



Navigating Youth Participatory Action Research in a Primary School: Exploring Power Dynamics, Tensions and Challenges



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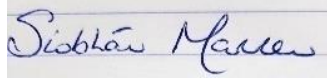
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all citations and references are correct and complete.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "Siobhán Mullen" in a cursive script.

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Abstract

Involving children in the co-production of knowledge through cross-generational research such as Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a growing practice which has the benefits of amplifying the voices of children and developing practical knowledge for social change. However, better understanding is needed about how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of YPAR studies. Such an understanding would ensure that during the facilitation of a YPAR study, spaces are created where the diverse perspectives of both child co-researchers and the adult researcher are considered. Moreover, this understanding would help adult researchers/facilitators navigate complex relationships and ensure that decision-making processes were inclusive and replicating traditional inequalities is avoided. Also reflecting on power dynamics encourages adult researchers/facilitators to critically examine their positionality, biases and privileges.

This study aimed to gain insights into power dynamics within a YPAR study. Specifically, it explored two critical aspects: (i) power relations between a teacher/researcher and child co-researchers. This aspect delved into the interactions between the adult researcher and the child co-researchers, and (ii) the impact of the adult researcher on child participation: Here, the focus was on the adult researcher's role in either supporting or hindering child participation.

This qualitative study was guided by Freirean critical theory (Freire 1970, 1972) and the Lundy (2007) model of participation. Across two academic years, six primary school children aged 10-12 years participated in three cycles of a YPAR study with a teacher/researcher. Multiple data methods were utilised, including research meetings with the child co-researchers and a draw and write survey. Additionally, the study employed peer-paired interviews and focus group interviews with the child co-researchers. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the school principal and a class teacher. In addition, the adult researcher maintained a research journal throughout the YPAR study.

Findings indicate that when the adult researcher creates space for cross-generational collaboration, power dynamics become decentralised, so that child co-researchers contribute as knowledgeable actors with decision making powers on an equal basis as an adult researcher. The findings also emphasise the critical need for vigilance by an adult

researcher regarding hierarchical power relations when facilitating a YPAR study within a school context. Adult researchers must acknowledge the possible impact of authority, privilege and decision-making on the research process. In this respect, therefore, as indicated through the findings, adult researchers must ensure that child co-researchers are not constrained by teachers or other school personnel when conducting research activities with their peers. By doing so, they can cultivate an environment where children's voices are empowered and equitable participation is promoted. In recognising children's rights (UNCRC 1989; Lundy 2007) and navigating power dynamics, the adult researcher plays a critical role in fostering an inclusive YPAR process. Their expertise enhances the depth and breadth of knowledge generated by the child co-researchers, informing meaningful suggestions for change. Moreover, the adult researcher must actively engage in self-reflection to recognise their own positionality and biases, ensuring that power imbalances do not inadvertently hinder child participation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

Children make up ninety-five per cent of the population of a school (Roberts and Nash 2009, p.174). Despite the plethora of evidence showing that children are capable and connected with their school experience, they have little say in decision-making (Gillett-Swan and Sargeant 2018; Hunleth 2011; Mitra 2014; Quinn and Owen 2016; Sargeant and Gillett-Swan 2015). Their school experience is bounded by hierarchical, power laden systems that assure their distance from decision-making processes (Aziah and Eddy 2016). These bright vibrant people who have much to offer are rarely given the opportunity to take the initiative to help improve their schools (Roberts and Nash 2009; Sargeant and Gillett-Swan 2019). Instead, they are often considered as passive recipients of policy and practice, rather than active agents of change (Sargeant and Gillett-Swan 2019). The activity of excluding them from important conversations fails to recognise their capacity to address matters of shared importance (Gillett-Swan 2014; Sargeant 2014).

Similarly, traditionally they have rarely been consulted or even asked to participate in research which is about their lives (Robert and Nash 2009). But the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) encourages adults to listen to and act upon children's perspectives and to view them as experts in their own lives (Mauthner 1997; Clark and Moss 2001; Kellett and Ding 2004; Mason and Hood 2011). In particular Article 12 of UNCRC has paved the way for both individual and collective participation in decision-making (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2009). Together the UNCRC Article 12 (UN 1989) and the new sociology of childhood/childhood studies (Corsaro 2005; James et al 1998 ; James and James 2004; Mayall 2003; Prout 2011) has led to increased participation of children in social research and particularly to their involvement as active researchers (e.g. Horgan 2017; Kellett 2005b, 2010; Lundy et al 2011).

Schools as Hierarchical Institutions

The hierarchical and autocratic nature of the primary school system often acts as a barrier to children's participation in decision making processes (DCYA 2015). Some International and Irish studies have attempted to understand children's participation in schools (Devine 2002; Lundy 2007; De Castro 2011; Cosgrove and Gilleece 2012; Fleming 2013). Devine

(2002) contends that school and schooling is experienced as something done to children, legitimised by a discourse that prioritises adult/future-oriented needs and expectations over present, lived experience. De Castro (2011, p.61) argues that an openness to problematise current truths of our modern institutions such as schools and looking at these institutions from the point of view of children is a necessity.

The continued ambiguity in Irish primary schools towards children's status as social actors is a concern (Deegan et al 2004; Devine 2008; Waldron et al 2014; Waldron and Oberman 2016). Children's opportunities to participate in democratic decision-making processes at school remain insufficient which reproduces asymmetrical power relations between children and adults (Horgan 2016; Waldron and Oberman 2016; Waldron et al 2014; Devine 2003, 2004; Deegan et al 2004; Murphy 2004; McLoughlin 2004; McSharry 2008). James (2004, p.25) has found that children in educational settings are often not allowed to participate in 'even quite elementary decision-making about the shape and structure of their everyday lives' (James 2004, p.25).

Irish educational practice has yet to reconcile the tensions between children's participation rights and their insufficient opportunity to participate in democratic processes at school (Devine 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009; Fitzgerald 2019; McSharry 2008; Waldron et al 2014; Waldron and Oberman 2016; Devine and Cockburn 2018). Gilleece and Cosgrove (2012, p.226) point out that in practice in Irish education settings, children often experience fewer opportunities to exercise their rights than might be expected. Primary school children's participatory rights remain constrained by social structures, discourses and practices within the school which implies that children's experiences of schooling is largely inequitable (Devine 2002; Fitzgerald 2019; Waldron et al 2014). Horgan et al (2015, p.3) also find that the school is a place 'least conducive to listening to children'.

It is beyond doubt that schools have a unique opportunity not only to teach children democratic principles and values, but also to reinforce and demonstrate these principles and values by their practices and procedures (Horgan et al 2015). Such participation needs to be meaningful and be made a reality, while also acknowledging that it involves 'both a shift in the dominant epistemology and in power relations' (Whitehead and Clough 2004, p.224). Democracy is an active and collaborative process which schools need to reinforce and demonstrate through their school policy and daily practices (Fitzgerald 2019).

The School Playground

Spending time on the school playground is an accepted part of the school day for most primary school children (Mulryan-Kyne 2014). Breaktimes and lunchtimes on the school playground can be a time when children are relatively free of adult control and when they can interact freely with their peers and choose how they want to spend their time (ibid). An Irish study by Darmody et al (2010) showed that, in accounts of their school life, most children identified the school playground as their favourite place. Blatchford and Baines (2006, 2012) found that most children, especially girls, mentioned the opportunity to be with friends as the thing they liked most about breaktimes. Children also mentioned having time to do what they want and being able to enjoy games and physical exercise as positive features of breaktimes (ibid).

Within a school day, school break-times are reported to be the most favourable periods of the day for children (Baines and Blatchford 2019). It is largely accepted that play behaviours of children (i.e. children's activity choices and physical activity levels) can be shaped by the contexts in which they are placed and the wider geography of the environment such as the human and physical dynamics of the space (Parrish et al 2020; Skau Pawlowski et al 2020). Previous studies have shown that increasing the amount of play features (e.g. organised games and loose play equipment) can increase physical activity levels (Colabianchi et al 2011; Parrish et al 2020). However, while the key aims of such interventions seem laudable, the extent to which the experiences and viewpoints of children are considered when designing interventions to encourage active play during break-times is unclear (Graham et al 2022).

Much qualitative research has been undertaken by adult researchers to explore barriers and facilitators of play on school playgrounds (e.g. Stanley et al 2012; Parrish et al 2012; Pawlowski et al 2014). All of these studies were conceived and conducted by adults. The adult researchers defined the problems and made suggestions for interventions to the respective schools. To date, the use of youth participatory action research (YPAR), in which adult researchers and children actively collaborate in all phases of the research process is not common in school playground research. Although the school playground (school yard) is considered one of the spaces in which children have the most freedoms and authority during the school day, they are rarely involved in helping to define problems as they occur

or to offer suggestions for change. Such a consideration flagged the need for YPAR conducted by primary school children to re-imagine their school playground and improve play opportunities.

The Purpose of this Study

This is a qualitative process-oriented research study. The method for the research was nested. Firstly, there was the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) study conducted by the child co-researchers (YRs) and the adult researcher (AR) and secondly the research into how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of a YPAR study in a primary school context. The studies are intertwined in that the first research study is the subject of the second. In the YPAR study the YRs were co-researchers whereas in the research on the process of YPAR the YRs were subjects.

The goal of the YPAR study was to facilitate children in making the changes they considered necessary on their school playground. The goal of the second study (i.e. this PhD thesis) was to explore how power dynamics operated during the construction, communication and use of knowledge to re-imagine a school playground during this YPAR study.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was:

How do power dynamics operate during the facilitation of a school based YPAR study?

The embedded research questions were:

1. How do child co-researchers and an adult researcher engaging in YPAR navigate the multiplicity of research experiences while (i) creating and (ii) using knowledge to initiate change?

2. How does an adult researcher promote and facilitate child participation and share responsibility in the YPAR process?

I hope that by answering these research questions new insights on how power circulates during a cross-generational study in a primary school context will be provided.

Conclusion

For clarity, this research is not a presentation of the findings from the YPAR study itself. Rather this research explores how power dynamics operate within the messiness of contact zones (Torre and Fine 2008) during a YPAR study. These contact zones (i.e. research meetings with the child co-researchers and presentations of suggestions for change by the child co-researchers to school leaders and their peers) refer to the social spaces where people meet and grapple with each other in contexts of asymmetrical relations of power (Hillier and Kroehle 2021). The messiness of these contact zones comes from the uncontrollable, unpredictable practices and realities that emerge and the complex politics of interaction that characterise them (Law 2004, p.809). I wanted to explore how productive tensions and discomforts (Askins and Pain 2011) in these spaces could be improvisational and generative (Torre and Fine 2008, p.26) but could also reproduce and reinforce power differences.

This thesis is a critical account of facilitating a YPAR study in an Irish primary school. It provides transparent descriptions of successes and challenges of undertaking YPAR within a school environment which are often overlooked in research literature on YPAR with children. It is hoped that this open account regarding the tensions and contradictions that the adult researcher grapples with can provide potential facilitators of YPAR with the insight to identify and prepare for problems long before they could potentially derail a study, helping to ensure not only that efforts do not go to waste, but also that these efforts do not unintentionally cause harm to the communities they are meant to serve.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

As discussed in chapter 1, the move towards increasing children's participation in decision making that affects their lives and in research into their own lives has been driven by the recognition of children as social actors (James and Prout 1990, 1997) and the increased attention to children's rights since the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Sinclair 2004, p.107). The Irish government in 1992 agreed to ensure that all those working with and for children understand their duties in relation to upholding children's rights including the obligation to involve children in decisions that affect them (Welty and Lundy 2013, p.1). From that stance, I hold that facilitators of YPAR studies should consider four separate factors of *Space, Voice, Audience* and *Influence* as outlined by Lundy (2007), in order to successfully implement Article 12 while ensuring that child co-researchers have a role in decision-making throughout the research process. Initially this chapter presents how Childhood Studies (CS) conceptualises child participation and agency. Then it explores how the policy context of the UNCRC (1989) has contributed to the child participatory agenda. Next it will examine the Lundy (2007) Model of Participation. The focus will then be on power relations in research with children, the role of adults in facilitating child participation in decision-making and the challenges to such participation. Finally the chapter will conclude by identifying gaps in research literature in relation to how tensions and challenges are navigated during the facilitation of a YPAR study.

New Sociology of Childhood/ Childhood Studies

The new sociology of childhood, now named childhood studies (CS), emerged in the late 1980s as a disciplinary focus created in reaction to well-established paradigms to inform the child development and family studies disciplines respectively (Tisdall and Punch 2012). Two core components are the conceptualisation of childhood as a social construction (James and Prout 1990; 2015) and the agency of children (Prout 2011). Agency is associated with children's daily experiences and their participation in interactions, strategies and tactics of action (James et al 1998, p.138). This concept of children's agency emerged with complaints about the lack of opportunities for children's participation in decision-making in their daily lives (Baraldi 2022). CS interprets children as 'active in the construction and determination

of their own social lives, the life of those around them and of the societies in which they live' (Prout and James 1990, p.8). CS characterises children as a minority group who lack power to influence the quality of their lives (Mayall et al 1996, p.207). James and Prout (1997, 2015) argue that children should be viewed as social actors who are capable of making decisions and influencing their social environment.

CS conceptualises agency as the capacity of children to act independently (James and James 2004), make choices and contribute to social change (James 2007). This conceptualization has led scholars to reconfigure the 'understanding of social structure as more open to the dynamic interactions and influences of children as agentic beings' (Oswell 2013, p.37). But children's agency is constrained by a 'generational order,' that is, 'a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other' (Alanen 2009, pp.161-162). Burman (2023) argues that generational order has structured and largely continues to structure theories and understandings about children and childhood. A generational order implies the capillary exercise of power in adult-child relations that compel children to act 'within the social, moral, political and economic constraints of society' (James and James 2008, p.11) and figures children's agency as something that can either be 'permitted' or treated negatively (ibid, pp 37-40).

Baraldi (2022) proposes an interpretation of children's agency as the construction of unpredictability in which children's choices of action depend on social structures. For example in schools, children are frequently positioned as incomplete persons - individuals who are not completely responsible for their contributions to communication - and thus as taking on the roles of learners and protected minors (ibid, p.20). This implies that their agency is very limited. Furthermore, Thomas (2021) proposes that the following must also be considered: Children, similar to adults, interact as agents with others and their environment. The extent of their freedom to think for themselves, to act for themselves and in conjunction with others, and the extent of their power to change the world they live in are highly variable, dependent on their own capacities and constraints and affordances in their immediate and wider environment (ibid, p.197).

In CS the structural constraints of children's agency have been mostly explained in relational terms in the context of a hierarchical, although dynamic, generational order of relations (Baraldi 2022, p.10). This means that children can exercise their agency by actively using their resources and abilities in their relations with others in both positive and negative ways (Bjerke 2011, p.94). These relational constraints can offer opportunities and determine limitations for children's agency (Baraldi 2022, p.10). The concept of children's agency shows a tension between children's autonomy and their dependence on social constraints (ibid).

The right to participation, initially inspired by Article 12 of the UNCRC (UN 1989), has become an important issue in CS (Invernizzi and Williams 2008; Percy-Smith and Thomas 2010; Thomas 2007). Several studies consider decision-making to be the most important way in which children can participate in social contexts (e.g. Clark and Percy-Smith 2006; Hill et al. 2004; Murray and Hallett 2000; Percy-Smith 2006; Shier 2001). However there are different levels and forms of children's participation. For example (i) consultative participation which is adult-led and managed and does not involve sharing or transferring decision-making processes to children themselves, but it does recognise that children have expertise and perspectives which need to inform adult decision-making (Lansdown 2010, p.20). (ii) Collaborative participation which provides a greater degree of partnership between adults and children, with the opportunity for shared decision-making with adults, and for children to influence both the process and the outcomes in any given activity (ibid). (iii) Child-led participation that takes place when children are afforded the space and opportunity to identify issues of concern, initiate activities and advocate for themselves (ibid).

One of the key features of the childhood sociological paradigm is that children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes but must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live (James and Prout 1997, pp.8-9). This conceptualisation of childhood contributes to three relevant changes in thinking. Firstly, children are considered competent of contributing as social actors and are not merely objects in need of adult protection. Secondly, children are seen as actors who interact with social structures and

have the ability not only to reproduce but also transform such structures. Finally, children's views, desires and needs are deemed a necessary contribution to the generation of social policies, services and practices that have an impact on their lives (Mayall 2000). As a result of the CS paradigmatic shift children are seen as capable and competent individuals to make decisions and influence their environments (Mayall 2013). However these foundational components are abstract constructions, therefore it is necessary to unpack and understand how children's participation is translated from theory to practice in everyday contexts such as family life, school and community. Examination of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, UN 1989) helps us to understand opportunities and spaces for children to participate.

UNCRC (UN 1989) and Children's Participation Rights

Lansdown (2010, p.11) stresses that despite its widespread usage, there remains considerable lack of clarity about what is meant by participation in the context of children's rights. The problem is in part triggered by the fact that the term *participation* is widely used, in everyday conversation to describe forms of social engagement. For example, children participate in a conversation, in games and in cultural activities.

However, in the context of the UNCRC (the Convention) the meaning of participation is more specific and has come to be applied as shorthand for the right embodied in Article 12.

Article 12 of the Convention states that each child is capable of forming views and has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, and that one's views must be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (UN 1989). It recognises that children are entitled to respect as human beings, with rights to be involved in decisions that affect them. As such, it provides a balance between, on the one hand, the engagement of children as active agents in their own lives, and on the other, their entitlement to additional protection during the period of childhood (Lansdown et al 2014). Article 12 stresses that the onus rests with adults to create the necessary time and space to learn to listen to children's different forms of expression whether that is through written or verbal communication, body language, play, drawing or painting (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNComRC) 2009). The Committee make it very clear that it is not enough simply to listen to children. Their views must also be given serious consideration in accordance with

age and maturity (ibid, paragraphs 28–31). Also, where it is not possible to reflect those views in any decision or subsequent actions, efforts should be made to communicate to children the reasons why the decision was made and how their views were considered (ibid). The Committee acknowledges the important role played by parents and those with responsibility for children, including teachers, in providing children with direction and guidance. However, Article 12 also includes recognition of children's evolving capacities, a principle through which to interpret the realisation of rights (Lansdown et al 2014). In relation to Article 29 the Committee clearly states that children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child 2001). The Committee clearly states that the participation of children in schools should be promoted as part of the process of learning and experiencing the realization of rights (ibid p.9). Therefore participation can be defined as an ongoing process of children's expression and active involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them. It requires information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect as well as assurance that full consideration of children's views is given, considering the child's age and maturity (Lansdown 2011).

Participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention, as well as one of its basic challenges (UNICEF 2010). According to the General Comment No. 12 (UNComRC 2009), the concept of participation emphasises that including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives. It recognises the potential of children to enrich decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as agents of change. The principle affirms that children are fully-fledged persons who have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity (ibid).

The UNCRC which has been ratified by many nations sets out a clear mandate for guaranteeing opportunities for children to be heard on all matters of concern to them. Listening to the voices of children has become a powerful and pervasive mantra for child

participation activists and policy makers worldwide (James 2007, p.261). However the Committee (UNComRC 2009, p.24) notes with concern continuing authoritarianism, discrimination and disrespect which characterize the reality of many schools. It stresses that such environments are not conducive to the expression of children's views and the due weight to be given to these views. The Children's Rights International Newsletter (2005, p.27) also notes that the voices of children must be prominent in the exploration of what is going on in their lives and they should be approached as knowing subjects. Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) stress that if fully implemented, the right of children to express views and have them taken seriously, throughout the school environment, would represent moving towards a culture of respect for children's rights and for their capacities to contribute towards democratic life. But legitimization and imposition of government policies does not prevent domination (Giddens 1995). As Thomas and Stoecklin (2018, p.86) argue children's voices may have legitimacy, but they have little or no effective power in institutions such as schools. James (2007, p.6) also contends that despite the rhetoric of recognition and capability, children continue to find their voices silenced, suppressed or ignored in their everyday lives. Furthermore beyond the actual pedagogy of the classroom, it is important that children are acknowledged as democratic participants throughout the school environment and opportunities are created for participation in decision-making processes.

When the UNCRC is scrutinised in more detail a major criticism is that it has a 'top-down' approach evident in the conditional nature of children's participation (Wyness 2006, p.210-211). Article 12 emphasizes adults having the final veto based on 'the child (being) capable of forming his or her own views ... (with) due weight (being given to the) age and maturity of the child' (UN 1989). Moreover, the formative role of adults in children's decision-making processes is reinforced through the apolitical status attached to childhood. Indeed, the Convention seems to go along with the view that children are citizens-in-the-making and not of the political world (John 1995). The briefing paper by the drafters of the Convention claims that 'the very status of a child means in principle that the child has no political rights' (ibid, p.106). Thus, within the UNCRC the emphasis is on the socialising powers of adults.

It is unfortunate that Article 12 appears to put the onus on adults to decide whether the child's views are worthy of consideration (Bucknall 2009, p.40). This means that adults can

exert power over children when they make decisions whether their participation is appropriate or not. As a result cross generational participatory studies in the main are shaped by skills and motivations of the adults and their interpretation of the status of children and the purpose of participation (Maconochie 2013). However, it must be remembered that Article 12 clearly states that the child has a right to express their views freely. The term 'freely' has multiple meanings. Firstly, it means that the child can express their views without pressure and can choose whether or not they want to exercise their right to be heard (UNComRC 2009, paragraph 22). Secondly, freely means that the child must not be manipulated or subjected to undue influence or pressure (ibid). Thirdly, freely is further intrinsically related to the child's own perspective i.e. the child has the right to express their own views and not the views of others. This highlights that current practices of participation with children in decision-making need to be subjected to more challenging theorisations and the complexities of the contexts and systems within which children participate need to be addressed (Tisdall 2008, p.419).

The issue of whether Article 12 relates to the rights of the individual child or the collective rights of children is critical to the interpretation and implementation of the provision. For example, Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010, p.2) argue that the phrase 'the child' and the wording of Part 2 of the Article, suggest that the scope of Article 12 covers only individual and private matters. However, the contention that it applies only to the individual child is not supported by the Committee (UNComRC 2009, paragraph 87). It states that the practice of implementation deals with a broad range of problems, such as health, education or the environment, which are of interest not only to the child as an individual, but to groups of children and children in general. This study addresses child participation in collective decision-making.

It is important to consider how children's rights are perceived and experienced at a local level before assuming a universality of rights (Weiner and Davies 2023). It must be stressed that having national policies on children's rights does not prevent local variation in outcomes and conceptual thinking (Davis et al 2014; Meegan and MacPhail 2006). While international legislation and domestic policies have their place in terms of instilling standards and

requiring change and accountability, rights equally must be realised in practice and more importantly in the daily lives of children (Weiner and Davies 2023, p.256).

Article 12 insists on the visibility of children in their own right. Its implementation involves a profound and radical reconsideration of the status of children and the nature of adult/child relationships in schools and other organisations at local, national and international levels. It requires adults to begin to listen to what children say and to take them seriously. It also requires adults to question the nature of adult responsibilities towards children in schools. Recognising that children have rights does not mean that adults no longer have responsibilities towards children. On the contrary, children cannot and should not be left alone to fight the battles necessary to achieve respect for their rights (Lansdown 2001, p.1). What is implied by the Convention, and its philosophy of respect for the dignity of children, is that adults need to learn to work more closely in collaboration with children to help them articulate their lives, to develop strategies for change and to exercise their rights. To assess how different levels of participation might be classified and evaluated the next section will examine the Lundy (2007) model of participation.

The Lundy (2007) Model of Participation

The Lundy (2007) model of participation aims to understand how the children's participation processes can be operationalised in light of the legal standards set forth in the UNCRC (Cuevas-Parra 2023). It emphasises that there are two interrelated dimensions to participation: adults engaging with children within a participatory process ('space' and 'voice') and adults in positions of power considering children's views ('audience' and 'influence') (Lundy 2007; Cuevas-Parra 2023).

Lundy (2007) conceptualises the normative elements that should comprise participation (Kennan et al 2021). Lundy's aim is to clarify the scope of a practitioner's obligations when implementing the child's right to be heard as set out in Article 12 of the UNCRC. Lundy's model brings attention to the roles, power dynamics, motives for adult involvement and the voice or role of children that should be explored when developing authentic child participation. As Lundy's model of participation aligned with the goals of this PhD research it became the underpinning framework for the YPAR study.

Lundy (2007, p.938) stresses the importance of interpreting Article 12 in a manner that is generous and child-empowering rather than negative and opportunity restricting. She argues that Article 12 is one of the most widely cited yet commonly misunderstood of all of the provisions of the UNCRC. She notes that frequently used abbreviations of the article include: 'the voice of child', 'the right to be heard', 'the right to participate' and 'the right to be consulted'. She argues that these are used as a convenient shorthand to explain the long-winded and awkward wording of Article 12. However, she believes that such abbreviations have the potential to diminish the impact of Article 12 and communicate an imperfect summary of what is required by the article.

The Lundy model illustrates that there is a natural chronological order inherent in Article 12. In order for children's view to be listened to and given due weight, their views must first be sought and expressed. The Lundy model is dynamic in that it recognises that children's participation is not a static process. For example, once children understand the influence that their views can have, there may be a need to provide them with further space to express their views, and the whole process restarts.

As previously mentioned, Lundy (2007, p.933) conceptualises participation as being constituted in terms of space, voice, audience, and influence:

- Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view
- Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views
- Audience: The view must be listened to
- Influence: The view must be acted upon as appropriate.

A prerequisite for the meaningful engagement of children in decision making is the creation of an opportunity for involvement - a space in which children are encouraged to express their views (Lundy 2007, p.933). It is important that the views of a diverse range of children are sought and that participation is not just afforded to the articulate and the literate (Flutter and Ruddock 2004, p.137). Lundy's perspective depicts an explicit chronology for voice and highlights the inefficacy of voice operating in a vacuum (Kellett 2010, p.196).

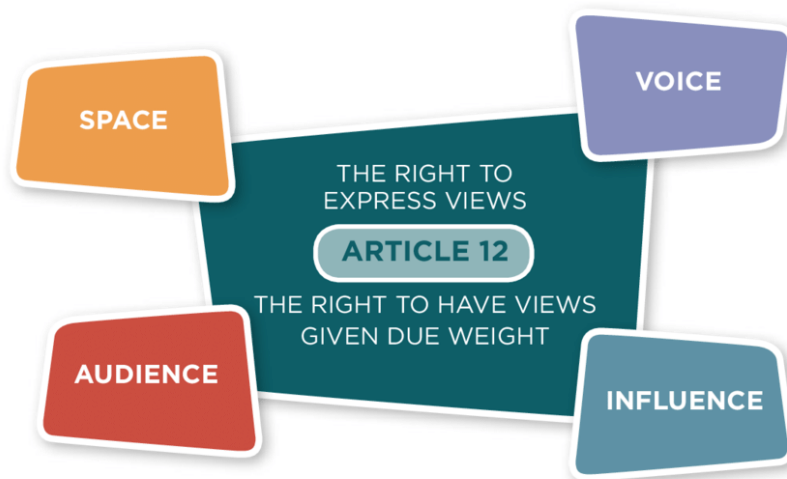


Figure 2.1: The Lundy Model of Participation (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015)

'Space' is considered as an essential prerequisite for the meaningful participation of children in decision-making. It is the structure within which children are encouraged to express their views or left free to choose not to. Lundy's use of space is similar to Barbers' (2007) concept of the 'engagement zone' where adults engage with children to find new ways of creatively utilising space to support participation. The concept of 'space' is linked to the idea of 'allyship' (Maynard et al 2021) which is seen as the opening up of collaborative and equitable space for children's participation (Checkoway and Richards-Shuster 2003) in which adults and children share both power and responsibility for the partnership (Khanna and McCart 2007). Kudva and Driskell (2009, p.378) argue that the creation of these spaces is not straightforward, noting that spaces of participation are created (and often constrained) by organisational practices. Lansdown (2005, p.2) maintains that respecting child participatory rights necessitates a preparedness to create the space to listen to their views in ways appropriate to them and one that requires the provision of time and of adults who are willing to listen. Marshall et al (2015) and Tisdall et al (2006) uphold that a participatory space in decision-making processes should ideally provide opportunities for face-to-face dialogue between the child and facilitator, rather than other forms of engagement such as surveys.

The concept of space points towards a research approach outlined by Barak and Lefstein (2022), who advocate the creation of a climate in which children can express opinions and make recommendations. Similarly, to Flewitt et al (2018, p.384) it encourages researchers to pursue opportunities to work alongside educators to create school cultures that foster

belonging and genuinely support all student's expertise. Creating space for children's participation in decision-making also demonstrates similarities to the work of Freire (1970/2003), and more specifically his introduction of culture circles. Culture circles create a social space in which each member can engage with and contribute on an equal footing (ibid). Providing opportunities for children to work alongside adults through devoting time to developing 'reciprocal trust' (Magill and Rodriguez 2019, p.60) can diminish the struggle for recognition that often silences some voices (Cook-Sather 2007).

Having created the space or social process for children's participation, the next step in the Lundy model is to facilitate children to express their view. 'Voice' in the Lundy model is the expression and articulation of the child's opinion, whether spoken or expressed non-verbally. Children's 'voice' is a concept that is part of a wider approach including both listening and participation (Tisdall 2012; Baker 1999; l'Anson 2013). Clark et al (2005) find that listening is a necessary stage in participation. Rinaldi (2001, p.4) suggests that 'listening is an active verb, which involves giving an interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who are being listened to'. This perspective suggests that listening involves more than hearing and requires interpretation and validation.

Listening to children can be understood as a political act that unites the child with civil society and, as such, is critical to facilitating children's participation (Bautista 2012; Gomez and Ryan 2016; Humphries 2019; Ozer and Wright 2012; Te One 2008). The pedagogy of listening 'is a context ... where individuals feel legitimated to represent their theories and offer their own interpretations of a particular question', which generates understanding and awareness (Rinaldi 2006, p.66). However, the pedagogy of listening is difficult to achieve (Carroll-Lind 2009; Carroll-Lind et al 2006; Clark 2004a). How research includes children's voices requires an understanding of how organisational structures (such as those in schools) impact on children (Carroll-Lind 2009; Dahlberg et al 2007; Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; Mitchell 2007; Rinaldi 2006; Smith 2002; Willow et al 2004; Zaal and Terry 2013).

Several researchers concur with Lundy (2007) and support the notion that voice cannot just happen. Lensmire's (1998) assertion of voice as project and requiring work to be done presents a perspective of struggle to make words carry meaning when they are populated with different connotations and associations. Wyness (2006) argues for child-friendly spaces

to be created that reflect children's interests and preferred ways of engagement so as children's voices do not become a tool for reinforcing adult governance. In contrast to Lundy's claims, Fielding (2001) argues that voice cannot be separated from space, audience and influences as a discrete stage, instead he states that it is these elements together which produce the voices which might be heard.

The requirement for audience in the UNCRC Article 12 (i.e. 'due weight') obliges adults to listen to children and not just hear what they have to say. One of the primary reasons for the development of the Lundy model was to emphasise that 'voice is not enough' and that children must be guaranteed the opportunity to communicate their views to a receptive audience (Lundy 2007, p.937). 'Audience' is described by Lundy (ibid) as 'a guaranteed opportunity to communicate views to an identifiable individual or body with the responsibility to listen'. Welty and Lundy (2013) have added to the debate on the role of audience by arguing that there is a need to ensure that children have the right to an audience.

'Influence' in the Lundy model refers to the impact of children's participation on the decision-making processes and by extension on their everyday lives (Lundy 2007; 2018). A combination of circumstances is necessary for children's voices to have influence, not least of which is a predisposition on the part of adults to value what children have to say and to appreciate the uniqueness of their perspectives. This implies having the right people in the room - those with the power to act (Lundy 2018). An aspect of 'influence' that Lundy promotes is the importance of giving feedback to children. This is supported by MacNaughton and Smith (2009), while Kelley (2006) finds that many participation processes often fail to respond to children's views by not providing feedback. Hill et al (2004) suggest that participation may be meaningful but argue that if children's views are heard but no action is taken, then consultation is seen mostly as a stand-in for participation. There are inevitably many discrepancies in the way that children's voice is received globally. During the UN Special Summit on Children's Rights in 2002, children identified sufficient time to understand issues; access to child-friendly documentation and information; capacity building with child-led organisations; and training for adults to overcome their resistance to children's involvement as prerequisites to meaningful and effective participation (Bennett Woodhouse 2003).

One of the major criticisms of children's participation is lack of accountability, in which children are not provided with feedback and are unaware of how their ideas or recommendations are used (Tisdall 2015a). Accountability to children is understood as the communication process between children and adults or institutions where they are able to request input on their contributions and to raise their concerns (Cuevas-Parra 2023; Newlands 2014). Tisdall (2021) argues that when children's participation is taken seriously, there are processes in place to let them know how their views are weighed and implemented. However, sometimes accountability processes are absent or in other cases, they are timely but superficial, and some are meaningful but untimely (ibid).

Article 12 is often mentioned under the banner of 'the voice of the child' or 'pupil' voice as it is referred to in primary education (Lundy 2007). Noyes (2005, p.533) and Roche (1999, p.489) observed that terms such as student voice or pupil voice need careful critique and warn of the possible language of children's participation being 'cosy'. Furthermore Lundy (2007) argues that phrases commonly used as abbreviations for Article 12, such as pupil/student voice, have the potential to diminish its impact as they provide an imperfect summary of the full extent of the obligation. Instead governments and organisations need to ensure appropriate conditions for supporting and encouraging children to express their views, and make sure that these views are given due weight, by regulations and arrangements which are firmly anchored in laws and institutional codes and are regularly evaluated with regard to their effectiveness (UNComRC 2009, paragraph 3). Lundy (2007) and Sargeant (2018) stress that it is important to realise children's rights beyond tokenism, through inclusive, accountable, respectful and transformative relationships. Lundy (2018) also argues that often pushing participation forward is more about changing attitudes and mindsets rather than developing new toolkits. It is about making adults understand participation is not a gift, but something they have to do (ibid).

