manzini and Rizzo (2011: 200) describe this contemporary, process focused, application of PD as departing from the output-driven motivation that underpinned the traditional application of PD within workplace settings. In refocusing their PD practice towards exploring how innovation can take place as social change, designers Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren explain a '*design thing'* to be a 'socio-material assembly that deals with "matters of concern"' (2010: 41, original emphasis). In their Mälmo Living Labs (2012), these authors collaborated with community organisations in a series of intervention-based projects, which aimed to connect segregated and disparate populations groups. These included those geographically dispersed across Mälmo, as well as across diverse demographic divides with a particular focus on excluded groups such as marginalised teenagers and female immigrants. The *design things* in these cases were the spaces created for collaborative partnerships and interventions with the aim of empowering and making visible previously hidden and ostracised groups.

Drawing on the work of Ellen Balka (2010), participatory designers Tone Bratteteig and Ina Wagner argue that more democratic ways of thinking and acting can often be the outcome of a PD process 'by increasing the agency of its users and giving them a voice in matters they did not have before' (2016: 148). As previously described, the use of PD practices for social innovation in the face of contemporary 'wicked' and 'ill-defined' problems (Rittel and Webber 1973), has gained a considerable foothold in the last three decades, where design has been used to democratise problem setting, solving, and the co-creation of solutions (Freire, Borda and Diebold 2015: 237).

The transformative impact of participation is frequently reported and theorised in PD and CBPD studies, where the participatory process itself is considered as significant as the final designed output (Bratteteig and Wagner 2016: 142). Examples of such outcomes have included collaborators learning new creative, technical and academic skills; developing teamwork skills; participation having an emancipatory or therapeutic value, departing from a PD project feeling empowered, and with a heightened sense of agency. The goal of mutual learning in PD and CBPD appears then to resonate with the transformative process that underpins Wenger's (1995) theory of learning as a social activity of self and collective realisation, formation, and capacity building. Design-researcher Allison Druin refers to this kind of outcome as 'design-centred learning' (1999: 597-598). In her design projects with children, Druin advocates the legacy of the accompanying learning that can take place through the experience of participation. As identified in Aim 3, I seek to better understand how young people participate in a PD process, and what can be learned about their own sense of agency. By gaining insight into their localised practices, goals, and motivations, I want to understand what kind of *design-centred learning* and transformation can take place.

As the PD movement sought to develop more democratic ways of working, one of its

principal tenets, based on the field's political heritage, is to empower those participating. As characterised by Toni Robertson and Ina Wagner, PD is built upon a fundamentally ethical foundation:

> This ethical motivation... is its essence and structures its definitions... [PD] cannot continue to exist without this commitment to working together to shape a better future (2013: 65).

As such, much contemporary PD work has explored ethically sensitive and socially conscious topics by supporting the participation of the people experiencing such issues (Waycott et al. 2015). This has included PD projects taking place in healthcare, social care, and educational contexts for example; and with minority and/or marginalised or excluded groups such as children, the elderly, those with a disability, refugees, those with a short-term or long-term illness, and with minority ethnic groups. Ethical challenges can arise due to the associated vulnerable, fragile, and complex nature of an individual's status, needs, circumstances, or external factors affecting their lives. Furthermore, in considering the need to acknowledge such vulnerabilities, Vines et al. (2014: 46) highlight concerns about drawing too much attention to presumed deficits, or imposing a vulnerable status onto individuals (2014: 46) – a challenge I return to in section 2.4. Having explored the field of PD and highlighting the key tenets pertaining to my practice, in the next section I turn my attention to the emergence of PD projects that have focused specifically on the participation of young people.

2.3 The Participation of Young People in Participatory Design

Whilst PD practices emerged during the 1970s as collaborative workplace interventions with workers, unions, and designers (such as the UTOPIA Project (Bøder et al. 1987), the

DEMOS Project (Ehn and Sandberg 1979); and the Metal and Iron Project (Nygaard 1979) - for more detail on these projects see Ehn 1993), it was not until the mid 1990s that studies focusing on the inclusion of children and young people in the collaborative development and redesign of technologies fully began to take place (Walsh et al. 2013). Druin notes that initial PD studies with children focused on the use and potential application of technologies in their experiences of learning and education, with their participation varying in degree – from being observed as testers or consulted on prototypes, to taking an active decision-making role as collaborative partners (2002: 2).

Commonly reported in PD studies that have focused on the participation of children, is the need for methods, tools, and techniques that can better support intergenerational collaboration between them and the adult PD practitioner (Mazzone, Read and Beale 2008, Walsh et al. 2013). As such, there has been a development of new techniques specifically tailored towards children's capabilities, as well as the adaption of those previously used when collaborating with adults (Bekker et at. 2003: 188). Whilst there is still work to be done in this area (Halskov and Hansen 2015: 84, Iversen and Smith 2012), there are, however, journals, special editions of journals, and conferences within the PD community that focus exclusively on the participation of children, such as *The International Conference on Interaction Design and Children* and *The International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction*. What appears lacking in the PD literature are studies and dissemination outlets that specifically report on engaging and collaborating with teenage demographics (Bell and Davis 2016, Fitton et al. 2013, Read et al. 2013). Interaction designers Emanuela Mazzone, Janet Read and Russell Beale (2008) suggest this could be the result of limited opportunities to gain access to young people, as well as stating that:

> working with teenagers is more demanding and more challenging… Being

> on the border between childhood and adulthood, working with teenagers requires additional attention on the choice of design methods and communication tools (2008: 2).

Whilst regarded here as 'challenging', within PD literature, it appears also that young people below the age of 16 (namely those aged between 13 and 15) are viewed as children, with little distinction made between childhood and adolescence (Iversen, Dindler and Hansen 2013). Within procedural ethical codes of conduct, a person below the age of 16 is considered a child, however, and as advocated by Fitton, Read and Horton, there are critical age-related differences in terms of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development, which affect changes in relationships, identity, and sense of agency (2013: 207). However, even within the teenage demographic (those aged between 13 and 19), differences can exist between younger and older teenagers. As described by Fitton, Read and Horton, young people are:

> a very diverse and highly contextualised population that are influenced by a large range of factors, making it very challenging to generalise in terms of their opinions and preference (2013: 208).

There is a need for this distinction between children and teenage populations to be more fully acknowledged and reflected in the design of person-centred PD tools and interventions (Bell and Davis 2016). Furthermore, and returning to Druin's notion of *design-centred learning* (1999), it is critical that as well as developing new approaches that are more personalised to individuals and their specific contexts, practitioners also consider what participants can gain from participating. In their PD project collaborating with groups of 13 to 16 year olds who had been excluded from mainstream education, Mazzone, Read and Beale reflect on the process

of co-designing a digital game to reflect on emotional perception (2008: 1). Here these practitioners argue that participation in these PD projects not only led to outcomes that informed the design of a digital output, but participation, in itself, was also a valuable process for the young people involved. By offering a choice of creative activities in relation to contributing to the different aspects of a final computer game, the young people were able to provide the design-researchers with insights into their experiences and interpretations of emotions and in how they chose to articulate these. This included making a comic book strip, storyboarding, making stop motion animations using modelling clay and digital cameras, and drawing and labelling facial expressions.

This seemingly transformative impact and legacy of a participatory process as an outcome in its own right echoes the work of participatory designers David Cavallo, Seymour Papert and Gary Stager (2004) and their project involving the participation of young people boarding at a residential non-mainstream education centre. Seeking to develop technological learning environments, Cavallo, Papert and Stager collaborated with a group of young people, aged between 11 and 20, in the co-design of their learning spaces (2004: 115). Through the staging of immersive learning spaces and giving the young people creative projects to complete over the course of a four year period, a significant shift was reported in the young people's sense of agency in terms of recognising their own achievements, as well as in their motivation towards learning (2004: 120).

Change in self-perception was also a key finding in designers Martin Severin Frandsen and Lene Pfeiffer Petersen's 2012 project working with a group of young people type-casted as 'troublemakers' in a disadvantage Danish community. With the aim of co-designing solutions for litter disposal in their neighbourhood, the young people undertook a series of community consultation events and iteratively designed and prototyped their innovative ideas. By

participating in the development and actualisation of this project, the young people were viewed by others in the neighbourhood as demonstrating civic responsibility, which helped to remove prejudice and instil amicable intergenerational relationships. The young people not only recalibrated their own sense of capability as contributing community members, but also challenged and changed the perceptions of others, fostering 'a range of new and enduring social relations of cooperation in the neighbourhood' (2012: 108). The impact of this project further evidences the fact that the participative process within PD can be just as meaningful as the final design output.

Whilst these examples show how PD practices with young people can have a transformative impact and lasting legacy, what often goes unreported are the relational dynamics within a PD process. It appears that studies may report on the supportive and brokering roles played by the practitioner (see for example Inns 2010), yet what is lacking are authentic and in-depth accounts of the subjective practitioner-collaborator interaction (Le Dantec and Fox 2015). Furthermore, such studies acknowledge the need to establish trust and rapport with those who are participating, yet offer little in the way of insight as to how one enters into and builds this kind of relationship.

A study that did report extensively on relational dynamics was Malinverni and Pares's (2016) auto-ethnographic account of working with a group of young people in the co-design of critical board games that would explore national socio-economic issues (2016: 5). Through reflexive field note writing, the central practitioner not only depicted the complex, inter-relational, and person-centred nature of a PD process, but also candidly exposed the consequences of her value-laden decision making as the facilitator. Entering into an internal problem-solving dialogue with herself, the practitioner reflected upon and questioned her observations and concerns that had shaped the PD intervention. Considering the possible

differences between the young peoples' and her own aspirations, motivations, and expectations for participating, drew her attention towards how her initial aims for the project were encroaching upon its participatory nature. By equally foregrounding the practitioner's agency, which is often downplayed in comparison to that of those participating in PD studies (Le Dante and Fox 2015), Malinverni and Pares were able to acknowledge, reflect upon, and mediate the tensions surrounding power and authorship.

I argue that there is a need for future PD studies to adopt reflexive approaches akin to Malinverni and Pares (2016), where insight can be gleaned into these acutely social dimensions experienced in PD practice. Furthermore, I argue there is a need for richer and more person-centred understandings of how young people participate in and can be transformed by PD (Iversen, Dindler and Hansen 2013, Bell and Davis 2016). By critically reflecting upon these aspects of the process, a knowledge-base distinct to this demographic can be developed which is centred on experience in building and sustaining a relationship. Having identified these gaps in PD knowledge, I will now look beyond the boundaries of PD to explore participatory practices developed in other fields of research that focus on the participation of young people.

2.4 Participatory Practices beyond Participatory Design

In this section I acknowledge the established tradition and prevalence of participatory practices with young people in fields outside of PD, which include Participatory Art, Sociology, Educational Studies, and Youth Studies. Whilst it is outwith the scope of this review to explore these areas extensively, I have identified particular areas that resonate and, at times, overlap with key concepts surrounding the participation of young people in the PD literature. Looking further afield has enabled me to gain a wider perspective on the use of reflexivity, negotiating ownership, and the development of agency.

Common in each of these fields is the use of (Participatory) Action Research approaches, which aspire to give voice, mobilise change, and transform prevailing discourses, roles, and circumstances (see for example Adams 2005, Hadfield and Haw 2012, De Lange et al. 2006, Mak 2011, Milne et al. 2012, Sclater and Lally 2014, Theron et al. 2011, Yang 2013). Often researchers and practitioners seek out ways to enable participants to become co-researchers, particularly the case when working with young people in Educational Studies (Thomson 2008: 7). This is similar to the ways in which PD practitioners support participants to become collaborators.

As previously discussed, PD practitioners have been known to seek inspiration and borrow techniques from various disciplines belonging to the Fine Arts. Traditionally, a distinct boundary was set between design and art practices. However, on closer inspection, fields have been, and are currently being, established by practitioners repositioning this line. An early example of this can be seen in the Arts and Craft movement during the 1800's, and later in contemporary fields such as Critical Design and Speculative Design (see for example Dunne and Raby 2015, 2013, 2009). Design can be considered a problem-solving-based practice that generates desirable solutions, whilst (fine) art can be viewed as a practice where the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of the practitioner are channelled and expressed in their creations for the viewer to interpret. In the case of socially engaged creative practices such as Participatory Art (see for example Bishop 2012, 2006) and PD, affinities exist between artistic and designerly approaches, particularly surrounding the initiative, rationale, and ethos underpinning participation. What both these practices seem to share is an ambition to instil democracy, empowerment, and justice through the transformative potential of creativity and social interaction. A pertinent example of this disciplinary coalition was the 2015 Turner Prize winner *Assemble*, a collective of architects who work with communities in neighbourhood regeneration and enterprise projects (Tate

2016). As an arts prize awarded to designers and architects, much controversy surrounded the unconventionality of *Assemble's* win and opened up debates with regards to the art and design dichotomy and the identity of the practitioner.

Acknowledging an increasing synthesis between art and design, and drawing upon Nicholas Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics* (2002, 1998), design-researcher Matthew Holt questions commonly expected aesthetics, and in the context of PD, calls for new ways of how 'the aesthetic of participation' (2015: 148) can be conceived. Holt contends that:

> PD is conducted through networks rather than hard manufacture and is... more concerned with "up-skilling" its participants than being commercially focused on the production of objects. It is therefore often ephemeral in nature and scope, much harder to identify in terms of shape, form, and presence than a product or even a service (2015: 155, original emphasis).

Following Holt, in participatory contexts design is not always object-orientated in seeking to produce material outputs. This requires ways of conceptualising intangible, co-created experiences and interactions, described by Bannon and Ehn as the 'pragmatic concerns' of PD (2013: 41). I will revisit this insight in relation to experience and aesthetics in the next chapter where I consider the role of *design things* (Binder et al. 2011) methodologically in this study.

Distinctions between art and design have become increasingly more ambiguous as practitioners work at this intersection – opening up new interdisciplinary spaces. Interdisciplinary ways of working have also become more prevalent in the social sciences. As researchers and practitioners have sought ways to empower people

methodologically, methods have become increasingly more visual and participatory (Literat 2013, Thomson 2008). Previously visual material and artefacts were more likely to be used in research for illustrative means and not handled as epistemological artefacts (Prosser and Loxley 2008, Chaplin 1994). A paradigmatic shift during the 1960s began repositioning the visual as a didactic device, which could contain theoretical knowledge (such as social processes, practices, and codes), requiring critical analysis in its own right (Banks 1998, Chaplin 1994, Harper 1988, Literat 2013, Rose 2007). Recognising the representational and communicative capacity of the visual (Grady 2001), social scientists began to explore its methodological ability. Used as a visual method, Jon Prosser and Andrew Loxley describe such ability as to:

> slow down observation and encourage deeper and more effective reflection… [enhancing] our understanding of sensory embodiment and communication, and hence reflect more fully the diversity of human experiences (2008: 1).

Resonating with the underpinning principles of PD, participants are empowered through the use of creativity as a mode of self-expression and as a means of constructing authentic accounts of experiences, issues, and needs. Josh Packard, (citing Chaplin 1994) describes how a more ethical discourse has resulted from the application of visual methods, which has redistributed power traditionally exclusive to the researcher, as well as noting the catalytic nature of such methods for constructing 'new knowledge... which would otherwise lie dormant, unexplored and unutilised' (2008: 63).

David Buckingham (2009), however, questions the heightened authenticity and neutrality, as

well as the alleged empowerment, participatory methods supposedly afford. Advocates admire the use of such methods as unveiling true representations of the participant, enabling 'privileged access to some kind of essential inner self' (2009: 9). Whereas Buckingham cautions against making analytic and interpretative assumptions, echoing Heather Piper and Jo Frankham (2007) who argue such analysis appears to be 'an uncritical celebration of representation... susceptible to naive and realist interpretations superimposed by those who are ''reading'' them' (2007: 373-385, original emphasis). Buckingham calls for accountability by embedding reflexive practice as a means of rebalancing the scales of power.

Education researcher Joanne Hill (2013) adopts a reflexive approach to account for power imbalances throughout her ethnographic study on teenage school sports experiences through the use of collaborative photography and photo elicitation interviews. Hill defended her use of participatory methods, arguing that they position 'participants assertively in the research… [enabling them] to 'define their own reality and challenge imposed knowledge'… and by listening to participants' own interpretations, authority is shifted' (Hill 2013: 139-140: citing Veale 2005: 254 and Harper 2002). By assessing her position – in terms of age, gender, class and ethnicity – Hill considered the possible implications her own agency may have for the research. Being mindful of these implications prevented Hill from implicitly privileging or normalising participants' identities in line with her own (2013: 137). Reflexivity is commonly reported in social research studies as an activity undertaken by the researcher/ practitioner to essentially account for and mediate imbalances of power in research interactions and relationships with participants (see for example Blazek and Hraňová 2012 and Spyrou 2011).

By its very nature, participatory research is a social practice. As argued by childhood researcher Deirdre Horgan (citing Gallagher 2008) 'it is not the methods themselves but the

social relations involved in the co-production of knowledge which makes the research participatory' (2016: 2). Instilling agency and empowering participants is a central aim of participatory research akin to that of PD, which suggests a degree of transformation can take place. Problematising these concepts in relation to participatory research conducted with a group of care experienced young people, Sally Holland et al. (2010) describe how the participants were encouraged to harness their own reflexive capacity in defining and directing the research process and outcomes for themselves. Supported through a choice of participatory making tools, which included scrapbooking, keeping a diary, taking photographs, being interviewed, and taking part in 'ethnographic conversations', the young people were able to lead their own personal research activities in exploring and representing significant aspects of their lives (2010: 363). The care context in which Holland et al. set their study greatly influenced their rationale for leaving the brief broad and allowing the participants to guide the research. As they describe:

> Young people who are looked after are often subject to fixed categorisation and an official 'gaze' at intimate aspects of their lives... Ethically, we did not want to intensify this scrutiny by predetermining the areas of their lives that the young people should explore during the project (2010: 364, original emphasis).

Acknowledging the relationship between agency and authorship in participatory research was a key aspect in Ellie Byrne, Eva Elliot and Gareth Williams's 2015 study exploring the cultural identity of a Welsh community experiencing post-industrial economic decline, health and social inequalities, and 'place-based stigma' (2016: 79). Negatively depicted by the media through deficit-based discourse, the authors collaborated with groups of primary and secondary school pupils in reimagining imposed typecasting by producing authentic

representations of community life. Through drawing, photography, collaborative song and poetry writing, and filmmaking, the young people reflected upon being a part of their community – identifying issues and celebrating assets. However, whilst attempting to empower the participants through constructing their own 'counter-representations' (2016: 83), the authors reported ethical concerns over presupposing the marginalised status of the young peoples' community, which was challenged by a project stakeholder – the pupils' teacher. Awareness of this presupposition and 'imagined future audiences' consequently permeated the teachers' discontent with parts of the content of the pupils' collaborative artefacts, which she requested be amended to fit with a more positive, not necessarily authentic, portrayal (2016: 82). Here the pupils' authorship and voice became sanitised through external pressures of representation felt by their teacher. Advocates of participatory research practices usually seek to elicit and centralise the voice of participants through such tools and techniques. However in this case, the aim and nature of the research clashed with the expectations of influential stakeholders resulting in the young peoples' voices becoming diluted and skewed. Paradoxically, research that seeks to empower participants through re-envisioning socially constructed identities and cultures can unintentionally reinforce imposed stratifications (Holland et al. 2010).

It appears then that even within participatory projects that seek to empower and centralise the views of young people, their voices can still become suppressed by adult gatekeepers or project stakeholders. This issue of representation became a key concern for educational researcher Ian Kaplan (2008) during a study where he collaborated with a group of young people to explore issues pertaining to their wellbeing at school through the use of participatory photography. Belonging to a class that provides educational provision for those with learning and behavioural difficulties, this group of young people were identified as typically being on the fringes of the education system (2008: 190). In seeking to instil a

process of consultation between the young people and their deputy head teacher and head teacher, Kaplan supported the participants in developing their photographic skills and knowledge so to visually document concerns about their educational environments, which sat alongside written commentaries. However tensions arose as those in power (these senior teachers) sought to mediate the content and dissemination of the participants' remarks. Instead of taking on board and responding to the pupils' claims, the gatekeepers intervened so as to doctor any evidence that would, in their eyes, place the school in an unfavourable light and threaten its reputation. Here Kaplan shows how those in power can potentially marginalise the voices of participants, in this case, by using their authority to prioritise their own agendas. Representation and authorship are critical themes here. Whilst the aim is to foster the empowerment of participants, as can be seen in this example, the results of this can often be diluted, suppressed, or affected by those in power.

To enhance means of authorship and representation, visual sociologists Sarah Wilson and Elisabeth-Jane Milne (2013) drew on a variety of visual and audio mediums in a participatory project exploring the lives of young people transitioning between social care services. In seeking to develop an understanding of the participants' sensory experiences of 'belongingness', Wilson and Milne provided the young people with choices as to how they wished to convey their feelings, memories, experiences, and elements of their metaphorical selves (2013: 3). This included selecting pieces of contemporary music, song writing, drawing, taking photographs, filming, and making collages. Reported here were a number of themes symbolically depicted such as identity, ownership, security and portability over objects, and specific spaces within their transient accommodation, as well as the fragility of their networks and relationships, and of the increased vulnerability of those who had moved on to independent living (2013: 6-11). In this example, Wilson and Milne show the value and impact of authorship, which empowered the participants to regulate the content of, and

permit privileged access to (in some cases highly sensitive) outputs. Here the young people were in a position of power and control, which, in their normal day-to-day lives, they rarely experienced. Whereas previously in Kaplan's study (2008) authorship was unintentionally taken away from the participants, here authorship was knowingly supported to empower the participants. I return to the concept of power later in Chapter Four where I discuss the surrounding ethical challenges pertaining to this present study.

In this section I have acknowledged the use of participatory practices with young people in fields outside of PD, and in doing so identified common themes, as well as highlight what is novel about PD practices. Whilst distinctions can be posed that differentiate design from art, in participatory contexts it seems that whether a process of creative collaboration is regarded as one or the other depends on how individual practitioners align themselves (if they need to at all). Breaking this, arguably, arbitrary binary has opened up interdisciplinary spaces where practices collide. Whilst this study speaks from a PD point of view, as a design practitioner I draw influence from artistic disciplines (as will be discussed in the following chapter), as well as insights from the social sciences. From looking to sociological, educational, and youth studies with young people, there is a need to adopt participatory and creative techniques that are culturally meaningful in specific contexts and with specific demographics. As well as this, there is a need not to presuppose or impose a marginalised or vulnerable status onto participants.

2.5 Summary: Outlining the Gaps

Through reviewing the debates in the PD literature relating to the participation of young people, as well as participatory practices from other fields, the aim of the chapter was locate the key gaps in knowledge that I seek to address. Here I have also indicated the work of specific practitioners with whom I align my practice and research interests – notably the work

of Binder et al. (2011), Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren (2010), and Malinverni and Pares (2016).

I have identified that whilst there is rich debate on the participation of children in PD projects, there is a paucity of PD studies, and a knowledge-base, that focuses on the specific participation of young people (in the teenage years). Here I position my first sub question for this study: *How do young people experience a Participatory Design process?* Within this, a salient aspect that appeared to be lacking in the PD literature concerns understanding the relational dimensions of a PD process. Here I position my second sub question: *What are the relational dimensions within a Participatory Design process?* Looking beyond PD, I have acknowledged a rich tradition of participatory studies that have focused on the participation of young people. Positioning PD within this broader landscape has enabled to me to discern factors in relation to the context, which will inform my practice in this present study and my third sub question: *What can be learned about the local context and how can it affect a participatory process?* In the next chapter, I position my practice in a research context and describe how this study will methodologically respond to this identified gap in knowledge.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Process

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I ground my practice in the context of research and outline how this study will be implemented. Drawing on the ideas of Christopher Frayling (1993), Linda Candy (2006), and Stephan Scrivener (2009) surrounding design and research, I begin by outlining what practice-based research is and position the technique of direct animation as a participatory approach and *design thing* (Binder et al. 2011) that will be used in the study. Situating this study within a participatory paradigm, I outline my underpinning social constructivist epistemological stance and position Participatory Action Research as my methodological approach. I set out how this research orientation supported the explorative nature of this study, and provided an appropriate scaffold for engaging, mobilising and empowering the participants to take an active role in the study. Under the arch of PAR, I describe the methods and interventions used, which formed a five-phase single case study. I outline my rationale for selecting the single case study model, advocating its heuristic nature whilst anticipating possible challenges and limitations. Drawing on Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark's (2006) process of thematic analysis, and Jennifer Attride-Sterling's (2001) technique of thematic networking, I conclude this chapter by setting out my analytical framework.

3.2 Practice-based Research

Christopher Frayling (1993) considers types of design-research to sit within one of three subsets: research about design (investigating the physical activity of design), research for design (research to extend the practice of design) and research through design (research conducted through the process of designing). Following Frayling, I situate my practice at a convergence of research for design and research through design, identifying my position as

both researcher and designer, which are 'interdependent' (Sanders 2002: 5). This duality chimes with Candy's definition of practice-based research, which she describes as an 'investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice' (2006: 3). This approach to knowledge creation through practice resonates with Scrivener's (2009) analysis of the role of art and design, and the production and function of artefacts in research. As Scrivener suggests, the creation of artefacts can serve a more significant role in the creation of knowledge when used as a tool for inquiry, stating that '[w]hen art and design is both subject and method of inquiry, then the research is both research into and through art and design' (2009: 76). In the case of this study, I anticipate that the knowledge produced through my PD practice will be constructed socially through interactions and the collaborative making of artefacts. In the next section, I will describe how I plan to use artefacts in this study before situating this within my over-arching research paradigm.

3.3 The *Design Thing* in this Study

This study has taken inspiration from participatory video techniques, often implemented in sociological Action Research studies with young people. This technique engages participants collaboratively to explore a topic through the co-production of a video that can be used as a device to inform and influence a range of audiences, particularly in the context of social and political justice (Blazek and Hraňová 2012, Shaw 2012, Shaw and Robertson 1997). When collaborating with marginalised and/or disadvantaged groups, this method has been championed by numerous studies, which highlight its ability to liberate and empower participants and imbue a sense of agency (Blazek and Hraňová 2012, Gauntlett 2008, 2007,1997, Lomax 2011, Milne, Mitchell and De Lange 2012, Shaw 2012, Shaw and Robertson 1997, Yang 2013). Indeed, participatory video facilitators Chris Lunch and Nick Lunch describe the method as a 'tool for positive social change… a process that encourages individuals and communities to take control of their destinies' (2006: 4).

Whilst many diverse prescriptions and uses of the method exist (High et al. 2012: 1), an underpinning commonality appears to be a collaborative practice where, to varying degrees, participants govern the video content and making process. Participation can vary from taking full authorship and control over the production process, to being supported and guided by a collaborating facilitator (Lunch and Lunch 2006). Furthermore, there are also various genres that the content of participatory video can align with, which can inform the optimal domain for dissemination. Common examples include: campaigning, evaluation, and documentary. In the case of disadvantaged groups, the content can be deployed as advocacy interventions, viewed by external audiences who have the power to instigate change such as government policy-makers, local councils, charities, and members from the participants' wider community. In this context, making a participatory video can have emancipatory outcomes for the participants. The tangible output of the video results from a process that can be equally as valuable to participants, providing opportunities to acquire new technical skills, and develop self and group efficacy through working as a team (see for example Lunch and Lunch 2006, Yang 2013). This can be seen to resonate with the transformative processes and values of PD, where a community can be fostered around the act of collaborative creating.

Similar to Wilson and Milne (2013), and as advocated by Gubrium and Harper (2013) (who, when conducting research with young people, described the need for methods to be culturally meaningful to the participants), I sought to harness a visual style and form that would be novel and exciting for young people, as well as a medium that would complement a PD process. In the next section I introduce the technique of direct animation and, drawing on the practice of Stan Brakhage as an example, outline the type of knowledge that this artefact could potentially produce.

3.4 Positioning the Technique of Direct Animation

Taking inspiration from the pioneering works of avant-garde animators such as Len Lye, Norman McLaren, and Man Ray's *Rayographs* (1923-1929), as well contemporary animators Richard Reeves, and Bärbel Neubauer, direct animation is a filmmaking technique whereby illustrations are made directly onto the surface of clear, black or recycled celluloid film, which is then projected through an 8mm, 16mm or 32mm reel-to-reel projector, which projects film at approximately 24 frames per second (see Figure 1). For this non-water based materials and tools are used directly onto the celluloid – for example the use of marker pens, inks, bleach, nail and other types of varnish, dental or other surgical tools for etching, stamps, and stitching by hand or with a sewing machine.

Figure 1. Photographer Unknown. (n.d) Norman McLaren Painting 32mm Film. Photograph.

In contrast to other forms of animation, such as hand-drawn, cut out, or stop motion, this technique allows for the rapid production of imagery without necessarily the need for repetitive actions or strict drawing ability. Direct animation also affords the creation of highly abstract and metaphorical imagery, where the marker can use shapes, colours, and textures conceptually (for example see *Sea Song* by Richard Reeves 1999; *Firehouse* by Bärbel Neubauer 1999; *Free Radicals* by Len Lye 1958; and *A Phantasy in Colors* by Norman McLaren 1949). The use of audio, through either manually manipulating the sound strip (located on the outer edge of a piece of film) or overlaying through additional technology, can play a critical role through the use of effects, voiceovers or music to add a further depth of meaning.

Furthermore, and as commonly utilised by filmmaker Stan Brakhage (1961-2003), everyday objects can also be physically imposed onto the film. A key example of Brakhage's work, made famous by this particular style, was the film *Mothlight* (1963). Here the filmmaker sought to convey a moth's visual experience through physically attaching found objects onto clear film. These included collected moth and other insect wings, and pieces of foliage such as flower petals, weeds, leaves and grass (see Figure 2). As a result of the objects deliberately covering the sound strip, when passed through the projector the sound of rapid crackling, reminiscent to that of a moth's beating wings, was created. When projected, the flickering light of the projector, the inconsistent sound, and the fleeting visual depictions transmit a sensory experience embodying the physical quality and metaphorical essence of a moth as envisioned by Brakhage.

Figure 2. Photographer Unknown. (1963) Sections of 16mm Film from Mothlight. Brakhage, S. Photograph.

3.5 Experiential Knowledge

Taken into a PD context, direct animation presents an alternative process of visualisation that promotes conceptual thinking and abstract expression. Writing about Brakhage, Fred Camper notes that:

> Many of the techniques Brakhage developed or refined… can be seen as part of a larger exploration of human subjectivity in all its varieties. He answers the idea that photography is an impersonal recorder of "reality" with

> the notion that reality itself is inseparable from human consciousness… The immateriality of his films' light becomes a metaphor for the shifting nature of thought itself (2003, original emphasis).

Camper's remarks here allude to the technique's ability to convey both tacit (Polanyi 1966) and experiential knowledge (Barrett 2007, Biggs 2007). Building upon the idea of *design things* (Binder et al. 2011) by drawing on Brakhage's sensory mode of expressive inquiry, I planned to adopt the process of direct animation as a vehicle for new knowledge to be generated experientially in this study. Estelle Barrett (2007) describes this kind of knowledge as 'sense activity' through which one's 'aesthetic experience' (citing Shusterman 2012) can be elucidated. Within this, and drawing on the connection between embodied knowledge and artistic practice as outlined by Dewey (1934), Barratt explains that:

> knowledge produced through aesthetic experience is always contextual and situated… derived from an impulse to handle materials and to think and feel through their handling... aesthetic experience plays a vital role in human discovery and the production of new knowledge (2007: 2-3).

Barrett's definition of 'aesthetic experience' resonates with Binder et al.'s use of the term, outlining that 'it is bodily and anchored in the senses' (2011: 10). Such knowledge can be viewed as quintessential to the experience of direct animation, as evidenced through Brakhage's work, where meaning is created and experienced through metaphor and symbolism. Here I draw on Donald Schön's concept of *reflection-in-action* (1983) where he describes reflective practice to be a dialogical transaction between the self and the artefact-making process. Following Schön, during the making process tacit knowledge can be elicited from the maker, which is imbued into, and then embodied by, the artefact. In this case, the direct animation is now a carrier of the maker's knowledge, which can then be experienced

by a viewer. This echoes Dewey's notion of the 'expressive object' (1934), which can draw out, as described by Michael Biggs, an 'aesthetic response' (2007). In-line with Aim 1, I planned to test and develop the use of direct animation as a mode of inquiry and method within a participatory context, to see if it could support and enable the participants to enter into a reflective dialogue about their lives and represent this as 'experiential content' (Biggs 2007: 6) in their films. Practically, this technique requires the maker to work conceptually in the production of a multisensory and expressive artefact, whilst theoretically it has the potential to generate experiential knowledge as a *design thing* by encouraging a reflective practice. Positioned within a PD context, this also suggests that such knowledge is socially constructed. In the next section, I outline my epistemological stance with regards to the social nature of my PD practice.

3.6 My Epistemological and Theoretical Perspective

In the context of research, my PD practice sits within an overarching participatory paradigm. Similar to Critical Inquiry, participatory research is centred upon empowering and emancipating societal groups who have been oppressed or silenced. Returning to PD, Simonsen and Robertson (2013) suggest that:

> The political rationale for genuine participation in design reflects a commitment to ensuring that the voices of marginalised groups and communities are heard in decision-making processes that will affect them (2013: 4).

A challenge arises when framing both research and design through presupposing a vulnerable and fragile agency, as previously described in Chapter Two. Foregrounding participants', apparently, marginalised or disadvantaged status could draw attention towards

negative issues surrounding their own sense of personhood, which they themselves might not have been aware of or believe to be an accurate reflection of their own lived experience (Pihl 2015). James Scotland (2012) warns of the subsequent impact of participation, suggesting that, paradoxically, this can have adverse effects in terms of condemning and disempowerment. Taking into consideration Scotland's critique (2012), alongside the transformational ethos of PD, I was mindful of these possible implications and sought to manage these methodologically. As I shall explain, I did this by centralising the participants' position in cultivating a community with a positively orientated and affirming culture of shared ownership.

Epistemologically, this study follows a social constructivist perspective, as outlined by Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (2013), whereby knowledge is socially determined and co-constructed. Underpinned by a relativist ontology, reality becomes socially constructed discourses that are relative to individuals and groups. Knowledge and meaning is thus generated and maintained through interactions with one another. Following this stance, and so to understand factors that mobilise young peoples' sense of agency and the relational dynamics of PD, this study draws on an interactionist theory of the self to examine how meaning-making and agency are socially formed and influenced.

As described in The Glossary of Terms (see pages 16-17), I define the term *agency* to mean a person's active sense of personhood and self-realisation, a capacity that can be harnessed as self-efficacy. Agency is not a fixed or one-dimensional condition. It fluctuates, grows, and be can influenced, stirred or suppressed by multiple factors and forces peculiar to any one individual. This capacity of self-interaction taking place within interactions with others resonates with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism (SI), which seeks to understand socialisation at a local level of interaction. As developed by Charles Horton Cooley (1902), John Dewey (1981), George Herbert Mead (1934), Herbert Blumer (1986), SI

theorises how and why individuals behave and interact through a process of socialisation based on meaning making through the interpretation of symbols. Mead (1934: 42- 51) argues that a symbol is a form of gesture in interaction that implies meaning, is interpreted, and then responded to, whether this is, for example, the use of language as a verbal symbol through dialogue, or a symbolic gestured through physical actions. As suggested by Blumer:

> meaning [arises] in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act towards the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as a social product, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact (1969: 4-5).

As Blumer suggests, not only does this meaning making interpretive process take place as social interaction in terms of social activity and behaviour, it also exists in how individuals, and groups of individuals, identify and interact with objects, which are also socially ascribed with meaning (Blumer 1969: 11). Furthermore, a core tenet of this perspective is the social interactive process in the development of an individual's sense of self and self-image (Mead 1934: 135-140, Blumer 1969: 12). Prior to Mead's concept of *role-taking* (1934: 254), Cooley defined this process as the *looking glass-self* (1902), whereby how one interprets (symbols communicated by others) how others interpret them (communicated through symbols), becomes how one comes to interpret one's self (through applying one's interpretation of the symbols communicated by others to the self).

This reflexive aspect of SI (Blumer 1969: 62-63) is particularly pertinent to this study, where self-image and agency will later be analytically examined as social constructions. Symbolic interaction can be said to pervade all aspects of socialisation for any one particular group of

individuals, and is not a static one-off occurrence, but rather a dynamic and on-going process of negotiation (Blumer 1969: 50 and 67). For this reason, and whilst enabling me to explore this at a micro level, SI prevents me from forming findings that could be generalisable at a macro level (Blumer 1969: 68). However, and in-line with both my methodology (as will be discussed below) and rationale for constructing a single case study (described in section 3.8), my aim is not to produce generalisable findings but rather to explore and understand aspects of the young peoples' individual experiences and sense of selves (described in Aim 1).

3.7 Participatory Action Research

Within a participatory paradigm, and as a PD practitioner, this study is methodologically aligned with Participatory Action Research (PAR); the reasons for which are twofold. Firstly, PAR provides a basis for conducting practice-based research with vulnerable groups, which can result in transformative, enfranchising, and emancipatory effects, particularly in the context of empowering oppressed participants (Lewin 1946, Reason and Bradbury 2001). As described by educational researcher Alice McIntyre, PAR fosters agency through nurturing and supporting participants to 'move from a place of dialoguing about issues that are of concern to them to a place where they take action on those issues' (2008: xi). Thus participants become active decision makers in partnership with the researcher in a process guided by them, for them, and with them. This explains the often emergent and unexpected nature pertaining to this research orientation. Secondly, and as previously discussed, PAR and PD are philosophically aligned in that they both seek the co-construction of new knowledge between the practitioner and/or researcher and collaborator (Bøder 1996, Frauenberger et al. 2015). Design-researcher Cal Swann also notes this affinity, describing Action Research as a 'scaffold' for inquiry and evaluation within a design-research paradigm (2002: 61). Through a series of iterations, the knowledge produced is disseminated back into its original context in some form of actionable intervention as a means of catalysing change

(Swann 2002, Zuber-Skerritt 1993). This type of research, described by design-researchers Greg Hearn and Marcus Foth as more of a 'research culture' than a strictly prescriptive methodology (2005: 2), embeds the researcher from the outset in the process where collected insights guide an actionable application or intervention in response to a need or issue. Instilling democracy and raising efficacy through a collaborative process encourages collaborators to recognise and utilise their own skills and expert knowledge, which can enrich autonomy (McIntyre 2008: Xi), as well as mobilise individuals and groups to take action and advocate for change (Reason and Bradbury 2001, Gatenby and Hume 2001).

Following a participatory framework based on socially constructed knowledge, I was aware that many diverse and conflicting constructions among and between participants could come to the fore. However PAR provided an arena where these could be explored and reflected upon in action, supporting, as outlined by Tandon, the 'notion of action as a legitimate mode of knowing, thereby taking the realm of knowledge into the field of practice' (1996: 21, cited in McIntyre 2008: xii). As opposed to a more phenomenological approach, which seeks to examine a predefined phenomenon through detaching and separating pre-existing subjectivities and experiences, as in the Phenomenology developed by Heidegger (1927, in Crotty 1998) for example, this explorative study responded to phenomena as they were co-constructed between the participants and me. As such, by following a PAR orientation, the research was essentially inductive in nature.

Furthermore, PAR as an iterative and transformative process is commonly associated with issues surrounding justice and advocacy in collaboration with communities and/or individuals who have been socially, culturally or politically marginalised. In the case of this present study, the young people would be encouraged to explore collectively their own sociocultural and education practices through the direct animation technique, where they set the agenda and focus of their action, the results of which could then be disseminated to an audience of

their choosing.

3.8 The Single Case Study

Using a PAR approach, I constructed a single case study (Gerring 2006, Gillham 2000, Stake 1995, Yin 1994). My initial intention for this research was to gain insights into young peoples' experiences across a number of different institutional sites and service provisions (such as in a school, a further education college, and a job centre) and construct several case studies. Early on in the planning of this however, I realised that in order for meaningful engagement to take place, doing multiple case studies would be out with the scope and timeframe of this three-year study. In this section, whilst acknowledging the limitations of this model, I provide a rationale for choosing the single case study and justify why it provided an appropriate structure for this fieldwork.

Firstly, and as outlined by Robert Yin (1994: 40), the 'revelatory' single case study model allows for multiple, inter-subjective constructions of realties to be disclosed, deconstructed and then reconstructed for the purposes of collecting rich, context-specific findings. As opposed to undertaking multiple cases (in perhaps multiple settings and with different groups of participants), the ethically sensitive and personal nature this study required an investment of time, where I gained privileged access to a group of young people deemed, ethically, *high risk*. Through embedding myself within their educational setting, my objective was to stay with the participants through the entirety of their final year in compulsory education, a significant year marked by key decisions and transitions for the future. This extended time period enabled me to gradually build authentic rapport and trust with the participants through prolonged and iterative interactions.

My observations of these interactions were written up independently in the form of field notes. I acknowledge a possible philosophical tension here in relation to participatory

research, however I sought to mediate this through presenting back to the participants my findings for evaluation and verification (a form of feedback loop). Furthermore, and whilst contested for rigour in terms of the innately subjective stance taken during observation, documentation and interpretation, striving for objectivity (as is the case of a more positivist and scientific approach) would run contrary to my epistemological position and values as a PD practitioner.

The single case study model supports explorative research on a granular scale. In seeking to apprehend authentic and in-depth insight from the participants about their lived experiences, so to generate, in an ethnographic sense, *thick descriptions* (Geertz 1973), requires a reflexive approach. As outlined by John Heron and Peter Reason (1997), working within a participatory paradigm demands reflexively interrogating how the researchers' own perspectives are also participating within the research. In such circumstances, I anticipated that my presence in the fieldwork setting, as female and relatively young (mid twenties) in comparison to the gatekeepers could possibly affect the research dynamic with the participants. I was mindful and responsive to this by reflexively accounting for my status and agency whilst attempting faithfully to capture significant instances and interactions.

In terms of anticipated outputs, a further critique is the ability of the single case study to generalise findings, bringing to the fore issues surrounding validity (which I reflect on later in Chapter Seven). I have not sought to draw conclusions from this study that can be generalisable to an entire demographic. Rather, my aim was to co-construct a rich and deep understanding of the participants' experiences. Following a social constructivist episteme, I acknowledge that multiple realities exist and the knowledge co-constructed about individuals' realties in this study may not necessarily apply or resonate with others. However, and in support of the single case study design, Sharan Marriam (1998) describes the potentially heuristic value stating that it:

> offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand the readers' experience. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research (1998: 41).

Evidence from a single case study can enrich and further understanding. Through drawing together insight constructed by the five methods across the case study (akin to triangulation), my goal was, as described by Robert Stake, 'particularization' (1995: 8) at a micro level, so to inform knowledge that would be transferrable, as opposed to universal to an entire demographic. Before I outline how the case study was structured, a description of how the participants were recruited is necessary as this played a critical role in defining my modes of data gathering and how these were to be implemented.

3.9 Participant Recruitment

In seeking the participation of a group of young people to explore factors that mobilise young people's sense of agency in the context of future societal participation, I wanted access to a group of young people who were still attached and participating in some form education, employment or training. However difficulty can arise in identifying these young people without presupposing a vulnerable or fragile status. In order to gain ethical approval for this study the, often complex, mix of conditions and circumstances that can cause vulnerability had to be raised and discussed (see Chapter Four for a full description of the ethical procedures employed). Recruiting young people for this study who were already attached to an institution, such as a school, would help to mediate such ethical implications, and enable me to gain approved access through working closely with identified gatekeepers whose role requires them to have the young people's best interest at heart.

One of my supervisors, who had previous contact with a department head at a high school in Glasgow that offers alternative education pathways and curricula for young people (who may

be at risk of not participating in education, employment or training beyond compulsory education), was able to facilitate an opportunity for me to meet with gatekeepers. During this initial meeting, I presented my fieldwork proposal and was invited to implement my research at the school. The gatekeepers subsequently identified a cohort of fifteen young people, aged between 14 and 15, who could participant in the study. As noted earlier, this group were in the middle of completing a course of study known as the XL Club, which aims to support young people in making positive transitions.

During this initial meeting, I was advised further on the characters and vulnerabilities of some of the group members. This included a range of complex and challenging circumstances, as well as behavioural and leaning difficulties, which I would need to be mindful of, and recommendations were made as to how best to approach engagement. The other gatekeepers I worked closely with in this study included the school head teacher and classroom youth worker, as well as contacting the young peoples' guardians/parents for consent.

3.10 Modes of Documenting and Communicating the Practice

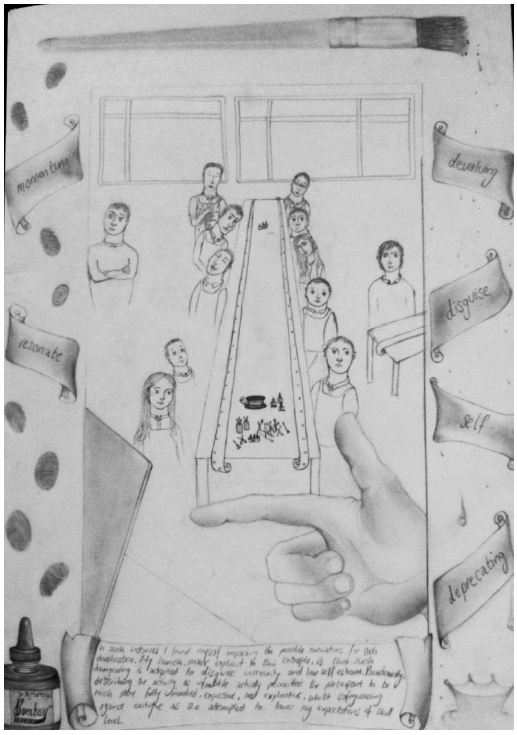
As the young people for the majority of the study were under the age of sixteen, and in respecting their own wishes, visual recording equipment such as filming or photography was not permitted, nor used. As noted earlier, this led me to document the study through extensive field notes, written up shortly after each visit to the school. Here I would reflect upon and describe critical events that had taken place. These field notes became a key body of data for subsequent analysis. At certain points I was given permission to audio record the participants upon receiving both their parental/ guardian's consent, as well as their own consent (the consent procedure is fully outlined in Chapter Four, section 4.3).

Whilst I attempted to maintain a high degree of description in my field notes, I experienced

difficulty in conveying the sensory, tacit, and *in-the-moment* dimensions of my PD practice simply through reflective writing. A crucial dimension in this study was the role the classroom setting itself played in furthering my understanding of the PD process. As will be described in more detail later in Chapter Five, it was an intimate environment, which was often a catalyst for conflict and tension between the participants. As such, I was left dissatisfied in being unable fully to communicate movements, relations, and interactions solely through the written word. I wanted to adopt some visual form to explore these physical, spatial and relational aspects of my practice further, which could then also be relayed back to the participants as well as the reader of this thesis.

I began visually documenting the study through 2D illustrations (see Figures 3, 4 and 5), however I quickly found the flat surface of my sketch book problematic in enabling me to capture and communicate physical and relational features realistically, such as depth, scale, and spaces between objects and people. I turned my attention to 3D options and, drawing upon my undergraduate background in theatre set design, I constructed a scaled (approximately 1.25) model box of the classroom (see Figures 6 and 7). I painted individual Playmobil figures of the young people and the gatekeepers, as well as made and sourced all the other elements of the classroom, including furniture, stationery and books, posters, and computers. My aim was to create a set as authentic to the life-size classroom as possible. Returning to my field notes, I was then able to assemble scenes and re-create critical events in the model box. These scenes were photographed and are presented in the Portfolio of Practice. As well as this, the model box photographs were used in the final phase for presenting the research back to young people and collecting their feedback. Thus the model box had a dual functionality in that it was at once a device for dissemination as well as a tool for evaluation.

Figures 3. McAra, M. (2015) Field Note Illustrations. Drawings.



Figures 4. McAra, M. (2015) Field Note Illustrations. Drawings.

Figure 5. McAra, M. (2015) Field Note Illustration. Drawing

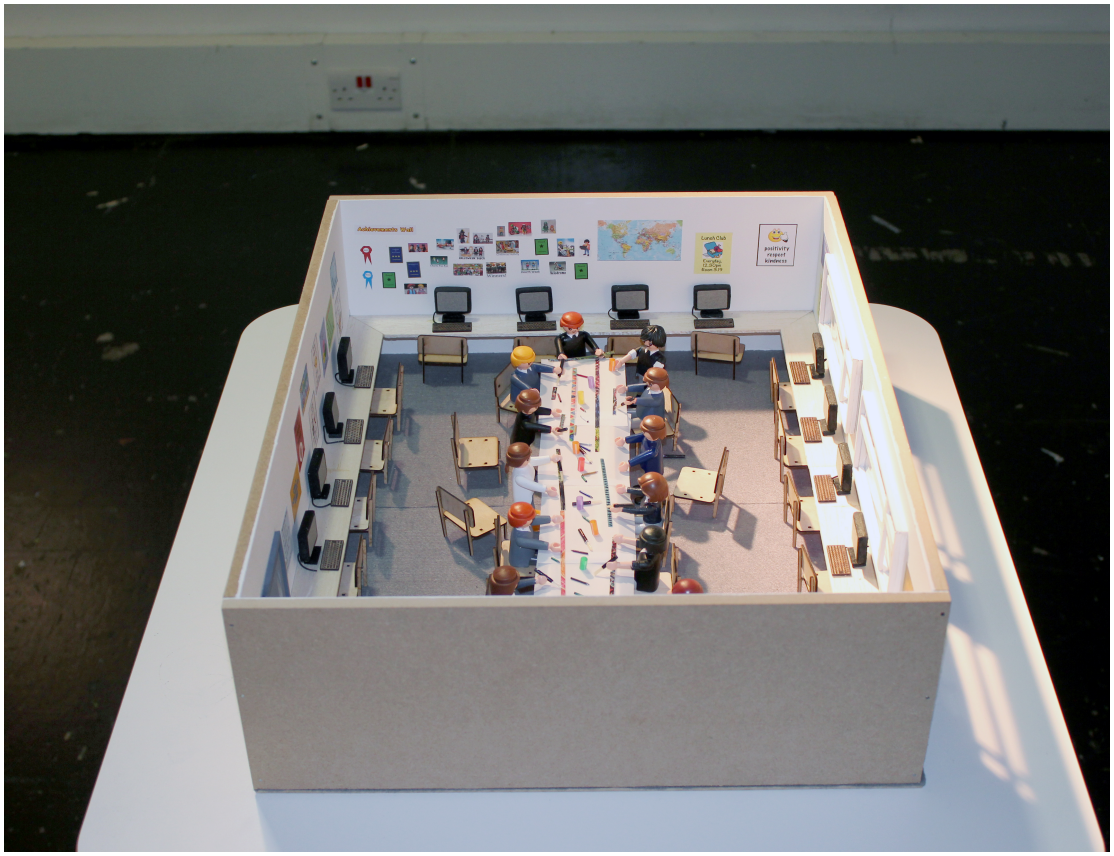


Figure 6. McAra, M. (2015) Classroom Model Box. Photograph.

Figure 7. McAra, M. (2015) Classroom Model Box. Photograph.

3.11 Fieldwork Structure, Design Interventions, and Methods

As foregrounded above, this fieldwork took place over five phases where I implemented a series of methods and design interventions. In phase one, I undertook a period of observation with the aim of developing a relationship with the participants. Building upon this, I experimented with the technique of direct animation as a participatory practice in the form of PD workshops in phase two. In phase three, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews, followed by an activity-based focus group in phase four. The final phase took the form of two evaluative events where I sought to gain the participants' feedback (event one), and critique from academic peers (event two).

Whilst seeking to gather a range of data for later cross-referencing (as a form of triangulation), I intentionally implemented five different forms of engagement that varied in the type of participation required. This was to accommodate participants who may have been less inclined to take part in group discussions (as in phase four) and those more comfortable in talking in smaller groups (as in phase two). In the following five sections, I more fully describe each fieldwork phase and the methods used, providing a rationale for their selection and discuss the type of data produced.

3.11.1 Phase One: Observation

The first phase of fieldwork consisted of a period of contextual orientation where I conducted classroom observation. During this phase I was able to gain first hand experiences by observing action and interactions in the classroom. My aim was to have an initial period of contact prior to any PD intervention taking place in order to build trust with the participants. As opposed to being a passive observer, under the guidance of the gatekeepers, I was permitted to take a more active role in class where I could engage with their lessons and assist the young people with their classwork. My objective was to not only gain insight into the participants' lived experiences within the classroom, but also to cultivate actively a

relationship with them through establishing a rapport and ultimately building and cementing trust through taking part in their educational practices.

As this phase was highly explorative, I did not set out with any definitive or predefined phenomena which I was explicitly looking for, but simply documented what emerged, physically positioning myself at the side of the classroom before being invited take part in any activity. My only predefined intention was to document the activity taking place in the classroom, interactions which I witnessed between the pupils, and between the pupils and the classroom teacher and youth worker, as well as any of my own hunches and feelings. For this reason, the criteria for determining what was deemed significant or critical were very loose, allowing the flow of the classroom interactions to determine what was revealed, witnessed, and then recorded. During moments of interaction and dialogue with the participants, I was mindful to allow them to decide and control when, and to what degree, they wanted to invite me into their conversations and interactions.

3.11.2 Phase Two: Participatory Design Workshops

The second phase of fieldwork took the form of PD workshops, where I implemented the technique of direct animation as a *design thing* (Binder et al. 2011) and research method. Whilst seeking to apprehend factors that mobilise the participants' sense of agency, my aim was to engage with the young people more directly as collaborative partners. Premised on the goal of mutual learning inherent in PD and PAR, as the participants learned the technique of direct animation, I was able to learn more about their social and educational practices.

The workshop approach is commonly used in PD as a means of creatively engaging with participants and staging collaboration through the use of design tools. As opposed to working independently and away from the fieldwork setting, the participants in this case were brought

together on a weekly basis in their classroom, where dialogue was fostered through the use of direct animation as a conduit. As is the case of PD and PAR, capacity building and empowering the participants were my key indicators of success. Intuitively, as these grew I found my role as the researcher changed and became less prominent as the young people appeared to transition in their own roles, from participants to research partners, chiming with Wenger's (1998) theory of collective learning in the forming and sustaining of a community.

Ten workshops took place over a four-month period, each lasting a double school period (one hour and fifty minutes). In this case, I choose to work with a 16mm projector and film. Whilst 8mm film is less expensive, I was anxious that its smaller dimensions would be make illustrating somewhat challenging, as opposed to 32mm film, which, whilst affording the largest space to work on, is far more costly and would require an expensive projector (similar to projectors traditionally used in cinemas). I supplied a range of materials for the participants to experiment with, which included inks, marker pens, etching tools, various types of glitter nail varnish, and rub on transfers (which included letters, numbers and geometric shapes). At the end of this phase, a series of screenings were arranged where the young peoples' final film was disseminated to various audiences.

3.11.3 Phase Three: Semi-structured Interviews

In the third phase I employed the method of semi-structured interviewing. My aim was to explore further the themes that had emerged from the previous two fieldwork phases (see the topic guide in Appendix 3: 31). As opposed to a structured interview, the semi-structured style is more flexible in nature (Bryman 2012: 470). This flexibility enabled me often to deviate from the topic guide when asking the participants follow up questions and exploring unexpected responses. Due to the time constraints of each interview (of having one school period per interview), such scope and occasional digressions, unlike a completely unstructured interview, were then refocused back to the topic guide when required. Whilst

allowing the participants greater freedom in guiding the dialogue, the adaptability of this technique also allowed me to tailor questions to specific participants. As I sought to generate rich individual accounts, maintaining consistency and standardisation across the interviews was not strictly necessary.

The young people were invited to be interviewed in pairs or in groups of three. By asking the participants to choose whom they wished to be interviewed with, my aim was to create a more informal and conversational dynamic that sought to encourage responses to, and with each other, as well as to my questions. Whilst aware of the possible implications of group interviewing – such as participants influencing and mimicking each other, or intimidating, deterring, or silencing less forthcoming individuals (Gillham 2000: 78) – in this particular context the benefits of interviewing friendship pairs and groups outweighed these possible interferences. Whilst I initiated the dialogue with a predefined topic guide, this process of self-section and organisation gave the young people control over the method in terms of choosing who they felt comfortable to talk with and share their experiences. Each interview lasted between thirty and fifty-five minutes. Nine out of the fifteen young people in the group volunteered to be interviewed. Both the young people and their parents/ guardians consented to the audio recording and transcribing of their interviews.