The more we can comprehend how voice, space, audience and influence (Lundy 2007) are formed by power relations the deeper understanding of relational and contextual components of children's participation can be developed (Cuevas-Parra 2023). The Lundy (2007) model of participation represents a starting point for the promotion of children's rights. But due regard must be given to the practical realities in school contexts. For example, overlooking the dynamics of age and power would keep interventions apolitical

and technocratic (Hart 2015). Legal expectations of implementation of Article 12 and the Lundy (2007) model of participation are joined by ideas familiar to childhood studies, that is, the need to consider processes, contexts, relationships and structures (Tisdall and Konstantou 2023, p.139). This implies that attention needs to be given to the specificity of context as well as the inter-relational status at play at any particular moment during a school YPAR study. This highlights that the Lundy (2007) model of participation would benefit from more nuanced analysis of how power relations between adults and children and among children can affect participation processes.

Irish Government Policies (2000-2024) on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making

The ratification of the UNCRC by the Irish Government in 1992 brought with it the obligation to develop structures whereby Irish children's rights to participation and consultation could be realised (Waldron et al 2011, p.6). In 2000, the National Children's Strategy (NCS) was developed to operationalise the Convention. At the time, the NCS was ground-breaking in many ways, incorporating discourses around diversity, anti-racism and child citizenship (Deegan et al 2004). Initiatives that emerged from it were the appointment of the first Ombudsman for Children in 2004 and the establishment of Dáil na nÓg (youth parliament), Dáil na bPáistí (children's parliament), Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils at local government level) and Comhairle na bPáistí (children's councils at local government level). These initiatives established an infrastructure that increased the opportunities for children to have their voices heard at national and regional levels. In 2015, Ireland was the first country in Europe to develop a *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) 2015). The strategy built on the developing infrastructure for children's participation established by National Children's Strategy of 2000. It focuses on the everyday lives of children and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, including in community, education, health and well-being, and legal settings (DCYA 2015).

In 2017, Ireland continued to ensure that children are at the heart of government decision-making through the establishment of 'Hub na nÓg: Young Voices in Decision-making' by the

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) as a centre of excellence on giving children a voice in decision-making. Hub na nÓg together with Professor Laura Lundy, from the Children's Rights Centre in Queens University Belfast, conducted focus groups with multiple stakeholders such as policy makers at national and local level, teachers from early years to post-primary, gardaí, social workers, healthcare workers, arts professionals and others (DCEDIY 2021). Subsequently, in 2021 the DCEDIY published the *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making* and in 2024 *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028*. The *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* (DCEDIY 2024) is built on the achievements of the first National Strategy. This plan aims to promote children's inclusion in decision-making across various levels - home, school, community and nationally. It seeks to harness their views to inform policies, services, legislation and research relevant to their lives. The plan also emphasizes evaluation and monitoring of services and policies based on their perspectives. These publications are underpinned by the UNCRC (UN 1989) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2018) and are guided by the Lundy (2007) model of participation. The vision of the Framework is participation with purpose (DCEDIY 2021, p.6). It states that the rationale of involving children in decision-making is to give them a voice on day-to-day activities and practices, or on the development of projects, programmes, services or policies that are central to the objectives and role of an organisation (ibid). It stresses that at the heart of participation with purpose is ensuring that when children are involved in decision-making, their views are listened to, taken seriously and given due weight, with the intention that these views will influence the outcome or initiate change (ibid).

The Framework clarifies that participation is not handing over power to children (ibid). It is about adults making decisions in ways that involve children as fully as possible. It holds that children are not the only experts on their own lives. It stresses that adults also have expertise in children's lives and it is this combined expertise that will enable better decisions to be made (ibid, p.7). It states that at school level - children should have a voice in decision-making in the running of the school, school policies and school governance (ibid, p.7). It would appear that the National Strategy and the Framework recognise the respective roles and positions of children and adults and that interdependence between adults and children

is an important basis for participation (Wyness 2013) and while child and adult are 'distinctive categories', children and adults develop their 'identities in and through routine engagement with each other' (ibid, p.435).

Exemplars in the Framework provide pictures of what happens when inclusion in decision-making is an effective practice. It sets out the ambition and vision that the promotion of child-adult partnerships should be at the core of the ethos of every school in Ireland. The Framework can be used as a benchmark to evaluate practice through identifying strengths as well as possible gaps or weaknesses. However, knowledge about how children's participation might contribute to change and improvement in schools remains very limited (Simmons et al 2015, p.131). Further research to develop a greater bank of exemplars is required. Crucial to the implementation of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (DCYA 2015) is documentation of activities and methodologies used on-the-ground in the operation of participation projects in schools. Such research would demonstrate a range of different spaces and opportunities to participate in school and would focus on organic, everyday spaces where participation may be learned (Forde et al 2018; Mitra 2008a; Percy-Smith 2010). Youth participatory action research (YPAR) studies that consider the processes and practices of child-adult partnerships in decision-making in schools is a way to actively hear voices which have been muted due to traditional schooling systems. Such YPAR studies range from the most basic level of children sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions, to allowing them to collaborate with adults to address the problems in their schools, to children taking the lead on seeking change (Mitra 2008b, pp.221-222).

Power Relations in Research with Children

In the growing literature about involving children actively in research adult researchers strive to engage children as active co-researchers, alleviating the power barriers and providing them with genuine participatory conditions (e.g. Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015; Gillett-Swan and Sargeant 2018; Kellett 2011; Lundy et al 2011; O'Reilly et al 2023). Participation of children as co-inquirers in research creates significant shifts in the understanding of the roles, purposes and agency of children providing spaces for person-centred, emancipatory sources of democratic fellowship for students (Fielding 2001).

Viewing power as inherent to research emphasises that research is a practice that is part of social life rather than an external contemplation of it (Christensen 2004, p.166). This requires that adult researchers pay attention to broader issues of social and cultural life that are, or can be, sensitive to the issue of power. Christensen argues for a move away from seeing power as residing in people and social positions towards viewing power as embedded in the process, that is in the 'doing' of research. The inherent power relation between researcher and researched in cross-generational research may be reinforced by more general cultural notions of power and control in generational relations between children and adults (Alderson 1995; Mayall 2000; Alanen and Mayall 2001). Christensen (2004, p.168) argues that this means that one-off interviews with children, whether these be qualitative or quantitative, or with the use of task-oriented tools or not, are at risk of not providing the context within which children can respond in accordance with their own views. This is so because children will have been left little scope for engaging in a critical manner with the research questions and the research practice.

Child research and practice is largely constructed using an adult lens and the perspectives of children are frequently overlooked. Hadfield and Haw (2001) stress that it can be with the best of intentions that adults conduct research and present findings which they believe to represent the needs and opinions of children or invite children to offer an opinion on particular aspects of their lives through participatory research or pupil voice initiatives. Other researchers contend that adult perspectives tend to dominate even collaborative work with children (Cook-Sather 2007; Hadfield and Haw 2001). Fielding (2004) and Mannion (2007) note that children's voices can unknowingly be moulded to fit with an adult agenda. Thus, children involved in research can be positioned as 'responder[s] to adult plans' (Hollins et al 2006, p.150) rather than as stipulators of their own priorities and designers of their own approaches (Mearns et al 2014, pp.443-444).

A factor that sustains unequal adult-child relations is the notion that adults' knowledge is superior to that of children's knowledge (Robinson and Kellett 2004). Such power inequalities in adult-child relationships are difficult to eradicate (Kellett and Ding 2004). Christensen and Prout (2002) describe children's participation in research studies as occupying different positions on a passive-active continuum, as objects of research, as

subjects, as participants and as co-researchers. Participation on the active end of the continuum challenges the traditional adult-child power relationships. But, even while challenging traditional adult roles and representations of students, YPAR, runs the risk of perpetuating relations of domination in the name of liberation (Cook-Sather 2007; Ellsworth 1989; Shrewsbury 1993; Orner 1992). Sinclair (2004) calls for giving child participants a realistic picture of what adults can offer children in the sharing of power.

Frost (2007, p.453) argues that engaging in research can provide a framework through which children can exercise agency over matters of importance to them, giving voice to their perspectives in ways that acknowledge their power as competent social actors. However, in schools there is often the appearance of children being consulted, yet they are denied any real power to bring about change through an intricate web of institutional imperatives such as a centralised curriculum, standardised tests, target-setting, school self-evaluation, overburdened timetables and teachers (Caraballo et al 2017). Critics of mainstream efforts to engage children, such as Checkoway and Gutierrez (2006), express concerns that many initiatives fail to tap into the potential of children to contribute to the betterment of society. They argue that participation is about the real influence of children in institutions and decisions, not about their passive presence as human subjects (ibid, p.2).

Cook-Sather (2006, p.361) has stressed the need for constructing new vocabulary to make new meaning of collaborative research; to reconceptualize partnership as an on-going struggle to find meeting places for teachers and students and for researchers and students to co-create meanings. Instead of conceptualizing children's participation in research as a binary of adult/knower versus child/learner, Call-Cummings and Dennis (2019) have asserted that participation has at its core a sense of collective entanglement, rather than an evaluation of individual actions that are somehow summed up to equal or not equal an ideal amount of participation. This entails moments of action in which a collective establishes their dignity and worthwhileness in institutional contexts where their identity/identities was/were diminished (ibid). This is a push against the ordinary conceptualisation of participation. They emphasise that for those involved in the knowledge production process participation should be conceptualised as a spectrum of communicative action that transforms adult and child co-researchers involvement to a 'we' engagement (Call-

Cummings and Dennis 2019, paragraph 13; Call-Cummings, Dennis and Martinez 2019). This suggests a move away from typologies of participation as a tool or device against which people measure themselves or the people with whom they engage to a more holistic understanding of participation (Call-Cummings, Ní Sheanáin and Buttimer 2020).

The power at work when children do participation is predominantly pervasive and productive and varies according to the nature of the relationships and power struggles among the adults and children involved, between the adults involved and between the children involved (Graham and Fitzgerald 2010, p.350). Gallagher (2006, p.159) recognises that there is a complex interplay between individual agency and institutional structures and posits that participation is 'the locus of an ongoing struggle, where the will of an organisation and the will of its subjects engage with and attempt to influence and realign one another'. This conceptualization attends to the myriad of ways in which power is at work in the processes and strategies employed in any participatory project (Graham and Fitzgerald 2010, p.350). Cook-Sather (2007, p.396) recognises that the process of participation is imbued with networks of power relations that are ever shifting, contextual and relational, and identities and voices that are played out within various webs of power and practice. This stresses the importance of the recognition of the subtle ways in which power shapes and informs what is recognised in participatory encounters. However, there is a dearth of research reports where the subtleties and nuances of power dynamics in cross-generational PAR are documented.

Changing the power dynamics between adults and children creates the possibility for children to embrace the political potential of speaking out on their own behalf (Lewis 1993, p.44) and being afforded the right to have their part matter (Heilbrun 1988, p.18). When children speak out on their own behalf, and when what they say matters and shapes action, their voice becomes the initiating force in an enquiry process which invites adults (Fielding 2004b, p.201) involvement as facilitators rather than keeping children in the role of recipient of adults' decision-making processes.

Negotiating the inevitable position of children as subordinate to adults is challenging in YPAR. Where studies were carried out in schools, existing adult-child hierarchical structures were often present and strengthened by the need to position the child researchers as

learners of research skills (Buckley-Marudas and Soltis 2020; Lang and Shelly 2021). Even when not in schools, relationships were sometimes shaped by cultural norms with children attempting to give the correct answer (Maynard et al 2020). Research demonstrates that it is clear that fostering power sharing arrangements is hard and It is difficult to create a relationship where the children are considered as partners (Milstein 2010). Even when sharing responsibility, practical issues sometimes mean that aspects of the research are conducted without children (Anselma et al 2019; Lang and Shelley 2021).

The Role of the Adult Researcher in Children's Research

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) represents a research approach which is committed to principles of partnership and power sharing between researchers and children. This approach is underpinned by the belief that those being studied have knowledge and must be repositioned as subjects and architects of research (Torre and Fine 2006; Wilson et al 2018). YPAR explicitly involves children in research and aims to research with them rather than about them with the goal of addressing issues identified by the children in order to improve situations (Cahill 2019; Cullen and Walsh 2020; Rubin et al 2017; Torre and Fine 2006).

This shift to participatory forms of research requires the reconceptualization of power relations between adult researcher and research participants. Such a reconceptualization involves affirmation that child research participants' own knowledge is valuable and that they are capable of analysing their own situations and designing their own solutions (Evans et al 2010; Nicholls et al 2011; Welikala and Atkin 2014; Cook and Krueger-Henney 2017). This repositions the role of the adult researcher from detached director or evaluator to facilitator and collaborator (Spaaij and Jeanes 2013; Spaaij et al 2016). Participatory research challenges the adult researcher to reconceptualise and continuously reflect upon the questions they ask and the methods they use (Nygreen 2006). Critical questions to be addressed include (Spaaij et al 2018): for whom is the research for; whose knowledge is counted; and who has control, leadership, and responsibility during the different stages of the research process?

YPAR is a complex process with many decision-making junctures (El-Amin 2015; Brion Meisels and Alter 2018). Power shifting occurs in a dedicated and cognisant way (Spaaij et al 2018) but the role of the adult researcher cannot be overlooked (Mannion 2007). Adult researchers must understand that child stakeholders' knowledge is not only valuable but indeed critical for achieving a truly informed understanding of the research context. Therefore, the task of the adult researcher in YPAR studies is to develop collective decision-making powers (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991; Bland and Atweh 2007; Kidd and Kral 2005; Savid-Baden and Wimpenny 2007; Casas et al 2013), create new roles and relations (Bang and Vossoughi 2016) where children are given opportunities for mattering (Costello et al 2000; Eccles and Gootman 2002; Kuhn and Franklin 2006; Monchinski 2010; Kirshner et al 2011; Kirshner 2015; Caraballo et al 2017; Collier 2019). In this way participants are empowered to analyse their own situations and to design their own solutions (Kay 2009; Nicholls et al 2011; Percy-Smith 2015; Randall 2012; Rafferty 2015). Importantly the shift of power does not happen automatically, rather, it is through a dedicated co-constructed process that requires the adult researcher to relinquish control over time, changing his/her role to facilitator (Spaaij and Jeanes 2013; Spaaij et al 2016). It is important that co-researchers are facilitated to co-own the unfolding research, to be in charge of co-identifying suitable participants and determining relevant research questions and approaches (Spaaij et al 2018). Similar to Frisby et al's (1997, p.10) findings in regard to Feminist Participatory Action Research with adults, it can also be argued that YPAR challenges adult researchers to examine (a) how knowledge in the field is constructed, (b) how relationships with research subjects are formed and (c) how research does or does not benefit those being researched.

It is important for adult researchers to understand the YPAR process and their role as allies. YPAR studies often take longer and are much less linear than adults are used to experiencing (Suleiman et al 2006, p.135). This can be frustrating for adult researchers especially when they have an agenda they believe is important. But a strong adult ally helps create space and structure to allow for this process but does not jump into problem-solving or directing the research team (Ballonoff Suleiman et al 2024; Suleiman et al 2006). At the beginning of the study the adult researcher must be mindful to loosen their grip on their personal agendas and prepare for the creative process of the child co-researchers (Ballonoff Suleiman et al 2024).

Kellett (2005b) acknowledges that there are methodological issues which raise concern about the level of adult involvement necessary in children's research. These issues relate to tensions between children's autonomy and their safety during data collection, to rigour and validity (MacDonald 2002; Johnson-Bailey and Lee 2005; Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson 2014; Rubin et al 2017) and facilitating data analysis. Similar to the writings of Freire (1998), Gore (1995) and Ellsworth (1992), Kellett (2005b) stresses the distinction between adult management and adult support to balance democratic authority against both authoritarianism and permissiveness. Kellett (2003) in her research with children focuses on the competencies of children rather than their limitations and demonstrates that appropriate training can help children conduct credible research.

Engaging children as co-researchers does not release adult researchers from their responsibilities, in fact it increases them (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015, p.170; Conolly 2008; Kellett 2010; Lomax 2012). Regarding confidentiality and disclosure, Coad and Evans (2008) reported that it is necessary for the adult researcher to make ground rules about disclosure. Furthermore, children need protection from harm as participants or subjects in research as much as they do if they are peer researchers. Moreover, engagement with children in any capacity involves accountability and responsibility. The protection of children is always paramount, whatever the context. The primary role of the adult researcher is to create a safe place for honest dialogue (Lundy 2007), which means an environment where everyone involved feels comfortable to express themselves and to contribute (ibid). Adults must balance their contributions so as not to dominate or derail discussions but more importantly to model good research practice and take seriously children's agency and capacity for research.

Consideration of the importance ascribed to children retaining a sense of ownership (Kellett 2005b, 2008a; Boeck and Sharpe 2009) in research raises the issue of adult motivation for engaging children as researchers. In some ways, research might be understood as a process of socialization through which children are taught to conform to adult norms and to value adult cultures over their own (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008, p.502). While child-centred research has the potential to draw attention to children's concerns and inform policy, there is also the potential to exploit children as researchers to serve the adult researcher's own

needs. Leitch et al (2007, p.475) argue that all forms of research must recognise the centrality of children's rights and commit to developing the capacity of children as researchers in appropriate forms as possible within the research goals and agendas. Frost (2007) points out that even the impetus to empower children by facilitating their active research arises from adult agendas and should therefore be a cause for reflection.

Interactions that occur between the researcher and the research partners during the research process are related to fundamental traits described in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social development. Theories of social development are combined with theories of social interaction through a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978). This is the space where social learning processes can precede the development and maturation of cognitive processes (Vygotsky 1978; Åkerström and Brunberg 2013, p.531). Skills not yet mastered by children as researchers have the potential to be developed from interaction with someone more advanced (e.g. an adult researcher). The more knowledgeable other (MKO) - the adult researcher - provides 'scaffolding' and changes the level of support as the children as co-researchers appropriate more skills to master tasks (Vygotsky 1978; Åkerström and Brunberg 2013, p.531). Research with secondary school students (eight adolescent girls) has found that both the researchers (adults) and the research partners (secondary school students) in their research circles served as MKOs for each other in the knowledge formation process taking place (Åkerström and Brunberg 2013). In their research circles, the researchers and the research partners both had the potential to extend themselves into their zones of proximal development when they were challenged by others' knowledge (ibid).

Lather (1987 cited in Oliver 2002, p.107) writes that both the researcher and the researched become changers and changed in the process of participatory research. One of the hardest things for the adult researcher is to recognise that it is no longer solely their research - the power and control are now shared and adult researcher and child co-researchers have to work against the conventional hierarchy of knowledge that assumes that what adults know is more valuable (Moules and O'Brien 2012; O'Brien and Dadswell 2020). Similarly, Checkoway and Richards (2003, p.27) write that if both parties share interpersonal and institutional power, they take a step toward quality participation. However, if the power remains largely in adult hands they do not. Hill (2006, p.81) emphasises the point further in

that the influence of general adult-child relations and expectations are often compounded by a context in which adults are in control which, given adults often perceived greater conventional knowledge and experience it is often the case in research with children. This stresses the need to find ways of not replicating conventional power relationships between the researched and researcher particularly when they are superimposed on power relationships between adults and children (Fleming 2013). It is vital that being involved in YPAR does not reproduce the experience of powerlessness that children may well have in other areas of their lives. This highlights the importance of moving away from the traditional role of the adult researcher as leading and directing to working in partnership: listening, posing questions, facilitating a process, supporting action and encouraging reflection (Fleming and Ward 1999). Children's involvement in research increases the relevance of the research process and the research findings to the participants, thus allowing for an exchange of knowledge and skills between child researchers and adult researchers.

Researchers such as Horgan (2017) suggest researchers should adopt the least adult role, a concept coined by Mandell (1991), which stipulates that researchers should try to blend in with a child's world to build relationships with children in order to understand their world from their perspective. But the least adult role is not always necessary in participatory research, rather the development of a partnership between adults and children is required (O'Brien and Dadswell 2020). Power can shift between the adult researchers and the child co-researchers throughout the participatory research process, as identified by Jones (2004), O'Brien et al. (2018) and O'Brien and Dadswell (2020). This shifting of power can occur between the stages of the research project and during individual meetings or activities.

Ozer et al (2010) use the Vygotsky's (1978) metaphor of the scaffold to suggest that adult researcher/teacher help is essential in YPAR. However, Cummings (2024) suggests the scaffold metaphor does not fully capture the role of the adult researcher/teacher in YPAR. To scaffold suggests something that is bolted on as support, a temporary external rather than as an integral part of the structure as in the research to make the research more comprehensible to the more powerful. Alternatively Cummings (2024) suggests the

metaphor of the jigsaw puzzle as a more appropriate representation of the roles the child co-researchers and adult allies play in the facilitation of child-led change.

Child-centred research such as YPAR opens up opportunities to challenge adult-centric definitions, pre-set conceptions and understandings (Ergler and Wood 2014, p.398). Moreover, it allows taking the different perspectives of findings that emerge from children and adults into account embedding the created perspectives within the contexts in which it is derived (Kellett et al 2004; Porter 2008). However, a child-centred approach does not reduce power inequalities per se, nor does it necessarily produce better knowledge. Instead, it remains important to consider how to best utilise the '*different knowledges*' among and between generations for maximum outcome to the people for and with whom findings have been generated in participatory child-focused or child-centred approaches (Porter et al 2012, p.132, italics in original).

The involvement of children in the research process is never straightforward, but always interwoven with processes of power. In conducting YPAR, Luguetti et al (2023) emphasise that adult researchers need to constantly examine power, privilege and knowledge production. As adult researchers are usually in positions of power and privilege (Brigham and Kharbach 2020) unfortunately YPAR studies can potentially reinforce existing power hierarchies (Dona 2007). Merely involving children in knowledge production does not guarantee that power hierarchies are addressed, let alone eliminated (Stapleton and Mayock 2023). Therefore as Wulf-Andersen et al (2021) advocate acknowledgement and reflexivity by adult researchers regarding these processes must be adopted as responsible and ethical research practices. Further research is needed to illustrate how understanding and negotiating these challenges in a primary school context is essential in implementing school-based YPAR.

Challenges to Children Engaging in Research in Schools

Power is defined in terms of action in a network of relations that are constantly in tension (Mason and Ren 2012). Schools are a context where an adult-child power imbalance is particularly acute (Devine 2000). The rethinking of power as having multiple forms is important in thinking about children's school lives. The issue of empowering children which

is the goal of YPAR studies raises questions about how the concept is being employed and in whose interests (Gallagher 2019). Devine (2002, p.307) emphasises that social structures impact on the degree to which empowerment is possible by stressing that where adult-child relations are framed in terms of voice, belonging and active participation, children will be empowered to define and understand themselves as individuals with the capacity to act and exercise their voice in a meaningful manner on matters of concern to them. Devine (2003) also argues that although teachers are aware of changes in the recognition of children as social agents and in the norms of adult-child relationships such changes are only welcomed as long as roles and authority remain unquestioned.

The barriers to the feasibility of children as researchers have typically been articulated in terms of children's deficits in competency and skills (Kellett 2004, p.330). Age is used as a delineating factor within the competency debate. The perspective of perceived lack of competence was supported during an era in which development psychology was a dominant influence. This has been robustly challenged by CS (Alderson 2008; Woodhead and Faulkner 2008), which argues that social experience is a more reliable measure of maturity and competence. This worldview argues that children's competence is different from adults' not lesser (Alderson 2000b; Alderson 2001; Christensen and Prout 2002) and cannot be assessed using the same metrics (Christensen and Prout 2002).

In contrast to an age-stage developmental perspective on childhood, the interdisciplinary paradigm of CS has led to a surge of interest in children's participation and a tendency to take more account of children's views within research (Hill et al 2004, p.87). The CS approach advances a view of children as competent and both willing and able to make decisions about matters such as participation in research (Munford and Sanders 2004, p.472). It is not easy, however, as research agendas are usually set by adults rather than by children, and although interest in setting research agendas has been expressed by children (Kellett et al 2004), this is an infrequent phenomenon.

The fallacy of identifying age as a barrier to engaging in research has been demonstrated by the imaginative mosaic approach (Clark and Moss 2001), where pre-school children actively participated as co-researchers in data collection about the early childhood centre they attended. Clark (2004) used methods that played to the young children's strengths (e.g. use

of cameras, pictures, maps and child-guided tours) so as they could engage in the research process and explicate things in their environment that were important to them. In this research Clark cast herself in the guise of inexpert so as she could listen to and learn from the three- and four-year olds. Research such as this demonstrates how children from a surprisingly early age can understand basic elements of the research process and their role within it if this information is presented in an age-appropriate manner (Thompson, cited in Morrow and Richards 1996, p.95).

Central to the competency debate is the assertion that children do not have sufficient knowledge to investigate subjects in any depth. Yes, many adults have greater knowledge than children in many areas of life, but in regard to childhood, in the sense of what it is like to be a child, it is children who have the superior knowledge (Mayall 2000; Alderson and Morrow 2004). When research topics emanate directly from children's own experiences then no adult, even the most skilled ethnographer, can hope to acquire the richness of knowledge that is inherent in children's own understanding of their own worlds and subcultures (Kellett 2004). By rejecting the notion that children cannot provide reliable information (Dockett and Perry 2003) children are given an opportunity to provide 'missing perspectives' (Cook-Sather 2002, p.3). This challenges the cultural reluctance that exists to take children's ideas seriously (Morrow 2005, p.153). Research therefore needs to go a step beyond involving children as participants by handing over the initiative and empowering them as active researchers. This is not to devalue the many research studies carried out by adults, nor does it suggest that research by children should replace or compete with adult studies, but that the two should be embraced as complementary bodies of knowledge (Kellett 2011).

Another common argument in relation to competency is that children lack the skills to undertake formal research. Skills to do research are not synonymous with being an adult (Kellett 2011). Most adults would not be able to undertake research without training. A barrier to empowering children as researchers is not their lack of adult status but their lack of research skills (ibid). In past research adults have circumvented research training for children by limiting their involvement to discrete aspects of a project (Sinclair 2004). It has been commonplace to exclude children from the design phase and only enlist their services to collect data. An absence of research training prevents children from making their own

informed decisions about methods. Often where there is training of children in research skills it rarely extends to analysis as it is generally considered too difficult for children. In challenging the barrier of children's lack of research skills Kellett (2005) has developed a training programme which aims to minimise adult filters by repositioning the balance to supporting rather than managing children's research (Kellett 2011). Furthermore, in accordance with a UNCRC informed approach to research it is not for the child to prove their capacity to form their own views but for the adult researchers to presume that the child has the capacity to form his/her own views (UN 2009 paragraph 20; Lundy et al 2011, p.720). This involvement of children as co-researchers in the design and delivery of a research study is essential if children's rights and best interests are to be duly respected (Alderson 2008).

YPAR studies involve a large time commitment from child co-researchers. Data generation and analysis is often time consuming. Added to this change does not happen quickly and maintaining child engagement is challenging (Suleiman et al 2006). This may lead to decreased engagement by some co-researchers and increased responsibilities on the remaining co-researchers to meet project goals and deadlines (Brion Meisels and Alter 2018; Dahn 2020; Smith et al 2021; Wilson et al 2018). Interest and enthusiasm often starts out high in YPAR studies as participants begin to think about action (Suleiman et al 2006). They want to dive into creating change and worry about generating data later (Suleiman et al 2006; Rubin et al 2017). The slow cycle of change can result in low morale at various points in the project (Suleiman et al 2006). This often leads to feelings of discomfort for the adult researcher and forces them to question their perceptions of what counts as participation, the benefits to co-researchers and to reflect on whether the study places additional stress on child co-researchers (Smith et al 2021).

YPAR, as a student voice initiative, should provide children with the tools to transform systems that promote inequality (Pearce and Woods 2019). But many initiatives lack the impetus to achieve transformation. They fall short for a variety of reasons: schools do not approach the work with authentic intentions; teachers are subject to hegemonic and coercive forces; teachers and children are concerned at the outcomes of overturning traditional power relations; or children are more comfortable in passive roles (Kehoe 2015; Lundy 2007; Mitra 2006; Robinson 2011; Rudduck and Fielding 2006). In order to succeed,

YPAR initiatives must effect real change (influence) and cross or transgress traditional borders and power relations (Pearce and Woods 2019).

YPAR initiatives must provide all children with opportunities to empower themselves. YPAR work in schools runs the risk of becoming a dividing practice that excludes children whose voices are silenced because they don't fit the dominant discourse and academic aspirations of their schools (McIntyre et al 2005, p.155). Much YPAR work is carried out with small groups of students, often chosen by teachers because they fit within particular ideals of a good student (Keddie 2015). Selection criteria of this kind reinforce existing relations of power within the school, rendering audible the voices of children already empowered relative to other students (Thomson and Gunter 2007). Raby (2014, p.85) states that student voice initiatives must involve recognition of the needs of others, individually and collectively and must be linked to the group's broader goals or aims.

Gaps in the Research Literature

Children are assumed to be lacking in power and less likely to be in a position, for example, to influence decision-making in areas that concern them (Todd 2012, p.191). This, therefore, leads to efforts to bring their perspectives into the picture (Kaplan et al 2007, Marquez-Zenkov et al 2007, Nystrom 2007). However, one of the things that child voice research such as YPAR has lacked is a critical rationale. The orthodoxy within some areas of professional practice that under-represented voices need to be heard has, perhaps, had the effect of silencing critique (Todd 2012, p.191). This poses a risk of disempowering children even further. Without a culture of criticality about the purpose, method or meaning of such research there is a risk of tokenism. This prompted me to explore how power dynamics operate in a cross-generational research team during a YPAR study.

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2015, p.4) argue strongly for authentic approaches to student voice such as YPAR to push beyond legitimization and guardianship, whereby children's perspectives may be incorporated as a data source (Fielding 2011) offering opportunities for children to be engaged as active participants, co-researchers or joint authors. In short, authentic implementation of Lundy's Model of Participation (Lundy 2007) involves the building of generative relationships and the joint engagement of adults and

children in the research enterprise. This study seeks to add to research literature by charting how joint engagement can be facilitated by an adult researcher and the tensions and challenges that occur while facilitating YPAR informed by Article 12 (UN 1989), Lundy's Model of Participation (Lundy 2007) and Freirean critical theory.

If YPAR work is to be dialogic then cross-generational relationships must be a central element of transformative initiatives (Pearce and Wood 2019, p.120). Adults therefore have a role in facilitating the participation of children, but this must begin with an acknowledgement that children are more than capable of voicing their opinions (Sargeant 2018), that their facilitation may not be needed at all, but also that they may need to work closely with children to find a method of participation appropriate to their competencies (Lundy 2007; Marchant and Kirby 2004). This may mean finding a variety of innovative methods through which children can participate, such as mapping and child-led tours. Cook-Sather (2007, p.397) describes this as a process of *translation*, which requires of adult participants that they become different selves through the process of opening ourselves to students' diverse identities and perspective: as they translate - with students - those students' experiences and perceptions, they are also translated. Fielding (2006, p.308) similarly refers to this as a kind of radical collegiality, which involves going beyond a reciprocity of topic and technique to adults and children learning from each other in holistic, co-constructive and collaborative ways. In order to add to the literature on YPAR in schools there is a need to outline how adult researchers become different selves through dialogue with children and engaging in critical self-reflection and reflexivity through each stage of the research process.

When I first started this research I noted that in academic articles authors were reluctant to discuss challenges and tensions associated with facilitating YPAR studies. The realities of fieldwork and behind the scenes work of building rapport, overcoming self-doubt is typically removed from research accounts of YPAR studies. Perhaps this is because of a fear of discrediting the YPAR approach or for fear of creating suspicion about the quality of knowledge produced. In navigating the intricacies of power differentials I recognise that the practice of YPAR takes a great deal of time and energy to forge and maintain meaningful relationships which is not always recognised in research accounts. Therefore, by sharing my

research strategies and accounts of my critical self-reflections and reflexivity I hope to assist researchers to tackle some of the challenges of YPAR while resisting the definitive solutions that might constrain its heuristic endeavour (Lenette et al 2019).

YPAR in primary schools alters relationships among stakeholders by creating space and roles where children interrogate a problem they define, research it and determine possible solutions (voice, space, audience and influence). This process alters power via shifts in knowledge production and thus opens a space for children to have more say in the practices within their school setting. This study seeks to add to research literature that reveals the nuances and complexities of such cross-generational research.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

Introduction

As stated in chapter 1, the goals of this research are to address research questions regarding 'how' (Cleland 2017). Therefore, I chose to adopt a qualitative research approach, which allows me to explore the quality of cross-generational relationships during research activities while facilitating a YPAR study. In this chapter I begin by describing why I chose qualitative research and in particular how Freirean critical theory became the framework for this research. Then, I outline how YPAR aligns with Article 12 (UN 1989) and the Lundy (2007) model of participation described in chapter 2.

Qualitative Research

In an attempt to co-produce research that provided thick description and a glimpse of what could be, I needed epistemological and ontological insights that alerted me to situate and determine the purposes, meanings and uses of the research act (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005, p.335). Rather than conceiving of theories as abstract frameworks, holding strong truth claims, I adopted a pragmatic understanding of theories, which views them as tools (Garnier 2014) and assessed their value according to the task to be accomplished (Poretti 2018).