During this phase, as well as interviewing the young people, I also interviewed the classroom teacher and youth worker. Adopting the same semi-structured style, my aim here was to carefully (without breaking confidentiality and preserving anonymity) present to the gatekeepers themes from the previous two phases as well as themes that emerged during the young people's interviews (see topic guide in Appendix 3:33). Seeking to gain the perspective and understanding from those traditionally in power during the young people's experience of education, I asked the gatekeepers the same questions as I did the young people, listening to their view point on each topic and then indicating, again without breaking

confidentiality and preserving anonymity, themes which had emerged in the young people's responses, which led to a consequent discussion. The purpose of this was to gauge how aligned (or not) the responses of the young people where to those of the gatekeepers. Both the gatekeepers consented to being audio recorded and their interviews being transcribed.

3.11.4 Phase Four: Activity-based Focus Group

The fourth fieldwork phase was a reflective activity-based focus group, which brought the young people together for a group discussion supported through the design of a collaborative artefact. The focus group method centres upon collective interactions in a process of inductive date gathering (Langford, Wilson and Haines 2003, Kitzinger 1994). As advocated by Joe Langford and Deana McDonagh (2003), and similar to the activity in group interviewing described above, the focus group format 'enables the participants to build on the responses and ideas of others, thus increasing the richness of the information gained' (2003: 2). I implemented this method as a means of gaining the participants' collective reflections, reactions and confirmation upon being presented back with key themes from the previous fieldwork phases (which had begun, by this phase, almost a year earlier). Used as a tool to support this recall and to facilitate further discussion, the production of a collaboratively designed artefact promoted active engagement in the group dialogue between the young people and me, and between the young people themselves. The use of creativity here to underpin the focus group activity, described by Langford, Wilson and Haines as 'thinking tools' (2003: 161), reflects the method's historical development in its implementation in the social sciences (Caretta and Vacchelli 2015) and in design, adapted from a market research tradition (Bryman 2012: 501, Hoppe et al. 1995, Morgan 1996).

The focus group in this study took place over a double school period, lasting one hour and fifty minutes. Unlike the semi-structured style of the previous interviews in phase three, I began the session by presenting key themes back to the participants as a way of

foregrounding the focus of the subsequent discussion and artefact making, after which the young people themselves directed the conversation through interactions between themselves, me, and the artefact. For the artefact making, I brought with me images relating to insights gleaned in the previous fieldwork phases, most notably from the interviews in phase three. Aware of the participants' general reservations at displaying their artistic skills, these were used as reference points and prompts in the discussion, where each participant selected images that related to their own experiences and future aspirations. I also brought tracing paper to allow those less confident at drawing to trace over these, as well as blank paper for those who wished to draw. The participants decided to include these images, as well as some originally drawn images, onto a design for a collaborative celebratory class flag, which will be described in more detail in Chapter Five.

In-line with a PAR methodological commitment, and in considering issues of representation raised by the young people in phase three, I encouraged the participants to consider a future purpose for their artefact, suggesting it could be used as a communicative device for sharing their knowledge and experiences with their wider educational community. Thus the artefact within the focus group performed a dual role in supporting the focus group dialogue as a 'thinking tool' (Langford, Wilson and Haines 2003: 161), as well as a communicative tool for advocacy, symbolically embodying the participants' group reflections and aspirations.

3.11.5 Phase Five: Evaluation Events

The final phase of fieldwork took place post analysis in the form of two evaluation events. In order to present my findings back to the young people, with the aim of gaining their reflections and feedback on participating, I revisited the school to host a pop-up exhibition. Using the classroom model box, I was able to assemble critical moments from my field notes, and photograph these to create a case study timeline. Here I also included photographs of artefacts used and created during specific fieldwork phases. Creating a five metre long

poster, I left space for the participants to then also draw and write their reflections. The young people all consented to being audio recorded, enabling me to transcribe the event afterwards.

The second event, similar in format to the pop up exhibition, sought to engage professionals from research and design communities in a critical conversation about the study so to gauge feedback in terms of my contribution to knowledge. Here I invited experts from the fields of design and design-research, youth engagement, education, and policy. I began the event by giving a presentation of the exhibition before a two-hour group critical conversation took place, which I was able to audio record. This not only provided me with an opportunity to gain expert feedback and insight, but also allowed me a platform to defend the work ahead of submission.

3.12 Analytical Framework

Following a Social Constructivist epistemology, insights from the five phases were constructed into findings through an interpretative Thematic Analysis (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, Van Dijk 1993). With the objective of constructing detailed descriptions and interpretations, my aim through the recording of significant moments of interaction between the participants and gatekeepers – their behaviour, actions and dialogues – was to apprehend the influences on the production and reproduction of their practices of agency (Janks 1997). Explored through PAR, my intention was to co-construct authentic accounts with the participants, which would empower them to redefine discourse about them and communicate this in their own way. Whilst discourse was significant in this study in a Foucauldian sense (see Chapter Four, section 4.3), I have not explicitly applied a Discourse Analysis. The nature of the methods varied in how much discourse could be deliberately foregrounded. As I have a varied data set, the flexibility of Thematic Analysis allowed me to identify and index discourse alongside other emerging themes.

As with ethnographic-style field note writing, so to generate *thick descriptions* (Geertz 1976), a degree of intuitive analysis occurred during my observations and interpretations, taking place each time I visited the fieldwork setting. The resultant data sets that underwent formal Thematic Analysis included these field notes from all five phases, and transcripts from the semi-structured interviews and from the evaluation events. The flexibility of Thematic Analysis allows for these different data sets to be brought together through a cumulative process of coding, where patterned findings can be drawn out in order to answer my research questions. As opposed to Content Analysis (an approach to describing the properties of a text), which places value on the quantifiable frequency of codes, salient findings in Thematic Analysis are not necessarily equated with prevalence (Braun and Clark 2006). Rather, through the development and augmentation of codes and themes residing within the text, Thematic Analysis builds an interpretation that is richly detailed without the aim of producing generalisations or numerical abstractions (Braun and Clark 2006, Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013).

Whilst similar in many respects to the analytical structure of Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006, Glaser and Strauss 1967), this study has not followed this approach. This is because of its participatory nature and single case study design. Whilst insight gleaned from each of the five phases informed the next, this iterative process reflects the emergent and participant-led process of PAR, rather than the simultaneous data gathering and analysis and *theoretical sampling* of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 45). As an inductive study, informal analysis occurred throughout all stages of the fieldwork through writing up field notes where I reflected and reported on my observations and explored my hunches. Locating this type of reflective writing as data within a PAR project could appear contradictory in terms of undermining the democratic ethos and privileging my experiences and voice over the participants. However, due to the ethical challenges and limitations of documentation, and in-line with the wishes of the participants not to be visually or audio

recorded except for the interviews and evaluation event, I have had to rely heavily on the process of reflective field note writing.

Formal analysis began once the fieldwork had ended. Here I collated my data from the observation phase, participatory workshops, focus group, and the interview transcripts (which I transcribed manually). These data texts (an individual text being one field note entry or one interview transcript) were first handled independently from one another and placed into a coding table I developed drawing on Braun and Clark's (2006) process of thematic analysis, and adapting Attride-Sterling's visual thematic networks (2001). For the purposes of this specific study, I created my own set of coding terms, which are explained below.

So to retain authenticity, all speech was recorded precisely, paying close attention to the participants' dialect, as well as their frequent use of colloquialisms and slang. For this reason, all coding was completed manually as opposed to using digital software such as *Nvivo* or *Atlas*, which could have risked misinterpreting or discounting these idiosyncrasies. Manually coding all my texts also enabled me to completely immerse myself within the data and make sense of nuances, paradoxes between verbal and nonverbal gestures, and inferred meanings.

After reading to firstly reacquaint myself, each text was then analytically read and iteratively coded three successive times, each time becoming more thematically conceptualised. I began by annotating directly onto the main body of text with what I have termed *basic premise codes*. These initial codes, guided by my own instinct and intuition, articulated the basic, overt, premise of what had been said or recorded. During this reading and so to quickly navigate through each text, I also logged my observations of nonverbal cues and gestures the participants communicated in a separate column as well as my own reflexive considerations. The purpose of this, as opposed to undertaking a more explicit and thorough

Conversational Analysis (which has a focus on linguistic and semantic dimensions of texts) was to record how the participants were participating in the methods so to reflect on the efficacy or constraints of the methods implemented, a process which was particularly insightful when reflecting on the effects of the paired and group interviews and participatory workshops.

The second analytical reading of the text sought to synthesize and distil down these basic premise codes into what I have termed *nascent themes*. This was a slower and more contemplative phase, so to consider inherent meanings. The final analytical reading viewed the text through these nascent themes, and sought to categorise and augment these into what I have termed *compound themes* (see Figure 8 for examples of the stages of thematic coding).

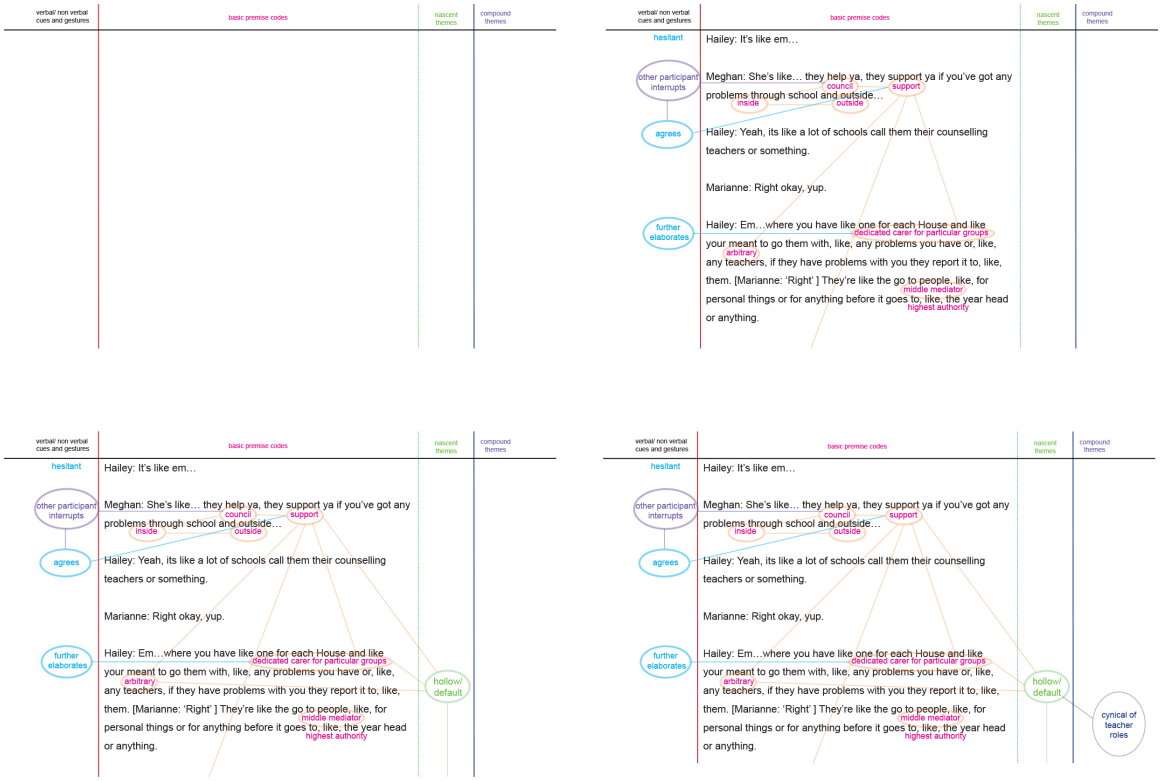


Figure 8. McAra, M. (2016) Thematic Analysis Coding Tables. Diagrams.

Through superimposing Attride-Sterling's network technique (2001: 388) onto the texts themselves, relationships I constructed between basic premise codes, nascent themes and compound themes can be retraced and visually retold. Taken from the entire text, I clustered and mapped out the compound themes so to make connections and map relationships, as well as to collapse down or discard any repetition (see Figure 9 as an example).

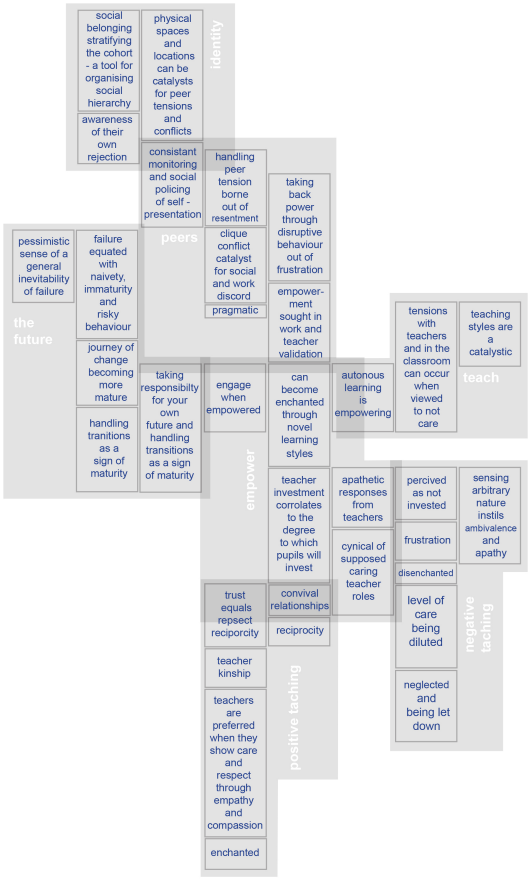


Figure 9. McAra, M. (2016) Compound Theme Cluster. Diagram.

This process of augmenting the text to codes, refining these into themes, and grouping these across the data-sets allowed me to draw out the nuances and patterns which then became the body of my analytical discussion chapter (see Chapter Six). My final findings and meaning-making were interpreted through the theoretical lens of SI. To address the particularity of each sub question (outlined Chapter Six, section 6.2), I draw on the theories

of Schön (1983), Wenger (1998), Barrett (2007), Biggs (2007), Dewey (1934), and Wearing (2015).

3.13 Research Design Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the paradigm within which this practice-based research sits with regards to my epistemological and theoretical stance on knowledge and relational meaning-making; methodological alignment; fieldwork strategy; methods and interventions; and analytical framework. Put simply, and as set out in Figure 10, I position my PD practice within a participatory paradigm, where knowledge is co-constructed socially. Following a PAR approach, I have implemented five phases of fieldwork so to construct a single case study. This includes a period of observation; participatory design workshops using the technique of direct animation; paired and group semi-structured interviews; an activity-based focus group, and evaluation events. From this, I will draw out findings across all methods through a process of thematic analysis. In the next chapter I will outline the ethical procedures that were required for this study, as well as discuss philosophically the notions of power and participation.

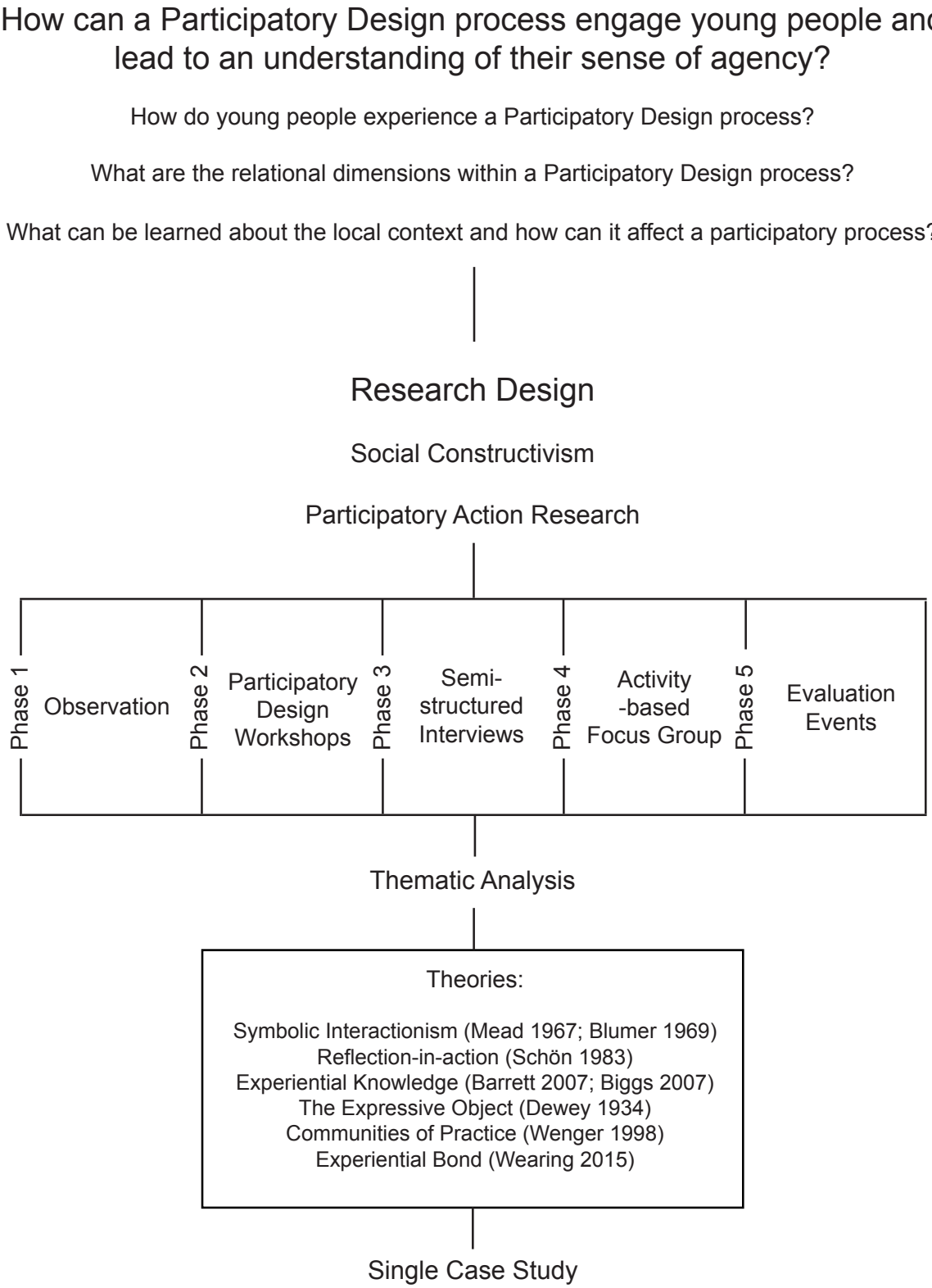


Figure 10. McAra, M. (2016) Overview of the Research Design. Diagram

Chapter Four

Engaging Ethically: Procedure and Philosophy

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the ethical procedures untaken in this research, which are discussed both practically and philosophically, as well as my ethical values as a practice-based researcher. I begin by foregrounding The Glasgow School of Art's (GSA) institutional code of conduct (2016), as well as key pieces of legislation that have informed this study. I then outline how a group of young people were recruited, how consent was obtained, and how this study was documented. Drawing on a Foucauldian (1984, 1990) perspective, I highlight the pertinent discourses of power in this study, where I consider issues surrounding the fieldwork setting, working collaboratively with young people, and in establishing a relationship with them. Here I draw on Carolyn Ellis's notion of *relational ethics* (2007) and Michael Wearing's conception of the *experiential bond* (2015).

Prior to commencing this research, my fieldwork proposal was assessed and approved by GSA's ethics committee. Whilst strictly adhering to GSA's Research Ethics Code of Practice and Research Ethics Policy (2016), I also consulted additional guidelines and legislation in advising best practice for conducting research related more specifically to educational contexts and young people. These included: The British Educational Research Association (2011), The Scottish Educational Research Association (2005), The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Data Protection Act (1998), and The Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act (Scotland) (2007).

4.2 The Participants

Whilst not a homogenous group, there were several defining characteristics that meant the group of young people recruited to this study were deemed 'ethically vulnerable' and identified institutionally as 'high risk', concerns which were central in all my decisions and actions. Firstly, as these young people were all aged between fourteen and fifteen for the majority of the study, I was required to gain parental/guardian consent. Secondly, this cohort belonged to a specific class that had been identified by the gatekeepers as highly vulnerable. During a briefing with the gatekeepers I was given some background information relating to the young people and their circumstances outside the class. Their circumstances included, for example, living in turbulent and unstable family households, being carers to ill or disabled family members, mental health issues such as severe anxiety, social and emotional behavioural issues, degrees of Autism, ADHD and Asperger's. In accordance with The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2009), educators are now required to integrate all learners requiring any form of behavioural, physical or educational support needs into mainstream education.

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, it is critical that a vulnerable status or identity is not presupposed or imposed onto participants. However, under institutional and legislative ethical codes of conduct, as a duty of care, researchers are required to explicitly address such characteristics and define how the participants in a study will be protected. To mediate this, I worked closely with the gatekeepers who identified and recruited a group of young people in a specific class (the XL Club), on my behalf. To become a member of the XL Club required an application and interview process. Here the young people were aware of why they were asked to apply and why they were accepted to become members. As a class that seeks to build confidence and self-esteem with the best educational and social interests of the pupils, the gatekeepers selected a pre-assembled XL Club class that they believed would enjoy and benefit from participating in the research.

However, whilst acknowledging that this group was chosen by the gatekeepers based on their educational and social support needs, it is highly unlikely that these young people would self-identify with words such as *vulnerable*, yet ethically and institutionally, this is how they were regarded. This tension echoes a paradox that can occur in participatory research whereby seeking to empower individuals and groups can negatively presuppose a disempowered or marginalised status. A similar concern over reinforcing vulnerability was raised by Holland et al. (2010: 365) in their participatory study with young people in care, as previously discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.4). Whilst initially mindful of not characterising the young people by their care status, the authors found that, in fact, being labelled as 'in care' was a very significant and meaningful aspect as to how particular participants characterised their lives.

Whilst acknowledging vulnerabilities is a prerequisite for gaining ethical approval to conduct research, I believe a balance is also required in respecting the experiences of those participating. As Holland et al. found, there is a risk of being overly cautious to a point where research can sanitise or understate the experiences of participants. When engaging with the young people in this study, I was ethically mindful not to use deficit-based language and, in accordance with Holland et al., encouraged them to 'choose and define their own means of representation' (2010: 365).

4.3 Gaining Consent

The gatekeepers judged the identified cohort of young people as having the level of competency and comprehension to voluntarily consent. Following Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Article 13 of the Scottish Educational Research Association, informed consent was gained from all the young people in simple, non-academic, English. No incentive (financial, material, or otherwise) for participating was provided other than suggesting that this was an opportunity to learn new

design and technical skills and to take part in a team.

Once GSA's ethics committee had approved my consent forms, I presented these during an early planning meeting with the gatekeepers for feedback. I was advised further on the format and choice of language to use in both the young people and the parental/ guardian consent forms. Prior to the fieldwork commencing these forms were also approved by the school head teacher.

Within the consent forms the young people were informed that involvement in the research was completely voluntary and they could withdraw completely or opt out at any point, and re-join if they so wished without having to give a reason, as well as having the right not to answer any question they did not want to. An information sheet was also provided, which gave an overview of the study. This included my aims and objectives; practical information such as the nature of the research activities, their duration and location, who would be present during the activities; what would be asked of them whilst participating; how I would record the research; how I would protect their identities; and how the information would be disseminated in the future.

When seeking consent from the young people, I explained to them the motivation and intentions of the study, emphasising the importance of consent, their rights as participants, outlining the participant information sheet and how to complete the form. Here the classroom teacher and youth worker provided assistance in further explaining the nature of the research before the young people consented, as well as helping to answer questions. The head teacher had previously advised that the most practical way of gaining the young people's parental/guardian consent was to give the young people the forms (which also had attached a letter explaining the project in full) to take home and return.

The PAR approach incurs challenges in gaining truly informed consent due to its emergent nature. I was unable to predict fully and thus outline a formal structure, or articulate what I anticipated the final outcome would be prior to commencing the research. To deal with this, I provided as much detail as possible across all the types of consent forms and participant information sheets about my research aims, my approach, the methods and time commitment of these, and what would be required of the young people. Furthermore, consent was continually requested throughout the fieldwork, on a phase-by-phase basis, where the content of each was adjusted to suit the specific method to which it applied. By iterating the consent process, I was able to remind the participants, at each phase of their participation, of their rights in an on-going ethical dialogue surrounding their participation. The nature of this study also required producing four styles of consent form and information sheet, each varying in form, and language (see Appendix 2). The first was designed for the school head teacher to secure institutional consent and was a formal document written in moderately formal language. The second style was designed for the young people and used less formal language and was presented in a more informal format. The third style was designed for the participants' parents/guardians and was similar in content to the second one but was presented more formally like the first. The fourth was designed for the gatekeepers when they were recruited to be interviewed. This was similar in form to the second style but used formal language as in the first.

4.4 Measures to Protect Participants

Several measures were undertaken to ensure the safety of everyone who participated in this study. Adhering to the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act (Scotland) (2007), prior to commencing this fieldwork I was Disclosure Scotland vetted, providing a copy of my certificate to the gatekeepers as well as GSA's ethics committee. Following the UK Data Protection Act (1998), and in keeping with GSA's institutional ethics policy (2016), all consent forms containing personal information were securely stored on GSA campus. All personal

information that could be identifiable contained in other documents (such as interview transcripts and field notes) was anonymised by the use of pseudonyms, which included changing the names of the participants, gatekeepers, any other related persons, the fieldwork location, and not directly referring to any circumstances or agencies that could identify the fieldwork location or participants. Only the young peoples' age and gender, and the gatekeepers' professional capacity and gender, have remained the same. In-line with Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Article 29 of the British Educational Research Association (2011), to have the best interests of the young people in ensuring their safety, I advised the participants and gatekeepers that confidentiality would only be breached if any information disclosed was deemed inappropriate in terms of breaking the law, or where it indicated that a participant was at risk of danger to themselves or to/by others. In such cases, this would be reported to a gatekeeper and/or relevant authority.

Several other measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Moments did occur during the fieldwork when the young people, seeking authorship over their made artefacts (as they were to be seen by external audiences), requested that their names be included on these. As these artefacts are depicted in this thesis, I created a secondary set where I replaced participants' names with pseudonyms. Furthermore, I was the sole transcriber for any recorded audio. Once transcribed, the recordings were destroyed.

As stated in my institutional code of conduct, the topics I pursued with the participants were deemed low risk in terms of causing emotional or psychological harm. Framed around the themes of aspiration, motivations, and anticipations, the general tone of the research was positive, supportive, and optimistic. In order to circumvent any possible negative consequences of participating, I actively sought advice from the gatekeepers, consulting with them on the type of language to use and how best to frame questions. Additionally, I supplied

an information sheet providing information about youth services, charities and other organisations in their local area for the young people to seek further advice on any sensitive issues if they so wished (see Appendix 2: 27).

4.5 Documenting the Fieldwork

Documenting the fieldwork became one of the major challenges in this study. During my initial consultation with the gatekeepers, I was cautioned against the use of recording devices. Informed of the young people's reluctance and embarrassment at being photographed or video recorded, ensuring anonymity in this case was not only an ethical imperative, but was clearly a central issue and concern for the participants also. Moreover, taking the setting of the classroom into consideration, the use of photography would have been inappropriate as it could have recorded, without my knowing, other recognisable details that could be associated with this group. Due to the small size and intimate nature of the classroom, it was also going to be impractical to record or voice record the group (particularly during the design workshops) if either a majority or minority of the participants did not want to be recorded. In response to this, I had to rely almost completely upon my reflective field notes as my main mode of documenting the fieldwork.

As previously described in Chapter Three (section 3.10), I constructed a scaled model box of the classroom, and by using Playmobil figures, I was able to visually recreate critical events without revealing the identities of the participants. I customised each Playmobil figure by painting on particular idiosyncrasies such as hair colour, different facial expressions, and the different ways individuals would style their school uniforms. Whilst the young people and the gatekeepers would possibly be able to identify themselves and each other, the standardised form of the figures meant that they would be unidentifiable to anyone out with the immediate fieldwork setting.

Whilst strictly adhering to these codes of conduct, ethical issues in this study can extend beyond the procedural and into philosophical debate. The participatory ethos underpinning both PD and PAR can appear premised on the democratisation of power, and centred upon innately ethical values. In the following sections I draw on Foucauldian theory to address the implications of power in the context of participatory research. I will discuss the potential issues concerning the discourse of research such as the practitioner-participant relationship and the fieldwork setting.