Historically educational research was guided by a positivist paradigm. This is a worldview that reifies scientific research methods, for example, experiments, observations, measuring behaviours in order to find an objective constant truth and universal laws that can be generalised to all (Mukherji and Albon 2018). In positivist research, researchers stand outside a situation and objectively investigate it scientifically. Very often in educational research this involved academics from outside the educational setting studying educators and children or introducing and measuring the impact of specific interventions developed by the academics themselves, often without any input from those being studied (O'Toole 2020). However some researchers now tend to acknowledge the limitations of positivism when investigating human beings in context (e.g. Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006; O'Toole et al 2019; Rogoff 2003; Steinberg et al 1995). Therefore, in recent years, educational research has drawn on more nuanced paradigms such as interpretivism/constructivism,

which rejects the notion of one objective truth generalisable to all people and contexts (Mukherji and Albon 2018). Rather, research in this vein sees knowledge as socially constructed and situated within human values and contexts. It seeks to understand the complexities of human experience from multiple perspectives and is an interactive research process between the researcher and the researched (O'Toole 2020). Within this paradigm, no attempt is made to find a single answer to a problem, but rather behaviour is seen as context-dependent, relying on factors such as perspective, language and the values of the researcher and the researched (Blair 2010).

I recognised that this perspective can be further expanded into a critical paradigm, recognising the impact of power dynamics that shape the context of people's lives (Freire 1970). Critical approaches to research are similar to interpretive approaches in that they reject all claims of objective truth, but the difference lies in how truth is seen to be constructed. The critical paradigm views reality as constructed on the basis of power and truth as a system of socio-political power (Lather 2006). Critical research focuses on the subjective experiences, perspectives and views of those who have traditionally been the subjects of research (Giangreco and Taylor 2003). Important to a critical perspective is the idea that the researcher is a key part of the human equation making up the research situation (Mukherji and Albon 2018).

Such paradigmatic shifts have allowed for the development of new methodologies for educational research that move beyond positivist ideas of scientific measurement of outcomes. In recent years there has been an increasing recognition of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and in particular Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), which is a specific form of action research involving the active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge, the promotion of critical awareness that leads to change and the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation and dissemination of the research process (McIntyre 2008). YPAR in educational settings views the adults and children as co-researchers, with agency and capacity to contribute, rather than subjects upon whom research is conducted (O'Toole 2020).

I noted that key features of such an advocacy/participatory paradigm include a focus upon a political agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, their institutions, and the researchers' lives (Creswell 2009, p.9). In this type of research practical and collaborative action inquiry is conducted with rather than on others (Creswell 2009; Guba and Lincoln 2005; Heron and Reason 1997). This worldview focuses on the needs of groups and aims to be emancipatory in that it provides a voice for participants, raises consciousness or advances an agenda for change to improve the lives of the participants (Creswell 2009, p.9). It has much in common with critical research and pedagogy (Freire 1970). In conceptualising an Irish primary school as a site for undertaking YPAR, I sought to make the research as collaborative and participatory as possible. Therefore Freirean critical theory provided the framework for this research which examines how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of a YPAR study in a primary school.

Freirean Critical Theory

Freirean Critical theory (also known as critical pedagogy) provided a theoretical framework to examine power dynamics during the facilitation of cross-generational research and to surface factors that can promote or undermine YPAR. Critical theory was chosen as it does not end with theory but rather focuses on praxis or the mode of translating knowledge into action (Saunders and Wong 2020). The Freirean concept of freedom (Freire 1972) positions children as active agents who engage with problems that are personally meaningful and through engagement gain agency to enact change (Freire 2000). It encourages children to be part of the conversation as creators of information and suggestions for change (Freire 1972). It urges an adult facilitator to adopt child-centred research methods.

Freirean critical theory pushes adult facilitators to surface power dynamics in the research group and the larger school community. Researching with a critical lens calls for a consideration of the processes and systems that may prevent child co-researchers from having their say, as well as the need to critique the ability of a YPAR study to reduce these systems and power structures. It also pushes the adult researcher to reflect on how biases colour their approach to research and in doing so, it offers a model for a more inclusive research practice (Saunders and Wong 2020).

Throughout this qualitative research there was also the need to focus on the concept of authority (Freire 1972) and to be aware of the trap of over-simplification of a progressivist approach to participatory research. By this I am referring to the possible tyranny/dark side of participation (Bouchard 2016; Cooke and Kothari 2001) where behind the equality rhetoric and curtain of meaningful involvement the adult researcher may regulate research for their own purposes (Irwin 2018; Roura 2021). To avoid this, as the adult facilitator, I attempted to adopt a Freirean problem-posing approach that emphasises dialogue, critical thinking and active participation of the child co-researchers rather than a banking approach (Freire 1970/2003) while facilitating the YPAR study. By using a problem-posing approach the aim is to create a more equitable and dynamic environment that fosters critical consciousness and empowers children to become active agents of change in their school community (ibid).

Informed by Freirean critical theory consideration of the freedom-authority binary informed my practice which was constantly accountable and open to critique (Freire 2005; Irwin 2012, 2018). For Freire the authority of the critical teacher/ adult researcher is dialectical (Freire 2000; Kincheloe et al 2017) where the goal is to create an environment in which critical learning incidents (Soini 2012) can emerge through the process of meaningful engagement and enquiry (Giroux and McLaren 1986). Similar to Freire I am not ruling out the authority of the adult researcher/teacher but rather resituating it in a more accountable and organic setting (Freire 1996, 2000; Irwin 2018), where the task of emancipation must remain a process and must never become objectified or turned into a formula (Freire 1992; Freire and Torre 1994; Irwin 2018). I tried to heed Freire's keen warnings against progressive conceit where adults may consider themselves to have transcended oppression and find themselves blinded to the oppressive aspects of their own practices and supposedly emancipatory approaches (Freire 1972, 2000, 2005). YPAR is a method that acknowledges issues illuminated by critical theorists and offers a process that allows children to be co-constructors of a research study (Bettencourt 2018). Ozer and Douglas (2015, p.30) build on this suggestion by proposing YPAR as a process that guides children through the iterative process of collective research and reflection to understand the situations in which they find themselves and use that knowledge to take action to improve those settings.

Freire's critical theory emerged as a collective and empowering process of learning that enables people develop new knowledge that will help them to identify what they would like to change and the actions they will take to achieve this (Sanders 2020). Freire's philosophy demands dialogue and ultimately social awareness as a way to overcome domination and oppression among and between human beings (Torre 1994, p.431). His theory recognises that both children and adults should be seen as subjects involved in the wakening of a critical consciousness of reality (ibid). Critics of Freire's philosophical perspective (e.g. Au 2009, Glass 2001; Harris 2011) contest that his work is too simplistic and fails to recognise the complex, multifaceted and contradictory nature of differential power relationships. While I accept this criticism and recognise that it can create limitations in Freirean thinking, I still hold that the key concepts of (i) critical consciousness (conscientization), (ii) the dialogical process of reflection and action (praxis), and (iii) where the strict hierarchy of power and authority traditionally exercised by teachers over students is reduced (Freire 2000) are sufficiently coherent and robust to inform my research.

Youth Participatory Action Research

YPAR's origins in critical pedagogy inform its role as a pedagogical approach based on a conception of teaching and learning through collaborative and transformative inquiry (Caraballo et al 2017). As a participatory methodology, YPAR is epistemologically primarily centred in who is involved in the conception, design, implementation, analysis, dissemination and action-based impact of research, rather than a specific set of methods that are employed (ibid, p.317; Fine and Torre 2019). YPAR recognises children as intellectual beings capable of engaging in the practice of critical investigation of community issues and the production of viable, usable knowledge (ibid, p.315). YPAR challenges who has the right to produce and disseminate knowledge by placing children at the centre of knowledge production. YPAR, the Lundy (2007) model of participation and childhood studies are all child-centred frameworks that prioritise agency, voice and active engagement of children in matters that affect their lives. These frameworks can be integrated in practice to create comprehensive participatory action research initiatives.

YPAR projects position children as knowers, researchers and agents of change in areas ranging from bullying (Koudelka 2020; O'Brien and Dadswell 2020), health promotion

(Anselma et al 2019, 2020; Mathikithela and Wood 2021), active citizenship (Prati et al 2020), child refugees (Holsen et al 2024), children who fall behind in school (Zeller-Berkman et al 2020), mental health (Rocha et al 2022) and school facilities (Green et al 2023).

Despite the growing advocacy and implementation of PAR methodologies in education-based settings, scholars (e.g. Kirby 2020; Spyrou 2011) warn against the constraining aspects of such approaches which are entangled within broader discourses, practices and power relations between children and adults.

YPAR is used by schools and community organisations to gather and understand child and youth perspectives. It is a process where children are co-constructors of a research study and in doing so accepts and responds to the notion that children not only have the right to be listened to as stated in Article 12 (UN 1989), but also hold valuable perspectives on issues that affect them (Lansdown 1995). YPAR as a participatory process facilitates children's right to participate by providing them with 'space', 'voice' 'audience' and 'influence' throughout the research process (Lundy 2007). The action component of YPAR works to ensure that perspectives are heard and acted on through the implementation of suggestions for change that seek to address the issues illuminated through the study.

During YPAR children engage in shared decision-making with adult allies and are given the opportunity to express their perspectives throughout the research process (Kornbluh et al 2015). The interrelationship between children's participatory rights and the transformative potential of YPAR are intertwined. YPAR is underpinned by a recognition that participation empowers children and values their contributions (Fielding 2004b; McIntyre et al 2005). Empowerment in YPAR studies involves children with adult aid engaging with power structures which impact on their potential to act, but also involves building their capacity to act through developing new skills, relationships and understandings (Kohfeldt et al 2011). As mentioned, YPAR aligns with Article 12 of the UNCRC by enacting the right to express their views, which are then given due weight throughout the research process. In YPAR then, children take on the role of expert witnesses (Flutter and Rudduck 2004) as they identify and respond to issues which matter to them. School-based YPAR creates the possibility for meaningful partnerships between adults and children where children are collaborative change agents in a key setting in their lives. They share what they discover

with school leaders and make a difference by influencing school policy and practice (Roberts and Nash 2009).

Although many studies have been described as utilizing a YPAR orientation in research addressing children's issues (e.g. Clark and Moss 2001; Frost 2007; Foster-Fishman et al 2010; Kellett et al 2010; Ren and Langhout 2010; Lundy et al 2011; Hawkins 2015; Coyne and Carter 2018) great variability exists in the degree to which children are partners in the true spirit of YPAR (Jacques et al 2013). Similar to Carter and Coyne (2018) when reviewing YPAR studies, it was noted that claims from researchers that a participatory research approach was used were not always reflective of actual participation from child partners. The distinction between children's participation as research subjects or as co-constructors of research was often blurred. Furthermore, there is limited knowledge on power dynamics within adult-child research teams and strategies employed by adult researchers to involve children in research decision-making processes in YPAR studies. This study therefore sought to explore the 'messy, fraught and ambiguous processes of children's participation' (Gallagher 2008a, p.404) while engaging in systematic generation and analysis of data for the purpose of acting and making changes (Gillis and Jackson 2002, p.214) on an Irish primary school playground. Specifically it sought to explore how power circulates as both child co-researchers and a teacher acting as an adult ally navigate a YPAR.

YPAR with Children

YPAR a subset of PAR was born out of concerns that traditional social science research methods may fail to capture the textured realities of children's lives (Cammarota and Fine 2008). YPAR strives to privilege the co-production of knowledge of and with children, and to emphasise their agency in facilitating social change (Smith et al 2021). In PAR studies agency is seen as the capacity that people have to act on their surroundings and as a tool in increasing their levels of empowerment (Jans 2004; Lee 2001; Neale 2004; Prout 2005; Smith and Bjerke 2009; Bjerke 2011; Russell et al 2009; Tremblay and Gutberlet 2010). Changes towards co-construction and co-design of research studies can greatly benefit the integrity, quality and appropriateness of the research and potentially contribute to a shift in power where participants can come to co-own the research (Spaaij et al 2018). An aspiration of YPAR is that children might transition from participants who are being

researched, to collaborators who are *researching* (Smith et al 2021, p.129, emphasis in original). To achieve this, the experiences and knowledge of children are (re)positioned as essentially valuable, useful for exchange and dissemination and largely equivalent to academic expertise (Kindon et al 2007).

The alignment of power and control within the research process is critical in participatory action research (Spaaij et al 2018). As Cornwall and Jewkes (1995, p.1668) note, the most striking difference between PAR and conventional methodologies lies in 'who defines research problems and who generates, analyses, represents, owns and acts on the information which is sought'. These issues affect all phases of the research process: from the development of research questions through to the communication of the results for action (Frisby et al 2005). YPAR therefore positions children as knowledgeable actors. They are not subjects to be tested with a focus on collecting predetermined outcomes or outputs. Rather, they are potential agents in the research process who possess skills, knowledge and experiences to offer insights (Darnell et al 2016, p.572). Therefore in PAR, power is decentralised, and through collaboration, the researched become the researchers and are given opportunities to actively participate in the research process (Dentith et al 2012; McCartan et al 2012).

Much YPAR which increasingly engages children and young people as co-researchers or peer researchers in all stages of the research process has happened over the last two decades (e.g. Bautista 2012; Bautista et al 2013; Berg Powers and Allaman 2012; Bertrand et al 2017; Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008; Enright 2010; Fine 2008; Fox and Fine 2015; Garcia and Smith 2015; Jones 2004; McIntyre 2000; Mirra et al 2015; Mitra and Serriere 2012; Rubin et al 2017; Mathikithela and Wood 2021; Holsen et al 2024). In these research projects children and young people undertook 'their own ... critical and collective inquiry, reflection and action' (Cammarota and Fine 2008, p.2). Through a focus on contributing to the solution (Cahill 2011), they are recognised as 'competent citizens with a right to participate and a responsibility to serve their communities' (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006, p.3). Adults who facilitate YPAR believe that such research is necessarily collaborative, oriented to change and visibly political (Hawkins 2015, p.467). In common with others (e.g. Cammarota and Fine 2008; Winn and Winn 2016) I hold the view that it is a strength-based

approach to research that draws out insider knowledge, expertise, capacities, energy and creativity within school communities. Moreover, it moves beyond children as subjects, beyond tokenistic participation (Hart 1992) to integral participation where they are agents with a vested interest in the process and the outcome (Callingham 2013, p.52).

Similar to Brydon-Miller et al (2011, p.389) I agree that YPAR creates openings for cross-generational dialogue, trust and local knowledge production as it stems from the understanding that knowledges are plural and that those who have been systematically excluded from knowledge generation need to be active participants in the research process, especially when it is about them. The cross-generational transfer of leadership, trust and resources (Foundation for Young Australians 2013, p.1) to enable children to meet the challenges that YPAR offers makes it clear that what needs to change are the beliefs and attitudes of adults towards children and their role in society more than the methods and techniques employed. Such a shift in perception allows new forms of partnerships to emerge (ibid).

In Mitra and Serriere's (2012 and 2015) research students in an elementary school engaged in YPAR as a student voice initiative to change salad options in their school canteen. This effort to change school lunch policy provides an example of a way students' everyday concerns can be entry points for helping them question policy. By identifying, questioning and seeking change in their school the 'salad girls' learned that they have the right to engage in school decision-making processes and leverage change (Mitra and Serriere 2015). Their student inquiry process consisted of students partnering with teachers to collaborate (space), exchange viewpoints and engage in problem-solving activities (Mitra and Serriere 2015; Rubin 2012). The 'salad girls' acquired the skills (voice) to participate as partners in inquiry activities rather than as 'recipients' of knowledge (Mitra and Serriere 2015, p.105). In the process students' perspectives moved from personal inquiry toward thinking more collectively and critically about the needs of all students in the school (ibid, p.107). By generating data, they learned how to draw on evidence rather than their own opinions alone (ibid). Core YPAR processes were followed in the implementation of this project: (a) iterative integration of research and action, (b) training and practice of research skills, (c) practice of strategic thinking and strategies for influencing change, and (d) adults' sharing of

power with students in the research and action process (Ozer 2016; Ozer et al 2010). Support from adults (i.e. skilful scaffolding) promoted the girls' sense of ownership and development of skills to communicate with other children and adult stakeholders (audience) their suggestions for change (Larson et al 2005; Mitra 2004; Ozer and Douglas 2015; Vygotsky 1978). However in this example of YPAR there is no exploration of how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of the study.

Conclusion

Freirean critical theory was chosen as the theoretical framework to explore power dynamics during the facilitation of the YPAR study. This theory pushed me as the adult facilitator to consider how biases, processes and systems may encourage or discourage child co-researchers' participation as change agents in their school. This required the adoption of a problem-posing approach. YPAR was chosen as it aligned with Article 12 (UN 1989) and Lundy's (2007) model of participation. All recognise the importance of creating a safe environment in which children's knowledge and experiences are valued and genuinely heard (Cammarota and Fine 2008; Fox 2013; Lundy 2007). In YPAR adult researchers and child co-researchers in dialogical spaces both share and receive knowledge to make informed decisions on what changes should happen.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter initially describes the research study context and the research methods that were used during the YPAR study. The research methods used to explore power dynamics, the role of the adult researcher in cross-generational research and the tensions that arise while facilitating a YPAR study in an Irish primary school context are then outlined. Next, the ethical processes involved when undertaking a YPAR study are stated. Finally, I present the process of data analysis and criteria for evaluating the findings of this study.

The Research Setting and Study Context

The YPAR study took place in a Catholic managed co-educational Irish urban school. In the 2013-14 academic year the school had an enrolment of 620 children from Junior Infants to 6th class and an enrolment of 598 children in the academic year 2014-2015. The school had 24 mainstream classes, a senior reading class and an ASD unit. The school moved to a new location in August 2013. From September 2013 to February 2014 the senior playground ('yard') catered for 171 children from 5th (n = 81) and 6th (n = 90). These children were aged 10-12 years old. Their playground was located to the rear of the school building and was known as the 'back yard' (fig 4.1, 4.2), an area which consists of a basketball court with an adjoining 5m x 9m tarmac area. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the green areas (i.e. school playing field and the grassy area adjoining the 'back yard') were not complete and were inaccessible. At the end of January 2014, the school playground allocations were changed by school management. Fifth and sixth class children were allocated another school playground (fig 4.3, 4.4). Their new playground (Senior Yard) was the size of 2 basketball courts and in 2014 they did not have access to a grassy area (fig 4.3, 4.4). They had to share this playground with fourth class children (n = 65). This meant that the age range of the children using this school playground was 9-12-year-olds. The number of children using this area increased to 236 in 2014, reducing to 216 in 2014/15, still in excess of the original 171 children. The time the children spend on the school playground at breaktime is 15 minutes (sos) and 25-30 minutes at lunchtime (lón).



Figure 4.1 Back Yard – 5th & 6th class children’s playground August 2013 – February 2014



Figure 4.2 Back Yard - 5th & 6th class children’s playground August 2013 – February 2014



Figure 4.3 Senior Yard – 4th, 5th & 6th class children’s playground February 2014 – June 2015

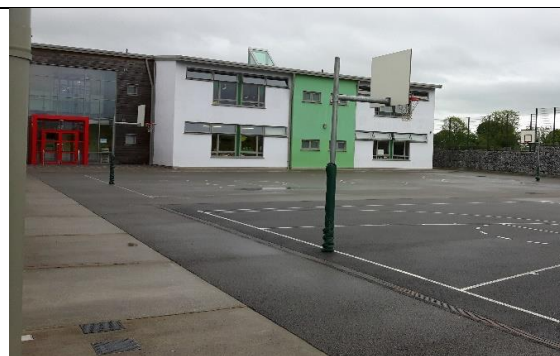


Figure 4.4 Senior Yard - 4th, 5th & 6th class children’s playground February 2014 – June 2015

Access to the School

Following the Hallowe’en mid-term break of the 2013-2014 academic year I met with the principal, deputy principal and a member of the board of management and members of the parents’ council to explain the research objectives (11/11/2013). I explained that my proposed research was to engage children in collaborative research to investigate possible ways of improving play opportunities during breaktimes on the school playground. The proposed research was discussed at a Parents’ Council meeting (18/11/2013) and a Board of Management meeting (18/11/2013). They suggested that I meet with the teachers ($n = 3$) and children from fifth class ($n = 81$) and that parents be given written notification in the school newsletter which was due for distribution in late November (26/11/2013). Following on from this there was a meeting with the three fifth class teachers (27/11/2013) where the research objectives were outlined and content of information sheets for parents and children were explained (see discussion later and Appendix A and B).

As a class teacher I had firsthand experience and understanding of the research context. However, insider forms of research typically present unexpected and ongoing ethical dilemmas for a researcher (Poulton 2021). These dilemmas often stem from pre-existing and ongoing working relationships with child co-researchers. The ongoing and sometimes unpredictable nature of these dilemmas means that ongoing reflexivity was required, where I focused on what it means to act to diminish power asymmetries.

Recruiting the Young Researchers (Child Co-researchers)

In late November 2013 (28/11/2013) guided by the wording of the children's information sheet (Appendix B) I explained to the fifth-class children (n = 81) in their classrooms that the goal of the research was to investigate the school playground, and that the co-researchers would choose how they would like to conduct the investigation. I explicated that research guidelines required a child's assent as well as their parents' consent for them to participate in the research project (DYCA 2012). I stressed that unlike general school activities there was no compulsion to participate and if a child agreed to participate all information was confidential and they could withdraw from the research study at any stage without giving a reason and without consequence.

The process of me, a teacher, inviting children to volunteer as advisors and members of the researcher group (YRs) could be seen as creating opportunities, or spaces, for child involvement and, therefore, for facilitating the implementation of Article 12 of UNCRC (Lundy 2007; Robinson 2011, p.444). I endeavoured to explain to them that I would be wearing my researcher hat and would be acting as a facilitator for the co-researchers. My goal was to include them in research with a more active role than just being informants (Brostrom 2012, p.6) and to investigate how this process unfolds.

Devine (2002, p.312) commented that school and schooling is experienced as something 'done to' children. Teachers and school leaders often influence the recruitment process during school-based research (Heath et al 2013; Kirby 2020). The power imbalance in the staff-student relationships may be particularly evident within a primary school when the class teacher's choice of volunteers is based on accepting only those considered to possess the specific, desirable characteristics that prospective researchers should possess (Frost

2007; Heath et al 2007; Kellett 2011; Keddie 2015; Kirby 2020; McIntyre et al 2005). Conscious of this I did not ask teachers to choose volunteers, nor did I ask for volunteers immediately, instead I returned the following week during a wet lunchtime (10/12/2013) when class teachers were not present and visited the 3 classrooms to gauge interest in the research study and to answer any questions the children had about the research study. When I entered each classroom I explained that the purpose of my visit was to talk about the proposed research. I encouraged them to continue with their chats and their board games. I did not demand their attention or insist on silence in the room as I walked around the classroom I went from desk to desk and enquired if they would like to hear more about this proposed research. Some children engaged with me while others continued with their board games and chats. Seven children expressed interest (10/12/2013). I met with them the following day (11/12/2013) for a ten-minute meeting during lunchtime and explained the contents of the information sheets and the informed consent and assent forms (Appendix B). I gave them envelopes containing parent and child information sheets and consent forms to take home. I stressed that my mobile phone number was on the forms and if parents wished to speak to me that they were quite welcome to do so. I phoned all parents the following day (12/12/2013) and briefly outlined my research objectives. As defining exactly how the research study might evolve is contrary to the emergent character of YPAR, I was not able to give an exact timeline or to fully inform parents or children exactly what they were volunteering for. I stressed that they should not feel compelled to give consent. Six parents consented to their children being co-researchers and these children also provided written informed assent.

Meetings with The Young Researchers (YRs)

For the YPAR study, a research team of six students was formed in January 2014. It consisted of three girls and three boys from fifth class (10- and 11-year-olds). The team of YRs (the 'lunch bunch') met twice a week at lunchtime (approximately 20-minute per meeting) across three weeks (January 2014) prior to commencement of the YPAR study. In the first meeting (13/01/2014), the group shared their understanding of research (i.e. doing surveys to gather data and presenting results in Maths lessons). I explained what YPAR was and shared an example of child-led research (i.e. Mitra and Serriere 2012). In subsequent meetings, UNCRC Article 12, responsibility of researchers, respect and confidentiality were

explicated. I stressed that while they were fifth class students and users of the school playground, they would have to be impartial and discrete in their duties as researchers. During an early research meeting (16/01/2014) a research contract was drawn up by the YRs to provide evidence of how ‘authentic participation’ would be facilitated throughout the YPAR study (this will be presented in Chapter 6). In line with good ethical practice I was always conscious to renegotiate consent at the beginning and end of each meeting. The goal was to ensure that the elements of space and voice according to Lundy’s model of participation were created (Lundy 2007).

My decision to meet in school during lunchtime addressed issues of practicality and the individual safety of the children and the researcher. This decision of course meant a sustained engagement with our own identities within the participatory team. Meeting in school meant that the YRs and I were positioned in familiar roles as students and teacher. The teacher’s inherent authority can be problematic as it can create an imbalance, where students may feel intimidated or reluctant to express their opinions, ask questions or challenge ideas (Garcia-Moya 2020). This can stifle open dialogue and critical thinking. The explicit power relationships between a class teacher and students were familiar and although problematic in this school-based YPAR, were at least transparent (Gristy 2015, p.376). Table 4.1 presents the data generation methods used during the three cycles of the YPAR study.

YPAR Study Cycle	Sources of Data
Cycle 1	Draw and Write Technique (likes/dislikes) (n = 76) Content Analysis – Codes chosen by YRs Tallies – recorded by YRs Poster Presentation by YRs
Cycle 2	Peer-Paired Interviews (n = 52) Content Analysis – Codes chosen YRs PowerPoint Presentation of Recommendations for Change to Deputy Principal and Principal by YRs
Cycle 3	Mosaic Methods (n= 72): Post it Notes Activities (Games/Activities child participants liked to engage in on School playground) Go-along interviews/ child-led tours (Places where they played on the playground identified) Mapping Activities (suggestions for changes on the school playground)

	Playground Audit ('drone map') Content Analysis of Child Participants' suggestions for change Presentation of Suggestions for Change to Peers (4 th , 5 th and 6 th Classes)
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Table 4.1 Data Generation Methods Used during the YPAR Study with Child Co-Researchers

Additional detail of the YPAR processes is outlined in Appendix H. The next section presents a rationale for the use of draw and write technique as a participatory research method in cycle 1 of the YPAR study.

Draw and Write Technique

The use of the draw and write technique has its origins in studies relating to health and psychology (Bradding and Horstman 1999; Williams et al 1989). There is a growing body of research which uses this method to capture participant voice in educational settings with the aim of effecting change and impacting policy development (Gabhainn and Kelleher 2002; Grano and Turunen 2022; McWhirter 2014). Common to these studies is the use of a basic approach of asking participants to respond to a researcher's enquiry by drawing a picture and then annotating this through written responses, either at the point of construction or during a follow-up interview (i.e. draw, write and tell (Angell et al 2014)). Punch (2002) states that draw and write is a useful tool as it provides time for children to reflect on what they wish to portray, removing the immediacy sometimes present in interviews and provides the child with some control over their form of expression. Problems with the draw and write technique pertain to validity, for children may draw what they are able to depict rather than what they initially imagine (Hartel 2019). In order to avoid this child participants were given the following options: (i) draw only (ii) write only or (iii) draw and write about what they liked and disliked about their school playground during breaktimes and lunchtimes.

This research method is a child-centred technique capable of both qualitative and quantitative analysis (McWhirter 2014). It has proved to be a versatile research tool across all age groups in education settings whether used alone, followed up with focus groups (McWhirter 2002) or alongside other methods where data can be triangulated with other sources (McWhirter et al 2008). A major determinant in adopting this method was the child co-researchers' (YRs) views that draw and write technique supports more inclusive and

participatory research in that it gives access to a group who may be excluded as a result of their limited verbal skills and vocabulary (Sewell 2011, p.178). The draw and write technique used in cycle 1 involved asking child participants from fifth and sixth class (n = 76) to draw pictures and write comments about what they liked and disliked about playtimes on their school playground (11/02/2014).

It was planned to conduct face to face interviews subsequently with the child participants in which drawings and comments would serve as a springboard for commentary and questions (Hartel 2019). Without the informant's firsthand commentary, it was noted at a research meeting that the visual and textual data may be difficult to interpret therefore it was proposed to the YRs that a draw, write and *tell* (Angell et al 2014) technique similar to Grano and Turunen (2022) should be adopted to elicit an overarching narrative (Hartel 2019).

Peer-Paired Interviews

Peer-paired interviews were conducted during cycle 2 of the YPAR study. When the YRs were consulted three of them stated that they would like to conduct interviews with their peers (influence) to identify what changes needed to happen on the school playground to improve play opportunities. The YRs suggested that interview questions should be grounded in the findings of the draw and write technique in order to further explore suggestions for change. Questions focused on children's activity preferences, school playground facilities and suggestions for changes to improve their experience of playtimes. In a research meeting it was thought that by pairing child participants according to age, gender and familiarity (i.e. friends together) that they would feel safer and more willing to express their opinions (McGarry 2015).

Peer-paired interviews represent a viable method for generating qualitative data from child participants. For example, Thompson et al (2001) used paired interviews of children to measure attitudes and perceptions about physical activity and motivations to proactively change their activity levels. Porcellato et al (2002) examined the appropriateness of focus groups with children and concluded that they were viable, but needed to be small, homogenous and interactive to maintain a high level of interest and participation.

Small group interviews (i.e. peer-paired interviews) provide unique opportunities for those who are listening (interviewers) to discover the meaning of events from children's perspectives (ibid). The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed (Krueger 2006). With guidance from the adult researcher the content was analysed, codes chosen and recommendations for change decided. These were presented to school leaders with decision making powers.

Mosaic Methods (Cycle 3 of the YPAR Study)

In cycle 3 the YRs decided to use a compendium of methods. A post it note activity was chosen as the YRs considered it to be a very suitable method to focus child participants' attention and to facilitate individual or collaborative brainstorming. Its goal was to focus child participants' thinking on activities they engaged in on the school playground during breaktimes and lunchtimes. It was considered a suitable icebreaker as it made the data generation process more interactive (Truscott et al 2019). It allowed child participants to communicate in a non-threatening manner and facilitated the YRs to gain insights into child participants' preferences. It fostered a sense of ownership making the child participants active co-researchers (ibid).

Next the child participants were asked to engage in a go-along interview (child-led tours) where the child participants led the YRs on a tour of the playground. The child participants indicated where they engaged in the activities identified in the post it note activity. The go-along walking interview was a mixture of an interview and participant observation (Kenney 2017). During the outing the YRs asked questions, listened and observed where the child participants liked to play. What is key, is that child participants made all the decisions, including the route to be followed, the length of time the walking interview would take and what they would like to show the researchers (Clark and Moss 2001; Emmel and Clark 2009). The child participants were in control of the interview; they were regarded as experts. Walking alongside a participant is regarded as an inclusive process compared with the traditional sit-down interview because it is viewed more as a partnership, thus reducing power imbalances (Kenney 2017).

Following the go-along interview the child participants went indoors and engaged in a mapping activity where they recorded possible suggestions for change. The use of the participatory drawing activity (i.e. mapping activity) following the go-along interview had a further advantage in that, unlike in interviews where an instantaneous response is expected, the research participants were given time to reflect on their responses, which encouraged active conceptualization and contemplation (Gauntlett 2007). This additional time for reflection also gave the participants an opportunity to craft a more complete depiction, which is more difficult to achieve linguistically in a brief interview or survey (Literat 2013, p.87). In accordance with Freire's dialogic pedagogy, this technique discourages the sense of a hierarchy between researcher and subject, and it is comparatively more horizontal and more ethical than alternative textual strategies (ibid, p.88). In order to assuage the challenge of misinterpretation, because of the imaginative and creative nature of children's visual depictions, a subsequent discussion of these drawings with the YRs (closing activity) was important (Gauntlett 2005, 2007; Mitchell 2006; Young and Barrett 2001). Adopting this strategy and encouraging the participants to talk about their own drawings puts the YRs in the position of the listener and enables the participants to lead the interpretation process - which is vital, given that the visual evidence is a subjective product of the participants' own perceptions and lived realities (Literat 2013, p.94).

The YRs also conducted a playground audit (Appendix J). This entailed an investigation of 'what' happens and 'where' it happens (Armitage 2005) on the school playground. This was called the 'drone map'. During the analysis process similar images were grouped together (i.e. included areas for tag games, ball games, skipping, chatting, n=10) and were compared with the 'drone' map. Possible implementable solutions were refined to 3 options and presented to their peers. Engaging the YRs in content analysis was important to ensure that that child participants' viewpoints were represented and suggestions for change were reflective of their needs. Furthermore it respected their right to participate in decisions that affect them (UN 1989; Lundy 2007; DCEDIY 2021, 2024).

The Adult Researcher's Role in the YPAR Study

In order to explore research relationships and how power dynamics operate within school based YPAR it was important to generate evidence from the perspective of the adult researcher. This involved utilising a range of data collection strategies, as detailed in the following sections. In addition, I address researcher reflexivity and detail the ethical considerations associated with the study, how data were analysed, as well as evaluative criteria.

Gathering Data from the YRs

All research meetings with the YRs from cycle 1, 2 and 3 were recorded and transcribed. Table 4.2 outlines the agenda and duration of each meeting. These meetings constituted informal open-ended group interviews. This approach to interviewing allowed me to gain insight into how the YRs perceived their roles and my role in the YPAR study. It provided opportunities for opening dialogue which is central to PAR (Fals Borda 1991). For example when participatory artefacts such as 'draw and write' surveys and transcripts of peer-paired interviews were used to focus conversations during data analysis research meetings in cycle 1 and 2. It was this discussion and questioning which allowed me to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words (Bogdan and Biklen 2007).

	Agenda	Duration
Cycle 1 Meetings Prior to Survey (6 x lunchtime meetings)	Introduction to Research Examples of YPAR studies Respect & Confidentiality, UNCRC Article 12 Research Contract Recruitment – Script Rehearsal Online Research - Survey Ideas x 2 Design of Draw & Write Survey Preparation for Conducting Research	6 x 20 mins
Cycle 1 Data Analysis	Sorting Data – likes/dislikes Descriptive Labels Recording on Tally Sheets Recording - Pie Charts and Posters	4 x 20 mins
Cycle 2 Preparation for Peer-Paired Interviews	Example from Research Interview Questions Recruitment of 4 th Class Students Preparation for Pilot Interviews x 2 & Review	20 mins 20 mins 20 mins 1 hour
Cycle 2 Data Analysis	Checking Interview Transcripts for accuracy Content Analysis of 'Likes' Content Analysis of 'Dislikes' Suggestions for Change Preparation & Rehearsal of PowerPoint Presentation Presentation to Principal and Deputy Principal	45 mins 45 mins 45 mins 45 mins 45 mins 30 mins

	Check Up meeting with YRs	20 mins
Cycle 3 Preparation for Focus Group Interviews	Examples from Research Go-along Interviews Mapping Activity Post It/Sticky Note Activity Pilot Interviews x 2 & Review	20 mins 20 mins 20 mins 20 mins 2hrs 20 mins
Cycle 3 'Drone' Map	Explanation of Task Construction of Map	20 mins 1 hr (3 x 20)
Cycle 3 Data Analysis	Assessment of Images – inclusion/exclusion Comparison with 'Drone' Map Preparation & Rehearsal of Presentation Reactions to Presentations Preparation for meeting with principal Feedback on 'Zones'	1 hour 2 x 20 mins 2 x 20 mins 20 mins 2 x 20 mins 3 x 20 mins

Table 4.2 Details of Research Meetings from Cycles 1, 2 and 3

Reflexivity

Reflexivity lies at the heart of, and is fundamental to, good qualitative research (Delamont 2016). The core principles are the employment of a tough-minded version of self-consciousness throughout every stage of the research and recognising that research on humans always involves interactions in which both sides are interpreting everything (ibid). Delamont reminds qualitative researchers that he/she is their own best data collection instrument only if they are continuously self-conscious about their role(s), interaction(s), theoretical concepts, the empirical material as it accumulates, readings and writings.

Reflexivity involved recognising and acknowledging the influence of my position as researcher within the structural context of the YPAR (Fook 1999) and required the development of awareness of the influence of assumptions and beliefs that shaped my judgement, decision and behaviours over the course of the research process (Etherington 2004; Gonnerman et al 2015). Reflexivity was a position and reflectivity was a process (Fook 1999). Reflective practice required my reflection on the research process my actions and how to alter my practice accordingly (ibid).

Making reflexive entries (table 4.3 and 4.4) in my research journal is a strategy I used to examine my 'personal assumptions and goals' and to clarify my 'individual belief systems and subjectivities' (Ahern 1999). This was a process of 'internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation' on my positionality (Berger 2015, p.220). The intention was to make clear how my own experiences, values, and position of privilege influenced the ways chosen to do this research and to represent research findings (Harrison et al 2001, p.325). Furthermore, using

a reflexive practice, allowed me to have a voice separate from the collective voice of the children in the YPAR study.

By writing my inner speech (Archer 2007) in a research journal I enhanced my own self-awareness as a researcher. For example, through writing reflections on recordings of research meetings such as analysis of questionnaire data in cycle 1, decisions on interview questions in cycle 2, analysis of interview data in cycle 2, analysis of go-along interview data in cycle 3, evidence of an audit trail of my role as an adult researcher was provided and outlined my methodological and ethical concerns during the research process.

The research journal (RJ) was also a space for critical reflection where I recorded reflections on interactions, challenges and negotiations that occurred during research meetings and presentations of suggestions for change. It was an important tool to facilitate me to consider (i) what is going well, (ii) what is not going well and why, (iii) what steps should be taken next in the YPAR study.

Every evening after conducting research meetings or facilitating the YRs to conduct research I listened to recordings and noted observations and recorded reflections in my research journal. I often shared these entries with the YRs (e.g. in cycle 2 following PowerPoint presentation to principal and deputy principal) and to two work colleagues who acted as critical friends (pseudonyms Maria and Oonagh).

Cycle 1	12 entries	150-500 words per entry
Cycle 2	18 entries	200-700 words per entry
Cycle 3	15 entries	150-500 words per entry

Table 4.3 Reflexive Journal Entries for Cycle 1, 2 and 3

<p><i>Today's research meeting was tricky. On the one hand I was commending them on their excellent work but then I had to be firm and request that they remove the 'Ideas' poster. They were not pleased. This could mean that my rapport with the group is compromised. I tried to explain the reasons why without coming across as 'all' controlling. (AR RJ 18/02/2014)</i></p>
<p><i>While the YRs were learning how to conduct interviews I feel that the answers given by the child participants were very rigid and lacked depth. The YRs didn't probe for more information. Choosing peer paired Interviewing was putting an old head on young shoulders. They need to get on the yard rather than speaking about the yard remotely. (AR RJ 23/06/2014)</i></p>

Glancing at the numbers from 6th (23%), 5th (46%) and 4th (30.6%) that they interviewed – they chose predominantly people from their own class cohort as they were more comfortable with them. Plus there was that unpleasant experience with the boys from 6th who made a mockery of the interview. A more transparent way of choosing who gets picked is needed. Placing them in charge with no definite guidance on quotas etc is foolish thinking. Giving them responsibilities needs to be more structured with guidance and ‘show how’. (AR RJ 14/06/2014)

Table 4.4 Examples of Reflective Journal Entries

As I spent more time engaging with the YRs and facilitating YPAR, my observations and reflections became more focused by research questions. For example, when the YRs advocated for change during their presentation to school leaders in cycle 2 my focus was on how the YRs used their knowledge and navigated power relations (Table 4.4). Whereas after cycle 2 my prime focus was on what strategies I needed to adopt as the adult researcher to support the YRs as change agents in cycle 3 (Table 4.4).

Research Journal – Field Notes/Participant Observations

Clough and Nutbrown (2002) suggest that observations can be one of the most powerful research methods and have significant impact on qualitative studies. Whilst working as a researcher I was able to observe participants during research meetings and record this information in the form of field notes (i.e. brief jottings in my research journal). Field notes also included any personal and general observations (Scott 1990) within the school environment.

I read the interview transcripts at an adjoining table. Darren kept glancing around then stood up suddenly and left. Rosie fidgeted with her pencil case and glanced furtively at what Emma and Aoife were writing and then wrote on her own document. She seems to be mimicking them and writing down exactly what they wrote. She is not at all comfortable with this research activity. What a pity she is normally very cheerful – she really enjoyed conducting the interviews. (AR RJ 16/06/2014)

Table 4.5 Example of Field Note during Cycle 2

There are 56 observations recorded in my research journal. These observations are predominantly keywords and phrases and are 1-12 words in length. These observations provided prompts for my reflexive entries. For example, noting a particular response from staff and students in cycle 3. By keeping explicit notes of these incidents, it allowed continuation of the action research cyclic process and explicit discussion of my own observations and thoughts. Without field notes and reflexive research journal entries, many of these issues may have been difficult to recall in detail later. The research journal

therefore provided a timeline in which issues raised could be considered within the context of specific research activities at that time.

Interviews with Principal and Class Teacher

Conducting interviews with the school principal and the class teacher served important purposes. The interviews were not only about gathering data but about building partnership and fostering an environment for cross generational research. Firstly, it was hoped that the interviews would secure support and buy-in for the YPAR study. Secondly, through interviewing the school principal an understanding of how material resources could be leveraged to implement research findings would be build. Also the school principal could offer insights into how to integrate recommendations into school practices and policies effectively. Furthermore, interviewing the class teacher would provide feedback on the implementation of research activities during the three cycles of the YPAR study. Also by interviewing the school principal and the 6th class teacher it was underscoring and emphasising the importance of children's inclusion in school decision-making processes.

I conducted face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews with the principal and a 6th class teacher on three occasions to discuss their perspectives on the efficacy and impact of the YPAR study. Each interview commenced with a brief explanation of the aim of the YPAR study. The first interview was conducted with the principal teacher after the PowerPoint presentation in cycle 2. He was asked about his thoughts and reactions to the YRs' suggestions for change. The interview was 28 minutes long. In an interview at the end of cycle 3 (20 minutes) he was asked for feedback on YPAR as a method of facilitating students' suggestions for change. A third interview was conducted with a 6th class teacher at the end of cycle 3 (25 minutes). The teacher was asked to give their opinion on YPAR as a method to facilitate students' views about possibilities for change and to identify perceived challenges to facilitating the YPAR study. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Focus Groups with the YRs

Focus group interviews were used to explore the YRs' thoughts and experiences of participating in the YPAR study. Conducting these focus group interviews was important as it offered opportunities for the YRs to provide their unique viewpoints that might have been otherwise overlooked or misunderstood (Adler et al 2019; Heary and Hennessy 2002;

Kennedy et al 2001). It was hoped that the group dynamic would allow the YRs to build on one another's responses and generate ideas that might not have been thought of in an individual interview (Krueger and Casey 2015). A teaching colleague (pseudonym Maria) conducted focus group interviews with the YRs at the end of cycle 2. Prior to the interviews I explained to the YRs that in order to give everyone time to offer their opinions that it would be preferable to facilitate 2 focus group interviews. They decided that the 3 girls and boys should be interviewed together. We explained to the YRs that the purpose of the interview was to hear their opinions about different aspects of the YPAR study during cycle 1 and 2. At the outset, as discussed later, informed assent was sought from the YRs. The interview commenced with an ice breaker where the YRs were encouraged to describe cycle 1 and 2 of the YPAR study. The interview questions covered the following areas: (i) engagement/enjoyment; (ii) control/ownership; (iii) assistance given by the adult researcher/ research relationship with adult research; (iv) working in a group; (v) what would make the research study better for the YRs going forward (Appendix D). Each interview lasted 25-30 minutes.

I conducted a second focus group interview at the end of cycle 3. Two interactive activities outlined by Lansdown and O'Kane (2014) in their toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation were chosen. The first activity was Footsteps (Hejje) a tool developed and shared by The Concerned for Working Children, India (cited in Lansdown and O'Kane 2014, pp.22-23). This is a method to determine various steps that have been taken to reach a goal. The Footsteps (Hejje) tool was used to assess the scope of the YRs' participation as I felt it could ensure that they defined their own stages of work and evaluated the scope of their participation themselves (ibid, p.23).

Cycle 2 Evaluation by YRs	Focus Interviews x 2	Duration 55 minutes
Cycle 3 Evaluation by YRs	Footsteps (Hejje) Activity Walk through the Project Activity	2 hrs 10 minutes 1 hr 15 minutes

Table 4.6 Evaluative Interviews with the YRs

As the YRs walked through the Footsteps (Hejje) activity they described their engagement in the YPAR study (e.g. recruitment of child participants, administration of the draw and write

survey, conducting peer paired interviews, analysing data, conducting go-along interviews, presenting suggestions for change). Their explanations were audio recorded and images associated with each step were photographed. The following day the interactive 'Walking Through the Project Cycle' activity (Lansdown and O'Kane 2014) was explained to the group. Four cards were used to describe the scope of participation ('Children not involved'; 'Consultative'; 'Collaborative' and 'Child-led'). The YRs 'walked through' the YPAR cycles that they had outlined in the Footsteps (Hejje) activity on the previous day and considered and rated the nature of participation at each stage. Again this interview was audio recorded.

Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was granted by Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC No. A13-011). In addition, this research study has adhered to the *Guidance for Developing Ethical Research Projects Involving Children*, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA 2012) to ensure that the involvement and participation of children in this research project was safe, respectful, meaningful and beneficial. At all stages of this research study children's potential vulnerability to exploitation and the differential power relationships between adults and children were considered (Morrow 2005). The nature of a sustained YPAR project meant there were some specific ethical considerations. Consent was a particularly important consideration because of the YRs' engagement in three YPAR cycles. I collected signed consent and assent forms (Appendix B) from YRs, child participants and their parents. However, the YRs' consent was regularly renegotiated throughout the YPAR study (Cullen and Walsh 2020).

Confidentiality and Anonymity

In this YPAR, due to the nature of school children being co-researchers, and often times interviewing their peers, confidentiality and anonymity were critical ethical considerations (Chabot et al 2012; Smith et al 2003). Alderson and Morrow (2011) argue that children have the same rights to confidentiality that adults have. However, several writers discuss the dilemma between confidentiality and the need to protect children (Alderson 1995; Thomas and O'Kane 1998). Although this project did not intend to ascertain children's views about sensitive topics, there was a risk that children may unexpectedly disclose areas of concern,

such as, for example bullying on the school playground. In the event of a disclosure I planned to discuss with the children that confidentiality could not be guaranteed under these circumstances and that I must adhere to the school's safeguarding procedures. Fortunately, this situation did not arise.

Confidentiality was also preserved in the management of data. All copies of drawings from the mapping activity in cycle 3 were anonymised, as were all other data records generated from questionnaires (cycle 1), paired interviews (cycle 2), post it notes activities (cycle 3) and child-led tours (cycle 3). All YRs were given pseudonyms and data from child participants (e.g. draw and write surveys/questionnaires, transcripts of peer-paired interviews, transcripts of mapping exercises in cycle 3) were given an identifying code.

Data Storage

All data with identifying information (pseudonyms or codes) including interview transcripts, research meeting transcripts, draw and write questionnaires, survey results, video-recordings and audio files were kept in a secure location. Electronic data were stored on my laptop which is password protected and is stored in a locked filing cabinet. Computer stored data were backed up every week onto an external hard drive which was stored in the locked filing cabinet. All identifying information was removed from documentation after collection. All other data, consent forms and documentation from the research were stored in a securely locked filing cabinet.

Data Analysis by the Adult Researcher

The overall data set for analysis included (i) transcripts from research meetings (n= 48), (ii) reflective diary entries (n = 45), (iii) interviews with principal and class teacher (n= 3), (iv) evaluative interviews with YRs at the end of cycle 2 and 3 (n = 4).

While analysis is about making decisions about what matters (Denzin and Lincoln 1986, 2011), I realise that *who* is doing the analysis, the lens I bring to the process, has a profound impact on the subsequent findings that are shared (Denzin and Lincoln 1986, 2011; Mertens 2014). To counteract the impact of my subjectivity on overall analysis of data generated, I have engaged in the parallel activity of reflexivity (outlined earlier) to highlight my experiences and perspectives so as to account for my impact throughout the research

process (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). In this section I outline the approach I took to reflective thematic analysis of the data (Braun and Clarke 2016; 2019a; 2019b; 2022).

Data analysis involved a combination of continuous and summative analysis. During the YPAR study I analysed data generated from research meetings and my research journal and shared these findings (i.e. patterns and initial codes) with the YRs. When all data was generated I looked back at the totality of the research process and conducted a summative analysis to make sense of the journey. I will now outline how I conducted the reflective thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2022).

Summative Analysis

Table 4.7 presents the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022) which I engaged in during data analysis :

Phase	Process
1. Familiarisation	The starting point of 'getting to know' the data involved reading and re-reading textual data, listening to audio data and viewing images. Notes were taken of things that were found interesting and to be explored further.
2. Coding	Data was reread. All the data that captured interesting features relevant to the research questions were grouped with code labels.
3. Initial Theme Generation	Similar codes were clustered and re-clustered to explore potential patterns of shared meaning, united around a core concept.
4. Reviewing and Developing Themes	The initial themes were reviewed and developed to ensure they worked to capture meaningful patterns in relation to the coded collated data and the entire dataset. The story each theme told was considered, as well as the developing an overall analytic story.
5. Refining, Defining and Naming Themes	Themes were further refined through writing short theme definitions that captured the scope and core concept of each theme. A name for each theme was chosen based on its interpretative story.
6. Producing the Report	The final phase finalised the analysis through writing. The analysis coherently weaved together data extracts and analytic commentary to tell the story of each theme. The overall analytic story was contextualised in relation to existing knowledge, and methodological processes were reflexively described.

Table 4.7 The Six Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Initially I grouped data into cycle 1, 2 and 3 sets in order to create a logical and sequential timeline of the research process. I laid out printed copies of research meeting transcripts alongside research journal entries and the YPAR research artefacts (e.g. posters, copies of PowerPoint slides), focus group interviews with the YRs, interviews with the principal teacher and class teacher. I felt that being away from a computer screen and engaging in a hard-copy process would allow for a different mode of interaction with data, that would move me into a different conceptual and physical space for conducting analysis.

But analysis is not in the data, rather it is an active process (Braun et al 2016; Terry et al 2017; Braun and Clarke 2022). Although Braun and Clarke (2013; 2016; 2019a; 2022) offer a six-stage/phase approach to RTA, they emphasise that analysis is not linear and movement back and forth between stages is needed (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2022). The act of reading through the data transcripts made me conscious of the role my subjectivity and identity played in the YPAR study process. It also allowed me to explore how the structural, political and cultural environment of the researchers (AR and YRs), the child participants and the nature of the YPAR study affected the research process (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007).

In keeping with Braun and Clarke (2006; 2022), I started with data familiarisation (phase 1). I listened to the voice recordings several times to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions. The transcribed data and the research journal were then read and re-read several times and cross referenced with transcripts from the research meetings and artefacts from YRs' YPAR study (Cycles 1, 2 and 3). This process of repeated reading, the use of recordings to listen to data and viewing of YPAR artefacts, resulted in further data immersion so as I could start to consider research questions. I used this strategy to help me create an audit trail documenting successes, tensions, struggles and research decisions taken during the data generation stages of cycles 1, 2 and 3 of the YPAR study.

The next phase involved creating codes for the data. Guided by the research questions I systematically reviewed all data and identified interesting aspects in the data items and across data sources and began to note ideas that were related to each research question and that could form the basis of repeated patterns across the data set. I was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2013, 2022) suggestion that good codes capture the essence of what it is about that bit of data that interests the researcher and are informative enough to capture

what was in the data, and their analytic take on it. I followed Braun and Clarke's (2013, 2022) advice that for each code, there is a need to collate together all instances of text where that code appears in the data set. This entailed all data extracts being checked and re-checked, coded, and then collated together within each code. Codes and collated data extracts were recorded in Microsoft Word documents. The coding process required a continual bending back on myself – questioning and querying the assumptions I was making in interpreting and coding the data (Braun and Clarke 2019a, 2022; Braun et al 2022).

In phase three I concentrated on initial theme generation (Braun and Clarke 2022) with the understanding that themes are broader 'patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organizing concept - a shared core idea' (Clarke and Braun 2017, p.297). The research questions acted as a guide for preliminary theme development, helping determine 'what is, and what is not, relevant in terms of potential clusters of patterned meaning' (Terry et al 2017, p.35). Themes were generated based on my perceptions of broad patterns of meaning across codes (Trainor and Bundon 2020). I looked for connections between several codes to generate a central organising concept (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.225; 2022)

Initial Categories	Codes	Themes
<i>Taking ownership</i> <i>Taking control of the research process</i> <i>Contribution - Designing questionnaire</i> <i>Recruiting participants</i> <i>YRs driving the interview process</i> <i>Power over who participates</i> <i>Capacity building</i> <i>Greater say – greater responsibility</i> <i>Action v Research tension (Robust rigorous research)</i> <i>Oversight</i>	Contributions Responsibility Research Roles Opportunities for Mattering Reactions of Work Colleagues	Collective Agency of YRs Navigating power while constructing knowledge (RQ 1 (i) – Chapter 5)
<i>Managing dissemination of findings</i> <i>Presenting suggestions for change</i> <i>Taken seriously</i> <i>Listened to</i> <i>Influence</i> <i>Changes</i>	Agents of Change New Roles	Advocacy by YRs Navigating power while using knowledge to initiate changes (RQ 1 (ii) – Chapter 5)

<i>Code of Behaviour/Contract</i> <i>Research Space</i> <i>Tension – Selection/Suitability</i> <i>of Research Methods</i> <i>Negotiate access to facilities</i> <i>Permission for class release</i> <i>Democratic practices</i> <i>Dialogue as source of change</i> <i>Constructive consultation</i> <i>Joint engagement</i>	Facilitator Expertise Responsiveness Using position to influence Reflexive practices Interdependency	Authority Authentic Participation (RQ 2 - Adult Role, Chapter 6)
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Table 4.8 An example of the coding index (link between initial categories, codes and themes)

During phase 4 I kept in mind that each theme (Table 4.7 and 4.8) needed to have a centralising concept (ibid) that captures the most salient patterns in the data relevant to answering the specific research question under consideration. I tried to ensure that the themes told a coherent story that reflects the data. This assessment of themes involved reviewing coded data extracts and reviewing themes in relation to data (Braun and Clarke 2022; Clarke and Braun 2013, 2016).

Phase 5 involved reviewing data within themes to ensure that data extracts fitted together and formed a coherent pattern (ibid). Subsequently it involved assessing whether themes were clear and distinct and actively reflected the meaningfulness of the data set (ibid). Furthermore, I re-read the entire data set to ratify that candidate themes were proper representations of the data. This helped me to give clear and concise names to overarching themes that accurately reflected the meaning and story of each theme. The following themes were constructed: collective agency, advocacy, navigating power, authority, authentic participation (Table 4.8). Short theme definitions were written that captured the scope and core concept of each theme. A name for each theme was chosen based on its interpretative story. The challenge was to ensure that themes were interpretative (Trainor and Bundon 2020).

In phase 6 the focus turned to the content of the literature review (chapter 2). This was an attempt to locate my analysis in relation to what already exists (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.257; 2022). I adopted an integrative approach (Braun and Clarke 2022) where the threading of research literature throughout the analysis expanded and deepened the analysis. The focus at this stage was to ensure that the analytic narrative moved beyond

simply summarizing and describing themes to providing some kind of commentary on their implications and importance (Braun and Clarke 2022).

As thematic analysis in research is a reflexive organic process it must be stressed that analysis can never be complete (Low 2019). Coding and deeper analysis did not inevitably reach a fixed end point - instead, I made a situated, interpretative judgement about when to stop coding and move to theme generation, and when to stop theme generation to commence writing (Braun and Clarke 2019b, p.10) the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis. But I also moved back and forth recursively between coding and theme development while drafting and redrafting chapters. As research is a pragmatic activity shaped and constrained by the time and resources available to the researcher (O'Reilly and Parker 2012) I made a judgement that the data generated had told a rich, complex and multifaceted story that was adequate to address the research questions.

Evaluative Criteria

The following are the strategies that I used to enhance the credibility of this qualitative research study.

1. Meticulous record taking was undertaken to demonstrate a clear decision-making trail and to ensure interpretations of data are consistent and transparent (Smith and Noble 2014).
2. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) prolonged engagement is critical in attending to credibility. Spending a large amount of time over two academic years with the child co-researchers facilitated the building of rapport so that they were comfortable giving information and making suggestions throughout the YPAR. The building of credible data came from close collaboration with the YRs throughout the process of the YPAR.
3. I hope that my writing facilitates the reader in entering as fully as possible into the research context. The setting, research activities and themes are described in rich details (Denzin 1989). I endeavoured to give deep, dense and detailed accounts (ibid, p.83). The purpose of the rich, thick description was to create verisimilitude (Creswell and Miller 2000, p.129) in that statements produce for the reader that feeling that they have experienced or could experience the events being described in

the study. The rich descriptions enable readers to make decisions about the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. The use of rich and thick verbatim extracts from the research meetings with the YRs assist the reader to enter into the rich context within which the study is positioned.

4. In the previous sections I endeavoured to identify ways the reader can judge the trustworthiness or dependability (McLeod 2001) of the methods of data generation and analysis used in this research. I tried to explain how I influenced the research process and the knowledge produced, and how I sought to 'maximise the benefits of engaging actively with the participants in this study' (Yardley 2008, p.237).
5. I used different data sources to produce a more comprehensive set of findings (Kuper 2008) - transcripts from research meetings with the YRs, interviews with two adults, observations, reflections from my research journal and research artefacts. I returned to the data over and over again to search for convergence to form themes to answer my research questions (Braun and Clarke 2022).
6. I tried to ensure that methods and strategies used were appropriate to the skills and knowledge of the YRs and the resources available through ongoing critical reflection and continually questioning my theories and assumptions. I strived to 'systematically extend and complete the possibilities of knowledge production' (Flick 2005, p.227).

Conclusion

The context of this research is an investigation of power dynamics during the operation of a YPAR study with YRs whose aim was to improve play opportunities during break-times and lunchtimes on a primary school playground across two academic years. Data were generated through extracts from the adult researcher's research journal (reflections and observations), recorded research meetings with the YRs during the three cycles of the YPAR study, focus interviews with YRs at the end of cycle 2 and cycle 3 of the YPAR study and interviews with the school principal and a sixth-class teacher.

Williamson and Prosser (2002) suggest that political and ethical tensions arise in PAR because of the close relationship between researcher and researched, and the degree of exposure that brings. This is particularly the case for those working in their own

organisations (Smith 2008, p.17). Consequently, I became more sensitive to the inherent ethical dilemmas of a YPAR study and had awareness and appreciation of my ethical responsibilities as a teacher/researcher towards the YRs and child participants. This resulted in rich and robust ethical self-reflection throughout the three cycles of the YPAR study. The next chapter discusses how power, roles and relationships were navigated as the YRs during the YPAR study created and used knowledge to reimagine their school playground.

Chapter 5 Navigating Power Dynamics during Knowledge Generation and while Advocating for Change

Introduction

This chapter is the first of two findings and discussions chapters that seeks to engage with the data constructed during the exploration of the YPAR study. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how six child co-researchers and an adult researcher engaging in YPAR navigate the multiplicity of research experiences while creating and using knowledge to initiate change. The focus is on power dynamics and how the YPAR partnership works through listening and learning from each other (Fielding 2011). It demonstrates that in order to ensure alignment with participatory principles and to avoid tokenistic participation (Hart 1992) the adult researcher (AR) must be intentional about the actions and techniques that are taken to address power inequities and tensions that arise in cross-generational participatory research. This chapters also tunes into how power is sustained through the YRs drawing on their research as a resource in the pursuit of a common interest (Giddens 1995; Hoyle 2000) and in doing this they break ‘the monopoly on who holds knowledge’ (Fine 2008, p.215). Data were generated from transcripts of research meetings, PowerPoint slides from cycle 2, excerpts from the adult researcher’s research journal and transcripts from focus group interviews with the child co-researchers (YRs). Table 5.1 outlines the key themes and sub-themes covered in this chapter.

Key Theme	Sub-theme
Agency	Recognition as Contributors Oversight Problem of Presence of Adult Researcher
Advocacy	Raising Consciousness Disruption in Power

Table 5.1 Themes and Sub-themes of Findings and Discussion Chapter 5

Advocacy

Advocacy is the use of resources and information to bring about systematic change (Thackeray and Hunter 2010, p.575). It links with Lundy’s (2007) concept of influence. In the YPAR study it was a group of six primary school students communicating messages for the purpose of persuading or influencing school leaders with decision-making powers in cycle 2 (24/06/2014) and their peers in cycle 3 (09/03/2015 – 11/03/2015). They endeavoured to develop the critical awareness (conscientization) of adults with decision-

making powers and of their peers and to cause a shift in how they thought about issues on the school playground.

Navigating Power Relations and Collective Agency

In this research agency is viewed as a relational concept, which is collective and is equated with the cultivation of interdependencies through forming bonds with other children and adults rather than individual action or autonomy. In this process multiple positionings for the child co-researchers (YRs) and for me as the adult researcher (AR) are created. Agency and dependency are not necessarily seen in opposition to each other, but as an inevitable part of the interconnected nature of relationships between children and adults, where children can perform their agency, yet also continue to be dependent on support or regulation from adults (Baraldi 2022; Bjerke 2011; Jans 2004; Crossley 2021; Lee 2001; Neale 2004; Prout 2005; Smith and Bjerke 2009; Thomas 2021). Such an understanding of agency involves a dynamic and reciprocal process of connecting to and interacting with other people (Moosa-Mitha 2005; Smith and Bjerke 2009; Bjerke 2011; Crossley 2021; Spyrou 2018; Sutterlüty and Tisdall 2019).

While facilitating the YPAR study power was understood as a negotiation between the YRs and the adult researcher, the YRs and school leaders and the YRs and their peers in dynamic ways. I agree with Fielding (2011, p.67) that power relations not only enable or prohibit contributions of child co-researchers but that they influence the potential synergy of co-production thereby affecting the possibility of all parties being able to listen and learn from each other. Fielding (2006) refers to this as a kind of 'radical collegiality' (p. 308), which involves going beyond a reciprocity of topic and technique to teachers/adult researchers and children learning from each other in holistic, co-constructive and collaborative partnership, rather than one party using the other for often covert ends (Wood et al 2018). The next section explores how an adult and six child co-researchers interacted and influenced the research process. It presents the push-pull that existed between the YRs and the adult researcher during research meetings.

Recognition as Contributors

An important step in research with children is that they are asked which matters they consider important and how they would like to be involved in influencing the outcome of these decisions (Graham et al 2013; Welty and Lundy 2013). With this in mind during the first research meeting of the 'lunch bunch' I suggested that they needed to decide what their specific area of study would be:

AR: Again I would like to welcome you on board. Our broad area of research is ... (hold on until I find the page and read the title) 'Children Improving Outdoor Play Opportunities during Break-times in an Irish Primary School'. But at this stage you need to decide what exactly you would like to research.

(Research Meeting 13/01/2014)

Shifting decision-making to the YRs early in the YPAR process was important to align with Article 12 of UNCRC (1989) and Lundy's model of participation so that they were being facilitated to express their views (voice) and were given opportunities to express their views (space). This emphasised that what they had to say was important (influence). It was an attempt to reinvent 'definitions and practices of authority' (Dentith et al 2012, p.16). The intention was to demonstrate that in participatory action research, power is decentralised, and through collaboration, the researched become the researchers and are given opportunities to actively participate in the research process (Meland and Brion-Meisels 2023; McCartan et al 2012). Conceptualising the YRs as legitimate and essential collaborators is consistent with the CS (Christensen 2004; Cuevas Parra and Tisdall 2019; Tisdall and Punch 2012), the Lundy Model of Participation (Lundy 2007; Welty and Lundy 2013; DCEDIY 2021; DCEDIY 2024) and the intentions of this research study (Morrell 2008, p.158). This gesture was elevating the YRs' status from mere participants to active researchers to have influence (Lundy 2007, 2018) to effect change in their school. These are some of the suggestions some YRs gave:

Darren: What changes does Mr ... need to make on the yard?

Shane: What changes would 5th and 6th class children like to see on the yard?

Rose: What needs to change on the yard to make it a better place for playing in?

Emma: What things would improve playtimes on the yard?

(Research Meeting 13/01/2014)

Darren's comment suggests his first thought is what changes the school principal could implement on the school playground. Some of the YRs thought that changes suggested by

the students needed to happen to improve play opportunities on their school playground. I posed the following question to them:

AR: How do we know what is important to others? What do you need to do? What questions do you need to ask to see if 5th and 6th class children would like to see changes on their playground?

Emma: Well we need to go to them and ask them.

Shane: We could ask for a show of hands in classes.

AR: Sorry to rain on your parade but we need to have written parental permission and child consent for all participants.

Harry: So you're basically saying we won't be asking everybody.

AR: Yes, only those who have agreed to participate and have the go ahead from their parents as well.

Aoife: That means we could ask them, the ones with permission, to write down what they think.

Darren: We could go like 2 sides of the story – what you like, what makes you cross.

Rose: What makes you smile, what makes you frown!

(Research Meeting 13/01/2014)

I wanted to ensure that from the outset engagement would be process based and dialogic rather than adult centric or didactic (Green et al 2023; Meland and Brion-Meisels 2023; Mitra and Serriere 2015). Space was made for their contributions which were both welcomed and valued. Their active participation was encouraged while expression of their thoughts and ideas was not inhibited (Green et al 2023; Welty and Lundy 2013). Their role as ethical researchers was also stressed.

Oversight

Trust and intentional power-sharing and decision-making are crucial in YPAR (Galletta and Jones 2010; Goh and Loh 2013) and present challenges in school-based YPAR where traditional power hierarchies and rigid roles often prevail (Call-Cummings et al 2018; 2019). As an emerging researcher I entered the field with high ideals and creative concepts for the 'perfect' research study, however, I had to modify my ideas when I encountered the reality of conducting YPAR in an educational institution. In cycle 1 prior to administering the write and draw technique, the YRs and I decided that every child participant (83 children had completed consent forms) who had agreed to participate be given an identity code (Research Meeting 05/02/2014). Lists and codes were compiled. The YRs intended to use the write and draw in subsequent focus group interviews where the child participants would be given opportunities to articulate their own meanings embedded within their drawings

and written comments (Angell et al 2014; Hartel 2019). The intended goal was to enable a deeper exploration of child participants' thoughts and perceptions by not limiting children to verbal communication (Noonan 2016). I arranged with fifth class teachers that this research activity would be facilitated in 2 senior classrooms.