4.6 Participation and Power

In accordance with a Foucauldian analysis of disciplinarily power (1990), which illustrates the ubiquity and multi-directionality of power in everyday life in its operation by society on society; the concept of agency central to this study requires further philosophical consideration, particularly in relation to the ethics of participation. Moving beyond Marxism (which located power solely within economic class compliance, domination, struggle and resistance (Harvey 2013)), historian and theorist Michel Foucault identified power as the manifestation of discourse in the production and control of knowledge that creates and permeates all different forms of societal stratification (for example gender, race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality); settings; and individual's sense of self and experience of reality relative to a particular time and context (Jones, Bradbury and Le Boutillier, 2011: 128-129). Here preferred behaviours, attitudes, actions and interactions can be inculcated and controlled, which are then internalised and enacted by individuals through self-surveillance. Through Foucault's analysis of the affects of established discourses on defining an individual, the notion of an independent and autonomous agent is rendered redundant. As suggested by Martyn Hammersley and Anna Traianou, 'it seems that only the power-knowledge system itself could exercise any autonomy or agency' (2014: 232).

However, while much of Foucault's early analysis of power would suggest agency only to be

contingent on prevailing discourses, his later study on ethics advocates the notion of an active selfhood which can engage with, challenge, and resist dominant discourses (1990). Foucault's later stance resonates with reflexivity where he suggests going beyond discourse to examine and account for one's guiding moral instincts and judgments. This notion of reflexivity, previously discussed in Chapter Two, is also an ethically pertinent practice in terms of how the researcher negotiates and accounts for their own position. In the context of conducting research imbued with prevailing discourses established by institutions (such as ethical codes of conduct), Hammersley and Traianou (2014), in-line with Foucault, suggest researchers:

> subject [themselves] to continual scrutiny [of] prevailing ethical and methodological ideas – both those ingrained in institutional norms and practices and their own intuitions about what is good or bad, right, or wrong – thereby opening the way for new modes of research and forms of life (2014: 229).

Whilst this study strictly followed an institutional and legislative ethical code of conduct, what became increasingly evident was the need, as advocated by Carolyn Ellis (2007) and Marilys Guillemin and Lynn Gillam (2004), for a heightened ethical consciousness that goes beyond the procedural. This required me often to follow my instincts and values, particularly in response to the unpredictability of PAR, a process defined by Dawn Goodwin et al. (2003) and Maurice Punch (1994) as *situational ethics*. Within this, negotiating and sustaining a trusting relationship with the participants became my central focus.

4.7 Establishing a Relationship

Trust and rapport are consistently cited as crucial when researching alongside young, particularly vulnerable demographics in research (see Delgado 2015, Banks et al. 2013, and

Punch 2002 for example). Arguably, developing a trusting relationship with participants can enable more meaningful interactions and can catalyse more insightful and authentic findings (Guillemin and Heggan, 2009, Punch, 2002, and Harden et al. 2000). However, Guillemin and Heggen (2009: 295) as well as Ellis (2007: 5), are critical that guiding ethical values and procedural codes of conduct can become too abstract and reductive to be grasped as practical tools when in the field and at the coalface of participant engagement, and call for more nuanced understandings of how the relationship between the researcher and participant is actually developed.

Health and social researcher Deborah Warr (2004) suggests such a researcher-participant relationship is built upon context-dependent and provisional interactions, where the researchers own subjectivities are embedded and embodied, generating 'knowledge that is experiential and situated' (2004: 580). For this reason, and in order to cultivate authentic and meaningful engagement incrementally, I return to my rational for employing the single case study structure as described in Chapter Three (section 3.8). Conducting a single case study over the course of an extended time period requires acknowledging the *situatedness* of the context. Responding ethically to the situation, in this case particularly in addressing notions of power, entailed a careful consideration of the relationship between the participants, gatekeepers, and me. Such a relationship required me to be consistently mindful and to critically examine my presence, conduct and language with both the young people and the gatekeepers, drawing on the concept of *relational ethics* (Ellis, 2007, Evans et al. 2004). Here Ellis (2007) calls for:

> researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others… [Dealing] with the reality and practice of changing relations with our research participates over time (2007: 4).

According to Ellis, *relational ethics* can be managed by adopting a reflexive approach. In attempting to develop a relationship with the participants, I critically examined my role and what I brought to this collaborative endeavour. With the young people, particularly, I had to strike a balance between retaining a level of professionalism as well as maintaining an informal, affable, and approachable demeanour. Whilst seeking to cultivate a convivial and trusting relationship, which would motivate the young people to take part in the study, I was also acutely aware of the subsequent responsibilities that this would entail, particularly when finally departing from the fieldwork setting.

In keeping with Guillemin and Heggen (2008) and Ellis (2007), I have found that guiding institutional and procedural codes of conduct appear to bypass the often fragile and emotive, person-centred dimensions in research. Here I draw on the work of qualitative researcher Michael Wearing (2015) and his use of reflexivity in the forming of such relations in research. In the same context of conducting participatory research with young people, Wearing conceptualises this kind of relationship in action as cultivating an *experiential bond* between the researcher and participant. Unpacking this further, Wearing outlines that:

> the researcher and the researched are co-present and co-learn in their knowledge and relationship building through the research… such an ethics entails a shared authenticity, inclusiveness and empathy on the part of the researcher and participants that promotes care, respect, justice, equity and understanding in the qualitative research process… [It] is to "bond" with the worlds of the "other"... The experiential bond is a more complete, sustainable and longer lasting legacy than simply the activities of research over a given period (2015: 65-68, original emphasis).

Here Wearing suggests that such a relationship is based on a reciprocity that goes beyond

the ability of research methods to simply foster, where the interaction between the researcher and participant should be ethically acknowledged as a lived and social experience (2015: 69).

Following a relational ethics and reflexive approach, as outlined by Ellis (2007) and Wearing (2015), of course can relate to other paradigms – such as Feminism. I acknowledge the philosophical parallels that exist between participatory and feminist values based on equality; where the struggles, emancipation, and justice of oppressed, excluded, and disempowered groups are central to both. Underpinning my ambition for this study is compassion to empower young people in cases where they have been socially, economically, and politically marginalised, which resonates with the spirit of activism present in the many nuances of Feminism (Hesse-Biber 2012).

The practice of reflexivity has been previously raised and examined methodologically (in Chapter Two), and, here, has now been positioned ethically. In the remainder of this chapter I highlight the various discourses that affected the ethics of participation and power in this present study.

4.8 Discourses of Power

One of the pertinent discourses of power in this study was the implementation of a research project. Through proposing this doctorial study, I identified myself as the practice-based researcher, and the young people recruited as the participants. These identities could have sustained a hierarchy with an inevitable imbalance of power. However, by acknowledging this unavoidable tension, I actively sought to set up an equal sharing of power. Following the values of PD and PAR, as opposed to a *them and I* dichotomy, this study methodologically sought to instil a collaborative discourse where power, as far as possible, would be shared. In practice however, and as will be described in Chapters Five and Six, I acknowledge that

power was not always communal but was much more fluid and transient, moving between the participants and me throughout the fieldwork.

A second discourse I was mindful of was the institutionalised setting of an educational classroom. From an ethical perspective, setting the fieldwork in the classroom context enabled me to gain access to a group of young people in a safe environment where gatekeepers would always be present. However, this raised several implications for the research, which may have affected the young peoples' participation. As advised by sociocultural anthropologist Spyros Spyrou (2011), who raises concerns over the effects of institutional settings in research, particularly the ingrained influence of established hierarchical power dynamics to which young people are subordinated in the context of education, I acknowledge that the setting could be at odds with the democratic and egalitarian values underpinning my methodology. Having to adhere to rules set by adults, being taught and tested by adults, and receiving praise or being reprimanded by adults were possible contextual associations that could have permeated the relationship between the participants and me. However, I believed the ethical benefits of staging the research in a safe location, which was habitual to the participants, outweighed the measures needed to mediate imbalances of power caused by potential contextual connotations.

Furthermore, whilst participatory research seeks to empower participants and instil democracy, conversely such aims can have the opposite effect, where tensions can arise when there is an ambiguity of authorship and ownership. Seeking parity of power as much as possible in this study, authorship and ownership would require careful handling in the process of collaborative participation. In every instance, and particularly during the more creative methods, I made sure the participants were aware that, whilst I would be presenting their design outputs (anonymised versions) within my thesis, they equally owned them. In the case of the collaborative artefacts, personal duplicate copies were given to each participant

to keep.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the ethical procedures undertaken in this study as well as highlighted the context-specific ethical challenges. Further to this, I have considered the ethical implications of participatory research with young people and the issue of presupposing a vulnerable status. Through a Foucaudian lens, I have philosophically considered potential discourses of power present in this study, positioning the need for an ethical mindfulness that goes beyond the procedural. Here I have identified the need to reflexively acknowledge the *situatedness* of the context (Warr 2004), the relational nature of participatory research (Ellis 2007) and the need to *experientially bond* (Wearing 2015) with the participants. Having addressed the ethical considerations that were required for this research, in the next chapter I present the case study fieldwork.

Chapter Five

The Case Study

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present an account of the explorative fieldwork undertaken to form a single case study. I will describe each phase in turn, beginning with an overview, followed by detailing critical incidents, and then a summary drawing together the key insights. As outlined in Chapter Three, by selecting the single case study model, I sought to develop an in-depth understanding at a local and granular level. In seeking to explore and better understand the PD process with young people, through this approach I was able to explore the social and educational practices of the participants.

In Chapter Six, insights from this account are theoretically developed and discussed in relation to my research questions. In-line with Geertz's *thick descriptions* (1973), the process of writing the field notes was an initial stage of intuitive interpretation before formal coding began. As described in the Presentation of Submission (see page 4), this study is reported in the first person. This has enabled me to remain embedded within the data, and, as the practitioner, afford me a degree of autonomy within a participatory and collaborative project. I have written reflexively in order to account for my own subjectivity and voice in parallel to the participants'.

To navigate between the thesis and portfolio, the reader will be advised when to refer to the Portfolio of Practice (PoP). Throughout this chapter, the reader will be directed to specific pages in the PoP, signposted as for example: *PoP: 1-2*. As previously described in Chapter Four, in response to ethical constraints (where I was unable to use of photography or film), I

created a scale model of the fieldwork setting so to document my practice in action. The use of the model box enabled me to reify *in-the-moment* processes and critically reflect on these alongside my field notes. In doing so, emphasis is placed on understanding the PD process as opposed to critically examining the final design outputs created by the participants. As such, the role of the PoP is to substantiate critically the experiential, relational, and contextual dimensions, and unpack these in order to make a contribution to PD practices with young people.

It was outwith the capacity of this thesis to report on every fieldwork intervention that took place. For this reason, I have selected incidents and quotes from my field notes based on how relevant and critical they were to answering the research questions. I provide an overview of the entire fieldwork timeframe in Figure 11, and all the field notes, which detail every intervention, can be found in Appendix 4.

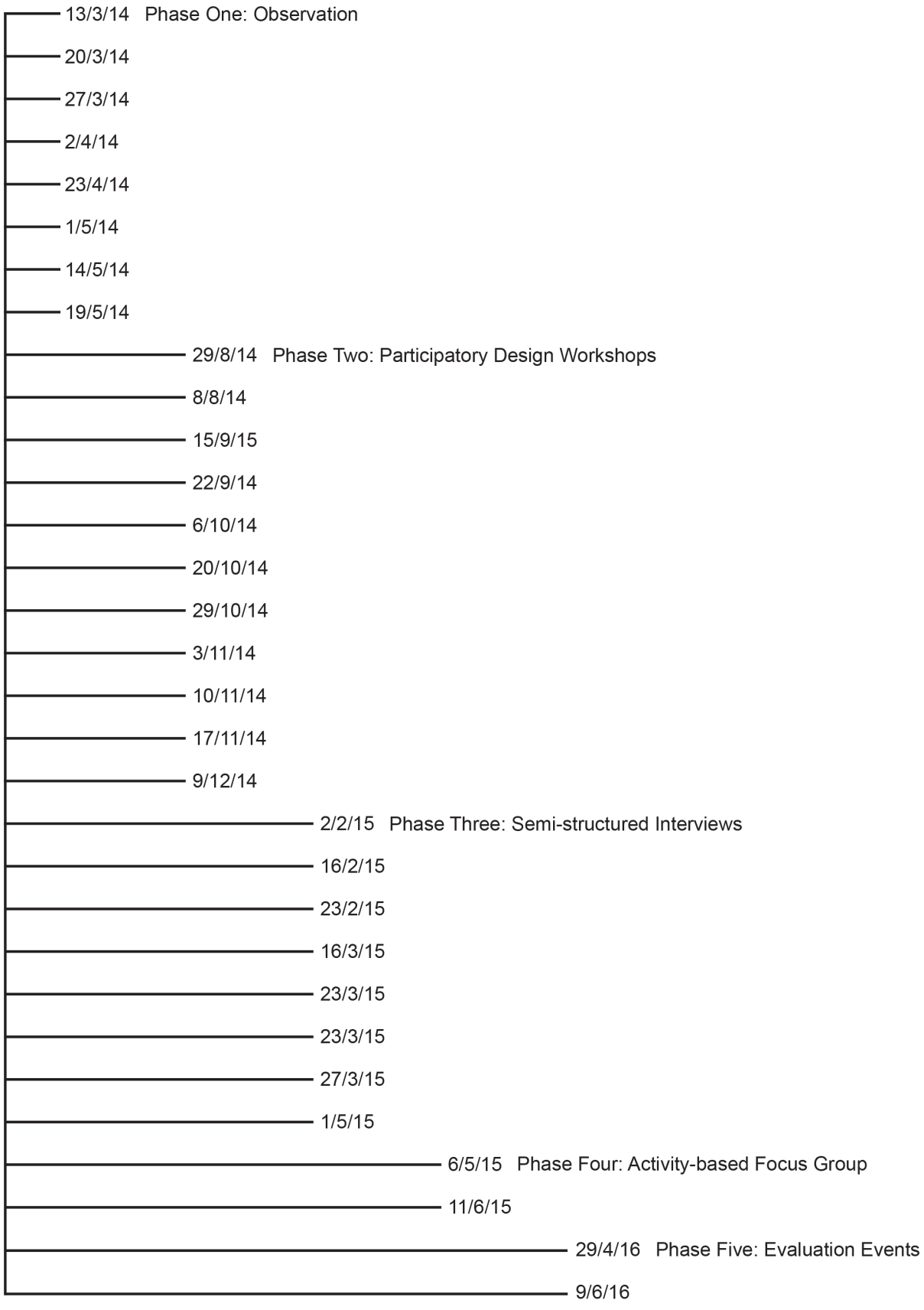


Figure 11. McAra, M. (2016) Overview of the Case Study Timeframe. Diagram.

5.2 The Participants and Gatekeepers

The Practice-based Researcher (Author):

Marianne

The Gatekeepers:

Miss Philips: head teacher

Miss Marsh: XL Club teacher

Maddy: classroom youth worker

The Young People:

Catherine

Dan

David

Hailey

Joe

Lewis

Mat

Max

Meghan

Ricky

Ross

Sam

Sean

Sophie

Steven

Figure 12. McAra, M. (2015) The Researcher, the Gatekeepers, and the Participants. Photographs.

5.3 Phase One Overview

I commenced my fieldwork in March 2014 with a four-month period of observation. Prior to entering the classroom, the gatekeepers advised me on practical considerations when engaging with the young people. In particular, they highlighted that many of the young people in this group lacked confidence and self-esteem, which required supporting and guiding them through tasks, and framing any intervention around short-term goals. Working in short durations and offering them a narrow selection of choices would also help in managing tasks with achievable end goals. As well as this, when discussing abstract concepts (such as identity), the gatekeepers advised I associate these with concrete examples with which the

young people could more easily identify and relate to.

Whilst at the contextual coalface, the aim for this first phase was to embed myself within the setting and establish trust and rapport with the pupils. How exactly this was going to come about, I was unsure, but I was aware from the outset that the pupils would require time to *figure me* out before any authentic rapport could occur. During this period, Miss Marsh and Maddy enthusiastically encouraged me to join in with their lessons by engaging with and offering assistance to the pupils, particularly during the more creative activities. This included assisting the young people with their reflective writing for their Youth Achievement Award journals and helping them to source and edit pictures to illustrate their work. As can be seen in PoP: 5-6, I was freely allowed to approach individuals and engage them in discussions about their work.

This initial interaction with the group was, however, often strained and awkward. I too was finding my feet in this initial stage, overcoming my own apprehensions and building up my confidence in striking up informal conversations with them. My early attempts to engage in dialogue were frequently shunned or in many cases ignored altogether. Upon reflection, I started to sense that the pupils' general apathetic response to me was perhaps because they found it difficult to work out where I fitted into the authoritative hierarchy in the classroom, and thus were uncertain about how to behave and conduct themselves around me. I was anxious to persevere in my efforts to engage with the pupils, and feeling that, as I was the outsider, it was my responsibility to do the legwork. However, more often than not, such perseverance was not reciprocated. Overcoming this required the courage to relinquish control and enter into a period of uncertainty, allowing the pupils to control when they were ready and wanted to invite me into their conversations and interactions.

Towards the end of this phase, the pupils were presented with the opportunity to take part in an inter-school design competition. Although the topic of the competition was not directly related to my own research, I was able to participate by helping the pupils interpret the brief, collaboratively generate ideas, and prototype their concepts – see PoP: 10-12. Four schools entered the competition, with around 60 young people participating. I was invited to attend the awards ceremony along with the pupils, Miss Marsh, and Maddy. It was announced there that our entry had won. I recall feeling this was an extremely momentous occasion, and where I first observed the young people display what felt to be a genuine sense of achievement, excitement, and celebration. Outside the venue, Miss Marsh took a class photograph, which I was asked to be in. We all proudly held up our medals – see PoP: 17.

The significance of this moment was not only about winning the competition. It was through sustained and consistent engagement on a weekly basis, and with the competition as our joint goal, that I was able to demonstrate my own commitment to the young people. Upon reflection, being able to participate in this shared experience was a vital opportunity for me to break down scepticism and integrate with the group. This proved to be a crucial preliminary step in terms of germinating trust and rapport before introducing my PD practice in the following phase.

5.3.1 Phase One Critical Incidents

During this period it quickly became evident that I was observing a group of young people who were governed by a pre-established social hierarchy. In trying to discern inter-group relations, I witnessed subtle negotiations and struggles taking place as individuals strove for status within the group. Often the young people would appear to undermine their own capabilities, which (as I will demonstrate), paradoxically, functioned as a strategy for self-empowerment and social integration. During a class trip to the host university where the

competition was being introduced, I observed three instances where this strategy was played out. As one of only two female pupils on this trip, Hailey frequently attempted to ingratiate herself with her male peers. Upon viewing how she was being perceived, Hailey adjusted and further readjusted her behaviour accordingly:

> *When Hailey would offer up suggestions, she was met in many cases by mockery and ridicule... In attempts to overcome this, Hailey abandoned her intellectual capability, suggesting futile responses as a means of gaining recognition through being funny... Hailey was then asked to leave... However, through being sent outside, Hailey had achieved the ultimate level of validation for her purposefully rebellious behaviour in front of her male peer audience, showing her to be fearless to the hegemonic power of Miss Marsh... As the teacher and I began a conversation with the group for ideas… on the topic of the competition, Hailey, critical of the topic's limitations in the context of the project, advised we change to another area… As this was met by a group consensus with little confrontation, Hailey, possibly feeling empowered by the group's positive reaction, began to then suggest [more ideas]. In order to capture and nurture this glimpse of enthusiasm towards the task, I suggested she come and sit next to me on the floor where we could write her ideas down. Through further fleeting one-to-one dialogues... Hailey continued to reflectively refine her idea. So to encourage her, I began to draw what she was verbally describing. She began talking through my sketch, pointing at sections as she described them. Throughout this dialogue, I notice Mat was eager to take part, interrupting to add to her ideas. Hailey's sense of empowerment may have been confirmed in the instance of Mat validating her idea, and this was substantiated when Miss Marsh praised her for the contribution, saying she had ' redeemed' herself...* (Excerpt from *One of the Boys*, Appendix 4: 48).

Within this excerpt, Hailey appeared to be consciously re-orientating her projected self upon internalising her perceived self, to the extent of sacrificially allowing herself to be reprimanded by the teacher through displaying rebellious behaviour. This notion of self-sabotage builds on insight from an earlier incident of imposed sabotage – this time concerning a moment of interplay between the pupils and their teacher. As can be seen in PoP: 7-9, I witnessed Miss Marsh inadvertently create, what I felt to be, pressured working conditions in order to get the pupils to complete a piece of written work within the school period. She provided the pupils with scrap paper and urged them to complete the task using a faulty printer. Whilst the teacher was conforming to, what she perceived to be, an effective mode of teaching with this group – framing any intervention around the goal of an achievable output and working in short durations – the pupils seemed anxious and disappointed in the way in which they were having to present their work. Reflecting upon this incident further, I question whether such actions, or a series of such actions, instigated by the teacher, could, in turn, have been internalised by the pupils. Resorting to the use of scrap paper could have been perceived by the pupils as signifying how the teacher symbolically viewed the quality of their work. When witnessing their teacher's actions (choosing to print on scrap paper with a faulty printer), a sense of worthlessness may then have unintentionally been implied. The young people were then told to place this work in their presentation binders to be later submitted for assessment.

Further to this, I became increasingly aware of self-deprecating testimonials given by the pupils prior to taking part in tasks with which they were unfamiliar. There was a degree of caution, a form of self-policing that pervaded the classroom, used perhaps as a means of lowering the expectations of others. In another field note entry, I captured an impulsive remark made by David when having a class discussion about how we were going to produce prototypes for this project. In response to my enthusiasm to the idea of making Plasticine

models, he exclaimed:

> ‘Aye... but it’s us that’s doing it’ (Excerpt from *Pride and Possession*, Appendix 4: 58).

Interestingly, it was the same pupil that throughout this phase of the project, appeared to be the most invested in it. Depicted in PoP: 13-15, after spending time carefully crafting his model, I witnessed David keeping a watchful eye over it as the class were asked to place their models in a tray. Upon seeing Sean pick up his model, David aggressively reprimanded him.

5.3.2 Phase One Summary

The aim of phase one was to orientate myself within the setting and build trust and rapport with the participants. Upon entering the field, I was perhaps overly optimistic that this could be quickly achieved, and at times found it challenging to sustain engagement as the focus of our conversations were, at times, fairly trivial in nature. Furthermore, and eager to disassociate myself from the authoritative hierarchy in the classroom, I was quick to respond when participants addressed me as ‘Miss’. It was not until near the end of this phase that the young people started calling me by my name. This seemed to be a gesture of acceptance where I felt a shift in dynamic between the young people and me, as well as a shift in my own confidence. This was possibly a result of consistently attending the class over this four-month period, where I was able to validate myself as someone reliable and who was invested in them. It took time and patience before the young people began to engage meaningfully with me. Upon reflection, this time was crucial in enabling me to learn local knowledge about the group, which would inform the next fieldwork phase. Here I gained an understanding of the social structures within the classroom and the empowerment strategies the young people appeared to employ. Furthermore, although the competition was an unanticipated event, the

process of taking part enabled this time to end with the pupils and me sharing in an achievement with which to transition into the next phase of fieldwork.

5.4 Phase Two Overview: Participatory Design Workshops

My aim for the second phase of fieldwork, taking place between September and December 2014, was to engage with the young people more directly as collaborative participants in a PD context. During this phase I facilitated weekly participatory workshops, focused on the technique of direct animation. The participants learned how to use various illustrative treatments (as described in Chapter Three, section 3.4), and created a series of collaborative experimental films. This included painting with inks; drawing with marker pens; and etching with small dental tools.

During these early workshops, Miss Marsh approached the group about entering another inter-school competition, this time a filmmaking competition. The brief required us to produce a one-minute film about a government sector of our choosing. The participants chose to focus their film on their emotional experiences at different stages of education (which will be described in more detail in the following section). Throughout this time, we had many conversations surrounding the emotive and symbolic connotations of colour and music, where the participants drew up mood boards, music play lists, and a timeline tracking the different developmental and transitioning phases of education – from nursery up to high school.

Once the film was complete, the participants organised a screening where we transformed their classroom into a cinema, and invited other teachers and pupils to attend. Shortly after the classroom screening, we discovered we had been short-listed for the inter-school competition, which required the class to attend the local iMax cinema for the awards

ceremony where all the entries where showcased on the *big screen*. As one of seventy-one entries, the participants' film was awarded joint second place.

5.4.1 Phase Two Critical Incidents

Upon viewing, on numerous occasions in the previous phase, how this group was socially and authoritatively governed in this class, I sought ways of encouraging the participants' sense of autonomy and agency. I would arrive early to each workshop to physically adjust the space before the young people arrived – rearranging the desks and chairs into clusters or as one large bank for everyone to sit around. After informally demonstrating techniques to the pupils at the beginning of each session I intentionally left all the materials out on one desk for the participants to then self-select what they wanted to experiment with, so as to encourage their independent creative decision-making – see PoP: 18. At times there was a great deal of energy in the classroom as the pupils moved around the space – see PoP: 19-20. I structured the workshops on an iterative basis, where each week I would present the participants with their designs from the previous workshop as a completed film, enabling them to see what types of shapes and textures were having the most visual impact – see PoP: 21. This became an effective didactic model in that I witnessed the participants quickly hone their technical direct animation skills.

However, whilst developing as animators, I was often confronted with defensive disclaimers from individuals about their lack of artistic ability. In such instances, I found myself reflecting upon the possible motivations for this self-devaluation. In PoP: 22-24, I describe a moment where I witnessed Hailey permit her own creativity through such self-disparagement. Such downgrading appeared to be instinctually adopted to disguise insecurity and low self esteem, a disparaging strategy that appeared to be entrenched within the general culture of this classroom. Describing the activity as infantile in this case permitted Hailey to be more fully

involved, expressive, and explorative, whilst safeguarding against critique. During such moments, I made a conscious effort to remind the participants of the experimental and explorative the nature of these activities and that their designs were not going to be assessed or critiqued.

After the group agreed to create a film to enter into the inter-school competition, we began the third workshop with a group idea generation session to gather concepts for the theme of the film. Captured in PoP: 25-27, during this time I sensed a gradual shift occur in the type of participation that was taking place. As the participants developed ideas for the content of their film, they also began debating the different connotations colour can have. I was struck by the degree to which the participants were connecting colours metaphorically with emotions and other attributes they regarded as significant. This included associating the colour white with innocence, yellow with happiness, red with anger, pink with love and romance, black with sadness, purple with power and ambition, green with growth, orange with enthusiasm, and blue with wisdom. Following this, a couple of the participants proceeded to gather insights for the film by asking everyone in the classroom for memories based on recalling how they had felt at certain stages of school. To me, it appeared as though the young people were implicitly transitioning from the role of participant to the role of co-researcher. Once the stages and emotions were set out, song lyrics were selected to narrate the film. These were as follows:

> Stage 1 (age 3-4): *'... because I'm happy… clap along if you feel like a room without a roof...'* (*Happy* by Pharrell Williams)

> Stage 2 (age 4-5): *'… my face above the water… my feet can't touch the ground… touch the ground…'* (*Waves* by Mr. Probz ft. Robin Schulz)

Stage 3 (age 5-6): *'… I was scared of dentists and the dark…'* (*Riptide* by Vance Joy)

Stage 4 (age 6-7): *'…take me away… dry my eyes… bring colour to my skys…'* (*Happy Little Pill* by Troye Sivan)

Stage 5 (age 7-8): *'… I'm clumsy and my head's a mess…'* (*10ft Tall* by Afrojack)

Stage 6 (age 8-9): *'… we're leaning on each other try'na beat the cold… I carry your shoes and I give you my coat…'* (*Millionaires* by The Script)

Stage 7 (age 9-10): *'… time to begin isn't it… I get a little bit bigger than them… I'll admit I'm just the same as I was…'* (*It's Time* by Imagine Dragons)

Stage 8 (age 10-11): *'… why you gotta be so rude… don't you know I'm human too…'* (Rude by Magic!)