I met with the fifth-class teachers (11/02/2014) and explained how the YRs would be conducting a draw and write research activity. It was decided that the class teachers would remain in their classrooms to act in a supervisory capacity. The YRs were each assigned to a particular classroom with their participant list and the materials they were to distribute (copies of draw and write, homework passes, pens, pencils etc).

Assigned the YRs to their respective classrooms. Gave them the list of child participants they were to call to the classrooms. I requested that ... and ... supervise as they administered the research activity. The teachers would be observing. If there was any problem that they would get me. Practised who they were to distribute the sheets to etc. Everything set to go. (AR RJ 11/02/2014)

At the lunchtime research meeting the YRs reported a different experience:

Aoife: I thought you said that we had to make sure that we gave the forms out according to the codes you had on the top and the code we had on our participant lists.

Emma: Well that's not what happened. They spoke with each other and then Mr BH took the pages off of us and gave them out to random people. I told him we needed to check the code on the top to match with a particular person. He told me that we needed to get going and that he would take care of it.

Shane: Much the same happened with us. He put the pages face down on the tables and told them that they could write on the sheets or draw or do both.

Harry: And when they were finished to put them in the box at the back of the room.

Rosie: We just smiled at people, said thank you and gave out the homework passes.

Darren: Same here, we didn't really have much to do.

(Research Meeting 12/02/2014)

The YRs were dissatisfied. They had not taken centre stage in leading the research activity (Cammarota 2008; Kirshner and Pozzobini 2011). Their participation was dependent on the adult's judgement of their capacity as researchers. I was disappointed:

YRs told me about what had happened when they were administrating the write and draw. I was angry but I kept my powder dry. Thank God for someone or something setting off the fire alarm (sliotar striking fire alarm in the Halla) – saved by the bell! I had 2 choices: confront the teachers and let them know that I was disappointed or interpret this incident as an oversight and make sure it doesn't happen again by not doing any research activities in classrooms going forward. (AR RJ 12/02/2014)

Lundy (2007) recommends that adults have a generous interpretation of children's capacity and to be creative in empowering them to have a voice. However, I felt that failing to do so resulted in a missed opportunity to gain valuable information. Due to the large number of child participants who turned up to participate in this research activity (n=76) the class teachers exercised a firm approach to classroom management. They were not going to experiment with new ways of doing things. Their approach was that *they should* organise the activity for the YRs. They made decisions for the YRs. The extent of the YRs' freedom to act was not dependent on their own capacities but on constraints and affordances in their immediate environment (Thomas 2021). This meant that rather than the YRs steering this stage of the research study teacher instincts had impinged on the process (Cahill 2007; Nygreen 2009; Van Sluys 2010). The hierarchical and autocratic nature of the primary school system acted as a barrier to YRs participation as researchers. The power and status distinctions in school settings provide a dramatic form of asymmetry due to institutional norms of deference to adult authority and the separation of adult and child roles in schools (Devine 2000; Mitra 2008). The YRs felt they had no alternative but to comply with adult authority. They did not have an opportunity to exercise their agency in this research encounter nor did they have space, voice, or influence (Lundy 2007). I perceived this as a pushback as the YRs were not viewed as capable researchers. The situation reproduced asymmetrical power relations between children and adults (Devine 2000, 2003, 2004; Horgan 2016; Waldron et al 2014; Waldron and Oberman 2016).

In this encounter children were perceived as 'dependent and recipient' rather than 'in[ter]dependent and contributing' to the social capital of their school community (Thomas 2000, p.198; Kohfeldt 2011). The teachers showed a tendency to harbour paternalistic beliefs about children and enacted behaviour consistent with a caretaker or guardian role (Bragg 2007). The treatment of the YRs reflects the school's normative practice of excluding children's voices and the customary modes of interaction that characterize everyday actions and activities (Kohfeldt et al 2011). The act of ignoring the YRs created tension between adult control and encouraging YRs' ownership and responsibility (Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson 2014).

The dilemmas for me were the challenge of building reciprocal relationships with the YRs where I demonstrated commitment to helping them achieve their research goals and the challenge of maintaining positive relationships with school-based adults. As a consequence of the YRs being overlooked I arranged with school leaders (i.e. principal and deputy principal) that all subsequent research activities in cycle 2 and 3 (i.e. peer-paired interviews, focus groups, go-along interviews, mapping activities) were convened in vacant classrooms or on the senior school playground. I interpreted this interruption in data generation as an oversight on the part of my work colleagues. Going forward I needed to ensure that all YPAR activities provided experiences that fostered group confidence (Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson 2014).

Problem of Presence of Adult Researcher

In cycle 2 when the YRs were conducting peer-paired interviews there was a 'problematic situation' (Archer 2013, p.5) as to whether I should be present in the room during the interviews. During a research meeting some of the YRs expressed discomfort with my presence in the room during the pilot interviews:

AR: Is there anything that you would like to talk about before we make out a schedule for the interviews?

Harry: Well actually yeah, I know you have to be here while we do the interviews but sometimes it makes me feel uncomfortable.

AR: In what way?

Emma: Well I suppose it feels like we are being watched. Not in a bad way but it's there all the time.

Darren: Could you maybe sit outside the door.

Shane: Yeah, you could keep the door open maybe that would be a better way to do the interview I think.

Aoife: The people coming to these interviews are going to be talking about things that matter to them. I want to make sure that they feel ok talking about stuff.

(Research Meeting 15/04/2014)

They provided feedback and felt that this was a resolvable issue. I needed to ensure that the YRs got the child participants' first-hand perspectives and I needed to consider that my presence in the room may be silencing the voices of the child participants.

I discussed the issue of my presence in the room when I went for a run with Maria. She suggested that I needed to absence myself from the room. (AR RJ 15/04/2014)

I wanted to be respectful and flexible in understanding how research relationships were working and for whom rather than imposing my presence on them. Therefore I decided to

book an alternative room that had a dividing screen, in that way there was adult supervision but I was not a visible presence in the room.

Rose: I think it was good that she checked up with us about where we were doing the interviews.

Emma: She listened to us and changed the room and wasn't in the room then but next door.

Aoife: That way then I wasn't feeling so self-conscious. Yeah she did pay attention to our ideas. (Focus Group interview conducted by Maria with YRs 27/06/2014)

The YRs were pleased that they had a say in how their peers would be facilitated to express their views. Action was taken based on their views (Lundy 2007). This incident highlights how the AR must be flexible and open to accepting YRs' perspectives. This involves acknowledging, valuing and incorporating the YRs' participatory knowledge throughout the research process.

As a researcher committed to YPAR I believe that this gesture towards genuine power sharing was ethically important (Call-Cummings et al 2020 ; Phelan and Kinsella 2013). I felt this decision established conditions in which children's participatory rights were honoured (Alderson 2005; Mayall 2000; Morrow 2005). In this instance as the adult researcher in school-based YPAR I was trying to create conditions for reciprocity and to work towards more equitable relationships by demonstrating respect for their knowledge and agency (Call-Cummings et al 2020; Dennis and Huf 2017).

Raising Consciousness in Cycle 2

In the PowerPoint presentation the YRs shared their knowledge and advocated for resources and changes to improve play opportunities on their school playground. Initially, they focused on what was working well on the school playground (yard). In this face-to-face encounter the YRs were placed in a powerful position of translating their peers' explanations into language that adults would understand (Mitra 2007; 2008). The following transcript from their presentation demonstrates how they presented what was working well on the school playground:

Harry: After examining the data from the 26 interviews that we conducted in May 2014 with 52 people from 4th, 5th and 6th classes, we interpreted the following themes regarding what was working well on the yard: 'basketball hoops'; 'basketball courts' and 'equipment'.

Shane: Here are examples of some of the comments made by students from 4th, 5th and 6th classes:

Aoife: 'I like the basketball hoops – the way you are allowed to throw the balls into the hoops' (a 6th class student).

Rose: 'I like the basketball hoops cause sometimes when we're playing, we try shooting' (a 5th class student).

Darren: 'Everyone looks forward to going outside and to playing stuff. We like to play bomb with the balls or any ball game' (a 4th class student).

(PowerPoint Presentation 24/06/2014)

They communicated that they had sought the perspectives of a number of 4th, 5th and 6th class students (n = 52). They put the child participants' likes and interests at the centre of their presentation. They showed their audience how they were careful researchers as each of the themes they identified was backed up with evidence from the paired interview data. In their presentation they demonstrated that the voices of 4th, 5th and 6th class students had guided their research. After presenting what was working well on the school playground, they highlighted issues identified by their peers. The next transcript explains how they contextualised interpretations of 'rough play' which the YRs identified as an issue on the school playground:

Emma: We asked people from 4th, 5th and 6th classes what they thought was not working on the yard. One of the themes we interpreted from the data was 'rough play'.

Harry: By 'rough play' we mean disrupting games, spoiling games by taking away balls and throwing them away, fighting over balls, unnecessary shoving and pushing and name calling.

Shane: The following were some of the comments made by 4th, 5th and 6th class students:

Aoife: 'The way people get in the way when you are trying to play a game with the balls, it kind of rolls away then like, people will take it and throw it and you have to go and get it, and that happens over and over again' (a 6th class student).

Rose: 'I don't like the way people take the balls off each other. And the way we get pushed and shoved. People call you names as well and that is not very nice. I don't like the way the boys take the girls' balls off of us when they have their own.' (a 5th class student)

Darren: 'That everyone is coming up to you and stealing the balls and things and that you are pushed around'. (a 4th class student)

(PowerPoint Presentation 24/06/2014)

They had sought the perspectives of child participants who were affected by this problem. They used quotes from their data to bolster their arguments so that their points could not simply be written off as personal opinions. The YRs by interviewing their peers, had found out what their main concerns were. The following are examples of additional quotes from

their data that they used during their PowerPoint presentation, to explain issues of 'rough play':

That everyone is coming up to you and stealing the balls and things and that you are pushed around. They get away with it too. (Paired Interview 20B)

There's lots of people fighting over the balls. Nothing really happens to stop them. (Paired Interview 8B)

People need to leave you alone and stuff. Pushing and shoving you, and all they get is they have to say sorry or a short time out and they go and do it again, so you give up complaining. (Paired Interview 9)

(PowerPoint Presentation 24/06/2014)

The YRs knew that their ideas around their research were not the only pieces of data that were valuable for their research projects. Rather they valued the voices and the experiences of their research participants just as much as their own (Bautista 2012, p.31). They showed an ability to listen and hear the viewpoints of others (Mitra and Serriere 2012, 2015). They used their critical research as a vehicle for advocacy to put the needs of their peers to the forefront (Bautista 2012).

The YRs as some of those impacted by problems on the school playground were the ones to show leadership and to take steps towards change. It was a group-centred leadership that they used to highlight what needed to change. Similar to Ospina et al (2012, p.xi; p.268) leadership was understood as praxis. Reframing discourse, bridging difference, and unleashing human energies were the key effective types of leadership (ibid). It was rooted in the YRs' critical stance, centred around their collective goal of improving play opportunities on their school playground, and was designed for each individual to contribute to the whole (adapted from Fox and Fine 2015, p.52).

In order to have influence (Lundy 2007) the success of their advocacy efforts required persuasive communication with decision makers (Thackeray and Hunter 2010, p.585). The YRs worked on convincing their audience by increasing their knowledge of the issues on the school playground. They presented themselves as more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky 1978). Similar to research by Bertrand et al (2017, p.149) these YRs characterised themselves as active agents speaking for others. They outlined possible solutions which they advocated as the best way to address issues on the school playground. The following transcript describes the suggestions for change that the YRs gave for the issue of 'rough play' which was the introduction of better 'sanctions for rough play':

Harry: For 'rough play' there needs to be tougher sanctions. We're not talking about accidents that happen sometimes. We know the yard is very crowded and people bump into each other. We're talking about people who are deliberately upsetting and spoiling other people's games. Having them saying sorry and giving them time-outs are not enough, that's not working. They treat it like a joke and do it again.

(PowerPoint presentation 24/06/2014)

They addressed an issue that the child participants had highlighted frequently in their peer paired interviews. They were specific and clear in their description of a possible solution. They showed that by being placed at the centre of this research project, they developed a deeper, more nuanced understanding of their environment (Garcia and Smith 2015, p.23). They raised critical consciousness (conscientization) by identifying and naming their oppression (Freire 1970). They held inequities up to the light (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008) through naming the inequitable conditions on their school playground. The YRs were positioned as experts and social actors within and about their world (Bautista 2012, p.40). In this 'contact zone' (Torre and Fine 2008) they were positioned as authorities regarding pertinent concerns of their peers which they presented along with suggested solutions to school leadership with decision-making powers. They demonstrated that their strategy was to move beyond the naming of sharing experience to the creation of a critical understanding of the forces that have shaped their experience (Weiler 1991, p.465). They used their findings to consider alternatives and identify points of 'opening' (Berg Powers and Allaman 2012) where changes to the status quo could occur. The PowerPoint presentation created the possibility for the YRs to have their part matter (Heilbrun 1988, p.18).

Disruption in Power

Contrary to traditional educational encounters, where children are often passive recipients (Freire 1970), this encounter shifted uneven and adult-dominated power dynamics and centred the YRs as leaders in driving awareness of issues on the school playground. By positioning of the YRs as advocates for their peers it temporarily disrupted hierarchies of power (Bautista 2012):

Emma: Here are examples of suggestions for dealing with 'rough play'. Shane, Darren and Rose will read some quotes to you.

Shane: 'Some people's behaviour that needs to change.' (Paired Interview 23B)

Rose: 'People who wreck games only get a time out. 5 minutes later they are back at it again, it's a joke.' (Paired Interview 11A)

Darren: 'People who push and shove and spit at you and if you complain all they have to do is say sorry, which you know they don't mean a word of it, 'cos they laugh at you when the teacher moves away.'
 (Paired Interview 14B)
 (PowerPoint presentation 24/06/2014)

The meeting with school leaders created a space where the child participants' and YRs' ideas were dominant. This may be viewed as 'power to' (Bucknall 2009; Sullivan and King 1998) which is positive, interpersonal and enabling. Changing the power dynamics between school leaders and YRs created a possibility for the YRs to embrace 'the political potential of speaking out on their own behalf' (Lewis 1993, p.44; Lundy 2007).

By using direct quotes they were ensuring that they were presenting a true picture to challenge adults in positions of power to face the issue of 'rough play'. They highlighted that the current discipline procedure on the school playground for people engaging in 'rough play' was perceived as ineffective. Moreover, 'lack of proper sanctions' was a critique of the school and therefore their adult audience. By representing the experiences of their peers they were exposing adults in positions of power to the effect of their policymaking (Marshall et al 2015). Harry on behalf of the YRs presented a possible solution:

Harry: Maybe a record of how many times a student upsets people needs to be taken. This could be checked by you every so often. Then by using this record you could decide what would be the best action to take.
 (PowerPoint presentation 24/06/2014)

He suggested written reports of incidents of rough play on the yard should be recorded and checked regularly by school leadership. If a pattern of anti-social behaviours was noted by the school principal, then he could decide on further possible sanctions. He presented himself not as an adversary to be managed (Rudduck et al 1986, p.2) but as one who genuinely wanted to enter into dialogue. The production of meaning was being linked to the possibility of transformative social action (Giroux 1988, pp.68-69). Graham and Fitzgerald (2010, p.354) suggest the value of such a dialogical approach is in 'its productive potential'. Face to face engagement in the PowerPoint presentation created an opportunity for the YRs to put pressure on school leaders. This could be considered as an unusual advantage (Marshall et al 2015) compared to what may be perceived as long delays and avoidance of their questions or concerns in other forms of engagement.

School power structures and social norms enable the participation of some stakeholders (notably adults) in decision-making while constraining that of others (Devine 2002; Dworski-Riggs and Langhout 2010; Caraballo et al 2017; Gallagher 2004; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2015; Lodge and Lynch 2000; Robinson and Kellett 2004). The YPAR study honoured the child participants' and the YRs' right to freedom of expression and opinion (Lundy 2007; UNCRC 1989). It provided the YRs with an opportunity to access roles typically reserved for adults in schools (Kohfeldt et al 2011). It facilitated a face-to-face meeting where views were expressed in a medium of the YRs' own choice. Some of the YRs saw it as a useful opportunity to express their views directly to decision-makers:

Emma: I wasn't afraid to tell them what we found out about the yard and that was a good thing.

Aoife: I think what I liked best was actually talking about the yard problems with people who could make things change for the best.

(Research Meeting 26/06/2014)

Meeting with the principal and deputy provided an audience where there was an opportunity to communicate views to an identifiable body with responsibility to listen (Lundy 2007). Similar to Marshall et al (2015) the school principal recognised that the face-to-face engagement created an opportunity to put pressure on him to make changes:

Principal: They were serious about the situation. This was a '*proper*' meeting. Ms ... and I got to hear properly about how it really is for children on the senior yard.

(Interview with Principal 24/06/2014)

It offered an opportunity to realise the students' rights beyond 'tokenism, through inclusive, accountable, respectful and transformative relationships' (Sargeant 2018, p.321). In advocating for change in their presentation power was an energy, capacity and potential rather than a domination (Shrewsbury 1993, p.10). The goal in the YPAR study was to increase the power of all actors (i.e. adults and children) not to limit the power of some (ibid, p.10):

Emma: We hope that our talk about our research will help you see the yard through the eyes of people from 4th, 5th and 6th classes.

(PowerPoint Presentation 24/06/2014)

A temporary shift of authority towards the YRs happened when they interacted and outlined issues on the school playground and suggested possible solutions which were subsequently put in place during the first term of the 2014-2015 academic year. The YRs had influence

(Lundy 2007) their ideas were taken into consideration and their input was implemented. This was due to having the right people in the room - those with the power to act (Lundy 2018).

Even while challenging traditional roles and representations of students in educational research, YPAR as a form of student voice work runs the risk of essentializing student experiences and perspectives and, as Orner (1992, p.75) warned, perpetuating relations of domination in the name of liberation. Avoiding the impositional potential of student voicework (Cook-Sather 2007, p.409) was always a priority in this research. The YRs were re-positioned through changing the dominant arrangements of participation:

School Principal: 'Stronger sanctions', I'd like to ask you from your experience on the yard what do you think?

Aoife: Well most people are fine on the yard most of the time.

Shane: But there are 3 boys that hang around together and they do what they like when they get together. When you are playing a really enjoyable game of wall ball one of them just barges in and grabs the ball and throws it away or he won't give it back to you.

Darren: Or they block you trying to get the ball as it rolls away and say they didn't mean it if you make a complaint to a teacher on duty.

(PowerPoint presentation 24/06/2014)

They were placed as authorities on and authors of their own experiences and representations of those experiences (ibid, p.391). In advocating for their peers, they translated their peers' explanations and their own experiences into language that adults would understand (Mitra 2007, p.732). The presentation provided a forum to include the YRs in dialogue with school leaders regarding decision-making about issues of schooling (Cook-Sather 2006; Fielding 2004; Levin 2000; Rudduck 2007). The aim was to demonstrate that they had the capacity to take initiatives and to reflect on issues affecting their lives (Rudduck and Flutter 2004, p.1).

The YRs by interviewing their peers, had found out what the main concerns were. These concerns became the springboard for action (Bautista 2012, p.87; Green et al 2023). Through engaging in YPAR they had gathered knowledge to make them experts regarding what was happening on the senior school playground. For example in relation to 'lack of space' their peers made the following statements:

They need to change that there's too much people in the yard, more space, less people please. (Paired Interview 6B)
 That there's more space for us to run around. (Paired Interview 5B)
 I'd say too much classes out on the yard, not enough room. (Paired Interview 16A)
 (PowerPoint Presentation 24/06/2014)

By using direct quotes they were speaking in 'authentic voices' (Shor and Freire 1987, p.308) and giving voice to their peers (Lundy 2007, 2018). This gave the YRs an identity and political position from which to act as agents of social change (Simon 1992, p.80). It provided a face-to-face opportunity to communicate their views to a receptive audience (Lundy 2007, p.937; Marshall et al 2015; Tisdall et al 2006).

Providing opportunities for the YRs to represent their own interests and those of their peers was crucial in the YPAR study. My being absent from the room during the PowerPoint presentation was important. I was conscious that my institutional role as a teacher would always weight my statements differently from those of the YRs. Furthermore, by being absent all queries, requests for clarification and comments were directed solely at the YRs:

Deputy Principal: I would like to congratulate you on your presentation. You all spoke very well. My question is this – if you were only to be granted one suggestion for change, which suggestion would you put as number one on the list?
 Shane: For me it's between equipment and sanctions, I'd pick sanctions.
 Harry: I'd love access to the field, I'm sick of looking at trucks and piles of earth.
 Darren: Sanctions was one that a lot of people wanted action on.
 Aoife: I'll like equipment, but I see why others would choose sanctions.
 Rose: Sanctions all the way.
 Emma: This week it's sanctions, but next September I might have different ideas.
 (PowerPoint Presentation 24/06/2014)

This reinforced recognition of the YRs' ownership of the YPAR study and their capacity to present their suggestions for change.

Including children as co-researchers mitigates, but does not eliminate, the dynamics of power. Nonetheless, as James (2007) points out, 'giving voice to children is not simply or only about letting children speak; it is about exploring the unique contribution to our understanding of and theorizing about the social world that children's perspectives can provide' (p.262). The PowerPoint presentation was a pedagogy of listening context (Rinaldi 2001 cited in Clark 2007) where the YRs felt legitimated to represent their theories and offer their peers' and their own interpretations of particular questions (Ballonoff Suleiman et al 2024), which generated understanding and awareness (James 2007, p.66).

Rallying Support through Raising Consciousness in Cycle 3

The presentations the YRs made in cycle 3 (11/03/2015 and 12/03/2015) were an opportunity to share with their peers and their class teachers how they had constructed knowledge during the YPAR study. It allowed them to assume authentic leadership roles in change efforts (Ballonoff Suleiman et al 2024; Cummings 2024; Fielding 2001; Mitra 2005) and to show their skills as researchers. Space was created for the YRs to enact new roles as experts on their research (Lundy 2007) in order to achieve transformative ends (Bang and Vossoughi 2016). They used YPAR to invite their peers (audience) to make suggestions for change on their school playground.

Their systematic research informed their advocacy for change in cycle 3. They gave rich descriptions to deepen understanding and to rally support for their suggestions for change. They started each presentation by explaining the data collection methods they had used - post it activities, go along tours, yard zone suggestions and the 'drone' activity (chapter 4). The following extract from a presentation to fifth class students demonstrates how they explained the 'drone' map in their research (fig 5.1):

Emma: After collecting data from 4th, 5th and 6th class group interviews we knew that we needed a research tool to help us compare all of your suggestions with what was actually happening on the yard.

Harry: To do this we came up with the 'drone' survey of the yard. This meant that we observed the yard from upstairs windows so we could identify where there were most gatherings of people and activities on the yard during lunchtime. This is an example of a 'drone' map. ['drone' map is projected onto whiteboard.]

(Cycle 3 Presentation to 5th Class (5B) 11/03/2015)



Fig 5.1 'Drone' Map from Cycle 3

They gave details of how they generated knowledge using this research instrument (fig 5.1):

Shane: The blue dots indicate where there were ball games being played on the yard. [*Shane indicates area near the gate, around the basketball hoops, centre of the court, the red door area by pointing to the map*]

Rose: The yellow dots indicate where there were children skipping. [*Rose points to area near the red door and over by 4th classroom windows*]

Darren: The green dots tell us where there were people playing tag games like family tag and other chasing games. [*Darren points to all the different areas around the yard*] Because people were moving around so quickly it was hard to get accurate numbers, so we had to estimate. [*He pauses to let the audience grasp the information he has given.*]

Darren: The red dots are for the people who weren't playing skipping games, tag games or ball games but who were chatting, standing up or walking around. [*He points to the area close to the 4th class windows and the corner near the grassy bank*]
(Cycle 3 Presentation to 5th Class (5B) 11/03/2015)

They explained how with sound planning based on eliciting more accurate portraits (Garcia and Smith 2015) the 'drone' map (fig 5.1) provided the YRs with a research tool to help them find possible solutions for their peers' needs. They were sharing research findings in forms accessible to those who helped produce it (Bell and Pahl 2018, p.110). They clarified how they triangulated their data by linking the issues identified by child participants in the go-along interviews with what was actually happening on the school playground:

Aoife: You mentioned during the interviews that some of you did with us in January and February this year that your games and activities were being spoilt or messed up, here are some of your comments that we recorded:

- 'Ball games coming across our skipping',
- 'Tag games cutting across our ball game',
- 'Being pushed out of the way by people playing tag games when I am chatting to my friends',
- 'Skipping going on where we play wall ball',
- 'Running through our skipping game and laughing at us',
- 'Being hit by skipping ropes when I try to play bomb'.

Emma: If you look at the 'drone' map on the board you can see possible reasons why this is happening. [*Rose points to area near the red door and to area on basketball court near the red door*] Here you can see that there are ball games, skipping and tag games going on in the same area. The skipping stays more or less on the same spot but the tag and running games are going in different directions [*Rose indicates this with her finger on the map*] and there are also ball games going on at the same time in these areas.

Harry: We appreciate that you contributed some incredibly good suggestions for zones/ or game areas on the yard. When we considered what you suggested and compared them against the 'drone' map the following were the 3 options that we came up with.

[Shane, Darren and Rose explain Option A, B and C to the class and then the class vote by secret ballot for their preferred option.]

(Cycle 3 Presentation to 5th Class (5B) 11/03/2015)

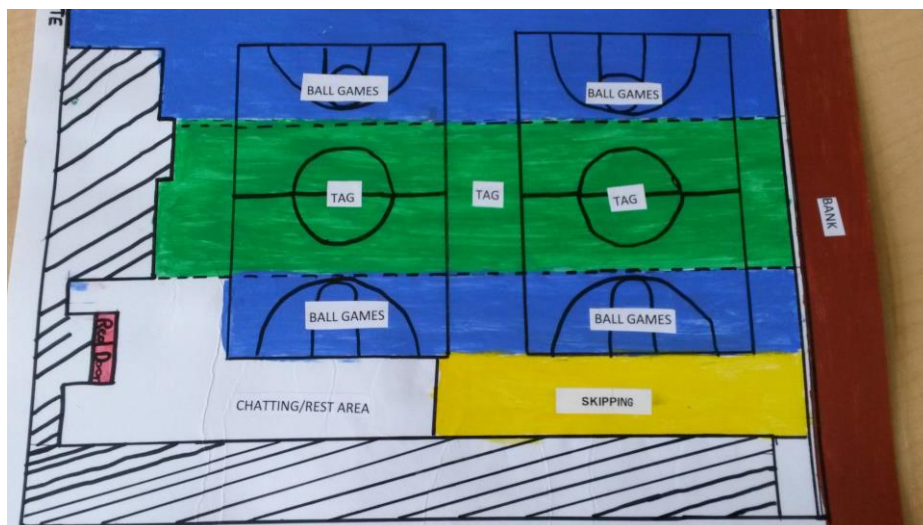


Fig 5.2 Yard Option A: Ball game areas marked in blue; Tag areas marked in green, skipping area marked in yellow; chatting/rest area marked in white.

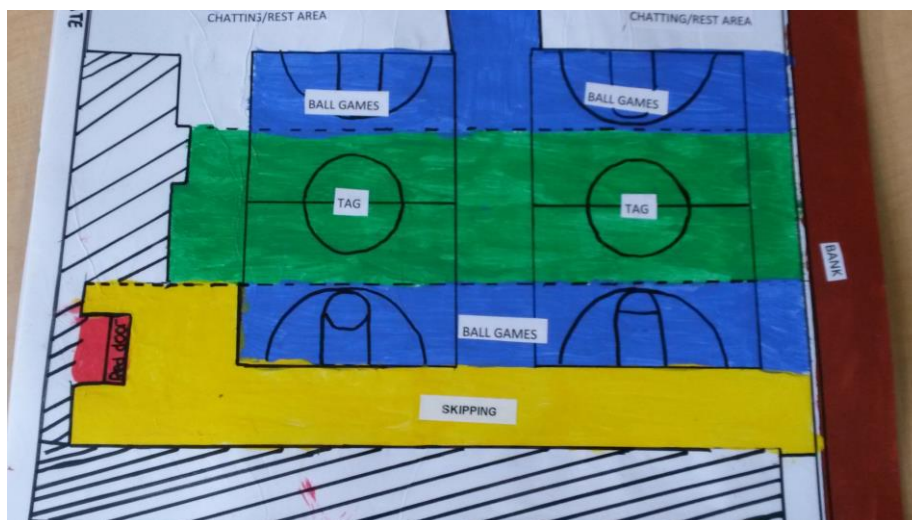


Fig 5.3 Yard Option B: Ball game areas marked in blue; Tag areas marked in green, skipping area marked in yellow; chatting/rest area marked in white.



Fig 5.4 Yard Option C: Ball game areas marked in blue; Tag areas marked in green, skipping area marked in yellow; chatting/rest area marked in white.

They indicated how they attempted to address their peers' frustrations and provided them with a space to use voices previously silenced, ignored, or misunderstood (Bahruth and Steiner 1998, p.132). Key factors that negatively impacted their peers' play opportunities were identified. Their research was used to raise critical consciousness (Freire 1970). They tried to promote strategic thinking (Ozer and Douglas 2015) through the strategy of problem-posing education (Freire 1970) where the YRs took their peers on a journey to understand and learn about the subject matter. This stance of criticality engendered awareness of current conditions and an understanding of the root causes of local conditions and problems (Fear et al 2006) for their peers. The presentation was used to help the child participants to understand the workings of potential dynamics in their lives and to challenge them to create change (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p.203).

Through an examination of the layers of meaning within their data and the root causes of targeted concerns, their peers were better prepared to decide on a school playground option to address the underlying causes of these problems (Foster-Fishman et al 2010). They were 'facing the issues' (Marshall et al 2015, p.358) on their school playground and highlighting specific action that could be taken to address these issues. They contributed to others' learning by sharing what they had learned through the process of YPAR (Zaal and Terry 2013, p.49). Their suggestions were for 'action focused on 'reading' and speaking back to the reality of the world, their world' (Cammarota and Fine 2008, p.2). They recognized that they and their peers contributed to the shared research tasks in different ways during

data generation. They were open and transparent with their audience about their praxis. They presented a critique and suggested transformation options of what was the status quo on the school playground during playtimes. They went beyond typical student roles to act in expert roles with their peers (Ozer and Wright 2012).

They suggested a possible role in school decision making for their peers regarding the school playground. In this 'contact zone' (Torre and Fine 2008) the YRs and their peers were recognised as 'able to and entitled to be engaged in this process' where their right to express their views and influence their lives was respected (Lundy 2007; Marshall et al 2015, pp.129-130). In their subject position as researchers they spread awareness and cultivated allies to help tackle issues of concern on their school playground. Child participants were given opportunities to critically reflect upon the conditions of their lives (Foster-Fishman et al 2010). A critical awareness (conscientization) of reality and their place in it allowed for the facilitation of their views.

By presenting their research findings and making recommendations for change the YRs de-settled normative hierarchies of power (Boss and Vossoughi 2016). They positioned themselves as an expert panel who shared their insights with their peers. In these pedagogical moments, the YRs were positioned as researchers and as teachers of others (Scorza et al 2017). They demonstrated that collaboration was vitally important in achieving collective movement building (ibid). They taught their peers (the child participants) 'how to name their world in order to change it' (ibid, p.155).

Chapter Summary

Throughout this chapter I have endeavoured to demonstrate how the YPAR study has been guided by Article 12 of UNCRC (1989), the Lundy Model of participation (Lundy 2007; Welty and Lundy 2013; DCEDIY 2021, 2024), the new sociology of childhood and the YRs have been conceptualised as 'legitimate and essential collaborators' (Lundy et al 2011; Morrell 2008, p.158). In the multiple experiences of constructing knowledge to re-imagine their school playground the YRs were given opportunities to actively participate in the research process ('voice' and 'space'). They took ownership of the YPAR and were the face of the research. They took on research responsibilities as active researchers from the outset. Their input was valued, expected and taken seriously ('influence') throughout the study.

From the outset of this YPAR study as the adult researcher I worked to redistribute power and develop authentic research relationships. Attempts were made to adopt a democratic, participatory approach to work with others rather than for or unto others (Lundy 2007; Lundy et al 2011; Lundy and Welty 2013; Mayes et al 2017). This entailed encouraging a level of free thought and speech while taking responsibility to guide the YRs informed by my knowledge and practice of research. At times power was shared where the AR and the YRs discussed and negotiated how knowledge could be constructed to improve play opportunities on their school playground. Power relations shifted and changed during this YPAR study.

Schools are hierarchical organisations where the practice of adults has often yet to reconcile the tensions between children's participation rights and their insufficient opportunity to participate in democratic processes (Devine 2002, 2004). This was demonstrated when the YRs were prevented from leading the draw and write research activity in cycle one. This stresses that democracy must become an active and collaborative process which schools need to reinforce and demonstrate through their school policy and daily practices (Fitzgerald 2019).

Participation in YPAR also carries a political element, in the sense of the YRs influencing their situation. Hence participation is both procedural (i.e. carrying out research with their peers) and substantive in that the YRs advocate for change ('audience'). YPAR provided a pathway for the YRs to gain organizing skills and provide pertinent data to influence decision-makers (Caraballo et al 2017, p.322, Zaal and Terry 2013, p.48) and to take on identities as influencers of change (Lundy 2007). While using their knowledge to re-imagine their school playground they used persuasive communication to define problems and raise consciousness to an audience of adults in positions of power (cycle 2) and their peers (cycle 3). As they shared their knowledge and advocated for resources and changes they were specific and clear and identified points of opening where changes could occur. In their presentations they took critical stances and bolstered their arguments with relevant data. They educated adults in position of power and their peers on the root causes of problems and highlighted specific action that could be taken to address issues on the school playground. They put the needs of their peers to the forefront and enabled them to have their voices heard on issues that impacted their lives. In the YPAR study engagement was

strong in the instances in which YRs played examined the experiences of their peers through a critical lens and shared their findings and suggestions for change.

In their face-to-face encounter with the school principal and deputy principal (cycle 2) and the presentations to their peers (cycle 3) the YRs presented themselves as an expert panel of researchers and tutors of others. This led to a temporary disruption in hierarchies of power. In the PowerPoint presentation they got to the crux of issues and were critical of the discipline procedures of their school. In cycle 3 they raised the critical consciousness of their peers by teaching them to see problems and solutions. They facilitated their peers to re-imagine their school playground and provided practical solutions to many of the challenges they faced on a daily basis. Power was an energy and a capacity for the YRs to use their expertise to influence decisions about practices on their school playground.

The experiences of the YRs as advocates for their peers illuminates the benefits of YPAR studies for primary school children. It demonstrates how a YPAR study can align with Lundy's model of participation as it opens up a space for transformation and change and creates opportunities for the development of participatory competencies (voice) to communicate concerns (audience) and influence decision-making (influence). It gives legitimacy to children's experiential knowledge as a lens through which to define problems that have a direct impact on their day-to-day experiences (Burke and Greene 2015). In this way, YPAR carves out a space (Bautista et al 2013, p.2) for children to share what they know as experts and renders them subjects - as opposed to objects in traditional research - who along with other school community members, examine their daily lives to make progress toward the goal of creating meaningful change.

YPAR demands reasonable supports and conditions are put in place for children to express their views fully, safely and freely (Lundy 2007) and for adult engagement to be respectful and accountable (Marshall et al 2015). The next findings and discussion chapter explores strategies and practices adopted by the adult researcher to create a research space where the YRs could express themselves and develop their capacities as researchers.

Chapter 6 Adult's Role in the YPAR Study

Introduction

Chapter 5 explored power dynamics as the YRs exercised their agency through demonstrating their capabilities as researchers and advocating for their peers with a call to action (Gonzalez et al 2016) to bring about changes on their school playground. This chapter deals with the second research question – *How does an adult researcher promote and facilitate child participation and share responsibility in the YPAR process?* It explores how I supported the YRs to initiate change in their school through creating a discursive space similar to Freire's cultural circle (Freire 1970, 1988) and through engaging in critical reflexivity regarding the choice of research methods in cycle 2 of the YPAR study. It focuses on some of the multiple strategies and practices I adopted as I attempted to 'straddle the divide between adult's and children's worlds' (Christensen 2004, p.173), during a YPAR study in an Irish primary school.

I interrogate how I tried to provide openings for purposeful participation informed by Lundy's (2007) model of participation while endeavouring to maintain a delicate authoritative balance (Bingham 2008) that did not succumb to the extremes of domination and submission (Orner 1992; Shor and Freire 1987). Data were generated from analysis of research journal entries, transcripts of research meetings and an artefact (i.e. research contract) created by the YRs. Table 6.1 outlines the key themes and sub-themes covered in this chapter.

Key Theme	Sub-theme
Authentic Participation	Organising a research space Building an alliance
Authority	Leading without controlling Using reflective practice

Table 6.1 Themes and Sub-Themes of Findings and Discussion Chapter 6

Authority

Traditionally, authority is seen to reside with the knower (Bingham 2008). The knower then communicates this knowledge to those who do not have the authority of knowing. This form of authority is key in educational institutions where traditions and time have legitimated beliefs and practices normalizing imbalances of power between teacher and student (Linds et al 2013, p.338), adult and child. This imbalance dictates who can be considered expert and who can be granted authority (ibid). However, critical theorists (e.g. Bingham 2008; Freire 1970; Shor 1996) conceive of authority as emerging in dialogical relationships between teachers and students. At the root of the term authority is power, that is the ability to make one's part matter in whatever discourse is essential to action (Heilbrun 1988, p.8). In the context of this research it involves the use of power to help others to exercise power (Freire 1970; Shor and Freire 1987; Gore 1992, p.59). Throughout this research I tried to create an environment where power was used to develop respectful relationships between the AR and YRs, and among the YRs. The learning process was negotiated, requiring leadership by the AR and mutual AR-YR authority (adapted from Shor 1992, p.16).

Influenced by Freire I sought to develop an authority that was constantly accountable and open to critique (Irwin 2018, p.66). This challenged me to reflect on the possible hidden authoritarianism in my own practices as an adult researcher and ally, how my supposedly problem-posing education could all too easily congeal into a residual banking form of power (ibid). While facilitating the YPAR study it was not a question of giving up authority, but rather, one of keeping the dialectic between authority and freedom open and of challenging the relationship between authority and freedom to keep faithful to the manner of the times (Freire and Torres 1994).

Authentic Participation

Authentic participation is participation that works for all parties (King et al 1998). It includes relevant stakeholders and creates relatively safe, structured spaces for multiple voices to be heard (Anderson 1998, p.575). It is concerned with both an authentic process and an authentic product (ibid, p.576). Attempts were made in this research to reduce adult authority in order to recognize and reposition students (YRs and child participants) as

authorities on and authors of their own experiences and representations of those experiences (Cook-Sather 2007, p.390; Cook-Sather 2020).

As previously stated in chapter 1, I work from the conviction that primary school children have 'unique perspectives on schooling and their insights warrant the attention and responses of adults' (Cook-Sather 2007, p.390; Roberts and Nash 2009). I recognise primary school students as authorities on their own experiences who should be afforded opportunities to engage in dialogue and decision-making about issues affecting them and so contribute to changes in their schools. However, I also recognise that such attempts to reposition children have the potential to reinforce rather than disrupt dominant arrangements of power and participation (ibid, p.390) and to perpetuate relations of domination in the name of liberation (Orner 1992, p.75). Throughout the YPAR study I had to be aware of the potential for tokenism, manipulation (Hart 1992), and practices not matching rhetoric that characterize some student voice efforts (Atweh and Burton 1995; Fielding 2004a and 2004b; Lodge 2005; Thomson and Gunter 2005) and YPAR projects (Cammorata and Fine 2008, Bautista 2012; Bautista et al 2013; Fox and Fine 2015). Therefore, I deliberately worked to create practices, roles and relations to achieve transformative ends (Bang and Vossoughi 2016, p.173) by endeavouring to promote authentic participation. The next section reflects on practices that were adopted to create an inclusive collective research space in an Irish primary school in order to facilitate YPAR and promote authentic participation.

Organising a Research Space

In an effort to build a 'community of learners' (Baharuth and Steiner 1998, p.129), Shor (1990) purports that the initial challenge is to deconstruct authoritarian modes of discourse and to establish a democratic space where students' lived experiences are invited and encouraged in the construction of meaning. Freire (in Shor and Freire 1987, p.212) argues that a 'progressive position requires democratic practice where authority never becomes authoritarianism, and where authority is never so reduced that it disappears in a climate of irresponsibility and licence'. In this research, I used my authority to try to create a space where the YRs could express themselves and develop their authority as researchers over time. This research space was based on Freire's 'culture circle' (Freire 1970) where the YRs

and the AR would come together and discuss generative themes that have significance within the context of the YRs' lives. I hoped to examine the 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' that emerge when 'architectures of practice' are accounted for, understanding that social practices always occur in particular times and contexts (Cruddas 2007; Kemmis et al 2014, p.59).

In January 2014, after gaining permission to do research in this Irish primary school and recruiting the YRs the next big task was establishing a research space that was an alternative to top-down leadership of traditional classrooms and research (Torre and Fine 2004). I had to design an infrastructure in which the YRs understood that their questions, ideas and solutions mattered (Lundy 2007; Winn and Winn 2016, p.128). To ensure student 'buy in' efforts were made to create a group-centred approach rather than an 'expertly' led (Fox and Fine 2015, p.56) approach. For the first research meeting setting up this space involved attention to small details regarding the room arrangement and the time of the research meeting:

Meeting number 1 was convened in a learning support room in the 2nd class corridor at 12:35pm. I chose a quiet room situated in a corridor where there was little passing student traffic during lunchtime. I organised the 3 tables in a rectangle and placed 8 chairs of similar size and colour around it (green chairs). I stood at the door and welcomed the students individually. I waited until they were seated before I sat down. YRs were free to bring their lunches and eat during the meeting. I pointed out that the empty chair meant that if any of their peers or my peers would like to join our research team that there was always room for more. I asked them about their previous experience of research. They spoke about surveys they did in Maths. I briefly explained the difference between quantitative and qualitative research. I stressed the importance of confidentiality and reminded them that they were free to opt out of our research at any stage without consequences. I read Article 12 of UNCRC (1989) and briefly explained it to them and what it would mean in this research project. The meeting lasted 25 minutes approximately and finished at 1pm to allow them to have 10 minutes playtime before the bell rang.

(AR RJ 14/01/2014)

A collaborative relationship had to be created in a short amount of time therefore it was important to provide a welcoming space for the initial research meeting. The purposeful gesture of allowing the YRs to be seated first was important. The room was organised so that all chairs were the same colour and size. This was to ensure that when we sat down that we were all seated at the same level. I was conscious that the space given for a relationship shapes the kind of relations possible (Mannion 2007). I hoped both to allow

student-student relationships and for meaningful and authentic adult-child relationships to develop free of relations of force (Pearce and Wood 2019). As a PhD researcher I needed to be cognizant not to assert my power and authority, so that student voice and autonomy could flourish, a model distinct from traditional teacher-and-student relationships in schools (Kirshner 2010; Nygreen 2009).

According to Bland (2006), the key to establishing a shared dialogic space is to avoid formalised forms of interaction. I had to find ways of not replicating conventional power relationships between the researched and researcher, particularly, when they are superimposed on power relationships between adults and children (Fleming 2010, p.13). It was vital that being involved in this YPAR study did not reproduce the experience of powerlessness that children may well have in other areas of their lives (Smith 2002, p.201).

AR: I know that your parents filled out these consent forms and you filled out your own forms, but, if at any stage you would like to opt out of this research don't hesitate to say so, it won't cause offence. (Research Meeting 14/01/2014)

The issue of negotiating children's informed assent and recognising their rights as decisionmakers at this stage of the research and allowing the YRs to opt-out without prejudice was crucial and a key ethical consideration.

It was important that the YRs would view research meetings as different to encounters in traditional classroom settings.

AR: You are accustomed to seeing me with 6th class students and coaching teams, but when we are engaged in this research, I am wearing a different hat. As the adult researcher – I am the 'aid', helper, and assistant. It is **your** research my job is to support you as you conduct your research. I hope you will find this research interesting, useful and fun. (Research Meeting 14/01/2014)

I was giving a clear message that while I was a 6th class teacher outside of this room, within this room I was adopting a different role, that of co-researcher. Cook-Sather (2007, p.397) describes this as a process of translation, which requires of adult participants that they become 'different selves ... through the process of opening' themselves 'to students' diverse identities and perspective(s)'. The purpose of the research meetings was to provide a source of community building for the YRs and a way to connect adults and students separate from traditional classrooms (Mitra et al 2012, p.108). It concurs with Lodge (2005, p.134) who identified in her work on participation in schools the critical need for 'building of

shared dialogue', and with Mannion's (2007, p.410) call for negotiating child-adult spaces through 'intergenerational dialogue'. I was attempting to move beyond the YRs as subjects, beyond tokenistic participation (Hart 1992) to integral participation where they were agents with a vested interest in the process and the outcome (Callingham 2013, p.52). In the context of this school, this was creating 'radical relationships' aimed to encourage adults and children to 're-see' each other as persons rather than as role occupants (Fielding 2011, p.61). The development of a democratic fellowship orientation was intended to nurture a new understanding, a sense of possibility, of respect between adults and children, together with a greater sense of shared care and responsibility (ibid).

A collective and inclusive orientation (Pearce and Woods 2019) was stressed from the outset of this YPAR. I wanted to create an inclusive structure and to communicate to the YRs that I was seriously interested in their perspectives:

AR: You are at ground level, so you are more aware of issues than I am. Also, I think it would be better if you approached your peers as the main researchers. I will work on providing the research tools, helping you to analyse data so as we can make suggestions for changes on the yard. I'll speak with the principal and teachers and organise permission for time out of class, access to classrooms etc when required. Every one of us will have different and vital roles in this research.

(Research meeting 14/01/2014)

Ethically I felt it was important to recognise and value the contributions and perspectives of the YRs therefore I set the tone. The YRs and their peers (child participants) were recognised as resources. They were respected as having something significant to offer, and they were encouraged to become involved (Woodgate et al 2017). I wanted to impress on them that my hope was to honour their knowledge, skills and contributions (Cammarota and Fine 2008; Fine and Torre 2019; Winn and Winn 2016).

I viewed difference as a resource to further develop student voice (Cook-Sather 2015; 2020). Rather than differences of power, identity, perspective or position leading to inaction, such differences were welcomed for their complementarities, overlaps and alignments (ibid). Both adult and child agendas would be considered in ways that acknowledge both adults and children as agentic and interdependent (Lodge 2005). They were to be 'stipulators of their own priorities and designers of their own approaches' (Mearns et al 2014, p.443-444). I was trying to get them interested and invested in YPAR. I

was giving the YRs a realistic picture of what I could offer them in the sharing of power (Sinclair 2004). I wanted to position myself as a supporter rather than a manager of their research (Kellett 2003, 2005b, 2011; Woodgate et al 2017). As people from inside the student culture within their school, they would be able to access knowledge and perspectives that are not easily available to teachers (Atweh and Dornan 1999; Bland and Atweh 2007) or adult researchers.

I endeavoured to create a 'democratic fellowship' (Fielding 2011, p.45). The aim was to attend, not only to power, but to cross-generational relationships, to care as well as to rights, to creative relations between persons as both the end and means of politics (ibid). From the outset I wanted to establish that as an adult in the school I was serious about listening and responding to children's views (Woodgate et al 2017), thus attempting to create a 'radical collegiality' (Fielding 2004, p.296).

According to Freire (1996), respect and humility foster conditions of trust and communication between teacher (who also learns) and learner (who also teaches). It was acknowledged that the YRs came to the research meeting with experiences of the school playground and would be more suitable researchers to make visible and conscious their peers' experiences, and then together with my research knowledge, new theory and information could be added to deepen the understanding of those experiences in order to develop plans for action (Linds et al 2013, p.339). As a teacher and adult researcher, I wanted to ensure that I was not the dominant voice (Bahruth and Steiner 1998), I invited the YRs to become active researchers and critical thinkers and tried to impress on them from the outset that their voices would be welcomed and respected. I stressed that we would collectively work to become a 'community of learners' (ibid, p.129) that this research was a team study. Among their roles they would be required to generate data, analyse it, synthesise and wrestle with making meanings for themselves (ibid, p.132). My aspiration was that pooling differently positioned expertise, i.e. situated knowledge (Harding 1995), would strengthen the knowledge produced (Fox and Fine 2015).

Building an Alliance

In research meetings I wanted to create a respectful learning environment for all the YRs. During our second research meeting I set the scene for drawing up our research contract and defining the ground rules for communication (Shor 1992):

AR: You are all familiar with drawing up a class contract and the contract we have for drama lessons. Today I suggest that we come up with a contract for our research group. I'd like you to start it off while I go and get a cup of tea and get my lunchbox. There's paper and markers and other stuff over there.

(Research Meeting 16/01/2014)

I wanted them to draw up their own contract rather than me managing this activity. In inaugurating this research group I was inviting the YRs to take the most active role while I as the AR restrained my verbal profile (Shor 1996). I returned about 15 minutes later.

Aoife: We liked the stuff you said about rights the last day, so we went with 'Research Rights'

Harry: Like the refs have on their jerseys – 'give respect, get respect', we came up with these ideas here.

Darren: We think it important to feel ok during these meetings, so we came up with 'Be safe'

Rosie: That's the yellow ones.

Emma: We also came up with 'Be Heard' – and we drew ears, they're not great but you get the idea.

AR: This is great – may I read them?

Shane: Yeah, you can add your own if you want to here's a pen and yellow and orange paper.

AR: I don't mind if I do!

(Research Meeting 16/01/2014)

They had drawn up their own research contract (fig 6.1).

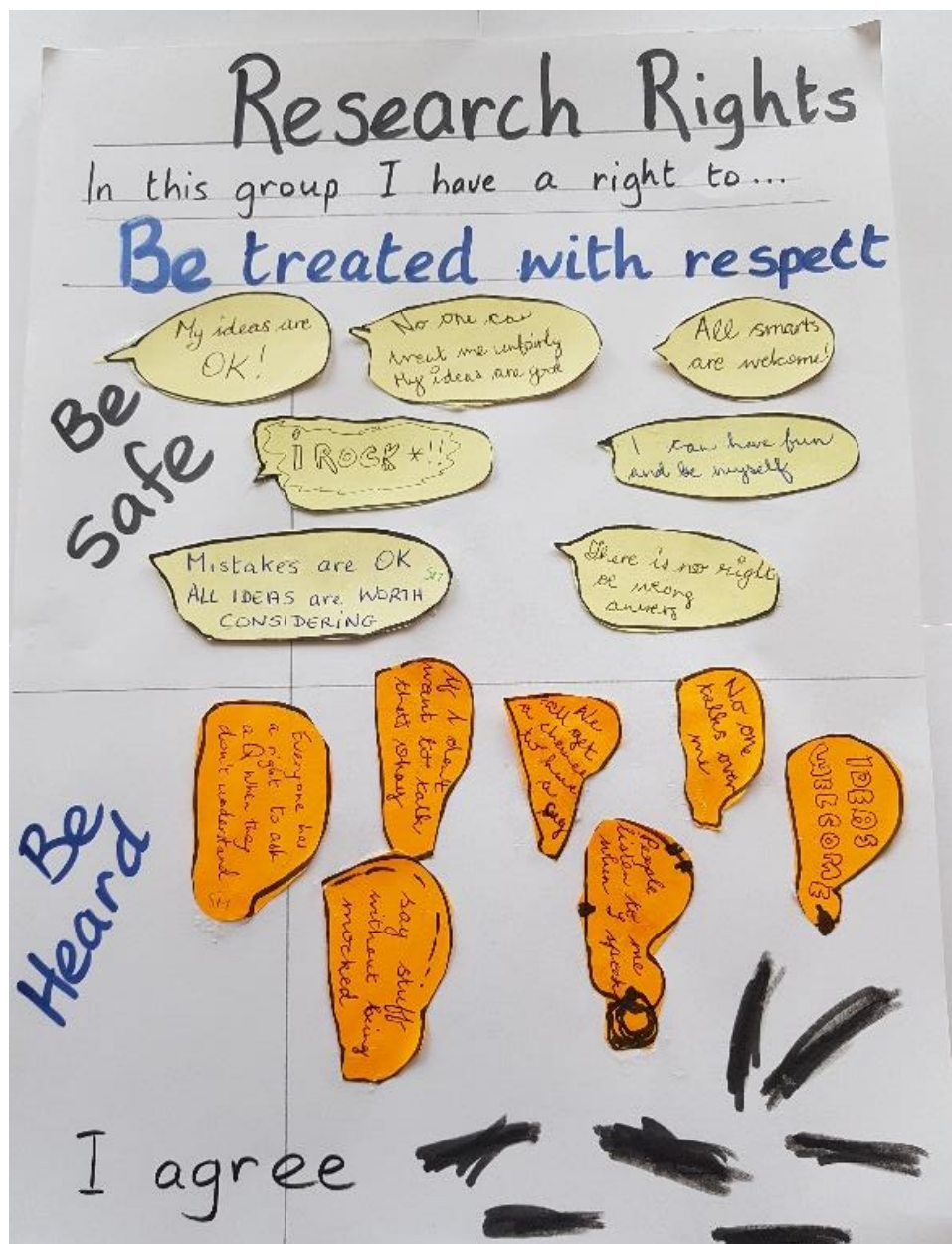


Fig 6.1 Research Contract Compiled by Young Researchers (16/01/2014)

Using the UNCRC Article 12 (1989) they decided to use the term 'Research Rights'. They invited me to be a contributor on their 'Research Rights' document (fig 6.1, table 6.2). In my research journal I recorded the following entry:

*We agreed on a 'code of behaviour' at today's meeting. They called it 'Research Rights'. The key word was **respect, be safe and be heard**. They asked me to contribute to the research contract. They were clear that there were no right or wrong answers and everybody's opinion was welcome. There were to be no put-downs. We **all** would listen respectfully when someone was speaking. While they didn't include confidentiality, I didn't push the issue. I was impressed.*

(AR RJ 16/01/2014)

Research Rights	
<i>In this research I have a right to ...</i>	
Be Treated with Respect	
Be Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My ideas are OK! • <i>No one can treat me unfairly. My ideas are good.</i> • All smarts are welcome! • <i>i ROCK *!!</i> • I can have fun and be myself. • <i>There is no right or wrong answers</i> • Mistakes are OK. ALL IDEAS are WORTH CONSIDERING
Be Heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I don't want to talk that's okay. • <i>Say stuff without being mocked</i> • We all get a chance to have a say. • <i>People listen to me when I speak.</i> • No one talks over me. • <i>IDEAS WELCOME</i> • Everyone has a right to ask a Q when they don't understand

Table 6.2 Contributions to Research Rights Contract Compiled by YRs (16/01/2014)

They defined being treated with respect as having the right to be safe and be heard. They interpreted being safe and being heard as having their contributions valued. Interestingly, they wrote their 'Be Safe' contributions on speech bubbles and 'Be Heard' contributions on ear shapes.

Doing this exercise provided them with an opportunity to freely express their views on a matter affecting them (i.e. participation in this YPAR study). Similar to Barak and Lefstein (2022) the goal was the creation of a climate in which children can express opinions and make recommendations. They contributed as they developed joint rules (fig 6.1; Table 6.2) and their views were given due weight (Article 12 UNCRC 1989; Lundy 2007). I wanted to impress on the YRs, that from the outset, they would have a voice in research decisions (Lundy 2007). The strategy was to promote the importance of children's involvement in decision-making in their daily lives (DCEDIY 2021, 2024; Lundy 2007). Through developing a group agreement key ethical aspects of mutual respect, solidarity, inclusiveness and trust were identified (Stapleton and Mayock 2023; Stevens et al 2016) as key values guiding the YPAR process.

A culture circle (Freire 1970) was created through the YRs identifying qualities they thought valuable to the creation of a conducive space. They pinpointed qualities such as respect, acceptance and listening (Humphries 2019). My primary role was to create an enabling environment through the creation of 'a safe place for honest dialogue' (Stoudt (2007) cited in Cahill (2007) p.302), which meant an environment where everyone involved felt comfortable to express themselves and to contribute (Lundy 2007). The following excerpt from an interview at the end of cycle 2 illustrates how three of the YRs felt comfortable during research meetings:

Maria AR: Did you feel like you could ask Ms M questions and tell her what you thought?

Darren: Yeah, I think I could have.

Rose: She would always ask if there were questions and not to be afraid to ask. There was a box you could put questions into if you didn't want to ask out loud.

Maria AR: Did you feel like she was listening to your ideas?

Shane: Yeah, because even if there were really silly questions you could ask whatever you wanted to ask.

Darren: If you wanted to share an idea, it was ok. There wasn't anyone better than anyone else. (Focused Interviews with YRs 27/06/2014)

I was conscious that in practising democratic leadership there needed to be a balance between freedom and authority (Freire 1974, 1998, 2005). Rather than use authority as power that can silence YRs and impose my own views upon them, I needed power to be used to set ethical limits on the exercise of freedom (Linds et al 2013). These limits were established and enforced when respect was used to guide the actions of both the YRs and me. Respect meant acting in the interest of the YRs and child participants in a way that maintained their right to develop their own voice. Power was used to ensure that voice was an ethical or respectful one that did not 'falsify the truth' (Freire 1998, p. 66), was responsible in its expression and was not used to silence others.

Each research meeting began with a check-in - a time for each person, if they wished, to say how he or she had done since the last meeting that particular week before we launched into whatever the task was for that day's meeting. The practice of check-ins was important to help create an environment where everyone feels safe and respected. Furthermore check-ins allowed me to gauge how the YRs were feeling on a given day. This was an important

ethical strategy as it gave each person the space to express themselves (Stevens et al 2016). This is an example of a check-in during cycle two when the YRs were conducting the paired interviews:

Rose: Most people are very co-operative except we had one interview on Wednesday where 2 boys kept answering 'cool' to every question. It was right annoying!

Harry: And they ran out of the room when the bell rang, and we hadn't asked them all the questions.

Shane: Yeah that was a weird interview, they were being silly and didn't take the interview seriously at all.

Darren: But that only happened once out of a load of interviews.

Rose: I suppose so.

AR: You all stayed calm, which was the main thing. If people don't want to contribute well that's their prerogative. Your reaction was very mature. Well done!

(Research Meeting 09/05/2014)

An opportunity was given to the YRs to express their frustrations. They were very invested in the research process, but they also had to respect that some of their peers did not hold such convictions. Ironically, through remaining civil with their peers in that encounter, they had maintained the delicate balance that leads neither to domination nor submission.

In these check-ins the YRs were encouraged to engage in open dialogue to share their reactions, experiences, and insights as they navigated research investigations (Cook and Kreuger-Henney 2017). Fox and Fine (2015, p.54) consider the more routine research tasks crucial to making the content of the YPAR work possible. They advise that the more ritualised set routines for each meeting are, the more the group would feel/ behave like a collective instead of a more conventional top-down controlled group. Facilitating check-ins is in keeping with Article 12 which stipulates that children should be assured the opportunity to express their views 'freely' (Lundy 2007). Freire (1998, p.86) points out that democratic authority carries the conviction that true discipline does not exist in the muteness of those who have been silenced, but, in the stirrings of those who have been challenged, in the doubt of those who have been prodded, and in the hopes of those who have been awakened. In research meetings, as the AR, I endeavoured to create a space where all could participate (Freire 1970; Lundy 2007) and where all truly learned to listen to and learn from one another (Cook-Sather 2002). A dialogic approach (Freire 1970; Wolfe and Alexander 2008) was used to minimise power disparities and maximise inclusion of all

YRs and their viewpoints. The next sections explore the concept of authority from a Freirean perspective where the goal was the sharing of authority that promoted conscientization (Freire 1970; Shor and Freire 1989) through authentic participation in YPAR.

Leading without Controlling

To ensure authentic participation, where there was space, voice, audience and influence (Lundy 2007), the central challenge for me in the YPAR study was leading this research without controlling it (Maguire 1987, 1993). I needed to be continuously reflective and critical of my methods and stances (Delamont 2016; Reid 2009; Smith et al 2021; Winn and Winn 2016). In cycle two, I introduced the idea to the YRs of using a research journal:

AR: I have 6 hardbacked notebooks here similar to my notebook. I use mine to record ideas, thoughts, reactions and feelings ... as a research diary. I was thinking you might use them to record your thoughts about how the interviews with 4th, 5th and 6th class students go or whatever you'd like to include yourselves. Would you be prepared to give it a try?
(Research Meeting 01/05/2014)

They agreed to give journaling a try. Two weeks later I suggested that they share items they had recorded while conducting peer-paired interviews during cycle 2. The following is a transcript of that conversation:

AR: We have a few minutes to spare before the end of the meeting would you like to share any of your journal reflections about doing the interviews with the group?
Emma: I just recorded that I felt nervous and that it felt easier being in a group.
Harry: We were talking about this yesterday. Do we have to do it after every single interview?
AR: Not necessarily.
Aoife: It feels like 'homework'.
Rose: I'm not used to that sort of thing and feel like I might get it wrong.
Darren: There's a lot to do with the interviews, this is an extra. It feels like a writing exercise you'd do in class.
Shane: I don't see how it helps us find out what improvements need to be made on the yard!
(Research Meeting 15/05/2014)

Some of the YRs did not want the research space to become 'school-like'. In this act of resistance, they were expressing their agency as they figured out 'who they can and cannot be in different contexts as well as how they can shape different contexts' (Jones et al 2016, p.1152). In this research encounter it was important to listen to the YRs (audience), and not

force participation on them (influence). This illustrates how power is always moving across and between bodies and situations (Siffrinn and McGovern 2019, p.176).

The YRs were given an opportunity to contribute ideas and opinions in a manner respectful of others (Barak and Lefstein 2022; Lundy 2007; Linds et al 2013, p.342). This research space equalized power by creating a space where they had an opportunity to exercise their voice (Lundy 2007) and say what they thought. They did not share my conviction regarding the value of using a research journal. They demonstrated that they were not passive recipients of research practices through communicating their perspectives. As my aim was to develop a respectful relationship with the YRs, I had to pay attention to their indifference towards keeping a research journal. I had to reflexively 'read' their resistance (Maconochie 2013, p.262). This stressed that participation needs to incorporate notions of resistance as well as compliance (ibid). This incident illustrates how I used my authority to create a space where YRs could express themselves (voice), exercise their agency (audience) and develop their authority (influence). Subsequently, they had influence and did not use research journals in their research in cycle 2 or cycle 3. Similar to Kennedy (2019), I had to let go of the idea of journaling in favour of group discussion. The next section describes and discusses how I learned from my mistakes as a co-researcher through the use of reflexive practice at the end of cycle 2.

Using Reflexive Practice

In July 2014, during the school summer holidays, when I listened to the transcripts several times (peer-paired interviews from cycle 2), I was disappointed with the apparent lack of content:

Listened to the paired interviews again and while I have already noted that the interviews were rigid and lacked depth (23/06/2014), it puzzles me ...
(AR RJ 13/07/2014)

The value of their knowledge and the child participants' knowledge had been acknowledged in their PowerPoint presentation to school leaders who had power to make changes (Chapter 5). My role had been to set the structure of the research experience through giving examples of research using peer-paired interviews, getting permission for time out of class to conduct the interviews and organising a location for these interviews. In conducting the peer-paired interviews, they had set the content. The YRs were positioned as the

producers of knowledge (Rubin et al 2017). The following excerpt from my research diary illustrates one of my many reactions to perceived lack of content and depth in the peer-paired interviews:

My actions and research decisions show I lack confidence in my own ability. I am so afraid that the YRs will give up and quit that I have lost my focus. I need to consider methods akin to the mosaic approach (Clark and Moss 2001; Clark 2012). It may entail some gentle persuading, but I think if I demonstrate the merits of such an approach that they will agree it would be a good approach. I have built trust with the group and hopefully they will agree with my suggestions for possible research tools going forward.
(AR RJ 03/08/2014)

My wariness of my authority as an adult researcher and teacher and my desire to use it to promote engagement had created a blind spot for me. In moving away from traditional understanding of authority and pedagogic practices, I actively sought to provide the YRs with a space to explore, analyse, critique and communicate their thoughts and ideas in a safe and supportive environment (Lansdown 2010, p.12; Linds et al 2013, p.350; Lundy 2007). I had naively thought that I needed to be more passive to be effective as an adult researcher in YPAR. While being caught up in shifting from non-dialogical to dialogical engagement I had taken my eye off the ball and was not paying enough attention to the research tools used in cycle 2.

I did not perceive the tension that had arisen in cycle 1 and 2 regarding the YRs including their own suggestions as a failure but understood it as a challenge indicating that change needed to happen in research methods chosen for cycle 3. The following is the reflection I wrote in my research diary:

In our research, new roles and relations have been created to achieve change. They have learned new skills – design of survey, analysis of data, interviewing, presenting findings. But it feels just like a checklist exercise. The peer interviews in cycle 2 were very wooden. It created a ‘them’ and ‘us’ dynamic. The research needs to have more ‘focal’ activities – ‘where’ and ‘how’. It needs to move from the school building to the playground. There needs to be more interaction and a coming together of ideas – a forum.
(AR RJ 15/07/2014)

I felt the interview protocol had curtailed the conversations I really wanted the YRs and child participants to have. While on the one hand I treated the YRs’ sense making as valid and full of potential (Talero 2008; Vossoughi 2014), on the other hand I had an uncomfortable feeling that our research practices may be reproducing inequities rather than transforming

them (Bang and Vossoughi 2016, p.176). The design decisions (ibid, p.174) taken in cycle 1 and 2 were impacting the scopes of possibility (ibid, p.173) of the YPAR study. I felt that those design decisions constrained the type of knowledge that the YRs constructed. Methods chosen needed to capture the views and experiences of the child participants and build the skills of the YRs as action researchers. Cycles 1 and 2 demonstrated the potential of the YRs to take ownership of the YPAR project, the methods chosen in cycle 3 needed to facilitate critical discussion initially by the child participants and subsequently by the YRs. My own sense of anxiety at the carefully researched plan of action in cycle 2 that did not appear to work in practice was leading me to try to maintain control over the research process in cycle three.

From a Freirean perspective I had overlooked that the YRs' perceptions and practices were contextually bound to their experiences (Freire 1970). What they were prepared to give in a research encounter was very much determined by how they engaged with and were treated in past educational experiences and in their limited research experience. They had limited experience of the complexities of interviews. They were conditioned to learn in ways that were short on autonomy and holism (Heron 1999, p.24). They had never been afforded chances to engage in this kind of research before. But I realised that the YPAR needed to be more than training them to mimic adult behaviour. The choice of research tools used in cycle 3 therefore needed to provide the YRs and the child participants with opportunities to achieve a higher critical awareness of their condition, to bring positive changes to their school playground, as well as producing change suggestions based on rigorous research.