Stage 9 (age 11-12): *'… I really don't care… I really don't care…'* (*Really Don't Care* by Demi Lovato ft. Cher Lloyd)

Stage 10 (age 12-13): '… forget about these stupid little things…' (*Amnesia* by 5 Seconds of Summer)

Stage 11 (age 13-14): *'… am I wrong… for thinking about that we could be something for real…'* (*Am I Wrong* by Nico and Vinz)

> Stage 12 (age 14-15): *'… and I don't care… go on and tear me a part… and I don't care if you do... cause in a sky… cause in a sky full of stars… I think I see you… I think I see you…'* (*Sky Full of Stars* by Coldplay)

As the workshops continued, now focused solely on their competition entry, the participants began to self-assign roles for themselves, which included Director, Assistant Director, Producers, Music Editors, and Artists. As well as reflecting on how the participants were constructing roles for themselves, I also became conscious of how my own role as a practitioner and researcher was fluctuating and being projected, particularly under the gaze of the gatekeepers, and the need for developing bespoke approaches for engaging with individual participants – see PoP: 28-29.

I experienced a fundamental challenge when facilitating collaboration with this diverse group of individuals. To achieve a meaningful dialogue I had to consciously adapt my demeanour and interact with individual participants on a personalised basis. At this point within the fieldwork, my instinct in managing this grew as I become mindful of the individuals who required a little more guidance and encouragement and those who had the confidence to take the lead. An ability to nurture participants, in both instances, was required. At times I found myself acting as a mediator in negotiating with the more active participants to include those less confident, who were situated at the periphery. Developing this level of understanding and awareness of the individuals' character and approach to collaboration only occurred with time and patience, and on the participants' own terms.

On many occasions, and as previously witnessed in phase one, acts of self-empowerment played out in conflict between the participants. I found myself frequently having to adopt an advocacy role as I attempted to reconcile collaborative tensions between the participants in

order to maintain the, often delicate, collaborative dynamic. At points, the collaborative ethos I was striving to foster grew more fragile during particular workshops where unresolved issues between participants were brought into and played out in the classroom. Furthermore, collaboration through teamwork was not the manner in which certain participants liked or chose to work on particular days, preferring to work alone. In Pop: 29-33, I reflect on my endeavours as a facilitator to unite the group, and the extent to which genuine collaboration was actually taking place. This independent way of working, whilst at odds with the collaborative discourse I was trying to foster, confirms previous notions of desired autonomy. Being solely responsible for a specific task resonates with the designation of production roles for themselves. Outwardly, this enabled the participants to contribute to an overall production process, whilst inwardly still maintaining a sense of individual agency.

Furthermore, there were also individual participants, who, on particular days, did not feel like taking part in the workshop activities. A notable tension occurred here between the gatekeepers and me when often they attempted to intervene over occasional non-participation. As depicted in PoP: 38-40, not only were these authoritative interventions contrary to the participatory ethos of the workshops (where I would intervene and reassure participants that they did not have to take part if they did not want to), I was also concerned that this could affect participants' investment and motivation to take part. Moments such as these highlighted the hierarchical nature of the setting, which I had not anticipated would interfere as much as it did.

The use of direct animation often resulted in meaningful moments of dialogue between the participants and me, revealing how it lends itself as a creative conduit for conversation. However, when I praised the participants, I was often met with sceptical responses. This became particularly evident once the competition film entry was completed. In PoP: 42-44, I

recall witnessing the participants' apathetic response to seeing the final film, as well as to Miss Marsh's and my positive feedback. Whilst seemingly downplaying their achievement, a second screening was organised by the participants (as mentioned earlier), where they invited other teachers and pupils to attend. As can be seen in PoP: 41 and 45-46, ahead of this event, the group spent time designing cinema-style tickets as invitations, making boxes for popcorn, and more origami mood cards. As well as these artefacts, the group agreed someone would need to open the screening with an introductory speech to the audience, and someone would have to be able to answer questions at the end. Hailey and David eagerly elected themselves for these roles and spent time preparing scripts, as well as Sean and Sam requesting to be technicians. Upon viewing the participants' previous apathetic response to the film, I was intrigued to see their readiness and enthusiasm towards the planning of a screening for peers and teachers out with the group.

Time was then spent transforming their classroom into a cinema-style theatre, which can be seen in PoP: 47-50. A table was set by the door where Joe and David set out and filled the boxes with popcorn. The other participants moved the desks to the side of the room and positioned chairs in a horseshoe formation. The participants gave themselves time to also have a quick rehearsal of Hailey's introduction and David answering possible questions. Upon arrival, the participants welcomed in their audience – taking their tickets and showing them to their seats. Described in PoP: 51-58, I sensed a shift in dynamic amongst the participants where they appeared more at ease in displaying their enthusiasm. Previously, the participants displayed little in the way of pride and satisfaction, or expressed outwardly a sense of achievement upon viewing their completed film. However, during this second screening to an external audience, the participants were clearly animated, confidently articulating the process and work undertaken and answering questions. Such avid displays could indicate a sense of accomplishment that previously had been hidden.

The final screening took place at the competition award ceremony at an iMax cinema. Amongst the participants, there was a great deal of excitement as well as anticipation, which I was equally feeling. After it had been announced that we had be award joint second place, two of the participants were invited up in front of the full auditorium to collect their prize and have a photo taken. Before the class left the cinema, Miss Marsh took a group photograph, which the young people asked me to be in – see PoP: 59. Upon returning to the classroom on my next visit, I was humbled to see the photo pinned up on the wall next to their winner's certificate. As a token, I gave the participants DVDs of all their films to keep, as well as a small, professionally printed, portfolio-style booklet of their work – see Figure 13. The participants' films can be viewed in the film folder as part of this digital submission.

Figure 13. McAra, M. (2015) DVD and Portfolio Booklet Given to the Participants. Photograph.

Ending this phase of the study with a second shared experience, built upon the foundations of the previous phase, allowed the participants and me to enter into the third phase with what felt to be a more secure and convivial relationship.

5.4.2 Phase Two Summary

The aim for this second phase of fieldwork was to harness my PD practice and engage with the young people as collaborative partners through the use of direct animation. The participants chose to focus their film on their emotional experiences of education and collectively decided upon the music, colour, shapes, and textures to include. As can be seen in the film competition entry and in Figure 14, the participants take the viewer on a journey, narrating each stage by specifically chosen song lyrics. Looking at this analytically, it appears that the participants associate their young years with happiness and a degree of innocence. What is then experienced is a sense of trepidation, as they transitioned from nursery to primary school. Later on, nuances of peer inclusion, rebellion, and dealing with insecurities were depicted. Throughout, the theme of growth, signified by the colour green, is repeatedly featured, with the film concluding on a green backdrop with a written caption: 'That was the past. Let's look to the future.' To me, this seemed a profoundly hopeful message, suggesting that the young people wanted to leave some emotional experiences in the past.

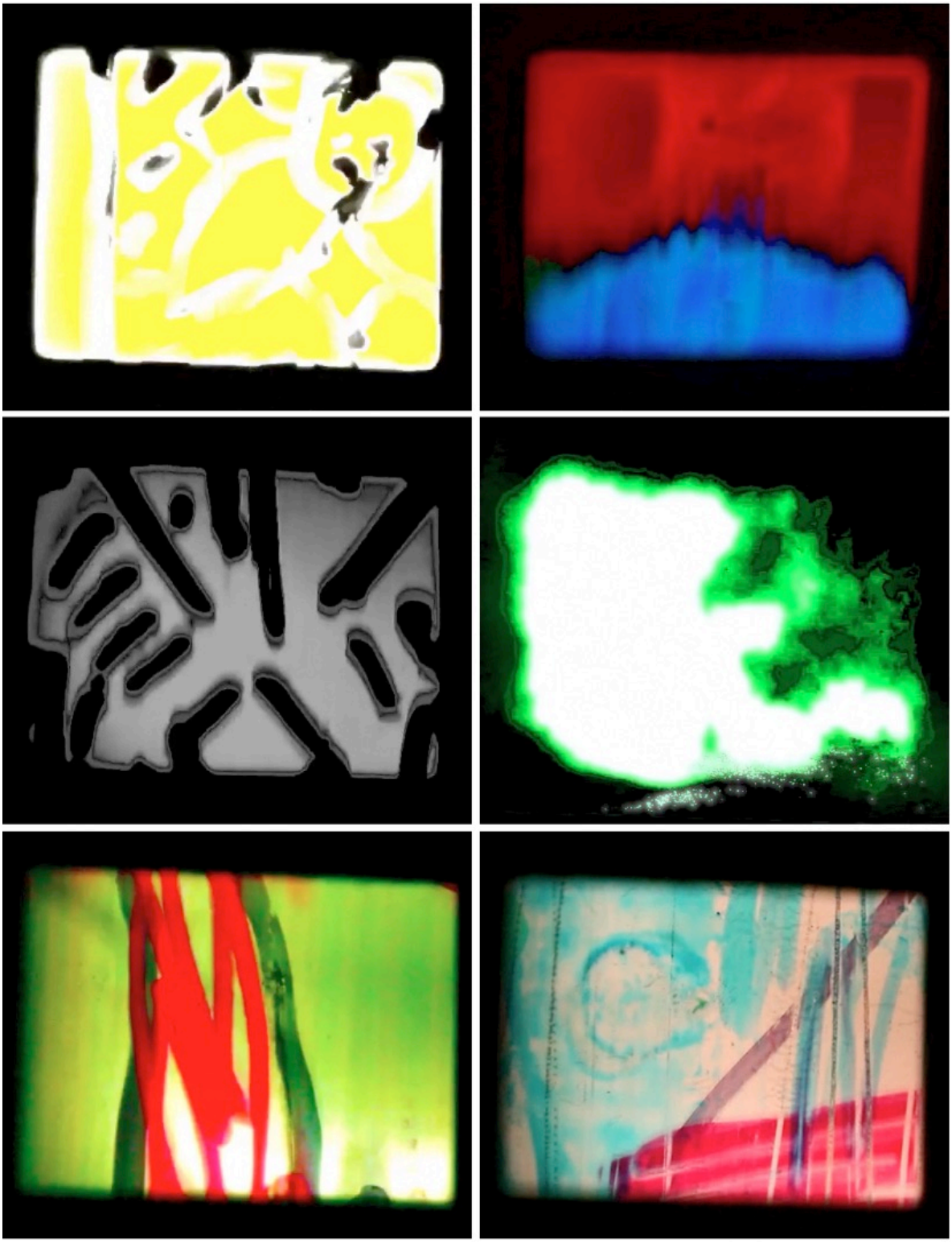


Figure 14. McAra, M. (2014) Screenshots from the Participants' Final Film. Photographs.

The participants appeared to thrive when supported to undertake autonomous learning, where they engaged in creative explorations and experiments of their own accord. However

within this, and building on themes gleaned from the previous phase, self-sabotage was apparent on numerous occasions and in different guises. Reflecting upon the workshops, it was possible to observe and unpack this behaviour more. It seems acts of self-sabotage were instigated by the pupils as a means to disguise their insecurities and as an attempt to manage the teacher's and my expectations of their abilities. This occurred prior to and on completion of the creative activities. This notion of masking became less apparent during the second and third screenings of the film, where the participants were transformed in the sense that they outwardly embraced and celebrated their achievement.

5.5 Phase Three Overview: Semi-structured Interviews

Between January and April 2015 I implemented the third phase of research using the method of semi-structured interviewing – see PoP: 60-66. As outlined in Chapter Three (section 3.11.3), I conducted interviews with the young people in pairs and in groups of three, and with Miss Marsh and Maddy on a one-to-one basis. I developed a topic guide for the interviews (see Appendix 3: 31) based on insights gleaned from the previous two phases. My aim here was to confirm or dismiss hunches in a more direct approach, where also the participants allowed me to audio record them. Documenting this fieldwork so far has been one of my major challenges, as the young people expressed an apprehension to being visually or audio recorded. Allowing me, in the third phase of this study, to audio record them, could appear as a gesture of trust.

After interviewing the young people, I then interviewed Miss Marsh and Maddy. My aim was to follow a similar line of inquiry with them as I had done with the young people but, in response to their answers, present back insights gleaned from the young peoples' interviews (see the interview topic guide in Appendix 3: 33). Here I found that whilst often Miss Marsh and Maddy' s responses were very much in-line with that of the young people, there were

also critical discrepancies, which will be unpacked in more detail below. Ethically, I was extremely mindful of what I chose to disclose to Miss Marsh and Maddy, only touching on themes inferred by the pupils indirectly so nothing could be traced back to particular individuals.

5.5.1 Phase Three Critical Incidents

Across all the interviews, several recurring themes appeared to emerge. The need to earn the participants' trust was a pivotal theme, flowing through all the conversations. Evident in the excerpt below, Hailey and Meghan describe favoured teachers as supportive, compassionate, dependable, and nurturing, symbolically perceiving them as maternal and paternal figures:

> *Marianne: 'Do you feel like there's certain teachers in the school that you can trust more than others?'*
>
> *Hailey: 'Yeah, the Drama teachers are like really supportive and trusting... for all the people who take Drama... the Drama teachers... you can rely on them so to speak a lot more than you could... probably rely on your pastoral care.'*
>
> *Meghan: 'They don't even treat ya like pupils, they treat ya as if you're like pure family and everything...'*
>
> *Hailey: 'Aye, I know, they treat you as if your family or friends and its not just like they've come into work and they have to just get on with it and deal with you, like, they actually make like... make like a personal connection to you... its more of like a friendship than a teacher pupil relationship.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 118-119)

Conversely, teachers who were less favoured were described with cynicism and considered to be unreliable and untrustworthy. Often participants' felt they were not prioritised by these teachers – that they were in a losing competition with other, higher achieving pupils, for their attention:

Marianne: '... out of the teachers that you don't like so much, why do you think that is? You said a minute ago that it's because they don't give you enough...'

Steven: 'Enough of attention... You could sit there with your hund up... tryin tae get help for a period and she just ignores ya... teachers got their eh... favourite... eh pupil... and us... are right at the bottom.'

Marianne: 'Right, so do you think teacher's have favourites then?'

Sam: 'Yes.'

David: 'Oh we know they dae.'

Steven: 'Star pupils.'

David: '... like P.E... P.E's... got four people... that they erm suck up to... aye and everybody hates it... they get more attention.'

Marianne: 'So why are they the favourites...?'

David: 'Because they're better at everythin... they listen maybe...'

Sam: 'And they actually bring in their P.E kit.'

David: 'And they actually dae stuff… But we would dae stuff if you could show us some bits... you know... you... us... you care... that you can dae it. But that they just stay with the same people.'

Marianne: '…so the teachers that you trust more, is there particular reason...'

David: 'Em... [sighs] it's hard... you need to earn ma trust… I really don't trust anyone.'

Marianne: '... how would someone then gain your trust in terms of the teachers…'

David: 'How they'm gain ma trust?'

Marianne: 'Yeah.'

Steven: 'Help.'

David: 'I don't know actually... I never figured it out.'

Marianne: 'It's quite a difficult question.'

David: 'Just... they just need to.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 165-170)

In both these extracts, trust is alluded to as a fragile privilege. As Hailey and Meghan suggest, once gained it is usually reciprocated by way of respectful behaviour, allowing for convivial relationships with teachers to develop. Building upon this, the participants made a link between teachers' pedagogical styles and the degree to which they are perceived to care about the pupils. Caring was also a key theme when participants described the qualities associated with preferred teachers. Other qualities referred to included respect, empathy, and compassion. Conversely, participants considered teachers who used more authoritarian and approaches to teaching as being less caring. Camaraderie was also a recurring theme in terms of establishing teacher and peer bonds. The participants described how the sharing of vulnerabilities fostered kinship and trust. This helped to lever their social (with peers) and hierarchical (with teachers) positioning. When asked about how such camaraderie could be effectively engendered, the participants described how learning activities that required them to work as a team, developed trust and ignited their own sense of agency and esteem. Feelings of empowerment were therefore associated with opportunities to engage in active, participative learning which brought with it a sense of achievement and feelings of pride.

Witnessing the shift in energy during the practical activities in phase one and during the workshops in phase two, I intuitively felt that pupils began to flourish in spaces where a culture of autonomous learning was being encouraged and actively supported. My observation was confirmed when I asked participants about the factors that motivated them to engage with learning. Where teaching was based on more practical activities such as games, experiments, and being able to physically move around the classroom, participants expressed an enhanced experience of learning and enjoyment, as shown in the following four interview extracts:

Steven: '... I used tae like going to XL. I used tae count the days and many periods left. But now, I just wanna get as far away... far away... away from it as possible... the stuff you do now and the stuff ya did in 3rd year... its more exciting in 3rd year… The excitement died down... and your happiness died down.'

Marianne: 'So what kinda stuff were you doing in 3rd year then? More...'

Steven: 'Everything!... The disco and everything... right now aw we doing is actual writing... Past couple of weeks all... has all been about writing. We have not been on our feet in XL.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 172-174)

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Marianne: '... Do you think with the practical classes, do you learn... do you feel like you learn more in those practical classes?'

Dan: 'Yeah. Like in Hospitality, ya could read out a recipe...'

Marianne: 'Uh huh.'

Dan: '…like hunners of times but wance you actually dae the recipe, that's when I remember it.'

Marianne: 'Uh huh. What about you Mat?'

Mat: '[Pause]... er.... just working with ma hunds.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 206)

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Marianne: '…how are you feeling about your exams at the moment? How's it all going?'

Lewis: '[pause]... I'm a bit nervous about some of em... er.... English because we don't really dae much... aw we dae is copy fra books an we're tae dae wi own value added unit and wi've tae dae a talk an [emphasis] wi've tae dae another assessment... and wi don't really dae it cause we're mainly copying fra books aw the time...' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 231-232)

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David: '... People in Physics always listen... It's like if you do more work, then the kids will not do work if you know what I mean?... They'll just switch off but if ya dae like Physics, we dae work and some stuff… like we dae like rockets an aw that… kids will understand if ya dae work and dae a wee bit of practical work…I think ya need that in some other classes tae cause too much… if we dae work then we just turn aff… get bored with it. Like if ya dae work and then dae something…[long pause]'

Marianne: 'More practical? Is it more to do with the type of teaching then?'

David: 'Yeah, like in Maths. If ya dae like Maths work and then ya can dae a wee game on the board and everybody can understand.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 157-158)

As the above extracts indicate, it became evident that the participants had an acute awareness of their own learning orientations and communicated a preference for active, dynamic, and novel modes of learning. Of particular significance was the participants' explanations of what motivates them to learn; responding positively and becoming more engaged through opportunities in class that empower them to harness their own agency. Furthermore, the majority of the participant's described experiencing a sense of achievement and feeling proud through acknowledgement and recognition from teachers, and through receiving formal credit in the form of awards. A notable commonality here was achievements that demonstrated commitment:

> *Mat: 'Eh… when I was in Cadets like, I got an award for shooting… and felt a sense of achievement.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 208)

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> *Meghan: 'Like when your passing all your classes, like, your doing good in all your classes… like if you're sitting in class and everybody else is like I don't get it and you get it, you feel dead proud of yourself.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 141)

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> *Hailey: '… if your teacher realises that your like erm… that you're good at something or if you like get praised upon something or you can sit there and if you understand something you'll like feel proud of yourself, you'll be like aw I actually do get that and it's a good feeling I guess…'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 141)

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Lewis: '... when I got ma black belt in Tae Kwon Do… two years ago… it took me four and a half years.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 231)

***

David: ' Eh…when I get promotion… in ma army… just get higher… aye pretty much, ya just need to work towards it... Took me three years.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 187)

***

*Sam: 'When ya pass your tests and exams and that… When ya win awards… When we won the *** [name of the first inter-school competition].'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 188)

The need to seek affirmation from peers also appeared to be prevalent across all the interviews. The participants described that their sense of belonging was contingent upon them aligning their behaviour with their peer group. Participants monitoring and self-policing of their own, as well as their peers' behaviour, could thus be viewed as a way to gain acceptance among their peer group. For example, participants felt stigmatised and stereotyped for being a part of this particular class. Such stereotyping included being thought of as 'stupid'. Awareness of this left the participants feeling embarrassed and ashamed, feelings that were often masked by blaming their peers:

David: 'But them all think it's for extra learning… and for people who cannie learn… and that annoys me… it's pointless talking about it like they still don't get it.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 175)

***

Steven: 'People I talk tae, they… just think XL is just a reason tae just dog some classes… they just think it's somewhere we go to go on our phones and that.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 175)

***

Lewis: ' [laughing]… some of them think it's for aw stupid people but er… cause some people have heard aw the trips we go on, some people would want… it's just fur kinda stupid people that cannie dae certain subjects I think.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 234)

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Hailey: 'They think it's... for people who are like really stupid… and it's like everyone outside of it… cause it's called X L, it's not really a very appropriate name cause everyone thinks it's like Extra Learning, like for stupid people…' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 132-133)

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Mat: 'I feel good but sometimes it can be bad cause people like say it's for spazes

and that, like for dumb people.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 209)

***

Dan: 'I think they see it as like a stupid class... like we're thick… and that's why we're in it.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 216)

During the interviews it became increasingly evident that the participants had little control over how the XL Club was perceived by peers out with the group. Explaining that their friends were not entirely aware of what occurred in the class, every participant, including Miss Marsh and Maddy, assumed that others would think that the class was for those with learning difficulties. As described by Miss Marsh herself, one of the key objectives and purposes of this class is to improve confidence and empower young people to improve on skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership, however, and it is evident that XL Club membership can result in the opposite:

Miss Marsh: ' ... trying to identify young people who might not make a positive destination and it's trying to get... a rich mix, so it could be there's not suppose to be all the ones with behavioural difficulties cause that tends not tae work but maybe there are ones wi challenging behaviour... maybe there are ones that have got... learning difficulties, maybe there are ones that really lack in confidence and self-esteem... or maybe they've got issues at home... and in that small group they can... come together as a team and sort of leading their own learning... sorta trying to keep them engaged in education. So in order to do that... we maybe do like enterprise projects and community projects... I think X L is just short for accelerate and I just say to the kids cause they all go aw it's extra learning and sometimes er... aw you're in XL

Club... like it's for kids who are not maybe so able or they say it's cause your thick or whatever and ya need extra learning... well I always tell them it's short for accelerate... It's about helping you to move forward and develop your skills and... qualities and think about what you want to do in your future and make a plan about how you're going to get there... that's the way I kinda word it to them... but all those things are still there. All those negative connotations sometimes are still there in the background...' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 282- 286)

What became apparent was the notion that such misconceptions were also fuelling an apathetic and disenchanted attitude towards being part of this group, and possibly school in general:

Marianne: 'So how do you feel about it in general then, do you think it's been useful or...'

Hailey: 'Not... not really to a point...'

Meghan: 'Its helped at points but... at other times like, if ya think like you could have bin daeing like a subject that coulda helped you, like... when ya leave.'

Hailey: 'I don't really find a lot of fun in XL, or they'll be like times, cause at the end of 3rd year me and you both wanted to leave it but we had to take it on for this year as well... like [long sigh] its just like really... ya get treated like you're about 5 years old with some of the stuff you do in there and I understand some people in there, like, don't understand things but it goes to an extent where she [the teacher] makes it like for dummies, like it goes to an extent where she's treating you like you're back in

nursery again the way she speaks to you or the way her lessons are designed...'

Meghan: 'There's a lot of teachers that dae that, they just talk dae ya as if yur like what wee babies and yur just like that's why a lot of people get annoyed and don't like coming to school because they want to be treated as if they're more grown up and that's why a lot of people decide tae leave.'

Marianne: 'And go to college then?'

Meghan: 'Uh huh, that's why like I'm leaving cause like I get pure annoyed when I come in school cause they treat ya like children and your just like I prefer to be treated like an adult...'

Hailey: 'Yeah there some class where like they have to really dumb things down on you, and your like well we're not stupid, we're in high school, your like, this is stuff we would have done in primary school and your... the way they word things it's as if like, like undermining your intelligence...' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 130-131)

Means and modes of expressing identity were signified on many occasions. For example, when describing the social hierarchical stratification in the school and reflecting on their lowly position within this, their feelings of rejection were described, paradoxically, with a sense of self-assurance and pride. Social belonging occurs physically in spaces out with the classroom where peer group friction and conflicts inevitably occur. Such conflicts are also brought back into the classroom. In order to manage peer tensions and conflicts, and as well as a means of social ingratiation, Hailey describes the need to actively recalibrate her skill levels in-line with peers which can have potentially detrimental effects on her own

achievements:

Marianne: '... do you think there's ever times where out of other people in your year, are there ever times where in certain subjects even though you know some kids are really good at a subject, they'll pretend not to be?

Hailey: 'Yeah... the prelims that were coming up, there was like a few of us who we knew everyone else was gonna fail so like we didn't really bother revising or anything because of... like especially if your friends are one of the ones that aren't gonna do very well, you wana don't look like... one of the really really smart kids... because then a lot of people do pick on you for being that as well. And especially if your friends are one of the one's who are gonna get the lower mark, you don't wanna make it look like a few people got a really high mark so it makes them look really really stupid.'

Marianne: 'Uh huh, so do you think then people might even go as far as then just maybe not revising as much or just try not to do as well?'

*Hailey: '... I never revised for any of mine, and I know ***[male pupil name omitted] also, he's one of my friends and he never revised either... [sighs] I don't know how to explain it, like, we didn't want make everyone else look stupid but then we also didn't want our, make ourselves look like we were, like, really smartie-pants or something... in our English class, there'll be comments made like if I constantly say the answers to something cause I know the topic we're doing, I'll be like the first one to like say an answer, like for each of the questions... and there'll be like people like making comments aw you don't need to do that, you don't need to do that.'*

Marianne: 'Right, okay, so people making negative comments?'

Hailey: 'Aye.'

Marianne: '... if you're getting the answers right essentially?'

Hailey: 'Yeah, or even if someone's getting the answers wrong, then there's negative comments made so there's no really... you have to try and find that balance because there's no really... everyone is gonna be making negative comments either way so you just, you either dumb it down or you...'

[long pause]

Marianne: 'You just don't say anything maybe?'

Hailey: 'Yeah.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 123-126)

Here Hailey talks of having to 'find that balance' of self-presentation, between *being*, yet not *appearing* too clever in front of peers. It seems this is because achieving too highly can cause resentment and result in rejection amongst peers. This is evident when these participants discussed the degree to which they prepared for their exams and the degree to which they actively engage in classes. This pragmatic stance was also revealed when participants discussed their goals and aspirations for the future beyond compulsory education. They described needing to take responsibility for their own futures, of being able to handle and navigate transitions, and not rely on the safety net of school

On further reflection, participants' adoption of these coping strategies could be viewed as evidence of their growing resilience. When discussing classroom behaviour, the participants reflected on how personal problems and adversities occurring in their lives outside of school can unintentionally manifest in disruptive and rebellious behaviour in school. The participants also referred to the negative impact of aligning with their peer group, and the way in which peer group performances are often mirrored in order to secure group membership, resulting in negative classroom interactions. The participants, however, also described a shift in attitude towards their work as they matured, whereby ingratiating behaviours for their peers was no longer their priority. However, when describing plans for their future beyond compulsory education, the participants expressed anxiety in relation to leaving the safety net of school. Several participants described looking forward to having more freedom, however seeking this and fulfilling their aspirations locally by staying close to home. Others, whilst highly ambitious and aspirational, often appeared to express a pessimistic and despondent outlook in relation to sharing experiences and imagining their future trajectories beyond compulsory education:

> *Marianne: '... what motivates you for the future? Is it your friends, or your family, or is a drive to be successful? What are kinda of motivators?'*
>
> *Steven: 'Dreams'*
>
> *Marianne: 'Dreams?'*
>
> *Steven: 'I mean I always have dreams about becoming an actual f... footballer one day... and that kinda gets me excited but it just kinda hold... holding me back at the same time at looking at something else...'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 185-186)

5.5.2 Phase Three Summary

Several new insights emerged during this phase that both substantiate and build upon the themes arising from phase one and two. From conversations with participants, I interpreted the gaining of trust as a privilege to be earned by teachers through their approaches to teaching, classroom environments, and the degree to which they nurture and can be relied upon. From my observations I noted that when participants felt rejected (not just within the teacher-student dynamic but also with peers, perhaps even extending outside of school), they engaged in acts of self-sabotage and self-deprecation. Conversely, these behaviours could be read as acts of self-empowerment, borne out of a resilient and pragmatic response to their situation. Paradoxically, whilst shame and embarrassment were prevalent themes that permeated all dialogue associated with the XL Club, when asked to describe a time of feeling proud and a sense of achievement, many of the participants drew on experiences gained through this group, including drawing on their experiences in this study.