While I had high expectations of the YRs I needed to be more involved in providing structure to improve the depth and breadth of their research knowledge. My role as AR was to engage in significant interpretative work (Piper and Frankham 2007) and translation (Cook-Sather 2007; 2020) and find methods of participation appropriate to the YRs' and the child participants' competencies.

I had a good look at the work of Clark and Moss. The mosaic approach while it was with younger children I think with some tweaking it would really work in our research context. Definitely going on to the yard during the interviews would make things more immediate and would put the children from 4th, 5th and 6th in the driving seat.
(AR RJ 14/08/2014)

The voice of the child participants needed to come to the fore in an initiating, not just responsive, role (Fielding 2011). I needed to heed Article 5 of the UNCRC (UN 1989) which gives children the right to receive guidance and direction from adults in the exercise of their Convention rights, including Article 12 (Lundy 2007). The YRs needed to be offered another way of *being researchers*, by trying something more interactive and newer to help them move from natural curiosity into epistemological curiosity (Freire 1998; Bahruth and Macedo 2016). As facilitator, I needed to ensure that the research methods chosen aligned more closely with the unique contexts within which they operated (Kennedy 2019). The methods needed to facilitate constructive dialogue, where child participants could take lead roles deciding joint courses of action with the YRs' active support.

I was cognisant that the desired goals would not be complete in 2 cycles of YPAR and that I needed to focus on cultivating and building increased capacity to continue the ongoing work of social change (Bang and Vossoughi 2016). I realised that I needed to use my research knowledge and creativity to suggest research tools and practices which would appeal to YRs and child participants and that would build on their capabilities and interests (Hawkins 2015). The YRs and the child participants needed to get out and walk in the school playground where implementation of changes would occur. Rubin et al (2017) posit that intertwining research and action can help by providing first-hand opportunities that students crave and that bring school-based projects to life. This would mean the YRs engaging the child participants in activities where they examine how change could happen. This could be accomplished by consciously positioning YRs and child participants as a community of activists who hold articulated theories of change (Conner and Rosen 2016; Tuck and Yang 2013).

This led to adopting multiple methods of inquiry (e.g. Clark 2010; Clark and Moss 2001; Darbyshire et al 2005; Dockett et al 2009) such as go-along interviews and mapping activities in cycle 3 (chapter 4 and 5). Making this adaptation happened through implementing Lundy's concepts of space and voice when building research relationships with the YRs over time and understanding their unique strengths and needs. But enhancement of the YRs' and the child participants' engagement in this YPAR was not simply a matter of technique, but a matter of ethico-political practice (Dahlberg and Moss

2005). While I retained overall authority of the research process, it was through engaging in critical reflexivity that a space for more interactive research methods was created that recognised the concepts of space, voice, audience and influence (Dean and Gilbert 2024; Lundy 2007).

Within this YPAR there was a permanent tension between authority and liberty (Shor and Freire 1987, p.16). Within this tension authority continued to be in relation to permitting student freedoms 'which emerge, grow and mature because authority and freedom learn self-discipline' (ibid p.16). As the AR, I was aware of the challenge of producing socially robust knowledge (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2015). I needed to concentrate on how to actually do YPAR while acknowledging that the YRs were hungry to provide models and exemplars (Reason 1994, p.2). The YRs exercised their agency within the boundaries of my perception of and implementation of rigorous research practices. As the AR I was responsible for the integrity of this YPAR. I could not abandon my scholarly commitment to rigour and to the need for reasoned justification (Thomson and Gunter 2007, p.329). It required the self-conscious development of reflexivity (Delamont 2016; Thomson and Gunter 2007, p.329). I needed to learn from the shortcomings (Darbyshire et al 2005) in cycle 1 and 2 and therefore nominated to plan for more interactive research methods (i.e. similar to the mosaic approach of Clark (2001); Clark and Moss (2011)) in cycle 3. When introducing the idea of child-led/go-along tours and mapping activities (i.e. multi-methods) I was clear about the details of the research methods. There was little discussion needed for this:

AR: Now the next part is where your research is going to be different – you need to get children to talk about times when their play is interrupted.

Harry: Do you mean find out dislikes?

AR: Yeah, get them thinking and get ideas about how they would like the yard to be. You need to bring them back upstairs to the room. Then, on a blank map of the yard they have to come up with ideas. It might be areas/sections on the yard to accommodate different activities. For example, there on the 'Active Playgrounds' page from *Intouch* June 2009. [pause as pages are flicked through] Yeah, this one, take a look at that.

Darren: Oh right.

AR: They will be drawing and writing on the blank maps and you will be chatting to them as they are doing the activity. Then at the end you will put their ideas on the whiteboard, and they will describe their solution. This is called member checking. The participants from 4th, 5th and 6th will be doing the talking, you all need to be

watching and listening, picking up on what you find interesting.

(Research Meeting 18/11/2014)

The focus in cycle 3 was identifying and exploring root causes of problems on the school playground and on designing actions to target those underlying issues. I wanted to be clear about the importance of systematic collection of data and how they must engage with their peers throughout all stages.

In today's research meeting I introduced the idea of using child-led tours and mapping activities in the next stage of the YPAR research. I was clear about time restraints as we only had a finite amount of time (12 hours) to conduct these go-along interviews. They seemed excited by the prospect of undertaking these interviews. However I was uncomfortable. They were taking control of knowledge production but I was instructing how this knowledge is produced.

(AR RJ 18/11/2014)

The YRs were lacking in research experience of multiple methods therefore they had to be directed clearly in the process required for such research. Also, I wanted to reduce the chance of any misunderstandings happening during cycle three. I was clarifying how those involved participate in the knowledge production process (Call-Cummings 2017). The master-apprentice relationship was stressed, I was positioned as the 'expert' regarding how data should be generated. I was obliged to assume 'a directive role for educating' (Shor and Freire 1987, p.171). It was necessary to guide the YRs as this was a situation where I could not wait for them 'to initiate their own forward progress into an idea or an understanding' (ibid p.157). The YRs had a small say in its organisation (i.e. suggestion of post its activity as introduction to go-along interviews). New methods of data generation were used and made a vital contribution to the research. My identity as a PhD researcher had a very real bearing on the force and direction of participatory design in cycle 3 of this YPAR.

When I reviewed this transcript after the YPAR project had finished I realised that this action could be interpreted as constructing the YRs as non-experts.

When going through research meeting transcript I notice that I was very insistent about how the interviews would be conducted in cycle 3.

(AR RJ 4/08/2016)

Expertise – definitely re-enforcing my position as expert in this conversation.

(AR RJ 21/02/2017)

My own voice is louder than the YRs. I am not leaving space for the YRs' views to develop. I am dominating the discussion with the end goal of increasing the breadth and depth of research knowledge taking priority.

Definitely pushing the mosaic method approach as being the best show in town. There are mutterings from the YRs – 'yeah, I see', 'oh cool', 'I would never have thought of that'. But they are very accepting of my recommendations.

(AR RJ 3/10/2018)

When I listened to the research meeting transcript (18/11/2014) in October 2018 what was striking to me was the absence of verbal communication from the YRs. It may have been because they were so absorbed in trying to understand the proposed research process. Or perhaps they were aware that on this occasion they were the recipients. I had resorted to an 'empty vessel' approach (Bowden-Clissold 2013; Dahlberg et al 2007; Woodhead and Faulkner 2008).

In this encounter I was not developing sustained shared thinking (Sylva et al 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002). I was not developing a more equal relationship, where the adult researcher and the YRs developed their thinking, their viewpoints together and adapted where relevant when thinking moved on. Due to time constraints in implementing the YPAR study I had to take the role of leader. Power for deciding what is important and merits action was accorded to the adult researcher. This made me feel uncomfortable:

It feels like I am taking the process away from the YRs (AR RJ 18/11/2014)

Up to this point in the research the choice of methods had been student driven. I also had to consider that the YRs although capable did have a need for guidance and support. This echoes Smith's (2011) argument that children should be respected and listened to whilst retaining the awareness that adult support is needed. Similar to Mirra et al's (2016) assertion in relation to YPAR with teenagers I realised that adult researchers do need to lead children at times in YPAR. This also stresses that adult researchers need 'to be explicit and transparent about what is reasonable and feasible concerning child voice' (Lewis 2010, p.16). There needs to be flexibility in responding to identified changing needs. Although the observations and comments of the YRs and the child participants were prioritized in this research it must also be stressed that those of the adult researcher should not be excluded as they too form part of the 'mosaic'.

This was a paradoxical position. My actions did not reflect my stated research intentions. While I was declaring that I was working collaboratively with the YRs and viewing them as competent actors (UNCRC 1989; Alderson 2008), I was giving them clear directions towards an outcome. It is illuminating that the use of planned research activities (go-along guided tours, mapping activities) appeared to affect how I constructed the YRs and resulted in me teaching and directing, whereas the research activities that emerged created a space for more genuine sharing with the child participants.

Although I was making claims that the YRs were engaged in problem-posing and problem-solving in cycle 1 and 2, I was anxious that my practices as an AR were banking education (Freire 1970) in disguise. Frost (2007) points out that even the impetus to empower children by facilitating their active research arises from adult agendas and should therefore be a cause for reflection. This led me to put my own position under interrogation, to hold up my own pedagogy to critical inspection and self-critique (Irwin 2018). In doing this I was developing an authority which is constantly accountable and open to critique (ibid, p.66). While the heavy lifting in YPAR comes from the YRs, I as the adult researcher had the responsibility of working *with* and learning *from* the YRs in every encounter. I learned that exercising adult authority to ensure authentic participation in YPAR involves re-examining and troubling the forms of repetition that play out in practices and that hinder attempts to confront challenges and work through issues. It meant moving back and forth from hierarchical/ directive leadership to cooperative leadership where appropriate (Heron 1999) during this YPAR study. This was important to enable the YRs deal with the complexities of their situation. This created new possibilities which involved imagining and enacting different forms of authority through spaces called 'safe uncertainty' (Mason 1998, p.194), which is a perspective that is always 'in a state of flow, and is consistent with the notion of a respectful, collaborative, evolving narrative, one which allows a context to emerge whereby new explanations can be placed alongside rather than instead of' (ibid, p.194) or in competition with the explanations that I and the YRs bring to our work together. My political power in such spaces shifted back and forth in response to what was happening from hierarchical/directive to collaborative leadership.

By indicating that they must adopt a multi-method approach to data generation I was communicating skills to them. It could be viewed as serving purposes productive for pedagogy (Gore 1995, p.170, Shor and Freire 1987). But participation in YPAR should not be viewed as binary of either/or but as a spectrum of complicated communicative action (Call-Cummings 2017; Call-Cummings et al 2019). While the goal of the work cited in this thesis had been to push against structures of research that separate the roles of participants and researchers (Call-Cummings and Dennis 2019) it still implicates separate agents. Levels of expertise and authority are inevitably imbalanced in child-adult partnerships (Mitra 2008).

Conclusion

In YPAR studies the adult researcher has the responsibility to structure the social environment to encourage engagement to facilitate shared understandings and create opportunities for child co-researchers to take the lead. Systems of conversation (Shor 1996) must be deliberately set up where careful attention is paid to checking and interrogating and weeding out the possible authoritarianism lurking in the authority of the adult as teacher and researcher. This is done through creating time and openings for collaboration opportunities and transparent decision-making processes as emphasised in Lundy's model of participation (Lundy 2007). Authority and authoritarianism do not have to be synonymous (Shor 1996). The role of the adult researcher requires expertise which is strong and self-critical.

For the adult researcher it is important to reflect on (i) the purpose of the research continuously and critically, (ii) how identity and power as an adult and teacher influence the research process, (iii) whether participatory and inclusive interactions with the co-researchers are taking place (iv) the extent to which research supports space, voice, audience and influence in keeping with the Lundy (2007) model of participation. Efforts must be made to reduce adult authority in order to promote genuine participation. There must be careful attention to relate to child co-researchers in a way that is not impositional.

In the YPAR study I had authority, both in terms of recognized expertise and institutional power. Engaging in YPAR provided me with opportunities to reflect on my power and use of authority to open spaces for the YRs to engage in authentic participatory research to

develop their authorities and exercise their power in different ways. There were times when I needed to exercise my power directly in choosing suitable research methods. By exercising my authority to create a research space, power sharing was more dynamic and there was a flow between myself and the YRs and among the YRs. The co-creation of learning spaces where knowledge production is shared does not require the relinquishment of teacher or adult authority (Linds et al 2013, p.352). Through intentional reflection during the YPAR study I learned to be adaptive. Through reflection on my praxis as an adult researcher (reflexivity) it became clear to me that it is up to me to educate, model and create space for children to exercise their agency and advocate for change in ways that meet the goals of the YPAR study. Adults cannot assume that children carve out spaces of individual assertion independent of adult worlds, instead, the focus needs to be on the deeply social and inter-relational nature of participation and the exercise of agency. Empowerment in this YPAR was the effect or consequence of an interaction between the capacity for action of the YRs and the options provided by their physical and sociocultural environment (Martinez-Andrés et al 2017), it was my responsibility to a greater or lesser extent to help them negotiate those options.

‘Together we ... build initially fragile and increasingly sturdy contact zones where diverse knowledges dialogue’
(Fine 2017, p.79).

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Introduction

In this final chapter I seek to draw out the knowledge claims made and conclusions arrived at in the previous findings and discussions chapters. In this way, the chapter highlights the contribution I believe this study makes to an emergent knowledge base on how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of school based YPAR. I also highlight the limitations of this PhD study and recommendations for future research.

Power Dynamics during a School-based YPAR Study

Power dynamics changed over time as the adult researcher and child co-researchers collaborated, shared leadership and engaged in inclusive dialogue during the facilitation of the YPAR study. Similar to Moules and O'Brien's (2012), O'Brien and Dadswell's (2020) and Green et al (2023) research with teenagers, this research recognised facilitation of a YPAR study as a situation in which a cross-generational partnership developed between child co-researchers and an adult researcher as they moved through the participatory process. In common with others, (e.g. Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015); Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2017); Lundy et al (2011)), this study also reveals that in order to facilitate genuine participatory conditions and reduce power imbalances, it is important from the outset, to create a safe and inclusive space where the child co-researchers felt comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas. Congruent with Mitra and Serriere (2012; 2015), Caraballo et al (2017), Kirshner (2015) and Mitra (2005), this study too provided opportunities for child co-researchers to act as joint contributors and to take up organisational leadership roles, whereby they brought unique expertise, which shifted power dynamics. The creation of a safe place for participation, recognising children's expertise and encouraging them to take on responsibilities during YPAR mattered as it reflected a commitment to democratic principles (UNCRC 1989: Article 12; Lundy 2007) and recognition of the importance of diverse perspectives in generating knowledge and driving social change (Freire 1970, 1974). Unquestionably, adult researchers, educators, school staff and school leaders must endeavour to create safe and inclusive spaces where children can adopt leadership roles and act as joint contributors in order to shift power dynamics during YPAR.

Similar to Cook-Sather (2006 2020), efforts were made to recognise and reposition the child co-researchers as authorities on and authors of their own experiences. Such an approach required a reciprocal giving over of power by the adult researcher. Giving the child co-researchers opportunities to express their perspectives throughout the research process (Kornbluh et al 2015; Lundy 2007) showed that their contributions were important, welcomed and valued (Lundy 2007; UNComRC 2009) allowing them to design their own approaches (Mearns et al 2014) and shape the outcomes. This matters as it firstly acknowledges children's ability to exercise their agency in shaping their own narratives and suggestions for change (Lundy 2007). Secondly, it demonstrates a way of not replicating conventional power relationships that often privilege adult perspectives over those of children (Fleming 2011; Lundy 2007). Indeed, during the facilitation of YPAR adult researchers must attend to sharing power through the provision of opportunities for child co-researchers to engage in decision-making and to exercise their agency.

Findings illustrate that there is an ebb and flow of power during the facilitation of a YPAR study, where sometimes the adult researcher had more, sometimes the child co-researchers had more. Similar to research by Casas et al (2013), Mitra and Serriere (2012) and Kellett (2010) adults provided technical expertise on research methods while child co-researchers took the lead on data generation (Kellett 2010; Mitra and Serriere 2012, 2015). However, as with Kirshner et al (2011) and Rubin et al's (2017) research with teenagers, the role of the adult often became more directive (Freire 1987; Mitra 2008) during data analysis and presentation of suggestions for change to ensure that all suggestions for change were data driven. The ebb and flow in power was important as it allowed for the emergence of different leaders at different stages of the YPAR study depending on their skills and areas of expertise. This research study's contribution lies in its nuanced exploration of power dynamics during a YPAR study. In recognising the interplay between adult expertise and child agency, it informs possible practices for fostering purposeful participation as suggested in the *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making* (DCEDIY 2021) and *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024-2028* (DCEDIY 2024). Undoubtedly, facilitators of YPAR in school settings should be prepared for shifts in power by being flexible, adaptive and willing to cede authority when appropriate.

The power of class teachers in the primary school impacted power dynamics and acted as a barrier to child co-researchers participation in the school based YPAR. Similar to previous studies (e.g. Cahill (2007); Nygreen (2009); Van Sluys (2010)) the power and status of teachers prevented the child co-researchers from exercising their agency and leading data generation activities. Consequently, this study highlighted the need to pay attention to possible practice of exclusion of children's voices during school based YPAR (Kohfeldt et al (2011) and Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson (2014)). Clearly, adult researchers must pay attention to hierarchical power and adopt strategies to ensure that child co-researchers are not impeded when conducting research activities with their peers.

Critique of YPAR and Freirean Critical Theory

Freire (1970) encourages developing dialogical methods and fostering critical consciousness to enable children to question and transform their social realities. However, dialogue and consensus may not always be practical or effective in school-based YPAR. Some situations might require more directive approaches. Furthermore, Freire's focus on collective agency can sometimes underplay the significant structural barriers that exist in schools.

As stressed by Herr (2017) school-based YPAR is fraught with tensions due to structures and support mechanisms which maintain the status quo of schooling. This places extra responsibility on adult researchers who have to continuously scrutinise situations to ensure that power and its effects can be reduced or minimised (Davidson 2017).

But YPAR is not simply a set of methods but a process that requires ever renewed commitment, an ethical stance, self-critique by adult co-researchers and persistence in ensuring that child involvement genuinely influences the research process and outcomes (Galletta and Torre 2019; Rahman and Fals-Borda 1991). The demands of facilitating and coordinating a school-based YPAR study requires significant time, effort and resources which may be a barrier for many schools.

Critique of Lundy (2007) Model of Participation

Despite its widespread adoption and use the Lundy (2007) model of participation has areas of critique. For example, in schools where children have traditionally had less voice or are expected to conform to adult decision-making (e.g. Luguetti et al 2023; Wulf-Andersen et al 2021; Caraballo et al 2017) providing genuine opportunities for children to participate may be challenging. Addressing these challenges requires a commitment by adults in schools to genuine power-sharing, cultural changes and ongoing evaluation to ensure meaningful and sustainable participation. There is a risk that schools might adopt the model superficially, going through a checklist and fulfilling the procedural aspects without genuinely committing to valuing and acting on children's contributions. This could lead to tokenistic practices (Hart 1992) where children are seen but genuinely not heard.

Consideration also needs to be given to the importance of organisational champions (Kennan et al 2021; Kirby 2003) who assist in the process of embedding a new way of working and are crucial in terms of sustainability (Scheirer 2005) of the Lundy (2007) model of participation. These champions can be adults and children who are enthusiastic about participation and are influential in terms of their capacity to inspire others to action and to role model desired behaviour (Kouzes and Posner 1995; UNICEF 2005).

Limitations of this Research

Exploring power dynamics during the facilitation of a school-based YPAR involved several specific limitations (Gottschalk and Borhan (2023):

- **Power Imbalance:** The adult facilitator may have inadvertently exerted influence over the child co-researchers' and child participants' participation, affecting the authenticity of their input and the power dynamics being studied.
- **Limited Agency:** The child co-researchers may have had limited capacity to articulate their experiences which could have affected the depth and accuracy of the data generated.
- **Subjectivity:** The adult researcher's perspectives and biases could have influenced the generation and interpretation of themes, potentially affecting objectivity and reproducibility. The adult researcher's own views on power and authority could have

influenced interactions with the child co-researchers and their interpretations of data during the three cycles of the YPAR study leading to biased outcomes.

- Lack of Generalizability: Findings from reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022) are context specific and therefore may not be generalizable to other settings or populations. Added to this is the potential for over-interpretation in order to fit with the adult researcher's preconceived notions which can lead to misleading conclusions.
- This PhD enquiry was a small-scale, in-depth and highly contextualised investigation, over two academic years that explored the specific experiences of six primary school students and a teacher/researcher involved in a YPAR study. Due to the participatory nature of this study replicating this level of involvement would be difficult especially if the same level of child engagement does not exist in other settings.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on power dynamics in YPAR with 10–12-year-olds. Further research that explores how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of YPAR with younger children, for example, 4-6-year-olds and 7-9-year-olds, would be valuable for comparative purposes. Research that explores how identities (such as ethnicity, gender and ability) intersect with power dynamics during the facilitation of a YPAR study should also be considered.

Furthermore, my study focused on participants whose involvement was sustained. Future research could work to understand the reasons why some children might not wish to continue with a YPAR study. This would help to illuminate other possible tensions and challenges that occur during the facilitation of a YPAR study.

Further research is needed to explore skills that child co-researchers develop through participation in YPAR, for example, critical skills and multiple transferable skills such as collaboration, negotiation and resilience. Such research would have implications for both researchers, schools and policy makers.

While the child co-researchers in this research did not agree to use research journals, perhaps, in a future YPAR study, journals could be used to record thoughts, feelings and experiences throughout the research process to develop insights on children's perceptions on how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of YPAR. The use of research

journals could create intentional spaces for critical reflection within YPAR and encourage adult researchers and child co-researchers to discuss power dynamics, share experiences and collectively strategize for more equitable research practices.

Implications for Schools and Policy Makers

Exploring how power dynamics operate during the facilitation of a school based YPAR study has several implications in school and policymaking contexts:

- Recognising how power dynamics operate allow schools to better facilitate YPAR through fostering increased child engagement, decision-making and ownership of the research process. When power is equitably distributed children are more likely to have higher investment in school activities.
- Adults' increased understanding of how power dynamics shift during YPAR leads to improved facilitation skills and more effective support for cross-generational research. But it is critical for the integrity of YPAR that the focus remains on children's needs and perspectives rather than being co-opted by adult agendas.
- Through acknowledging and addressing power imbalances schools can promote authentic child engagement. It allows schools to create environments where children are given opportunities to exercise their rights and engage actively in decision-making processes. This can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable school climate, which, in turn, can lead to improved relationships among children, teachers and school leaders. When children see their contribution is valued and acted upon, trust between children and school leaders improves, leading to a more cohesive school community.
- Insights into how power dynamics evolve in YPAR studies can inform policy makers about the importance of supporting cross-generational research initiatives and integrating children's perspectives into policy development processes. Making provision for more equitable power sharing promotes sustained engagement in school activities and school decision-making by children. This can lead to continuous improvement and adaptation in school policies and practices.
- Understanding how power dynamics operate during YPAR can facilitate policymakers to develop policies that address issues affecting children, prioritise student voice,

equity and inclusion in school decision-making processes. Policies developed where children are facilitated to have space, voice, audience and influence are more likely to reflect the actual needs and concerns of children leading to more relevant and effective educational policies. This ensures that policies are evidence-based and contextualised. Policies developed through cross-generational approaches are likely to be more transparent and accountable as they are subject to the scrutiny and input of a broad group of stakeholders. When children have contributed to policy development resistance is reduced facilitating a more harmonious school environment.

In summary, exploring power dynamics during the facilitation of a school based YPAR study can lead to a more inclusive, responsive and equitable school environment. It can inform policy making processes and contribute to the development of educational policies that promote and prioritise child agency. Addressing power dynamics develops more effective and sustainable educational policies.

Conclusion

Findings of this study contribute new insights on both the importance of the adult researcher creating space for cross-generational collaboration to shift power dynamics, as well as evidence-based approaches to how the adult researcher can intentionally share power. The adult researcher's intentional practice throughout this YPAR study was critical in order to decentralise power. Building on the work of others, (e.g. Dentith et al 2012; Freire 1972; Lundy et al 2011; McCartan et al 2012; Shor 1992), this research shows how a commitment to genuine power-sharing through providing space (Lundy 2007, 2018) and opportunities to contribute help to position child co-researchers as knowledgeable actors (Darnell et al 2016; Freire 1972) with decision making opportunities (DCEDIY 2021, 2024; Lundy 2007, 2018).

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Appendix A - MIREC Approval A13-011

For Office Use Only
Application Reference Number:

A13-011


	Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee
	MIREC-4: MIREC Chair Decision Form

1 Title of Research Project
Children Designing Outdoor Play Spaces in an Irish Primary School

2 Applicant	
Name	Siobhán Mary Marren
Department / Centre / Other	Education - Learning, Society and Religious Education
Position	PhD Student

3 Decision of MIREC Chair	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance through MIREC is required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance through MIREC is not required and therefore the researcher need take no further action in this regard
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance is required and granted. Referral to MIREC is not necessary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance is required but the full MIREC process is not. Ethical clearance is therefore granted if required for external funding applications and the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Insufficient information provided by applicant

4 Reason(s) for Decision
All the ethical requirements seem to have been fulfilled.

5 Declaration	
Name (Print)	Áine Lawlor
	<i>MIREC Chair</i>
Signature	
	<i>MIREC Chair</i>
Date	22/03/2013

Appendix B - Children's Information Sheet

Parent/Responsible Other Information Sheet

Children's Consent Form

Parent/Responsible Other Consent Form



Child-led Research in Improving Outdoor Play Opportunities during Break-times in an Irish Primary School

Children's Information Sheet

Some people in Mary Immaculate College are trying to find out about children working together to improve play opportunities during break-times. I, Siobhán Marren, a sixth class teacher in your school, would really like to hear about your ideas about improving play opportunities in your new school.

If you agree to take part in the project, you and a group of your friends and some children from Fourth Class and First Class will be working together making photo/picture albums and using other fun ways to put your ideas together. I am really interested in your ideas and would like to chat to you about them. It's not like a test - there are no right or wrong answers. We will be doing some activities together and thinking about ways to improve play opportunities during break-times. If it's alright with you I would like to keep some of your photos/drawings/reports to help me write my report at the end of the project. When people in the college see your photographs and artwork and written work they might talk about some of the things you have done. But we won't use your name or the name of the school so people won't know who you are.

If, when I am chatting to you, you want to stop talking or move away from the table to another table that's okay. If you don't want to be questioned you won't get in trouble. By holding up a red card this will indicate that you do not want to be questioned. If you wish you can still take part in the activities we will be doing, i just won't question you. Alternatively if you wish to go to room 15 where your class teacher is working that is fine.

If you have any worries at any stage you can talk to me, your class teacher or your parents.



Child-led Research in Improving Outdoor Play Opportunities during Break-times in an Irish Primary School

Parent/Responsible Other Information Sheet

What is the project about?

This is a research study that involves sixth class, fifth class and fourth class students working together to improve outdoor play opportunities during break-times in their new school.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is Siobhán Marren, a learning support/resource teacher at Ennis National School and I am a Postgraduate student attending Mary Immaculate College. I am presently completing a Structured PhD in the Department of Education under the supervision of Dr Deirdre Ní Chróinín, Dr Mary Moloney and Dr Eimear Enright. The current study will form part of my thesis.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to investigate how primary school children can engage in research to develop their competencies to express their perspectives about improving outdoor play opportunities in Ennis National School. I hope that my research findings will help the development of different ways of listening to children's perspectives through talking, writing, making drawings, photo-books and maps and reviewing these to bring about improvements for the well-being of the children in an Irish primary school.

What are the benefits of this research?

The structured systematic research will promote maximum involvement of children as stakeholders. The research findings will be presented to school management, teachers and SNAs. This will empower children by acknowledging the importance of their voices and valuing how their contribution can benefit individual and collective well-being in a primary school.

Exactly what is involved for the participant (time, location, etc.)

Students will be asked to complete a survey about their current play experiences during break-times and the types of play opportunities they would like in their new school. Some students will then be asked to partake in focus groups (group interviews) to clarify aspects they like about play during break-times and possible changes they would like to see happen in their new school. The group interviews may be recorded. A query box will be provided where students can anonymously place questions regarding topic areas they need to be clarified. The research findings and recommendations will be presented to students, school management, teachers and SNAs.

Right to withdraw

Your child's participation is voluntary. **You may withdraw your child from participation at any time without consequence.**

How will the information be used / disseminated?

The group interview transcripts, writings/drawings and any audio tapes that are used will be stored safely for as long as they are needed. Data from your child's participation in the research will be



combined with that of the other participants in this study and used to form the results section of my thesis. Summary data only will appear in my thesis, individual participant data will not be shown.

How will confidentiality be kept?

All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party. A random ID number/pseudonym will be generated for each participant and it is this number/pseudonym rather than the participant's name which will be held with their data to maintain their anonymity. The school name will also be given a pseudonym. Information stored on a computer will be password protected and only I will have access to it.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In accordance with the Data Protection Act (2003) all participant data will be stored for the length of time that it is required to produce this thesis at which time it will be destroyed. The results of this study are for research purposes only; if they are published in the future, names of children and of the school will not be revealed.

Contact details:

Please share the contents of this information letter with your child before completing the attached consent form. If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Siobhán Marren, Ennis National School, Ashline, Ennis, Co. Clare.
 siobhanmarren@hotmail.com
 065 6829158

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

**MIREC Administrator
 Mary Immaculate College
 South Circular Road
 Limerick
 061-204515
 mirec@mic.ul.ie**



Children Improving Outdoor Play Opportunities during Break-times in an Irish Primary School Informed Consent Form

I have been told by my parent/guardian that it's ok for me to take part, if I want to, in a project which is about children improving playtimes in our new primary school. This will involve me taking part in activities with other children during this term. I will be asked to complete a short survey and take part in chats which might be recorded if everyone taking part is happy about that. I understand that photographs might be taken of my work.

I understand that I do not have to take part in the project. I also understand that even if I agree to take part at the beginning, I can change my mind at any time. I will just let Siobhán Marren, my teacher or my parents know in whatever way is comfortable for me.

Please read the following statements before giving your consent to take part in this research study.

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about and I do not have to take part if I don't want to.
- I understand that if I am not happy to have chats about my ideas recorded or my work photographed that I just need to say so.
- I have been told that no one will know that the information that I give came from me and that no one's real name or the name of the school will be used in any written report about this project.
- I have been told that written information about our ideas will be kept safely only for as long as they are needed and will then be destroyed.

Name (PRINT): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Child-led Research in Improving Outdoor Play Opportunities during Break-times in an Irish Primary School

Dear Parent,

As outlined in the **parent information sheet** the current study will investigate how children working together bring about improvements in the provision of outdoor play opportunities in Ennis National School. It is hoped that by listening to children that the well-being for the children of an Irish primary school will be improved.

Details about each stage in the research study are contained in the **parent information sheet**. This information sheet should be read fully and carefully before consenting to allow your child to partake in this study.

Your child's anonymity is assured and you are free to withdraw your child from the research study at any time. All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party. Mary Immaculate College Record Retention Policy research records will be retained for the duration of the project plus three years.

Please read the following statements before signing the consent form.

- I have read and understood the **parent information sheet**.
- I understand what the study is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I have been offered the opportunity to discuss the research project further should I want to do so.
- I am fully aware of **all** of the stages involving my child.
- I know that my child's participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw him/her from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that all results will be kept confidential and neither my child nor their school will be identified in publications arising from this research.

Child's Name: _____

Name (PRINTED): _____

Name (Signature): _____

Date: _____

Appendix C -

Questions for Young Researchers' Focus Group Interview

Focus Group (Boys) Data Extracts – Examples of Emerging Codes and Categories

Focus Group (Girls) Data Extracts – Examples of Emerging Codes and Categories

Questions for Young Researchers Focus Groups

Ice breaker: Explain the purpose of the interview (i.e. to find out about their experience of doing a research project) If there is any question they don't want to answer – that's fine. If they want to leave the interview at any time that's fine.

Research meetings covers the meetings about how research is done, designing the questionnaire, deciding the questions for interview, conducting interviews, analysing data and data presentation.

Reminder re courtesy (listen to other people's contribution)

Part 1

1. Did you enjoy the lunch time research sessions/meetings ? If yes, why? If no, why?
2. What do you think was good about the research project? What made that good?
3. What did you think was bad about the research project? What made that bad?
4. Did you find the research difficult? If yes, why? If no, why?
5. Do you think you have learnt new skills? What are they?
6. How important was the research project to you?
7. Would you want to do a similar research project again?

Part 2

1. Did the research project feel like your own? If yes, why? If no, why?
2. Do you feel proud of your work?

Part 3

1. How much did the teacher (Ms Marren) help you with the research project? Was this too much? Too little?
2. Did you understand everything that you were meant to be doing?
3. Did you feel like you could ask the teacher questions and tell her what you thought?
4. Did you feel like the teacher was listening to your ideas?
5. Could the teacher have done anything differently?

Part 4

1. Did you enjoy working in groups? If yes, why? If no, why?
2. What was good about working in groups?
3. What was bad about working in groups?
4. Do you think that you were able to manage tasks well as a group?

5. Would you have preferred to work on your own?

Part 5

1. What was your favourite part of the research project?
2. What would you change about the research meetings?
3. What would have made the research project better?