5.6 Phase Four Overview: Activity-based Focus Group

The fourth fieldwork phase took place in May 2015, where I implemented an activity-based focus group with the participants. My aim here was to draw together insights gleaned from the previous phases into a reflective discussion channelled through the making of a collaborative artefact. As described above, from the interviews it was evident that a common sense of shame and embarrassment surrounded the XL Club. However, the majority of the participants also associated their experience of participating in the work of the class with a sense of achievement. Through the negative stereotyping by peers outside of the class, participants reported feeling that their achievements were invisible to their wider school community. This insight informed the rationale for the main activity of the focus group in which I proposed collaboratively designing a celebratory artefact in the form of a flag that

could hang in the school with the aim of promoting positive awareness of the XL Club.

Aware of the participants' apprehension in displaying their drawing ability, a view to which they alluded in the interviews, I decided to collect, as well as make, a range of images that I hoped would help to inspire and capture their thoughts and opinions. As can be seen in PoP: 67-69, I encouraged participants either to draw their own ideas or choose images to trace onto blank shapes resembling Scout or Girl Guide badges, synonymous with award and achievement. I asked the participants to consider words and images that they felt reflected their experiences of being in the XL Club, as well as to represent symbolically their achievements and future aspirations. These badges would then become incorporated into the iconography of the flag, including images from their films.

Due to time constraints, I was only able to facilitate the focus group over one double school period (1 hour, 50 minutes). It was also the last time I was able to see the group before they went on exam leave. This meant that I had to design the final artefact away from the participants. With this in mind, and whilst making their badges, I strove to obtain as much direction and aesthetic information from the participants as possible through a group idea generation session. Suggestions offered by the participants included: icons to represent the changing seasons, images to represent XL Club activities and its achievements, symbols of growth and transition, images of a shield or coat of arms to signify the identity of the school (which has several religious undertones), and hands clasping to represent kinship. All the participants enthusiastically requested that their names be displayed on the flag, including Miss Marsh and Maddy's. During the focus group, whilst the participants spent time talking about and drawing their badges, David and Joe chose to concentrate on creating one large image together. Relating to David's aspiration of joining the army, their illustration contained wartime memorial iconography including guns, poppies and a soldier's helmet (see PoP: 70).

5.6.1 Phase Four Critical Incidents

Away from the classroom, I spent several weeks curating the participants' designs and ideas into one cohesive print design. Initially I was uncomfortable with finishing off the final design away from the participants because I was anxious that they might feel a sense of disempowerment and lack of ownership. Having to compose the piece away from the participants was going to be unavoidable, and was simply one of the constraints of having to respect and work within the timetable of the school curriculum. To mediate this, I decided to use the following weeks to my advantage. I invested time and expense to carefully produce the final piece, with the aim of returning their work in an exciting and impressive form. After getting the flag printed onto fabric, I presented it in a grand black frame and behind glass. Here I sought to make a visual impact and communicate symbolically a sense of achievement, value, and worth.

The process of curating the content of the flag, which captured the shared insights and signposts of the entire fieldwork journey that we had embarked upon, afforded me time to reflect on the whole process. When I had asked the participants to symbolically represent their experiences of the XL Club, different kinds of words were written down including 'conflict' as well as 'confidence'. Whilst using the participants' imagery to develop the flag, I found myself often struggling to communicate the participants' views and experiences candidly alongside the aim of producing a visual piece that could be celebrated and proudly hung in the school. Mindful of assembling one cohesive piece, I was cautious not to sterilise, nor embellish the participants' experiences.

Returning the framed flag back to the participants would be my last trip to the high school. In PoP: 71-74, I observed how the participants' mediated their reactions in response to who

was watching them. Whilst initially anxious about the participants' apathetic response, there was a notable shift in their demeanour when in the presence of Miss Philips. This was perhaps due to her hierarchical status as the school head teacher. Such a shift echoes that found in the interviews where the participants described displaying convivial behaviour towards favoured teachers and sought out their praise and approval. Another signifier of pride was the participants' choice to have all their names included on their flag, mirroring their choice to include their names in the end credits of their competition film entry. In both these artefacts, the participants sought ownership by physically stating authorship. Paradoxically, in both instances, the participants were at first reluctant to claim this authorship publically, relating back to the notion of self-deprecation. The participants' class flag (see Figure 15) has since been hung in their school assembly hall. As an additional token, I printed the flag design, as well as David's war memorial design, onto postcards for each of the participants to keep (see Figure 16).

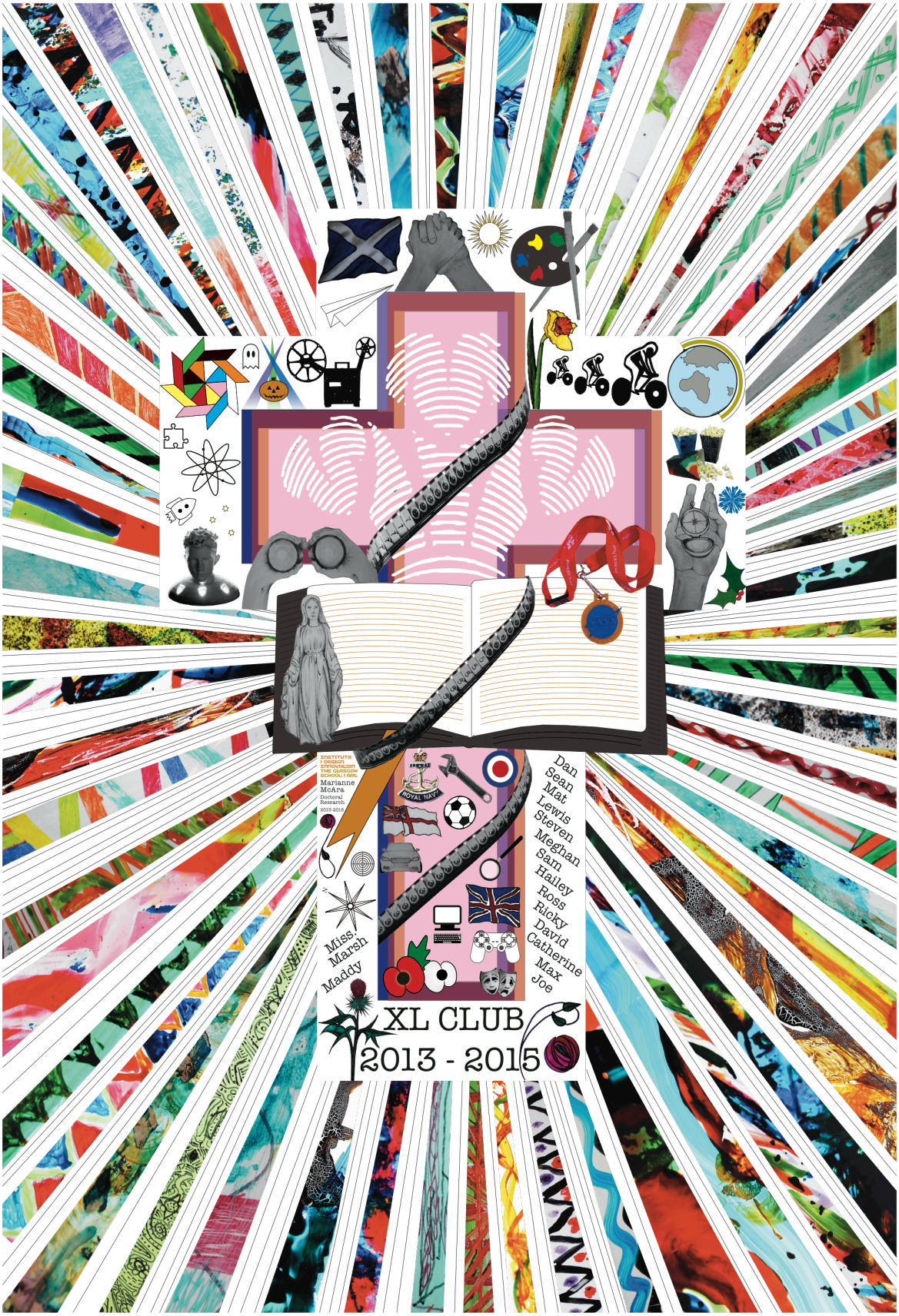

Figure 15. (2015) McAra, M. The Celebratory Class Flag. Photograph.

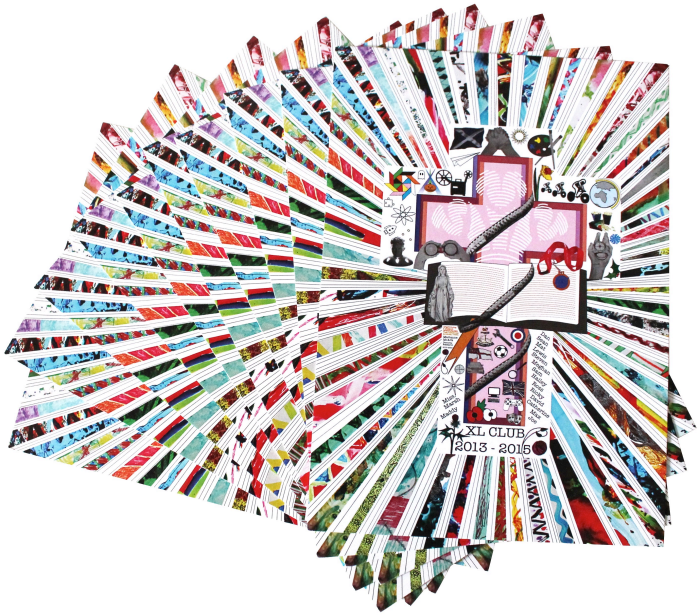

Figure 16. McAra. M. (2015) Postcards of the Flag given to the Participants. Photograph.

5.6.2 Phase Four Summary

Phase four involved the production and presentation of the celebratory class flag. Due to the constraints of the school timetable I was required to produce the flag away from the fieldwork setting and the participants. Acknowledging that the class flag was not the result of an entirely participatory process, a key methodological finding here was the need to pragmatically respond to fieldwork constraints in such a way as to maintain the participants' collaboration. Aware of our limited time to work on this, I collected as much rich information from the participants as I could.

The aim of the class flag was to bring about positive recognition surrounding the activities of the XL Club, as the participants felt negatively judged by their peers and stereotyped by the wider school community through a lack of transparency and formal communication. Metaphorically instilling worth through scale and quality, this artefact was to embody symbolically the achievements and pride the participants often had associated with the work of the class. Upon returning the flag back to the participants, there was a notable shift in their

demeanour, from being downbeat when they were receiving the flag in front of an audience of younger peers (echoing the theme of apathetic achievements), to one of pride and enthusiasm as they received praise from Miss Philips. Their response indicated the importance of receiving recognition from authority figures.

5.7 Phase Five Overview: Evaluation Events

The aim for this final phase was to gather feedback to evaluate the study. This was implemented through two events where I was able to present the research back to the participants and gatekeepers, as well as to a group of experts from the fields of education, design-research, and policy. The first took place at the school. Using the model box images, I created a five-metre long timeline of the case study, where, below the images, I invited participants to write and draw on their reflections. In addition to producing smaller comic-book style versions for the young people to keep (see Figure 17), I also made up packs of postcards using images of all their film illustrations for them to keep too (see Figure 18).

Figure 17. McAra. M. (2016) Page from the Timeline Booklet given to the Participants. Photograph.

Figure 18. McAra. M. (2016) Postcard Pack given to the Participants. Photograph.

My aim was to use these artefacts as prompts for a reflective discussion about what they had learned from participating, how they felt about participating, and what they would change about the study. Now in their fifth year of high school, eight out of the original fifteen participants attended the event: Hailey, David, Steven, Dan, Joe, Catherine, Lewis, and Mat. Miss Marsh informed me that the participants that were absent had either left school after fourth year or were attending classes at a local college that provides courses not taught at the school. Whilst I facilitated the discussion, I chose not to use a topic guide, which allowed the conversation to remain participant-led.

The second evaluation event took the form of a critical discussion, where a panel of invited experts was brought together to discuss the fieldwork, the artefacts produced, and my early findings. Here I was able to receive feedback from academic peers so to evaluate and validate the research. The panel included: a Doctor in social research and policy, a Professor of Education, a Doctor of Design-Research, as well as my supervisory team.

5.7.1 Phase Five Critical Incidents

Event One: For the first event, which took place at the school, I arrived early so as to arrange the desks to accommodate the five-metre timeline. Before engaging in a discussion, the young people were able to walk around and examine it. There was much excitement and laughter as the participants began to identify themselves and each other and the various scenarios that had taken place. Reflecting upon this initial interaction with the timeline, it was clear that not only was this device to function as a tool to facilitate reflective discussion, it also acted as an effective ice-breaker as I had not seen the participants for approximately ten months – see PoP: 75-77.

I began the discussion by asking the group what significant memories, if any, the timeline provoked. One of the key themes was the participants' analytical reflections surrounding collaboration. Whilst required to work as a team, the participants also sought out opportunities to participate either autonomously on their own or within friendship-based sub teams. Here the participants reflected upon the fragility of sustaining affable collaboration:

> *Hailey: 'There was a lot of like… tense moments where a lot of people of got into arguments at times… I can't remember who most of my arguments were between... but me and Meghan kept arguing with…'*
>
> *Joe: 'Everybody.'*
>
> *Hailey: '… mostly you lot… just to do with making the films or whatever because obviously me and Meghan came up with the idea for the emotional phases and everything… and we were try'na organise it into colours and all this and then other people weren't listening so there was just a lot of tension happening at that time.'*

Marianne: '... So was working in sub groups could actually be quite difficult?'

Hailey: ' Yeah… because obviously we had organised it all and then try'na get them who were making the films to like listen to what we were saying… and at times is wasn't…'

Marianne: '… do you prefer working as a team or working individually?'

Dan: 'As a team... with certain individuals.'

[group laughs]

Marianne: 'Right okay. So you chose to work with certain individuals in a sub team…'

Dan: 'Aye.'

Hailey: 'Yeah… I think that's just worked a lot better for us, like working with the people we were comfortable working with rather than… cause a lot of people clashed.'

Marianne: 'Uh huh. So be able to work with your friendships then?'

Hailey: 'Yeah... And all of us like creating the same thing cause a lot of our XL projects before, we all like went off into different groups and did different things.

Whereas this, it was like the whole of XL had worked to make this film…' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 351-354)

Transformation was another reoccurring theme, which was evident through acquiring new skills that enabled group cohesion, where tensions and conflicts were channeled through the creative task as opposed to personally at each other. Furthermore, the participants also alluded to a shift in appreciating their own capabilities and achievements, reflexively acknowledging a renewed sense of self-capacity:

Hailey: 'It was fun… like getting to make the film yourself and then seeing it all come together stage by stage.'

Dan: 'It was good… it was something most of us hav'nae done before… So it was… a new experience... I think when we like actually won it cause like we didn't know we were entering a competition at first and then when we like went there and like I don't think… when we were seeing the films going through everyone else's… I think… I don't know whether it was just me but I had like… I was like aw no these good like… we might not get anything out of it and then when we did actually get something… it was kinda like a big shock.'

Marianne: 'Uh huh, how did you all feel seeing your film on the big screen?'

David: 'It… it was cool though because it was like… we made it and now its like up on this big massive cinema screen.' (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 350)

***

> *Steven: 'I think it's just like close up as well and we had the one on the film where it like bubbled or something cause of the way it went through the projector… yeah. And I think that one although it was like an accident; it turned out to be like a really nice accident… just the way it came out… It's just surreal looking back on it now and looking at what we did. Cause like before hand I don't think we could have created anything like this… I mean at the start we started like mucking about with the film but then when we actually got down to it, we did create something good.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 356)

When discussing the content of their final film, the participants agreed that the abstract nature of the medium supported inclusivity by allowing for multiple and personal interpretations. Whilst the film focused on the participants' collective emotional experiences of education, Hailey explained that their film can resonate with anyone, suggesting it has an ability to communicate the participants' message as well as becoming a bespoke experience for the viewer:

> *Hailey: 'Aye, like anyone can relate to it… everyone's gone through school, everyone's either going through it, been through it, about to go through school and… because of how abstract it is… everyone can interpret it differently… you can't like just say aw it's just for 13 to 15 year olds…. you can be like well anyone can look at it and interpret it differently cause like even people in this class could interpret it differently. Obviously we know the things behind it but if you showed it to like an assembly full of people… you could have like so many like different views on it and so many different people taking different things from it…'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 358)

Building on Hailey's explanation, Joe commented on the role of the origami mood card in providing additional meaning for the viewer:

> Joe: *'So everyone… although they've got that wheel in their heads at first, whilst they're looking at it… it can… for different… like different people can trigger like different primary school memories or like even just looking at it, you can interpret it differently.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 358)

Whilst interpretation in the viewing experience is shared, the theme of ownership also appeared in several other guises throughout the discussion. In the case of the celebratory class flag, several of the participants remarked on the inclusion of participants' names who had not regularly attended the class. In the excerpt below, I found myself having to justify and defend the inclusion of all the participants names on their flag to Dan, who questioned why they received such recognition:

> *Hailey: 'Sophie, Ross… I don't know what's happened with them.'*
>
> *Dan [pointing at the names on the flag]: 'Look at aw these people getting credit who were'nae even there! That's shockin.'*
>
> *Marianne: 'Well you were all a team… and with the flag itself… everyone had a hand in designing bits of film… so everyone's names needed to be included.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 360)

At the end of the event, Miss Marsh, Hailey, Catherine, Mat and Joe escorted me to the

assembly hall to show me the class flag that I had returned to the group. I was then led to a large glass trophy cabinet in the entrance corridor. On display was their entry to the first inter-school competition in phase one and winners' certificate, as well as their runners up trophy and certificate from the filmmaking competition in phase two. Having their class flag prominently displayed in the assembly hall, a location that every pupil and teacher visits on a weekly basis, could be seen as signifying a high degree of worth and importance. This symbolic value and prestige is echoed by the glass trophy cabinet where the participants' awards had been given equal prominence. Both these locations appeared to physically embody a sense of achievement – a feeling not always explicitly expressed by the young people. I left the fieldwork setting that day hopeful that upon seeing this, the young people could acknowledge and celebrate the significance of what they had accomplished.

Event Two: The second evaluation event took place at my university where I invited a panel of academic experts, alongside my two supervisors (SA and SB) to attend an exhibition of practice, which would be followed by a critical feedback discussion – see Figures 19-22. Present was a Doctor from the field of design-research (DoDR), a Professor of Education (PoE), and a Social Policy Researcher (SPR). Throughout the discussion, my fieldwork and findings were critically evaluated and verified by the panel.

Figure 19. McAra. M (2016) Evaluation Event Two. Photograph.

Figure 20. McAra. M. (2016) Evaluation Event Two (detail). Photograph.

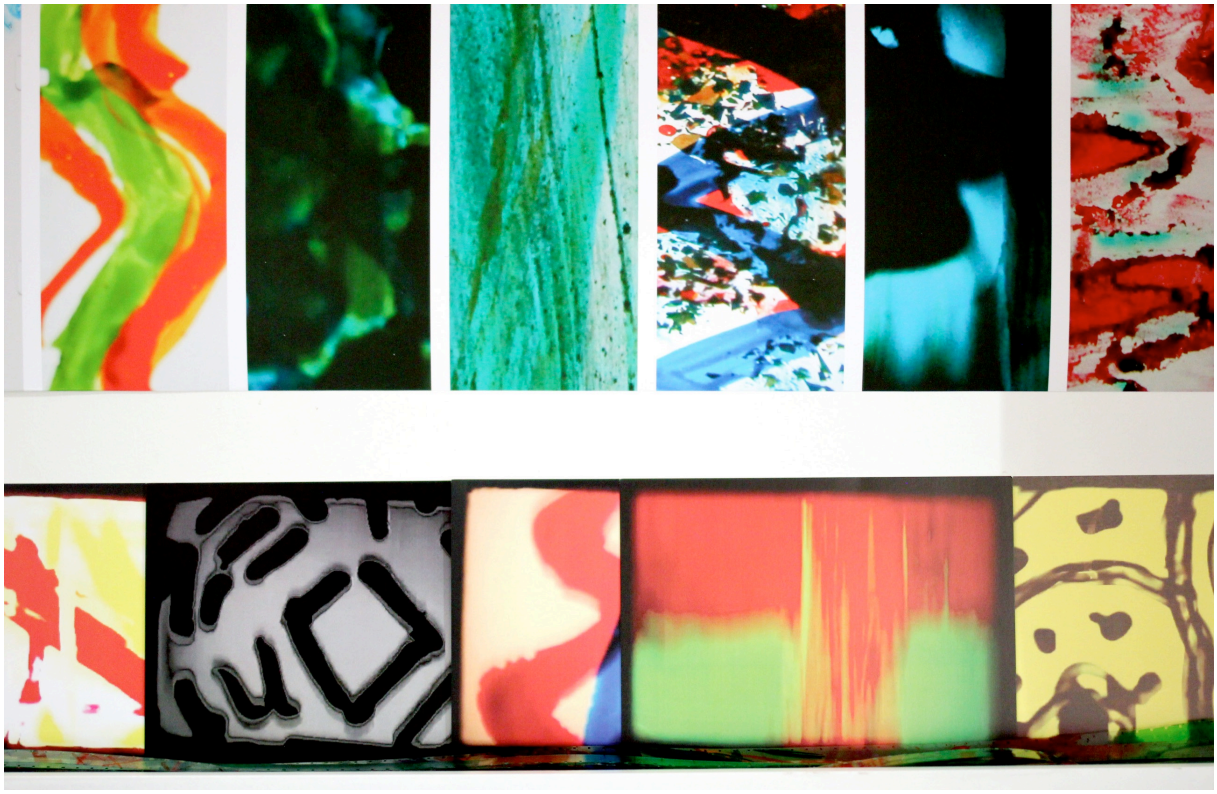

Figure 21. McAra. M. (2016) Evaluation Event Two (detail). Photograph.

Figure 22. McAra. M. (2016) Evaluation Event Two (detail). Photograph.

Having acknowledged how I was often required to adapt the methods in response to the context, methodological tensions were discussed in relation to my participatory approach. Staging collaboration in the face of ethical, time, access, financial, and technological restrictions and constraints required adopting a degree of pragmatism, which, at some moments, could arguably have affected the participatory nature of the research. However, and as validated by the panel, mediating the unexpected contextual tensions and possible barriers within this study outweighed the moments where I had to step in and make a creative decision on behalf of the participants. An example of this was the need to facilitate the filmmaking workshops on a weekly basis and working with an old projector, which I was unable to bring to the school. In response to these circumstances, upon leaving the fieldwork setting each week, I would then have to piece the their film together, project and record it, and return their now digitised film to them in the following workshop (this and other contextual limitations are discussed more fully in Chapter Seven). It was in response to these limitations that I had to, out of necessity, break from the participatory ethos unpinning this study. PoE, however, praised my endeavours, stating that:

> *PoE: It's very very difficult to actually do something creative in a situation as constrained as the one you were in'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 405).

Furthermore, the panel reviewed my methodological choices with a particular focus on implementing the single case study strategy. As previously outlined in Chapter Three, this choice was made in response to being presented with a privileged opportunity to remain in the school setting and with the same group of participants for an extended period of time. This methodological commitment generated in-depth insights at a micro level that were rich and authentic and which were also acknowledged by the panel. Here they discussed the need for prolonged and incremental engagement, such as this, to take place as a means of

supplementing studies that focus on gathering statistical data:

> PoE: *'Don't loose contact with those voices. I was talking to somebody yesterday who styles himself as a world-class researcher in the field of quantitative studies with this age group… And I said to him that there are some major holes in your work… what's missing? And he said the deep qualitative studies of subjectivity, which is what you've got here.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 398)

Returning to the notion of contribution, my qualitative findings were questioned by SPR in relation to having an impact on policy. Here it was advised that a key concern for policy-makers and other practitioners in this field is scalability in how such inventions can operate on a macro-level and be best value for money in terms of reaching a wide demographic:

> SPR: *'... the question a lot of people will ask is what's scalable about this... you can't repeat what you've done in every situation so what are the key dimensions and qualities in what you have done that is scalable? And I think also a later question is of limited resources… like one thing that will hit a number of individuals… you know the best value but I think there is value in this in that the approach can address a range of problems. You don't need a different policy for truancy… [for] violence, for substance misuse. It's an approach that can be applicable to all of them.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 401)

In response to this, and as the panel remarked on, my methodological approach focuses on sustaining a relationship through creative collaboration in which the participants were empowered to develop and transform their own sense of agency. I argue that the process-focused outcome, taking precedence over the physical artefact-based output (such as the

participants' films or class flag), is transferable to many other contexts and communities, a view that was supported by the panel.

> SB: *'I think that's really important what you're saying and it makes me think about the value of this kind of an approach, not for particular groups of pupils that have been labelled but it's something that should potentially be embedded into a curriculum for all young people… that keys into their aspirations for what they're doing now, where they want to go, where they're seeing their futures… that everybody has an opportunity to experience this.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 401-402)

> SPR: *'… in these kinds of approaches, your method should be true to the context and nature of the thing you're looking at which is what I think you've caught. But so many sociologists… end up doing interviews or focus groups because that's their particular methodological predilection…'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 402)

As the SPR verifies here, there is a need for research to be contextually meaningful to those participating. In order to do this, it was suggested that a degree of flexibility and adaptability is required, which in this case intuitively lead me to look beyond PD to other fields, such as the social sciences and avant-garde filmmaking practices. PoE championed this interdisciplinary approach:

> PoE: *'…what interests me is the fusion between the contributing areas into something that is no longer any one of them and it's not necessarily directly traceable back… or could easily be claimed… reclaimed by any one of them because it's moved beyond them into something else… You've been moving beyond the methods of Participatory Design and practice, which is very evident that it's there, you're clearly drawing on*

> *educational and sociological [inaudible]… You're clearly drawing on those but nor is it traditionally that either… it's highly interesting, it's highly creative… I just wondered where you felt you were sitting in relation to those disciplinary contributions to something that's clearly highly innovative, highly original and extremely interesting…'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 395-396)

Central to implementing contextually meaningful research was the need for establishing an authentic relationship with the participants. I explained to the panel how this was slowly developed over time, a process that the SPR described as a journey:

> SPR: *'… I think your first bit about trust and rapport was really interesting because what for me built the trust and rapport was the fact that you all went on a journey together and you were a traveller on that journey with them…'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 388)

Thinking of how the relationship developed as a journey, I was able to reflect upon not only how the participants transformed but also how I did as a developing practice-based researcher. My confidence grew in phase one as I was gradually accepted by the participants into the group. In phase two, my position shifted significantly as I observed the participants begin to implicitly take on co-researcher roles. From initially scaffolding their learning through teaching them techniques, later I was able to step back from a facilitator's role and liaise with participants as they took the lead. In both cases agency appeared transformed. In the participants' case, the panel and I discussed the interplay between working autonomously and as a collective. Here the SPR remarked on this finding with regards to the broader implications for education and teaching practices in general:

> SPR: *'… I think your findings are really strong… particularly about agency and the individual verses the collective. And I think what you've nailed there is how the education system is not set up to handle that tension… individualism's fine when it's towards a collective aim that everyone can buy into… it seems to me in the current curriculum there's no marks for team work… there's no marks for collaboration… [the] outcomes of this… you know the fact that they understood how a production works and actually in the real word it's all about collaboration… It's the kind of relationship and understanding of those kids and that journey you've gone on as well, which I think… is interesting.'* (Excerpt from Appendix 4: 389)

Building upon the findings surrounding the relationship that developed between the participants and me, the panel asked how aligned the participants' agendas were, in terms of taking part in the study, with my own aspirations for the research. Following a PAR approach, and whilst predefining a loose plan of action (as a requirement to gain institutional ethics approval), the research design remained emergent in nature. The phases of the study were successive in nature in that each became contingent on what had occurred in the previous. As such, this uncertainty made it difficult to initially provide the participants with a full prediction of what was to be expected or anticipated from taking part. Whilst the young people were always in complete control over their own participation, I acknowledge the various motivations that may have differed from my own. For some, taking part in this research was considered a fun and enjoyable activity, and a chance to learn and develop new skills. For others it was possibly an opportunity to avoid doing class work. Either which way, their participation and the motivation behind that was in their hands. Often it was the case that certain participants on particular days would attend the workshops yet choose to not fully participate. Whilst motivation to participate was often determined on a daily basis, taking part in both inter-school competitions did instil a common agenda and appeared to

mobilise group participation.

5.7.2 Phase Five Summary

The aim of this final fieldwork phase was to gain critical feedback so to evaluate the research and my findings. By returning to the fieldwork setting and presenting the research back to the young people, I was able to glean the key attributes surrounding participation that had impacted most on them. This included individual and group transformation, alluding to ownership and recognition; reflecting upon the abstract nature of the filmmaking medium as supporting inclusivity; and how in the future their collaboratively made artefacts should be displayed as a multi-sensory experience.

In the second event I presented my research in an academic forum in order to gain feedback from experts from the fields of design-research, education, and policy. Here I was able to verify my findings as the panel functioned as a critical sounding board. The key points that were raised focused on methodological implications and contextual limitations; my interdisciplinary practice and pragmatic approach in the field; the journey the participants and I went on in the development of our relationship; and how the young peoples' sense of agency was understood and was transformed, as well as my own as a developing practice-based researcher.

5.8 Case Study Summary

In this chapter, I have presented each fieldwork phase so to form a single case study. Beginning with a period of classroom observation in phase one, I began to understand the groups' educational and social practices, most notably their paradoxical strategies for empowerment through acts of self-sabotage, which were also imposed onto others. These acts were iterated throughout the filmmaking workshops in phase two. During this time, I was

also able to discern various aspects about the young people's sense of agency, particularly in connection with seeking out opportunities to work autonomously within the collective. During the semi-structured interviews in phase three, further themes surrounding the role of teachers, as well as learning approaches emerged. The production and presentation of celebratory class flag in phase four allowed for further insights to be developed around how the young people acknowledge their own achievements and the role that authority figures can provide in terms of impact and recognition. During the final phase, feedback from the participants and a panel of academic experts was collected for the purposes of evaluating the research. Importantly, I was able to establish what the young people had gained from their participation. This will be unpacked in the next chapter where I analyse the insights gleaned from the fieldwork through a process of thematic coding, and draw on various theoretical perspectives to illuminate my understanding so to answer my research questions.

Chapter Six

Case Study Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I draw together and discuss insights from each of the five phases to form the basis of my findings. As described in Chapter Two, I identified the need for a richer and more person-centred understanding of how young people participate in, and can be transformed by, the process of PD. In seeking to develop knowledge surrounding the participation of young people in PD specifically, based on the following discussion, I set out my contributions to the field. These are based on my experience and understanding in this study where I have found there to be three key dimensions of a PD process: the experiential, the relational, and the contextual.

For this discussion the evidence I draw on includes field notes, interview transcripts and evaluation event transcripts, and, where indicated, the reader can refer to these in Appendix 4. Adopting Braun and Clark's (2006) principles of coding, and Attride-Sterling's visual *thematic networks* (2001), my data sets underwent a process of Thematic Analysis. As outlined in Chapter Three (section 3.9), I adapted these approaches by developing my own set of coding categories that were applied onto each piece of data through a series of iterative readings. From this process 22 interrelated themes were generated, which are set out in relation to the specific phases from which they emerged from in Table 1. After identifying these common themes across all the data sets, my meaning-making was theoretically informed by drawing together a number of concepts and perspectives as described in Chapters Two and Three. In the next section I summarise these and explain how each address different aspects of the sub questions.

6.2 Theoretical Overview

In seeking to better understand the participation of young people in a PD process, the social nature of PD has been interpreted through the lens of SI (Mead 1967, Bluner 1969). To address each of the three sub questions, I have drawn on additional theories that have informed my meaning-making. So to answer the first sub question – *How do young people experience a Participatory Design process?* – I began by examining the themes that emerged surrounding the role direct animation played. In ascertaining its ability to preform as a participatory practice and *design thing*, I integrated Schön's theory of *reflection-in-action* (1983) with the concept of *experiential knowledge* as outlined by Barrett (2007) and Biggs (2007), as well as drawing on Dewey's notion of the *expressive object* (1934).

It became clear that my second sub question – *What are the relational dimensions between the practitioner and a group of young people within a participatory process?* – was very much interlinked with the first. So to sense-make the relational dimensions of PD in this present case, I looked to Wenger and his theory of *communities of practice* (1998). Wenger's concept has enabled me to theoretically connect the role of practice and the artefact with how the young people engaged with each other, and with me as the practitioner, in this study. Within the context of working with young people, and in establishing and sustaining an authentic relationship with them, understanding how to nurture trust and rapport became central. Drawing on a *relation ethics* as advocated by Ellis (2007), here I position Wearing's concept of the *experiential bond* (2015). My final sub question – *What can be learned about the local context and how can it affect a participatory process?* – has been addressed through holistically gleaning insight across all the phases of fieldwork. Here I have been able to gain an understanding of the social and educational practices of the young people and the culture within the classroom context and its affects on the participants. The following discussion is structured by answering each sub question and drawing these dimensions together so as to answer my over-arching research question. So as to identify the specific

themes I have drawn on as evidence in this discussion, I have provided an iteration of Table 1 for each sub question that highlights the corresponding themes.

6.3 How do young people experience a Participatory Design process?

During this section please refer to Table 2. I will begin answering this question by reflecting on the efficacy of direct animation as a *design thing* (Binder et al. 2011) within a PD process. With the aim of cultivating a safe space and conduit through which the participants could explore, translate, and narrate their experiences, emotions and stories, I contend that the direct animation technique, employed as a research method, encouraged the participants to be explorative and experimental by working collaboratively in highly creative ways. The abstract nature of the medium did not demand strict drawing ability. Therefore, even those who believed that they lacked artistic skill were less apprehensive than they might otherwise have been. The medium enabled the participants to quickly develop the necessary skills and gradually grow in confidence with these. With regards to the content of their films, towards the end of the phase, the group had become fluent in a collaboratively constructed design language, which placed them in control of what, and the degree to which, they wished to disclose their experiences and knowledge. The abstract nature of the content also ensured the participants of their anonymity, which had been raised as a central concern, evident in their reluctance to be filmed, photographed, or initially voice recorded.

Furthermore, the goal of entering the competition provided a common objective, helping to instil a sense of camaraderie, with the participants treating the process and their roles synonymous to that of a production team. Here they self-appointed roles and responsibilities such as Director, Assistant Director, Producers, Music Editors, and Artists. It was reassuring upon witnessing such mobilisation that the use of a production process could heighten the development of an automatous learning environment, as well as the participants' own enchantment with the project. The significance of the participatory process here chimes with

that found by designers Mazzone, Read and Beale (2008), Cavallo et al. (2004), and Frandsen and Petersen (2012), when they collaborated with different groups of young people as described in Chapter Two (section 2.3). Acknowledging that a participatory process can meaningfully impact on young people, in the case of this study, this can be seen not only in how the participants developed and sustained a community (Wenger 1998) centred upon being part of a production team, but also in the way value was located in the heuristic process of *doing* direct animation, and not solely in the physical artefacts themselves.

This participatory practice enabled the participants to reflect on their knowledge and experiences and translate these metaphorically into abstract imagery. In this respect, I draw on Schön's (1983) theory of *reflection-in-action*, where the participants reflectively interacted with and through the process of direct animation, working within the connotations of their illustrations, as opposed to what had literally been drawn. Here I also look to how Dewey (1934) believed the aesthetic is experienced, drawing on his concept of the *expressive object*. For Dewey, art should be viewed as an expression rather than a direct depiction. In the making of these films, the mark marking was a mode of self-expression rather than of representation or statement making. The young people visually depicted their emotions, expressed in and through the mark marking, echoing Brakhage's sensory embodied filmmaking style described in Chapter Three (section 3.5). As stand-alone artefacts, these films hold little meaning for an outside viewer. However, and returning to Barrett's notion of aesthetic experience (2007), for the maker – in this case the young people – the use of metaphor and symbolism meant that their films have become the output of a process of dialogical interaction between themselves and their designs.

This experiential knowledge was then alluded to by the participants whilst reflecting upon how their final film could be experienced by external audiences (see Chapter Five, section 5.7.1). Here it was suggested that the abstract nature of the medium could support audience

inclusion. Whilst inscribing their own meaning and definitions onto the film, the participants agreed that the viewer might also have their own personal interpretation of it, concluding that not one definitive interpretation exists but many. Returning to the literature surrounding *boundary object* theory, as described in Chapter Two (section 2.2), here the participants, themselves, had identified their final film as having *boundary object* qualities – where the meaning of their film can be shared whilst embodying a diversity of understandings for different people.

This notion of boundlessness was one of the common themes that emerged when I ask the young people to reflect on the content of their film in phase five (see Chapter Five, section 5.7.1). This can also be seen in the collaborative production of the celebratory class flag in phase four, which further built up upon this shared design language. In seeking to communicate their XL Club experiences, achievements, and future aspirations to the rest of the school and their peers, this artefact visually captured and embodied the young peoples' journey through symbolic iconography. Whilst the aim of this class was to instil self-esteem and confidence, conversely the participants described how a lack of transparency has lead to negative stereotyping, leaving them feeling embarrassed and ashamed. In response to the stigma of being in this class, and now hung in their school assembly hall as a lasting legacy, this artefact personifies pride, achievement, and empowerment and has become an allegorical emblem of the transformation that occurred.

In terms of understanding how agency was developed and sustained, evidence suggests that the young people sought out opportunities to do so in the filmmaking workshops and in the activity-based focus group, particularly evident through their claim of authorship over all their made artefacts and by seeking out opportunities to work autonomously. Seeking recognition and ownership through being solely responsible for individual tasks, outwardly enabled the participants to contribute to an overall collaborative production process, whilst inwardly still

maintaining a sense of individual agency. The iterative nature of the filmmaking workshops enabled the young people gradually to build upon their own sense of agency in the project, where they appeared to transform in their role – from participant to co-researcher. Here a sense of criticality was developed through the gathering and analysing of their own data for the film, as well as uniting their reflections and experiences into one cohesive artefact in the construction of the celebratory class flag. This shift in participation is suggestive of the transformative capacity of PD, which was also recognised by the young people themselves during the evaluation event in phase five (see Chapter Five, section 5.7.1), resonating with the concept of *design-centred learning* (Druin 1999) discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.2).

Working collaboratively appeared to build and stabilise cohesion within the group, which was particularly apparent when working towards the inter-school competition (also the case when the group entered the first competition in phase one). However, a notable tension occurred in attempting to sustain affable interactions, which, again, was also acknowledged by the participants in phase five. Conflict occurred frequently as a result of the more assertive participants taking the lead, where the role of Director was intuitively passed around the participants and was not always explicitly, or indeed democratically, elected. When less favoured individuals amongst the group stepped into this role, particularly in Hailey's case, decisions made were often aggressively challenged. It appeared as though pre-existing social dynamics were being carried over into the research setting, which frequently made collaboration volatile and fragile to maintain. Often though, such tensions and conflicts were focused on and channelled through the creative nature of the workshops, as opposed to personally at each other.

In the following the section I discuss these relational dynamics further with a particular focus on the relationship formed between the participants and me. What emerged here however was insight into how the PD process fostered and, at times, unsettled rapport between the

participants themselves. Here I suggest the need for approaches that can be implemented as a collective whilst supporting independent participation. In this case, the use of direct animation enabled the young people to collaborate as a production team by intuitively adopting a process that gave them each a sense of autonomy. As rapport within this group was not always enacted positively, this approach to collaboration managed and sustained group cohesion. Building upon this, I will now discuss establishing rapport between of the participants and myself as the practitioner.

6.4 What are the relational dimensions within a Participatory Design process?

During this section please refer to Table 3. In order to apprehend and understand the participants' sense of agency, establishing an authentic relationship with them became a central focus throughout the fieldwork journey. I had initially, and perhaps naively, planned for trust to be cemented during the first phase of classroom observation. Whilst being allowed by Miss Marsh and Maddy to take part in the class and assist the pupils with their work, my initial dialogue with the young people was fairly trivial. Upon further reflection however, a turning point in our interactions occurred once I stopped relating conversations back to my research interests and, instead, absorbed myself in the task at hand with the group. Here a far more balanced and meaningful engagement ensued as both the young people and I were invested in our dialogue as opposed to me steering it.

Whilst documenting the young peoples' journey of participation and transformation, as a developing practice-based researcher within this study, I also reflected upon my own. Frequently described in my field notes are significant moments where I experienced my own sense of agency shift in response to gestures of acceptance offered by the group or individuals. One such touchstone, where I recall my confidence elevate, occurred when I was first addressed by my name in phase one, approximately three months after I had first entered the classroom (see Appendix 4: 73). As discussed with the academic panel in the

second evaluation event (see Chapter Five, section 5.7.1), reflexively recording such moments has helped me to develop an understanding and appreciation of the complexities involved in establishing trust and rapport.

Channelled through the creative tasks of the first competition, rapport was progressively built up as both the participants and I engaged in interaction around a common purpose. Drawing upon the reciprocity that underpins Wearing's notion of the *experiential bond* (2015), participating in their educational practices enabled this first phase to end with me having something in common with them, a shared experience and point of reference with which to enter the next phase of fieldwork. Through collaborating and sharing in the young peoples' work, anxiety, excitement, and celebrations here, I was gradually accepted into the group.

Whilst not overtly apparent, rapport slowly became more visible through the participants' continual engagement with the filmmaking process in phase two, further built upon in phase three, and cemented by phase four and five. Stratifying the case study over these five successive phases enabled our relationship to gradually flourish, with each phase laying the foundations down for the next. Over time I was able to distinguish the participants' idiosyncrasies and strategies of empowerment, which, in-line with Ellis's (2007) concept of *relational ethics*, became vital tools in mediating and rebalancing power and negotiating pre-existing social dynamics. This level of understanding and awareness of individuals' personality and their approaches to working and collaborating, which enabled more meaningful interaction, only occurred with time and patience and on the participants' own terms.

What became apparent throughout the entire study was the need for me, as the outsider, to prove to the participants that I cared, before the young people would genuinely engage with me. The theme of reciprocity was central here, where, through displaying an invested interest

by providing bespoke tools for example (speakers for Max and bringing in additional printed images for Sam and Sean), I felt I gradually became more accepted into the group. A significant gesture, which could signal a trusting relationship had formed, occurred during the third phase where the participants who had consented to be interviewed permitted me to audio record them.

Here I draw on SI to conceptualise how trust was earned and enacted during this study. The longitudinal nature of the study enabled me to demonstrate my commitment to the participants. By visiting the fieldwork setting at the same time on a weekly basis, a sense of routine was instilled where the young people would know when to expect my company. Prior to entering the classroom, this approach to engagement centred on consistency and reliability, had been advised by the gatekeepers. Furthermore, I actively sought out means to impart worth and value. I did this physically through providing the participants with high quality tangible outputs (such as the individual portfolio-style books and postcard packs of their work, DVDs of their films, and getting their celebratory flag printed and framed behind glass), as well as through more intangible gestures such as taking part in their education practices and accruing knowledge about individuals' abilities and preferences of collaborating. It was evident that such value and worth was often internalised and embodied by the participants through displaying their own enthusiasm and enchantment towards the projects.

Conversely though, I have witnessed a similar effect taking place in the class but having the opposite impact. An example of this took place in phase one where Miss Marsh, out of necessity, instructed the young people to print work out for their Youth Achievement Award onto scrap paper. The low value and disregard equated with scrap paper may have been perceived by her pupils as symbolic of her disregard for them and the quality and value of their work. Of course it is highly unlikely that this is in fact the case, however, in a moment

where Miss Marsh had to act pragmatically in dealing with a lack of resources, her reaction could have been observed and internalised by the pupils as signifying worthlessness. As acknowledged by several of the participants during the interviews (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1), teachers play a significant role in their educational practices, which I will return to in the following section.

Reflecting on my own role and positionality, I found myself embodying several different roles at different times. This included being a facilitator where I would gently guide the participants in their explorations; to what felt like a co-researcher stance, where the participants and I were working in partnership; to that of peacekeeper and diplomat in resolving collaborative tensions, which I will also return to in the next section. Whilst I felt managing the group dynamics was my responsibility, I relied on the filmmaking process to maintain an egalitarian culture within the classroom, supporting the participants by encouraging them to undertake creative explorations and experiments of their own accord. Moving between these multiple roles required me to develop an agile sense of agency as a researcher.

As our relationship grew, the participants' views on their own sense of capability became increasingly apparent. As was reported in Chapter Five (particularly in section 5.5.1), the participants would frequently profess self-depreciating declarations surrounding their ability before a given task. This suggested to me that the participants were highly critical and insecure of their own creative abilities, disclosing this to perhaps lower the expectations of onlookers and those in authority. Such self-disparagement appeared to be entrenched within the general culture of the classroom. Paradoxically, upon devaluing themselves, the participants would proceed to engage, often enthusiastically, with the technique. Whilst becoming aware and receptive of such strategies, I was also able to discern the implicit social rules that appeared to govern this group. One such rule, which permeated every phase of the case study, was the ingrained social faux pas of publicly expressing a sense of

pride or accomplishment in response to praise. Through specifically requesting independent roles and responsibilities, it became evident that the young people sought praise on an individualistic basis, resonating with a consistent desire for autonomy.

Returning to the question of understanding the relational dimensions between the practitioner and young people in a participatory process, I suggest that such a relationship is built incrementally through harnessing and catalysing opportunities to *experientially bond* (Wearing 2015) with participants. A reciprocal adoption of practices occurred between the participants and me. Firstly I took part in their educational practices in phase one, which led to the participants adopting my design and research practices in phase two. Initial interactions grew into genuine rapport, although this was not always overt. Over time, and by showing myself to be reliable and invested, trust was cemented. This became particularly evident, not just by phase three when those who wanted to be interviewed also allowed me to audio record them, but in how the participants' demeanour shifted over the course of the study. As described in Chapter Five (section 5.3) initially our exchanges were strained and awkward, where as by phase five, the participants had grown accustomed to me and were far more spontaneous and confident in our dialogue.

In seeking to empower the participants to harness their own capacities and agency through cultivating an autonomous and explorative participatory culture, what appeared to recur were acts of disparagement and self-depreciation. Over time, I began to discern that nuances of self-sabotage appeared to exist beyond participating in this study, and in their social and educational practices in relation to their local context. In the next section I explore this further, where I will discuss what was learned about the context and how the context played a critical role in this study.

6.5 What can be learned about the local context and how can it affect a participatory process?

During this section please refer to Table 4. Whilst seeking to understand the young peoples' sense of agency within a PD process, I was also able to develop a contextualised understanding of agency in relation to the participants' social and education practices. This knowledge grew from initial observations in phases one and two where I was able to witness, what I have termed, *agency-in-action*. The interviews in phase three presented an opportunity to explore, confirm, or dismiss my hunches with the participants more directly – insight from which instigated the creation of the celebratory class flag in phase four. The participants were then able to reflect and offer feedback in phase five, which provided me with a final opportunity to confirm or dismiss more fully formed insights. Methodologically speaking, whilst PD was a central practice in only one of the phases, stratifying the single case study over five phases enabled me to glean a wider understanding of the participants' lives through building an authentic relationship. This holistic approach cultivated a diverse set of data, which were later cross-referenced during analysis.

Throughout the study, what became increasingly evident for these young people was that agency is synonymous with autonomy. As described above, self-efficacy was catalysed during collaboration when individual roles and responsibilities were sought and enacted that were independent of, yet contributing to, the collective. However, when I presented their work back to the participants, such enchantment, possibly viewed as a social faux pas as described above, was dispelled.

The fragility of the participants' agency became evident through consistent acts of self and imposed sabotage as previously discussed. As well as this, regulating self-presentation was frequently alluded to and enacted by the participants, particularly in securing peer relationships. A notable example of this was Hailey's account of sacrificial gestures that

involved recalibrating her skill level in line with her peers, which could have detrimental effects on her own achievements (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1). Such recalibration was also evident in many of the participants' outlooks for the future beyond compulsory education. Whilst the majority of the participants passionately articulated their ambitions, there was underlying sense of pessimism. Several of the participants described their desired future ambitions as unrealistic and felt they would have to recalibrate these in line with more realistic and rational options and opportunities available to them, insight which very much echoes that of Sweenie (2010) described in Chapter One (section 1.4). Others alluded to their apprehension of leaving their geographical safety net and planned to stay physically close to home or in the local area beyond compulsory education. Furthermore, along the way I gained knowledge of the complex mix of circumstances, factors and situations that individuals were dealing with, both inside and outside of school. When discussing classroom behaviour, the participants reflected on how personal problems and adversities occurring in their lives outside of school can unintentionally manifest in disruptive and rebellious behaviour in school. Focusing on their goals and aspirations helped to mobilise the participants' motivation to undertake their schoolwork and assessments. However, whilst highly ambitious and aspirational, many of the participants were resigned to a despondent outlook, with, what appeared to be, an underlying inevitably of failure.

Particularly in phase three, the participants articulated an acute awareness of their learning preferences, where they described the types of teaching activities that enable and motivate them to learn, and equally the approaches that do not. Many described an enhanced experience of learning and enjoyment in classes where teaching was premised on practical activities such as games and experiments, where the pupils are enabled to take a more physically active and participative role in their learning. What became evident was a clear dichotomy between dynamic and static modes of learning. Furthermore, the majority of the participants indicated a relationship between didactical approaches, their own classroom

behaviour, and their relationship with particular teachers. Qualities sought in favoured and, more significantly, trusted teachers included: being supportive; compassionate; dependable and nurturing – in some cases regarding particular teachers as maternal and paternal figures. The pupils reported that qualities such as these could also be expressed and demonstrated by a teacher through their teaching approach, acknowledgment of which would then be reciprocated through the pupils actively being more committed and attentive towards these teachers. An example here was Hailey's enchantment with the Drama department where she felt accepted into a trusted family and mirrored the respect she felt she was afforded there by highly praising her drama teacher (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1).

Conversely, teachers less favoured, or hated, were regarded as untrustworthy, uncaring and unreliable. A sense of neglect and rejection was notable in participants' description of particular events. An example of this was when David and Steven reflected on their P.E class, where they felt they were in a losing competition with other higher achieving pupils for the attention of the teacher. These participants indicated that a degree of favouritism was occurring, believing that their teacher was prioritising 'star pupils' (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1). Their interpretation of this was that their own position was at the very bottom of a sensed hierarchy. In such cases, particular participants described how feelings of frustration manifested as an apathetic attitude in these classes, effecting their motivation to learn.

Following a SI perspective, it could be argued that the young people may be altering their behaviour in-line with their interpretations of the teacher's teaching approach, which, for them, suggests the degree to which their teacher personally cares for them. The young people mirror how they perceive the teacher to perceive them. Viewing teachers as having roles that extend beyond being solely educators could suggest that the young people in this group are seeking roles that are not fulfilled by adults in their lives outside of school. Additional responsibility is therefore placed on educators, whether they are aware and

equipped for this or not.

On many occasions I witnessed the pupils seeking affirmation, not only with their peers, but with Miss Marsh, Maddy, Miss Philips, and me also. This was particularly evident in two cases. Firstly by the pupils choosing to work independently during the filmmaking workshops so as to possibly gain praise solely; and secondly in publically shifting their demeanor from one of nonchalance to one of pride upon receiving recognition for the class flag from Miss Philips (see Chapter Five, section 5.6.1). Throughout all the phases of the fieldwork, what became clear was the catalytic role teachers (or possibly adults in general) play in imparting agency in the pupils, as well as inadvertently taking it away. Whilst attempting to maintain a harmonious dynamic and productive learning space in the classroom, Miss Marsh was perhaps not always aware of the implications of her actions and reactions in terms of how these could have been interpreted and internalised by the young people, as described above. Miss Marsh was often unable to take the time to understand fully and resolve conflict between the pupils, choosing to quickly dismiss it by and often wrongly reprimanding one or all involved. During the filmmaking workshops I believed this insight in relation to agency was confirmed when I found myself taking on an advocacy role in order to negotiate and settle tensions. As previously described, conflict arising during the day-to-day running of the classroom would be immediately addressed by the teacher, with often little regard for reaching a proper resolution (see Chapter Five, section 5.4.1). In the case of the workshops however, by possibly allowing for more mediated conflicts, the participants felt empowered that their views were being heard. Whilst these observations could appear critical of the teacher's actions, these instances illustrate the significant and meaningful, if not always positive, impact teachers can have on young people.

Building upon this further, when asked more specifically about the XL Club, there appeared to be a divergence between the perception of the teacher and that of the young people (see

Chapter Five, section 5.5.1). Whilst the manifesto of the XL Club seeks to promote confidence and self-esteem, ironically, every participant expressed a high degree of embarrassment and shame about being a part of this class – particularly how it effaces their social standing. A lack of transparency here appears to incite negative rumours and rhetoric amongst the participants' peers outwith the class. Whilst acknowledging the stigma surrounding the XL Club, Miss Marsh downplayed this by reinforcing the aims and objectives of the curriculum. Viewed through the lens of SI, in this case the young people have chosen to observe and internalise the negative perceptions of their peers rather than the positive and affirming perception of their teacher. From this example, it appears that the young peoples' educational status (belonging to the XL Club) can impact on them socially, which may negatively influence their own sense of self and their perception of others in the group, as well as their motivation to take part in the class.

Throughout the study agency often appeared as innately pragmatic. On several occasions (as noted in Chapter Five), I witnessed the young people empower themselves by, paradoxically, adopting strategies to downplay their ability and achievements. This pragmatism extended beyond their educational practices and into their social worlds, where according to Hailey, through a reflexive balancing act they can maintain their social status.

Reflecting upon the effects of the context on how the young people participated, often the classroom setting became a physical site for collaborative tensions. Returning to Wenger (1998) and his notion of brokering distinct and disparate *communities of practice*, I found a major challenge in bridging the, often conflicting, dynamics between the already established authoritative hierarchy set by the teacher with the collaborative and democratic culture I was striving to instil. At times the teacher inadvertently encroached on the participatory nature of the workshops when she either reprimanded pupils for misbehaviour or forcefully encouraged them to take part. Moments such as these drew my attention to the implications

of implementing this study in the institutionalised setting of a school as raised by Spyrous (2011) in Chapter Four (section 4.6); nuances of which I acknowledge were most likely implicitly embodied and enacted by the young people. For the duration of the research, the young people were at once both collaborative partners with me, as well as pupils in a classroom under the supervision of their teacher.

Initially in phase one the participants appeared to place me within the authoritative hierarchy of the classroom, associating my status with that of a teacher. I was also aware that the discourse of the setting could have led the participants to associate my research tools and methods with that of school work, possibly affecting the degree to which they were invested in the study. Having the constant presence and vigilance of their teacher and youth worker could have contributed to maintaining these associations. As described in Chapter Three, the underpinning principles of PD and PAR puts forth a democratic ethos with the aim of bridging the practitioner-participant divide through a process of mutual learning. However, a fundamental concern of mine was the young peoples' own motivations to participate. In order to instil this process of mutual learning, I explained to the participants that, as experts of their own knowledge, my aim was to learn from them. In exchange, my aspiration was that the participants would learn a filmmaking technique, develop their skills in collaboration, and ultimately have fun whilst creating artefacts from which they could gain a sense of satisfaction and achievement.

A further salient discourse of the classroom setting was the bringing together of individuals in a relatively small physical space, where pre-existing social dynamics and tensions were brought in and played out during the research. Although micro communities existed within the class, the young people were not voluntarily brought together, but rather institutionally through their XL Club status. As Holland et al. (2010) suggest, social power within an already established social hierarchy can greatly impact on participation. Returning to Holland et al.'s

participative study with a group of care experienced young people, the authors found that the more confident members of the group could overpower and silence less forthcoming individuals (2010: 368). In the case of this present study, such social tensions not only affected how the young people participated, but also how I did too. My role was often forced to change to one of an advocate or peacemaker. However, having figures of authority – the teacher and youth worker – present in many instances greatly helped to mediate social tensions and conflicts. I acknowledge the possibility that their presence could have impacted upon the research in terms of influencing the young peoples' behaviour and what they chose to disclose. Nevertheless, I believe these implications were outweighed by the benefits of the setting, where the participants had a sense of confidence and control, and, most importantly, a sense of safety in a space highly familiar and habitual to them.

Ethical considerations led me to situating this study in a high school where the gatekeepers recruited a class to take part. Recruiting a group of young people that had not been voluntarily self-assembled became a catalyst for many of the creative tensions and conflicts. However, and although unexpected and fortuitous, the extent to which taking part in the two competitions instilled a sense of camaraderie and group cohesion should not be underestimated. Particularly during the workshops, friendship groups organically formed sub teams where more affable collaboration took place through the collective commitment to creating the competition film entry. Reflecting upon these events in phase five, the participants themselves acknowledged the transformative impact participation had had – not only on group cohesion but also reflexivity recognising changes to their own sense of self (see Chapter Five, section 5.8.1).

Returning to the question of what can be learned about the local context and how it can affect a participatory process, from my experience in this study, I was able to observe, what I have termed, *agency-in-action*. Here I was able to build knowledge surrounding the young

peoples' educational and social practices. Whilst outwith the scope of this study to explore these further, this does indicate, however, the potential this approach has in constructing context-specific knowledge that could contribute more broadly to fields beyond PD. In this case, this included understanding the young peoples' learning preferences; the role and impact of teachers in their lives; paradoxical empowerment strategies; recalibrating their skill levels to align with their peers; their motivations to learn; and re-adjusting their aspirations for the future and locating these geographically close to home. These insights could further knowledge in fields such as Education and Youth Studies, as well as inform policy. Premised on incrementally building a relationship based on reciprocity is a transferable principle that I believe resonates with broader participatory research contexts.

Furthermore, the contextual and ethical constraints I faced in this study led me to reflect upon and disseminate my PD practice through the use of a 3D classroom model box, images from which were also used as recall device with the participants. Assembling all their experiences holistically into one artefact supported the participants to reflect upon their entire fieldwork journey. The multiple uses of the model box could be adopted by practitioners working in other ethically sensitive research contexts. I will reflect more fully on the contribution of this approach in the following section.

6.6 How can a participatory design process engage young people and lead to an understanding of their sense of agency in a research context?

To conclude this discussion I return to my over-arching research question and draw together insights from each sub question so as to set out my contributions to knowledge. These contributions relate to the experiential, relational, and contextual dimensions of participation that arose in this study, and how these three dimensions were effectively documented. Whilst presented here distinctly, these contributions are, in fact, highly interdependent of one another. As such, the order in which these appear below should not be viewed hierarchically.

I acknowledge that these contributions are based on my experiences within a single case study, and I will address issues surrounding generalisability in the next chapter. However, it is the premise of these contributions that I believe to be transferable to other PD settings, where PD practitioners may tailor and adapt these for their own requirements in a given context.

Contribution 1: The Experiential Dimension

My first contribution is centred upon the experiential dimension of participation and the method of direct animation. Within this study the use of direct animation, as a *design thing* (Binder et al. 2011), played a catalytic role in gaining an understanding of the young peoples' sense of agency through being able to observe it in action. Whilst the analogy of a production process brought about group cohesion, the participants also actively sought out individual roles and responsibilities. Working autonomously whilst being a part of a collective appeared to be the preferred style of collaboration for the majority of the participants. Furthermore the medium itself enabled the participants to translate their knowledge through metaphorical and abstract imagery whilst also protecting their anonymity. Learned, adopted and self-implemented by the young people, agency was also transformed as their roles appeared to implicitly shift from participant to that of a co-researcher.

Here I suggest that PD practitioners develop flexible approaches that can support young people to collaborate independently whilst contributing to the overall collective endeavour. Through the direct animation method, the young people in this case self-assembled as a production team where each had distinct roles and responsibilities, maintaining a sense of autonomous agency. As a group and as individuals, agency was transformed through the creation of a community, experiences that became embodied and celebrated in their class flag.

Contribution 2: The Relational Dimension

My second contribution is centred upon the relational dimension of participation. Building upon the relationship developed in phase one, the process of making these films became a further opportunity for me to *experientially bond* (Wearing 2015) with the participants through the construction of a community (Wenger 1998) centred upon being part of a production team. In terms of developing an authentic relationship with the young people, as the outsider, I found I needed to firstly adopt their educational practices in phase one before I could ask them adopt my PD practice in phase two.

Based on my experiences here, I suggest that rapport can be invisible, ineffable, and tacit, requiring an innate sensitivity on the part of the researcher to look for cues and opportunities for *experientially bonding* with participants. As opposed to short-term interventions, the advantage of a long-term study with one group of young people was the authentic relationship that was gradually built over time. Based on the notion of reciprocity, genuine and meaningful rapport was constructed. My second contribution is that PD practitioners seek out opportunities to *experiential bond* with future collaborators through the reciprocal adoption of each other's practices.

Contribution 3: The Contextual Dimension

The third contribution focuses on the contextual dimension of participation. Through building and sustaining a trusting relationship, I gradually learned about the young peoples' sense of agency, not only in relation to participating in this study, but also in relation to the broader context in which this study was set. By gaining an insight into the educational and social practices of the young people in this group over a prolonged period of time, I was also able to discern insights that could potentially contribute to related fields of research and practice.

Suggestive of a somewhat fragile yet resilient personal agency, present in this classroom

was an entrenched culture of self-deprecation and self-disparagement, where insecurities and low self-esteem were masked through paradoxical self-empowering strategies to lower expectations of their skill level. Teachers seem to play a significant role in how the participants viewed themselves, their abilities, and their achievements.

Whilst I was able to learn additional insights about the context, the fieldwork setting brought with it several implications. This included issues surrounding the authoritative hierarchy and how this was negotiated and enacted by the various stakeholders (the teacher, the youth worker and the young people), the connotations of school work, the bringing together of disparate social groups and dealing with pre-existing relational dynamics. Furthermore, the ethically sensitive nature of the context required an alternative approach to documentation. In considering these contextual dimensions, I suggest that PD practitioners critically engage with the context and the impact localised discourse can have on participation.

The longitudinal nature of this study, where, through the use of incremental phases and different modes of engagement, enabled me to develop knowledge surrounding the young peoples' sense of agency that related to the broader context and wider aspects of their lives outwith the classroom. This demonstrates the potential of PD in developing knowledge that could contribute to other fields of research and practice.

Contribution 4: Documenting the Dimensions

Drawing together these three dimensions, the fourth contribution is the approach I developed to document and report the fieldwork through the use of the classroom model box and my field notes. Stemming from my ethical obligations to the young people, I was required to develop an approach to documenting and disseminating the fieldwork that not only protected their anonymity, but which also respected their wishes not to be visually recorded through photography or film. The impetus for constructing the model box also arose from a challenge

I found in authentically conveying *in-the-moment* processes that occurred in the fieldwork through 2D illustrations or with words alone (as described in Chapter 3, section 3.10). The model box effectively protected the participants' identities by the use of the Playmobil figures as well as enabled me to depict intangible and tacit aspects of participation; complex and fluctuating group dynamics; and the action-based and situational nature of my PD practice.

Guided by my field notes I re-constructed key scenes in the model box and then photographed these – see Figure 23. This process provided me with a means to visually re-live and explore critical and meaningful incidents and interactions that occurred. The selection of these was based on the named narratives I had recorded in my field notes, excerpts from which I also used to storyboard and script each scene (as depicted in the PoP). This process was an effective means of communicating experiential knowledge and was a novel way to disseminate findings back to the participants and to the PD community in the form of the accompanying portfolio to this thesis.

Entry Eighteen: 17/11/14 (55 minutes)
Performance

Prior to this session, I had taken the cinema ticket Lewis had previously designed, and replicated in on card, and perforated one end so to create a stub. I posted these to the school so the pupils could the pupils could invite guests a screening which would take place in this session.

I arrived early for today's session so to position and test out the projector, speaker and video. After the class had settled down and the register had been taken, the participants divided themselves into teams to prepare for the screening. David and Joe decanted popcorn into boxes made in the previous workshop and positioned a table by the classroom entrance, which they both sat at, as well as organising the pinwheel mood cards. Sean and Sam chose to sit by the laptop, speaker and projector I had set up. The rest of the participants moved tables out the way and positioned chairs to form a cinema-style audience. Once the room and props were set up, Miss. Marsh suggested we have a rehearsal before the audience were due to arrive, particularly as Hailey had planned to give a short introductory speech. David enthusiastically stood up and announced he would be pretend to be an incoming audience member. He left the classroom and entered again in character. Slightly mocking the situation, the class laughed as he jovially entered the room, showing his ticket to Joe. Once Hailey had rehearsed her speech in front of the group, Miss. Marsh suggested someone be ready to stand up at the end to answer any questions. Again David confidently volunteered, quite certain he wanted this role, and stood up in front of the room. It was interesting to watch the concurrence contained in his performance, an insecurity masked by flippancy. I suggested he present the audience with the physical film reel containing the participants' artwork I had brought with me.

...

There was a jovial atmosphere in the classroom and a more harmonious dynamic between the participants than I have witnessed previously. The audience began to fill in, with a teacher from the adjacent classroom bringing his entire class of around 20 pupils with him. Several other teachers also joined. Once seated and calm, I quietly instructed the technician (Sean) to fade out the music as Hailey stood up at the front to recited her speech. Whilst smiling and occasionally laughing, she confidently outlined the project and the work that was involved without the need for the script. Afterwards, I again subtly instructed Sean on how to play the film, signalling to Sam to remove the lens cap from the projector. Throughout the screening, pupil audience members sang along with the music. At the end, David stood up, thanking the audience for attending, and if there were any questions. He also presented them with the original film reel and past it around the room. The guest teachers enthusiastically praised the participants, commenting on the animation technique exclaiming they had never seen anything like it before, as well as the mood cards, which they requested to keep.

Figure 23. McAra. M. (2017) Snapshot of Field Notes used for Re-creating Critical Moments. Diagram.

6.7 Locating my Contributions in the Field

To conclude this discussion, I will locate these contributions back into the field of PD so as to highlight their originality in relation to the identified gaps in knowledge. As argued by many practitioners – such as Bell and Davis (2016), Iversen, Dindler and Hansen (2013), Fitton, Read and Horton (2013), and Sustar et al. (2013) – there is a gap in knowledge surrounding teenage participation in the PD community. I believe my contributions provide both theoretical and practical insights that can inform PD practices with young people in the development of a knowledge-base more distinct to this age group. Within the field, and as indicated in Chapter One (section 1.2), I locate my practice at the intersection of PD and CBPD and I am inspired by the work of PD practitioners – such as Cavallo, Papert and Stager (2004), Frandsen and Petersen (2014), Mazzone, Read and Beale (2008), and Robertson and Wagner (2013) – who seek to address contemporary complex social problems, and empower hidden, marginalised, or supressed voices.

Returning to more specific areas of the literature (as set out in Chapter Two), I position the direction animation method most notably alongside the work of Binder et al. (2011) and Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren (2010). Drawing on these practitioners' concept of *design things*, with a focus on their adoption of *boundary object* theory (Star and Grisserman 1989) and Wenger's *communities of practice* (1998), emphasis was placed on the process of direct animation as an outcome in its own right, rather than simply on the final output. Re-adjusting the focus to examine the process of participation, rather than the artefact-orientated output, enabled me to develop a more nuanced definition of participation. As shown in the case study, I observed that the collaborative ethos of PD does not necessarily have to be conventionally collaborative. In this study collaboration took place between the young people by, paradoxically, sustaining their self-assembled autonomous roles. Here I suggest that this group were participating collectively as opposed to collaboratively. This observation unpacks the person-centred and experiential dimension of PD and fills a gap in extending the field's

understanding and definition of participation. This I believe is a particularly pertinent concern when working with young people as age-related differences (between children, adolescence and adulthood) can affect emerging identities, agency, and sense of personhood.

Gaining a meaningful understanding of how the young people wanted to participate took time and required developing idiosyncratic knowledge about each individual. Here I was able to learn and participate in their social and educational practices, and could identify aspects surrounding their sense of agency and identity – such as their motivations, aspirations, and their relationships and interactions with peers and teachers. Within regards to the contextual dimension, I was able to identify the critical role the context played in affecting how the young people participated, whilst learning about the young peoples' lives – both inside and outside of education. This dialogical engagement with the context enabled me to explore discourses and hierarchies of power that affected the study and identify factors that mobilised the participants' sense of agency. Here I was able to construct substantive knowledge that also could contribute to fields outside of PD – such as Education, Youth Studies, and Policy.

In-line with Malinverni and Pares (2016) and Le Dantec and Fox (2015), PD is an innately social and interactional practice where equal attention should be paid to the agency of both those participating and the practitioner(s). Whilst guided by the arguments of these practitioners, the originality of my contributions lie in the candid and rich depiction I provide surrounding the inter-subjective and relational aspects of participation, and of the intricacies entailed in building trust and rapport. Unpacking this relational dimension of participation has provided the field with an authentic depiction of my experiences, where I offer insight into how I built a relationship with the participants. Additionally, through taking a reflexive stance and by writing this thesis in the first person, I was able to equally foreground my agency in parallel to that of the young people.

Exploring and reporting upon the three dimensions of participation required developing an ethical approach to visually reporting *agency-in-action*. My use of field notes and the 3D model box is an innovative approach that could support practitioners in the future to effectively document and disseminate findings when working in ethical sensitive contexts, making a contribution to PD methods and processes.

6.8 Summary

This explorative study has responded to the need for a richer and more person-centred understanding of how young people participate in, and can be transformed by, the process of PD. In answering my sub questions, I have been able unite my findings so to address my over-arching research question – the answers to which have formed my contributions to the knowledge. My contributions to the field, which specifically focus on the participation of young people, each deal with a different dimension I found to exist in this PD process: the experiential, the relational, and the contextual. I also position a fourth contribution in the form of an effective and ethical means of visually documenting the fieldwork. Having positioned them and highlighted their originality to the field, in the next chapter, I conclude this thesis by setting out my final reflections, reviewing the limitations of this study and providing recommendations for future research.

Chapter Seven

Concluding Reflections and Future Research

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect upon the entire process and outcome of this study, acknowledging the constraints and limitations. Through reviewing the practical issues I faced, I suggest how these could be mediated in future research. Here I encourage practitioners interested in pursuing a similar study to consider the setting, direct animation as a participatory technique, and how the participant-made artefacts are to be interpreted. I will also discuss the validity of this study, account for its capacity to be replicated, and the degree to which my findings can be generalised. Throughout this discussion I will suggest areas that were under-explored, which could inform the direction for future research, as well as indicate areas I am personally interested in pursuing further. I conclude by returning to the research questions and stating my contributions to knowledge.

7.2 The Fieldwork Setting

Whilst seeking to recruit a group of young people attached to an institution, conducting fieldwork within the institutionalised setting of a school became problematic at certain points for various practical reasons. Firstly, implementing the fieldwork during term time required the study to take place within the teaching timetable, as well as around school holidays. During the fourth phase, I had to negotiate my contact time with participants whilst they were on exam leave and by phase five several of the participants had chosen to leave school. I was fortunate enough to be allowed access to the participants on a weekly basis, where the teacher generously gave over her teaching time so that I could implement my research activities. Working with the participants once a week allowed for regular intervals apart, affording me the time to reflect and write up my field notes, as well as giving the participants

a break so to avoid research fatigue.

For practitioners wishing to work with young people in a similar setting such as a school, I recommend staging fieldwork outside the classroom setting and the teaching timetable – gaining access to an after school or lunch time club for example. Whilst having the ethical advantages of being in a safe environment where gatekeepers will always be present, the symbolic rules and connotations of a classroom culture may also be removed. Young people attend extracurricular clubs on a more social basis, where there may be a higher degree of social unity and where the authoritative hierarchy may be less strict.

The young people in this study were a group assembled purposefully in a class. Whilst friendship subgroups also existed, pre-existing social dynamics pervaded which meant that much of the conflict and friction between the participants often affected the collaborative and democratic ethos I was seeking to instil. Recruiting a self-assembled group belonging to a club, already socially bonded, could possibly help to mediate this.

Further to this, issues surrounding the participants' attendance at school meant that each week the size of the group would differ. It was difficult to predict the exact amount of workshop materials to buy and bring in, and it became challenging when having to catch participants up if they had missed a workshop, slowing down the filmmaking production for others. Fortunately, there was a core group of participants who attended regularly enough for the project to be sustained. Again, if I had chosen to stage this fieldwork in a club that the young people were motivated to attend and therefore disassociated from a classroom culture, perhaps more stable and consistent attendance could have been guaranteed.

However, the hierarchy and power dynamics of the classroom setting did provide a sterner test of PD techniques and their capacity to mobilise and empower. That these young people

were enabled to give voice to thoughts and feelings about their lives through the creative challenges, as attested by the academic panel at the second evaluation event (see Chapter Five), highlights the efficacy of PD and its inherently democratic values.

7.3 Direct Animation as a Participatory Method

Using direct animation as a participatory method presented two main challenges. The first was in obtaining the materials. Sourcing new film stock, whilst available from specialists, is expensive, which led me to sourcing pre-owned stock where I could from second-hand retailers. With the possibility of having up to fifteen participants present at any one workshop, I had to ensure I had enough materials. This became fairly expensive. Whilst I believe the benefits of the technique outweighed the financial costs, I would recommend practitioners interested in this technique seek out funding streams to finance these materials or factor in additional time for sourcing them second-hand.

The second challenge emerged during assembling and editing the films. Due to the old age of the 16mm reel-to-reel projector I was unable to obtain electronic certification, which meant that I was unable to bring it into the school. This was disappointing as it required me to capture the projections of the participants' completed films away from the fieldwork setting, and hence the participants themselves. I did this by recording the projection at home with a digital camera and uploaded this onto my laptop so to bring the completed film with me on my next visit to the classroom. This process detracted a little from the truly collaborative and spontaneous nature of the filmmaking exercise. To deal with these constraining factors, I sought strict guidance and instructions from the participants as to the order in which the film was to be spliced together and projected. However, through being able to digitise the films, and import into a basic film-editing application (iMovies), I was able to easily overlay music, which could be purchased online. This process opened up infinite curatorial possibilities. To compensate for the participants not being directly involved in the digitizing process, I brought

my laptop in and showed the participants how to edit their films and intergrade in music. Unable to source additional laptops, the participants had to share, meaning only two or three at a time could work on the digital film. To overcome this, I recommend that practitioners purchase a more modern 16mm projector that would pass or already be electronically certified, so films can be projected with the group. Due to higher cost of these, I was unable to do so. I would also suggest sourcing or purchasing several laptops or tablets for editing if digitising the analogue film and placing in music is desired.

7.4 Interpreting the Participant-made Artefacts

During this study, the participants translated their experiences through the design of several artefacts – their films and the celebratory class flag. Imbued with symbolic references and metaphorical iconography, these artefacts contained a designed language developed by the participants and are thus not intended to be viewed in isolation of this study. I acknowledge that for the knowledge contained within these to be more meaningfully apprehended by someone out with the group who made them, additional foregrounding information is required. However I do not believe this to be a limitation or constraint. Viewed and interpreted in isolation, with the threat of meaning being superimposed onto them, could reduce, or remove entirely, their value to the contribution of this study. Rather than designed outputs, these artefacts should be viewed, as Binder et al. (2011) have described, as *design things* (2011) – conduits through which conversations took place and catalysts for transformation.

In Chapter Two (section 2.4) I discussed the, arguably, arbitrary nature of the art and design dichotomy. In the case of the participant-made artefacts in this study, I acknowledge their highly expressive aesthetic, which a viewer may consider to be more artistic than designerly. However, contextualised as PD, I believe the artefacts created in this study could open up an interesting debate for future research surrounding the degree to which expression is

considered a legitimate aesthetic in design. For me, working in participatory contexts I believe the aesthetic of the designed output should be determined by the participant in how they wish to translate their knowledge, experiences, and ideas. In this case, the young people identified with the use of colour to connote emotions, and chose to use this metaphorically in their films.

7.5 Ability to Replicate this Study

I acknowledge that this fieldwork was highly situated. I believe, however, that my experience-based contribution can provide an illuminative account of how an authentic relationship was cultivated through highlighting the nuanced ways trust and rapport were expressed, not always overtly by the young people. This relationship was built on context-dependent and contingent interactions, where my own subjectivities were embedded and embodied. Reflecting on the use of direct animation as a participatory *design thing*, I have not developed a prescriptive method, but rather observed and reported upon the process by which the young people used the technique to represent themselves visually and metaphorically. With a different practitioner, a different fieldwork setting, different participants and gatekeepers, and at a different time – a study similarly implementing this method may produce different outcomes and findings. In future research, practitioners may wish to adapt, tailor, or extend the method. I suggest exploring the possibilities of illustrating and manipulating recycled pieces of already filmed celluloid such as old movies, cartoons, and adverts. Through collaging a sociocultural commentary, the notion of satire could be explored with participants, offering an alternate means by which to develop their sense of criticality. In my future research activities, I am keen to further explore the intersection of analogue film with digital technologies.

What I believe could be more directly replicated from this study is the novel approach to documentation I developed through the use of the 3D model box and field notes, as identified

as the fourth contribution to knowledge (see Chapter Six, section 6.6). This approach could be particularly relevant to PD practitioners working in ethically sensitive contexts as an effective alternative to traditional means of recording and reporting that may not be possible.

Furthermore, another element that could be replicated is the design of the case study. The prolonged time the single case study afforded enabled the five phases to be incrementally implemented as layers, where, through iterations of engagement, bonds with the participants and me were cemented. I was aware that by embedding myself within in the setting over a significant duration of time would require careful handling of the way in which I would end the study and depart from the setting and from the participants. However, because of their exams the participants were the ones to depart to go on exam study leave. Aware that ending the case study here was due to circumstantial factors (the participants' impending exams), and that this might not be the case in future research scenarios (if set at a youth club for example); I would recommend an explicit exit strategy be in place before commencing a similar research project.

7.6 Validity and Ability to Generalise Findings

Selecting a single case study design, set in one location and with one cohort of participants could invoke criticism about the validity of the findings. A key concern is the ability to propagate and substantiate the new, yet highly context-specific, knowledge produced. This I believe can be carefully mediated, and ultimately defended, through a clear articulation of the intention, purpose, and audience of any given study. In seeking to construct a better understanding of how a participatory process can engage young people and lead to an understanding of their sense of agency, I did not intend on producing generablisable findings that could represent the experiences of all young people. Rather, I implemented participatory interventions that could have meaningful impact for a group of young people, in being able to reflect upon, articulate, and envision their experiences. From doing so, I have generated a

set of contributions for the PD community based on dimensional aspects that I believe will resonate with practitioners whose work focuses specifically on the participation of young people. These contributions are thus transferrable (as opposed to conclusive and generalisable) in that it can be adapted to other contexts as a bedrock upon which to be built upon in future PD projects.

Whilst a PAR orientation makes it difficult to predict the outputs, and thus predefine precisely what is to occur, what can be anticipated is that some form of transformation might take place. Measuring such transformation in the context of responding to 'wicked problems' can often become highly subjective and complex, as argued by Rittle and Webber who contend that it is not a case of judging it to be true or false (1973: 162). However I have sought validly in this study by the use and combination of different interventions and methods that have been thematically analysed to form my findings. The explorative, and thus loosely structured nature of the study, allowed me to harness insight gleaned in each phase to inform and guide the next iterations, and ultimately my contribution to knowledge. During the final phase, these findings were presented back to the participants for feedback and evaluation, and were critically discussed, challenged, and verified by an academic panel of experts from the fields of design-research, education, and social policy research. In the future, this type of study could be scaled up so as to widen participation and test whether or not more generalisable conclusions could be generated.

7.7 Conclusion

To conclude, this practice-based study sought to answer the question: *How can a participatory design process engage young people and lead to an understanding of their sense of agency in a research context?* This question was subsequently deconstructed in three sub questions:

How do young people experience a Participatory Design process?

What are the relational dimensions within a Participatory Design process?

What can be learned about the local context and how can it affect a participatory process?

These questions were developed in response to identifying a lack of knowledge in the PD community surrounding the specific participation of young people. This was explored in Chapter Two where I identified the need for a richer and more person-centred understanding of how young people participate in and can be transformed by PD. Here I also drew on participatory studies beyond PD that have an established knowledge-base stemming from an Action Research tradition. Looking to the fields of Youth and Educational Studies, as well as Sociology, enabled me to gain a wider perspective on reflexive practices, working in ethically sensitive contexts, and issues surrounding power.

The single case study presented here was constructed from a five-phase fieldwork design. Framed methodologically as Participatory Action Research, my intention was to implement a study that could have meaningful impact for the young people who participated. Throughout the study ethical considerations were central factors and permeated methodological choices in how I implemented, recorded, and reported the fieldwork. As I was unable to visually document the fieldwork on site, the role the 3D classroom model box played was pivotal in how I was able to reflect upon the fieldwork, disseminate findings back to the participants, and present my practice in the portfolio.

By building and sustaining a trusting relationship with this group of young people, I was able to observe, what I have termed, *agency-in-action*. Here I gained a rich understanding of the young peoples' social and educational practices in the classroom and identify factors that

mobilsed their sense of agency (as described in Chapter Five). Through a process of thematic analysis, I was able to draw out key themes, and form these into findings by drawing on the theories of SI (Mead 1967 and Blumer 1969); reflection-in-action (Schön 1983); the experiential bond (Wearing 2015); communities of practice (Wenger 1998); experiential knowledge (Barrett 2007 and Biggs 2007); and the expressive object (Dewey 1934).

As set out in Chapter Six, my contributions to the field of PD each deal with a different dimension of the participatory process based on my experiences in the field. Firstly, with regards to the experiential aspect of participation, based on my observations of the direct animation method, I suggest PD practitioners develop flexible approaches that support young people to collaborate in both an independent and collective capacity. My second contribution is that PD practitioners consider the relational dimension of participation, and seek out opportunities to bond with participants, so to build a relationship based on trust. In this case, this led to the reciprocal adoption of their practices and mine. My third contribution is that PD practitioners need to critically engage with the role of context and the impact localised discourse can have on participation. This contribution also indicates the potential of PD processes in constructing knowledge that could meaningfully contribute to other fields such as Education and Policy. Investigating how PD practices can inform policy-making, particularly in the area of youth engagement, is another aspect of this research that I am personally interested to explore in the future. The fourth contribution is my innovative approach to documenting the dimensions of participation through the construction of a 3D model box and using my field notes as a tool for recreating and re-living significant and meaningful moments in the field.

From this study, I have been able to gain a more comprehensive and meaningful appreciation of the complexity that surrounds the lives of these young people, and what

appears to impact their formation of agency. What is evident is that external discourse, such as the NEET label, fails to capture the complex nature of young people's lived experiences. In their daily lives, these individuals are positioned and participate in educational, authoritative and social hierarches; deal with external, often adverse, structural and situational circumstances; as well as seek inclusion with their peers. I sensed agency in this group was constrained, and was sought in this study in opportunities to collaborate autonomously. Reinforcing this observation was the entrenched culture of self-deprecation present in this classroom, where the participants would empower themselves by, paradoxically, attempting to lower the expectations of their capabilities. Whilst seeking autonomy suggests a degree of resilience, independence, and personal responsibility; the fragility of this agency was evident through precautionary self-effacement, how they believe their peers negatively perceive the XL Club, the emotional role they seek in teachers, as well as in their pragmatic outlook on life beyond school.

However, the interventions that took place in this study became a catalyst for the young people to fulfil their desired roles. During the direct animation workshops, the young people self-managed collaboration through the analogy of a production team, where individuals were mobilised to contribute to the collective goal of creating their competition film entry. The participants chose to express themselves through the use of colour and music in abstract, symbolic, and metaphorical ways – contradicting their own initial apprehension over their creative capabilities. Reflecting upon this project, the participants themselves felt a renewed sense of self and group efficacy, and surprised themselves by their own achievements. Throughout the fieldwork, rarely was achievement or self-esteem outwardly expressed, however, in the making of the class flag, the young people recognised, acknowledged, and showcased their accomplishments to the rest of their school.

The challenge for PD practitioners, I believe, is to create interventions that can sustain

authentic moments of mobilisation, such as these, with young people. My aspiration is that this study will resonate, give confidence to, and inspire other PD practitioners through candidly depicting the relationship that developed between the young people and me, and the journey we went on. PD is built upon an ethos that seeks to empower and give voice. However, what has been lacking is the PD community are studies specifically focused on ways of giving voice to young people. Taking part in this study provided this group of young people with opportunities to collaborate creatively together whilst also maintaining and supporting their own autonomous agency. As a group and as individuals, agency was transformed; experiences which where embodied and celebrated in their made artefacts. This, I believe, is how a Participatory Design process can engage young people and lead to an understanding of their sense of agency.

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