<p>Questions for YRs Focus Group 1</p> <p>Boys</p> <p>End of Phase 2</p> <p>Data Extracts</p>	<p>Emerging Codes & Categories</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>My reflections</p> <p>Building skills and independence (danger of overload)</p> <p>Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers)</p> <p>Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation</p> <p>Shifting power relations</p>
<p>Part 1 27/6/2014</p> <p>Did you enjoy the lunch time research meetings?</p> <p><i>Yes, because like it helps to improve the yard to make it more enjoyable for others (YRD)</i></p> <p>What do you think was good about the research project? What made that good?</p> <p><i>I just liked it because I knew we were going to improve the yard for the other people coming on to it next year and it's going to be more enjoyable for everyone (YRH)</i></p> <p>Do you think you have learnt new skills? What are they?</p> <p><i>I learned how to present a PowerPoint.</i></p> <p>How important was the research project to you?</p> <p><i>It was important because we would be able to improve the yard for other people and make it more enjoyable.</i></p>	<p>make a difference, change, transformation, conviction</p> <p>make a difference, change, transformation, conviction</p> <p>Building skills and independence, building capacity</p> <p>make a difference, change, transformation</p>
<p>Part 2 27/6/2014</p> <p>Did the research project feel like your own?</p> <p><i>Yeah, it felt like we were doing all the work ourselves, Ms M was just there because she had to give supervision.</i></p> <p>Do you feel proud of your work?</p> <p><i>I think that we did very well. I think that there will be more improvement to the yard and it will make it a lot better.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>make a difference, change, transformation, conviction</p>
<p>Part 3 27/6/2014</p> <p>How much did the teacher help you with the research project? Was this too much or too little?</p> <p><i>She helped but sometimes she was out so we had to do it ourselves.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Building independence</p>

<p>Too much/too little? <i>A little too little because she wasn't there most of the time</i> So, you had to do a lot of the work on your own/ independently? <i>Yeah</i> Did you understand everything that you were meant to be doing? <i>Yeah, well I found the interviews we did at the start a little difficult but as we went on I got used to it.</i> Did you feel like you could ask the Ms Marren questions and tell her what you thought? <i>Yeah, I think I could have</i> Did you feel like she was listening to your ideas? <i>Yeah, because if there were really silly questions you could ask whatever you wanted to ask</i></p>	<p>Building skills and independence Time – prolonged engagement</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Creating safe places for participation</p>
<p>Part 5 27/6/2014 What was your favourite part of the research project? <i>I liked doing the PowerPoint for P and DP. I liked doing the interviews and the PowerPoint. I thought P would get good ideas from it.</i> What would you change about the research meetings? <i>Nothing really because everything was going alright.</i> <i>In some of the interviews people just messed around</i></p> <p><i>What would have made the research project better?</i> <i>Maybe a little bit more time</i> <i>Maybe doing a few more interviews to get more information</i></p>	<p>make a difference, change, transformation, conviction</p> <p>School barrier to PAR Maturity of student participants – silliness and inappropriate comments and general lack of positive contribution – attempts to derail the process Cannot necessarily control how others interpret our research (power)</p> <p>Limitation Ownership, critically reflective</p>
	<p>Response in focused interview was underwhelming – perhaps this was due to the time of year, or that they were not familiar with the interviewer and therefore had not built a relationship with her in order to create a safe communicative space {time needed to build rapport}</p>

<p>Questions for YRs Focus Group 1 Girls End of Phase 2</p> <p>Data Extracts</p>	<p>Emerging Codes & Categories</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p>
<p>Part 1 27/6/2014</p> <p>Did you enjoy the lunch time research sessions/meetings? <i>Yes, we were finding out likes and dislikes, you could relate it to yourself.</i></p> <p>What do you think was good about the research project? <i>I think it was good that we found out information so P could be able to improve the yard now</i></p> <p>What did you think was bad about the research project? <i>We didn't have enough time to get all the research done, if we had more time we would have been able to get more information from for example Fourth Class</i></p> <p>Do you think you have learned new skills? <i>Coding and using your brain in different ways</i></p> <p>How important was the research project to you? <i>We were helping people that they could do stuff about the yard without being scared</i></p> <p>Would you want to do a similar research projects again? <i>Yeah, if it's for improving stuff-people will enjoy it definitely</i></p>	<p>make a difference, change, transformation</p> <p>Taking YRs seriously Making them feel that they count</p> <p>limitation/constraint ownership – critically reflective change in opinion/attitude Building skills – interactive research methodology</p> <p>make a difference, change, transformation</p> <p>make a difference, change, transformation</p>
<p>Part 2 27/6/2014</p> <p>Did the research project feel like your own? <i>You had your own say in what you were doing. She wasn't really bossing you about. You asked the questions yourself.</i></p> <p>Did you feel proud of your work? <i>Yeah, because P and DP were going out with smiles after PowerPoint presentation and that makes you feel good.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation</p> <p>Taking YRs seriously - perception of reaction Pride Making them feel that they count</p>

<p>Part 3 27/6/2014</p> <p>How much did the teacher help you with the research project?</p> <p><i>Not that much-she helped us with the coding but everything else we mostly did by ourselves. We were fine we didn't need any extra help from her.</i></p> <p>Did you feel like the teacher was listening to your ideas?</p> <p><i>Yeah, definitely, Ms M she was including everyone's ideas about coding and what we should do for the next time (phase 3), asking us if the questions were ok (questions for questionnaire and interviews)</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Building skills and independence</p> <p>AR facilitating participatory research</p> <p>Consultation</p> <p>AR-YR relations in research circle - interactive research methodology (Akerstrom and Brunnberg 2013)</p>
<p>Part 4 27/6/2014</p> <p>Did you enjoy working in groups?</p> <p><i>Yes, because if you were working by yourself you would be nervous and you might get confused and you wouldn't have anyone to ask.</i></p> <p>What was good about working in groups?</p> <p><i>It was good because if there were any questions you didn't understand you could ask the other people and they could explain it to you. As well you got work done quicker.</i></p> <p>What was bad about working in groups?</p> <p><i>Once in coding we thought one question should be in one code and the others thought it should be in a different code but then we sorted it out.</i></p>	<p>Peer learning</p> <p>Negotiation in research circle</p>
<p>Part 5 27/6/2014</p> <p>What was your favourite part of the research project?</p> <p><i>When we did the presentation for P and DP-that they got ideas. They said they were going to think about it and get more equipment. And when we were interviewing people.</i></p> <p>What would you change about the research meetings?</p> <p><i>Nothing really-maybe in the project if we had a few more fourth class</i></p>	<p>make a difference, change, transformation</p> <p>change of attitude, reflexive practice, thinking like researchers</p>
	<p>Response in focused interview was underwhelming – perhaps this was due to the time of year, or that they were not familiar with the interviewer and therefore had not built a relationship with her in order to create a safe communicative space {time needed to build rapport}</p>

Appendix D - YPAR Cycle 1

Samples of draw and write technique

Samples of data extraction sheets for data analysis

Tally sheets

Reflective Journal Data Extracts – Examples of Emerging
Codes and Categories

MC 10

Tick (✓): Boy () Girl ()

5th Class () 6th Class ()

Write/Draw what you like about break-time/lunchtime in your yard:

There is football's and hoops and basket ball hoops + courts

Write/Draw what you dislike about break-time/lunchtime in your yard:

There isnt enough hiding spots
It would be nice to have Swings or See-saw's

There isnt a

and you can't kick footballs

MARI

Tick (✓): Boy (✓) Girl ()

5th Class () 6th Class (✓)

Write/Draw what you like about break-time/lunchtime in your yard:

I like the way there are balls on theyard.
I like the way each class have their own balls and each one with their class written on the ball

Write/Draw what you dislike about break-time/lunchtime in your yard:

~~I dont like the way we are not allowed kick the ball~~

I suggest we split the yard into sections. for example, one part for soccer and another for basketball and so on.

Soccer Basketball

				to play basketball at lunch Just one game each time for the separate classes.	
MK 7	RP CPF	girl F B	Being with your friends I like being able to play with the balls Having a laugh with your mates	I don't like 5 th class taking our balls then blaming it on us I don't like the new yard I don't like not being able to kick the balls	I would like more equipment I would like for us to be allowed to bring our own stuff in I would like more time outside
MK 8	CPF RP	girl F B	Being with your friends Playing with the balls Having space to run around Meeting up with friends that are in different classes	Not being allowed to kick the balls I don't like children being rough with the balls I don't like the new yard I don't like having to line up quietly	What I would like More balls More equipment More time outside Eating outside
RU 4	RP	girl B BBN	The way that there are balls for girls and boys That the yard is very big The basketball hoops	That there are people atcing (hassling) people for the balls	
RU 6	RP TC NEQ	girl H B BBN	Houla hoops Boll Bascet boll	Being hit by the balls It to crouded (too-crowded) Not erob (enough) balls per class Not enot selecshon (enough selection) of games	What I would like to see hopscotch
RU 7 Drawing Like side Houla hops (caption) Chatting (caption) Dislike side	VEQ	girl H F	Houla hops chatting		I think the teachers on jutie (duty) should organis some games PS Do not get us all to play sport The girls hate sport

				to play basketball at lunch Just one game each time for the separate classes.	
MK 7	RP CPF	girl F B	Being with your friends I like being able to play with the balls Having a laugh with your mates	I don't like 5 th class taking our balls then blaming it on us I don't like the new yard I don't like not being able to kick the balls	I would like more equipment I would like for us to be allowed to bring our own stuff in I would like more time outside
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RU 7 Drawing Like side Houla hops (caption) Chatting (caption) Dislike side		girl H F	Houla hops chatting		I think the teachers on jutie (duty) should organis some games PS Do not get us all to play sport The girls hate sport

B: IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII = 50
 BBN: IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII I = 26
 WP: IIII = 4
 H: IIII IIII = 8
 F: IIII IIII = 10
 T: IIII = 4
 SR: IIII = 4

TC: IIII IIII IIII II = 17
 NEQ: IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII = 30
 RP: IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII = 30
 CPF: IIII IIII IIII II = 17

Likes

B : IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII (50)
 BBN : IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII I (26)
 WB : IIII (4)
 H : IIII IIII (8)
 F : IIII IIII (10)
 T : IIII (4)
 SR : IIII (4)

Likes

Dislikes

TC : IIII IIII IIII II (17)
 NEQ : IIII IIII IIII IIII (14)
 RP : IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII (30)
 CPF : IIII IIII IIII II (17)

<p align="center">Reflective Journal Cycle 1</p> <p align="center">Power Dynamics based on Data Extracts</p>	<p align="center">Emerging Codes & Categories</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p>
<p>January 2014 Research meetings</p>	<p>Research group meetings = children’s space organised and facilitated by adult (Shier 2010) Right to express their opinion and their opinions given due weight (UNCRC 1989)</p>
<p>22/1/2014 Research meeting Group agreed that 4th class would be surveyed later (discussed just after yard change)</p>	<p>Taking ownership/control of the research process Shifting power relations - AR-YR relationship Interplay</p>
<p>29/1/2014 YRs Suggested that for production line of putting forms in envelopes it would have been better to have forms in 2 different colour papers (parents and children) I explained write and draw type questionnaire and they were on to it straight away and suggested like/dislike with smiley faces as the layout</p>	<p>Taking ownership/control of the research process Creating safe environment to develop praxis Creating opportunity to act in authentic way Research energy</p>
<p>11/2/2014 Administration of questionnaire – YR’s jobs (for 10am 12/2/2014): Introduce questionnaire, seek assent, distribute questionnaires, clarify any misunderstandings, collect questionnaires, give out homework passes</p>	<p>Taking Ownership/Control of the research process Creating opportunity to act in authentic way</p>
<p>12/2/2014 I won’t be present in the 2 centres - first official job of the researchers (12/2/2014) Power struggle – hegemony - school structures as a barrier – bad idea to conduct this research activity in classroom (12/2/2012) Researchers disgruntled as they are not allowed to administer questionnaire, codes are not implemented Lesson learned is to make next stage more researcher friendly and not conduct research in the classroom</p>	<p>Taking control School culture Hegemony Adults creating barriers by adopting authoritative position Barrier of time issues Identifying gap between principle of participation and practice of participation Deficit view of child researchers’ capabilities New social norms need to be negotiated Institutional space (school) power dynamics establishing myself as a conscious, although not omnipotent, actor, critically examining how I represent myself, and making conscious attempts to perform myself in particular ways (Holt 2004, p.19).</p>

<p>14/2/2014 Analysing Questionnaires It was their view; they chose the words that constituted their codes; inclusion of ideas – they see themselves as agents of change (conviction)</p>	<p>Taking ownership/control of the research process Respecting their opinions Allowing space for participation Creating safe environment to develop praxis Creating opportunity to act in authentic way Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978)</p>
<p>14/2/2014 2 co-researchers naturally assumed leadership roles within the research group during data analysis This was their way of being in the group EM and AD regularly reflected on their work as they conversed AD acted like a student teacher and actively helped others in the group who were daunted and reluctant to learn research skills</p>	<p>Power Ownership Agency Genuine participation/engagement with research Shared meaning Illuminating children’s insider perspective (Kellett 2012) Peer tutoring</p>
<p>14/2/2014 Content analysis of questionnaire data – analysed 8 questionnaires with the group (14/2/2017) They would analyse the rest of the questionnaires themselves (x 53) Mine early data for analytic ideas to pursue in further data collection and analysis (Charmaz 2006, p.46) I was in CR across the hall from the room where they analysed the data</p>	<p>Vygotskian Scaffolding (Vygotsky 1978) Building Skills and Independence Taking co-researchers seriously Making them feel that they count Knowledge production Efficacy of children as researchers Opportunity for children to participate in the interpretation and analysis of research data Avoiding just relying on adult interpretation Children contribute to sense-making Broke down power imbalances - encouraged joint analysis among YRs YRs could review and refine their interpretations by returning to them more than once Interpreting and analysing data to avoid ‘adulteration’ or ‘over-adult’ interpretation Recognising Interdependent asymmetrical power Shifting power relations</p>
<p>They presented their findings on poster (likes, dislikes and ideas) - dissemination</p>	<p>Building Skills and Independence Taking co-researchers seriously Making them feel that they count Knowledge production Efficacy of children as researchers</p>
<p>Review of YRs data analysis by Adult Researcher Mistake made was that nouns were used instead of verbs; curious inclusion of YRs own ideas even though this was not discussed or suggested; task was content analysis for likes/dislikes but they put their own slant on it</p>	<p>Personal reflection Child researchers offering their opinions and perspectives</p>

Appendix E - YPAR Cycle 2

Samples of data generated from peer paired interviews

Sample of data extraction sheet for Q1

Reflective Journal Data Extracts – Examples of Emerging
Codes and Categories

Tape – Interview 3

Code: E.Q G S RP IV E Q

1. What is playtime like for you?
Where and what do you like to play?

EQA G S	B G S
Basketball	Tag

2. In your opinion what is working well in the school playground?

A	B
I don't know	I'm not sure

3. In your opinion what is not working well in the playground?

IV E QA	B RP
The balls that the class get	Being bullied

4. What needs to change? (List in order of priority 1, 2, 3)

A	B
The Sixth class and pretty much everyone else should not be taking all the balls	Not being able to play with other classes and being able to have fun

Tape – Interview 12 (boys)

Code: E.Q G S N K b

1. What is playtime like for you?
Where and what do you like to play?

E.Q A	E.Q B G S
It is good I like to play with the balls	Yea good I like to play basketball

2. In your opinion what is working well in the school playground? (changed to what do you like on the yard)

A	B
I like that we are allowed to play with the basketballs and play with our friends	I like to play with the balls

3. In your opinion what is not working well in the playground? (changed to what don't you like on the yard)

kickball area A	B
I don't like that I am not allowed to kick the ball - bad rule	I would like to be able to kick the ball I don't like that we are not allowed to

4. What needs to change? (List in order of priority 1, 2, 3)

N K P A	B N K b
The kicking of the ball rule needs to be changed	We need to get some soccer goals or something

1. What is playtime like for you? Where and what do you like to play?		
Interview 1	When we are outside we like to play with the basketballs (little green balls) on the yard. <i>eq</i>	Well sometimes I go outside on the Infant yard and help them play. Except When I do go out on the yard we just walk around and stuff.
Interview 3	Basketball <i>gs eq</i>	Tag <i>gs</i>
Interview 4	Playtime is exercise like and my favourite game is bulldog. <i>gs</i>	I like to play bulldog. We all the class play bulldog. <i>gs</i>
Interview 5	It's fun. Everyone looks forward to going outside and to playing stuff. We like to play bomb with the balls or any ball game <i>gs eq</i>	You are kind of looking forward to going outside and just kind of playing and fresh air <i>gs</i> Usually we play bulldog or girls catch boys and kind of a game with balls as well <i>eq</i>
Interview 6	It's good outside in the yard and alright <i>gs eq</i> Tag and with the balls	Good Tag <i>gs</i>
Interview 7	Fun but sometimes it gets too crowded I like to play tag and games like that <i>gs</i>	Fun but there's a lot of people with Fourth and Sixth Bulldog and family tag <i>gs</i>
Interview 8	Good Basketball or bulldog <i>gs eq</i>	Yea it's alright it's good Basketball or dodge ball or tag <i>gs eq</i>
Interview 9	ok	tag <i>gs</i>
Interview 10	Fun basketball <i>gs eq</i>	Fun tag <i>gs</i>
Interview 11	Fun Play with the balls Mr McInerney gave us <i>eq</i>	Fun (no answer)
Interview 12	It is good I like to play with the balls <i>eq</i>	Yea good <i>gs eq</i> I like to play basketball
Interview 13	Playtime is great I like our old yard better (no answer)	It is good I like to play tag <i>gs</i>
Interview 14	Good I like skipping <i>gs eq</i>	Good <i>gs eq</i> skipping and tag
Interview 16	Yea it's fun but sometimes on the yard it gets very stuffy and sometimes the Sixth class are very rough out on	Fun but it's too crowded

<p style="text-align: center;">Reflective Journal Cycle 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Power Dynamics based on Data Extracts</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Emerging Codes & Categories</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p>
<p>Focus on building capacity [March 2014] Aim: to build on their strengths and let them become full partners in gaining and creating knowledge and mobilising for change Researched/googled: children interviewing peers, focus groups led by children Observation: so much research is adult-led or adult controlled I understand that 100% child-led, child-controlled could not exist in academic terms (recognised as research by academic institutions) but I am still frustrated at the lack of genuine child-led research in journals and books Explain to YRs that draw and write cannot stand alone as an elicitation tool (Sewell 2011, p.188), that it has a role as a ‘warm up’ activity (p.188); better understood if used as part of a multi-methods approach which enables the research to understand more of the context and cultural significance of the emerging data (McGregor, Currie and Wetton 1998) Explained about the work of Parrish et al (2012) and how they used peer pair interviews to better understand how school environments affect young children’s physical activity levels Paired interviews good idea as participants and co-researchers can talk naturally</p>	<p>Personal Reflection</p> <p>Taking YRs seriously Sharing nuts and bolts of doing research</p>
<p>Standoff about the inclusion of fourth-class students continues (27 Feb and 5 March 2014 meetings) Co-researchers have got support of 4th class teacher that students from 4th class should not be included I state my case in non-threatening manner that they are users of the yard if they want genuine robust research they should reconsider I remind them of the duality of user of the yard and researcher, and as researchers they have to be more objective and examine their position (reflexivity)</p>	<p>Taking ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Negotiating adult-child relations (AR v YR) Highlighting responsibility Communicative democratic practices – dialogue, negotiation YRs experiencing complex and diversified interactions to find a common reference and be individually reflective Shifting power relations</p>

<p>Vignette (for RQ2 – power relations between AR and YRs) A Stutter in my Agenda Dilemma Analysis On the one hand (inclusion of 4th class AR) /On the other..... (exclusion of 4th YRs)</p>		<p>change in my perceptions about group members as I sought to enact children’s participation Hard choices – no easy solution Agentic tactics of resistance Opportunity for possible democratic dialogue between AR and YRs Lack of consensus blocking progress Whose views should be listened to? Whose interests should be honoured? Conflict Accountability – consideration and reflection upon actions and decisions taken ‘antagonisms’ as the essence of democracy Encouraging critical thinking (Freire 1970, p.73) YRs have different interests, perspectives and power</p>
<p>4th class students are users of the yard and deserve a say</p>	<p>This is only a temporary measure – he said he would try it for a few weeks</p>	
<p>4th class students are very uncomfortable with the new yard arrangement as well, it’s not fair to take it out on them</p>	<p>We did nothing <i>wrong</i> everything was going well on the other yard and we had lots of plans for the green area</p>	
<p>4th class students could give us some good ideas for the green area perhaps</p>	<p>We don’t agree that there’s a need to include them in our interviews</p>	
<p>On the one hand (inclusion of 4th by AR)/ On the other (backing for exclusion by WM 4th class teacher)</p>		<p>Dialogue cannot exist without humility (Freire 1970, p.78). Question my ethical conduct Relinquish adult control and power</p>
<p>Research is for all yard users therefore 4th class students should be included in phase 2</p>	<p>WM highlights that I want YRs to take ownership of the research, therefore I must respect their decision not to include 4th class in phase 2 of research</p>	
<p>But all the children as users of both yards were not consulted on account of their age and assumed lack of competency Two wrongs don’t make a right</p>	<p>WM agrees that we will disagree – he is sticking with the YRs decision</p>	
<p>This actually prompted me to consider that commitment to open dialogue could only be achieved by creating spaces with minimum structure so as not to curtail or limit conversations. I must accept that there is no easy solution to the dilemma</p> <p>5/3/2015 Over the weekend I have been considering my dilemma. On the one hand, I want to promote child-</p>		<p>Shift in power</p> <p>Handing over the reins Communicative/ democratic practices</p>

<p>led research, therefore I must hand over power to the YRs and adopt an encouraging rather than a directing and interventionist role.</p> <p>On the other hand, when I consider the 7th rung of Hart's ladder of participation (1992) which depicts a child-led approach as one in which YRs initiate and direct their own actions I feel that their approach is insufficient in ensuring all children's participation. I am therefore faced with the tension between non-interference and being responsible for inclusion of 4th class students in the research.</p> <p>Asked YRs to consider their dual role of users of the yard and researchers I stated that the inclusion of some 4th class students would make their research more rigorous I explained that I would go with whatever decision they made.</p>	
<p>13/03/2014</p> <p>they agree to include a limited number of students from 4th class. They will get back to me when they agree on the number of students who should be recruited. (bartering negotiating)</p>	<p>Adult-child relations (power dynamics) - controlling, managing a key aspect – who participates Taking ownership/control of the research process Communicative democratic practices – bartering, negotiating YRs gradually led to understand, adopt, reject and change points of view Shifting power relations</p>
<p>YRs have to recruit – we role play the 'talk' they need to give to 4th classes Broken record happening – 'give children time to reply'; listen actively; repeat their response (confirmation); feign interest if needs be; be non-judgmental (18/03/2014)</p>	<p>Building Skills and Independence Taking co-researchers seriously Making them feel that they count Efficacy of children as researchers Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978)</p>
<p>1/4/2014 - preparation for paired interviews One of the YRs presumes that it is the research team's job to come up with solutions to the dislikes highlighted in survey Don't want to dampen their enthusiasm but they are almost 'evangelical', on a 'mission' or 'crusade' (especially HYR and RYR) Flash Gordon episode about to happen – 'saviour of the universe' 'For the pupils, by the pupils, with the pupils' – I need to be subtle, discrete but affirmative We're all burned out after WSE – we need to take a break I'm speaking but all they hear is 'blah, blah, blah ... change ...' I need to slow down and focus on the process</p>	<p>Misconception/confusion among researchers</p> <p>Personal reflection - Lead by example</p>

<p>8/4/2014 clarifying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the study for? Part 1 establish likes/dislikes; part 2 suggested improvements (interviews) • From whose point of view? Users of the yard (4th, 5th and 6th class students, 245 students approximately) • Gaps/holes in the data from questionnaire • Source of needed data (suggested peer pair interviews) • Looking for participants' meaning • Need for good clear questions <p>YRs decide on convenience sample YRs come up with a list of questions</p>	<p>Taking ownership/control of the research process YRs drive the interview process so what is discussed is more likely to be pertinent and relevant to them</p> <p>Adult researcher-child researcher relations Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) Children as users of the yard are the best to report on frustrations experienced when using the yard at lunch and break times Clarifying concerns Their ideas essential to the process</p>
<p>10/4/2014</p> <p>Role played interviews (practice) Played back tape – reminded them to be comfortable with silences (wait time) They decided who would undertake different roles (H & E dominating) for pilot interviews</p>	<p>Building Skills and Independence Taking co-researchers seriously Making them feel that they count Efficacy of children as researchers</p>
<p>06/05/2014</p> <p>Agreement with co-researchers and 4th class teacher - max 16 students will be interviewed Consent forms etc distributed by YRs</p>	<p>Taking ownership/control of the research process Practising agency Shifting power relations</p>

Appendix F - YPAR Cycle 3

Samples of post it note activities

Samples of Mapping activities

Samples of Data from Footsteps (Hejje) Research Activity

Data Extracts from Walking through the YPAR – Examples of Emerging Codes

Data Extracts from Footsteps (Hejje) – Examples of Emerging Codes

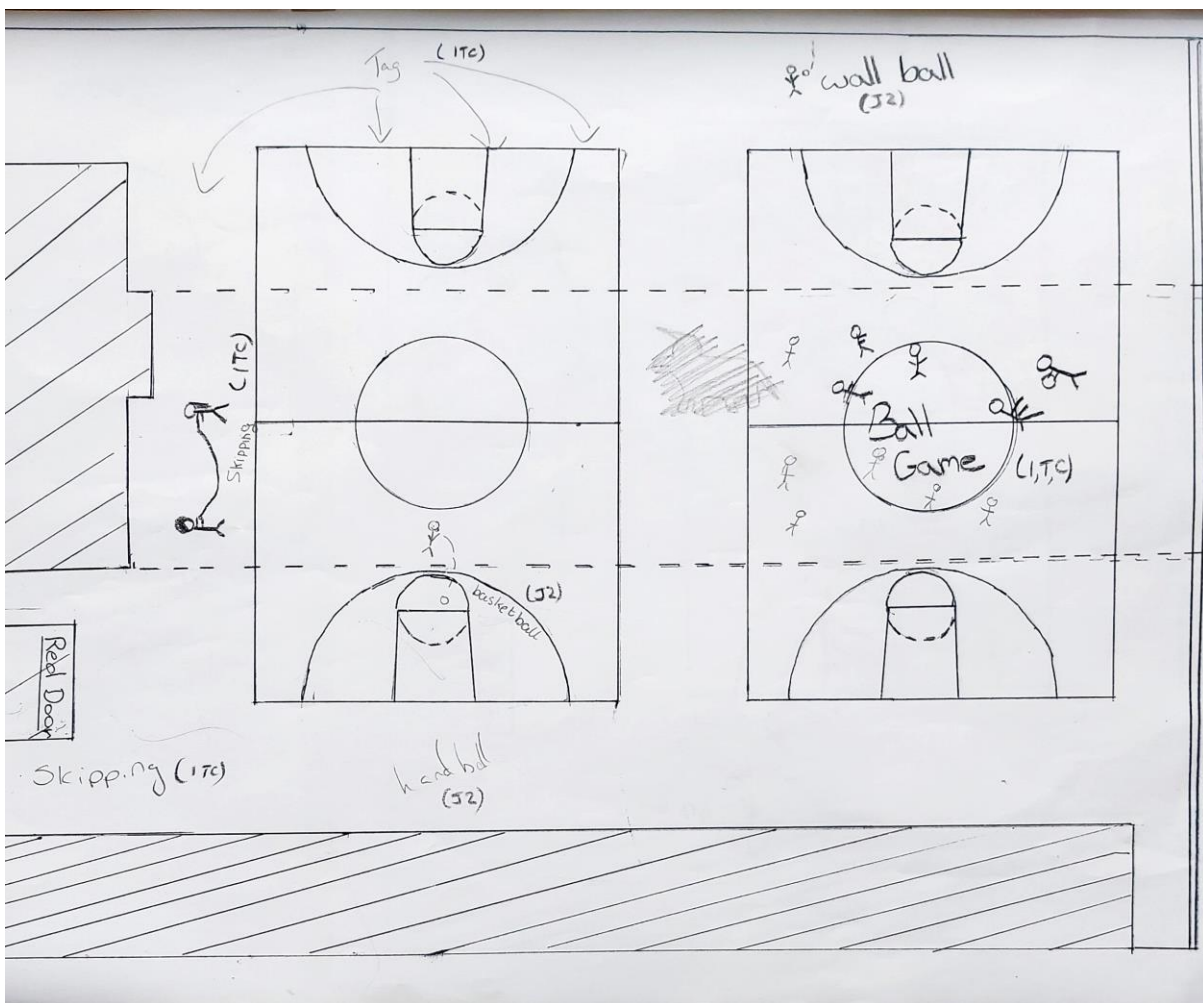
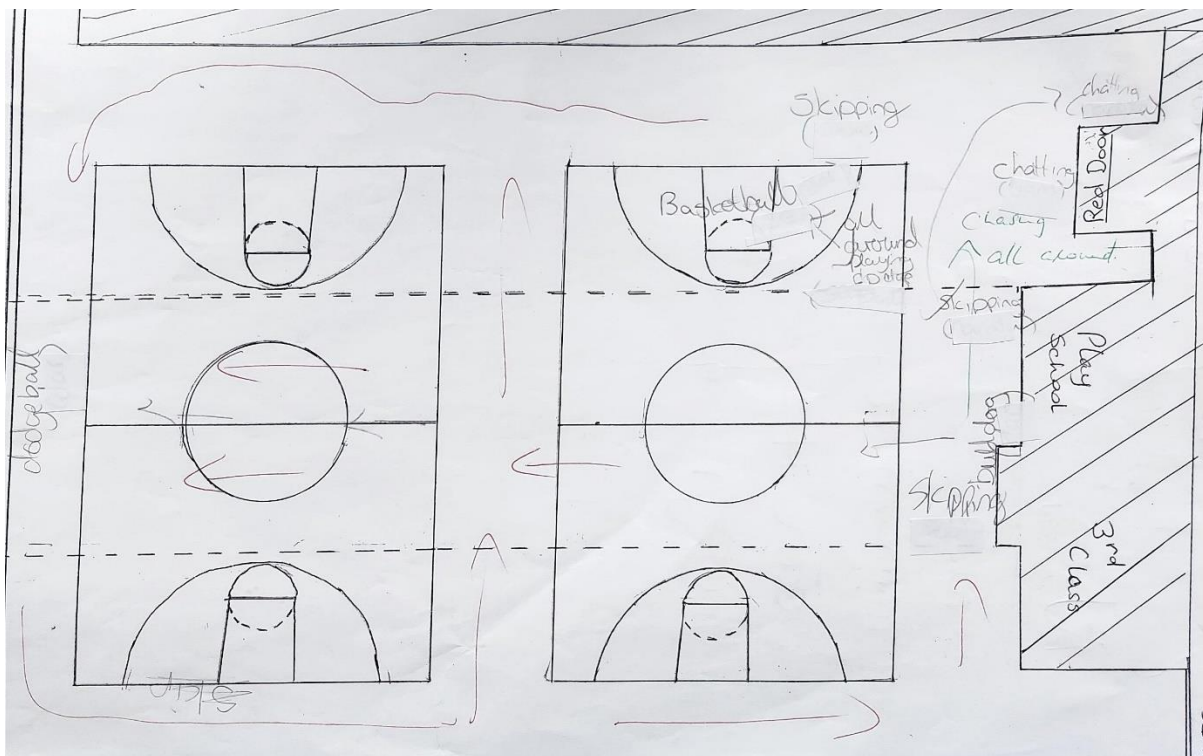
I like to play:

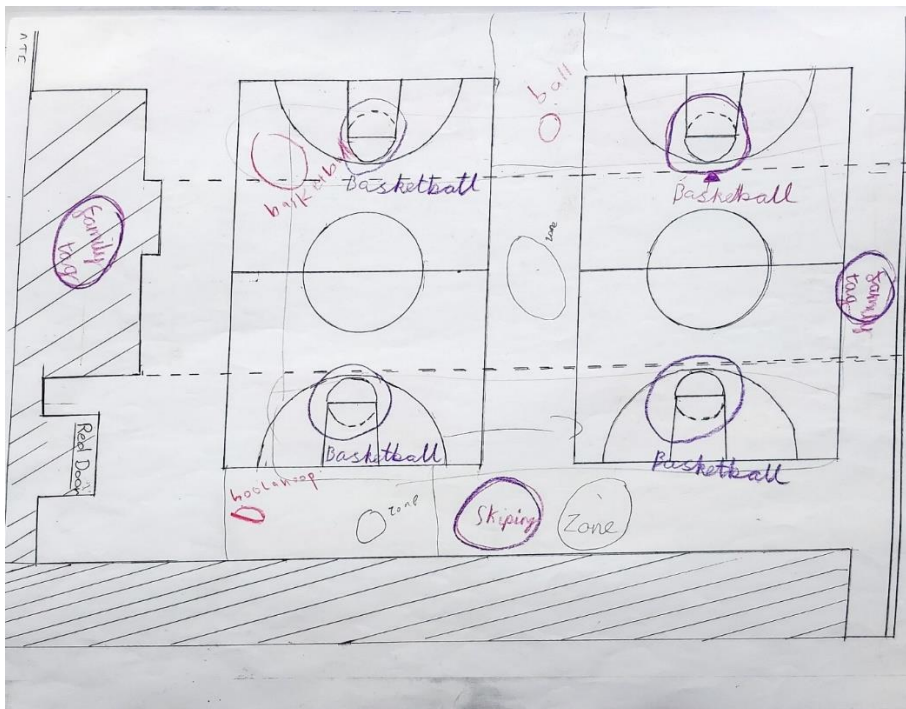
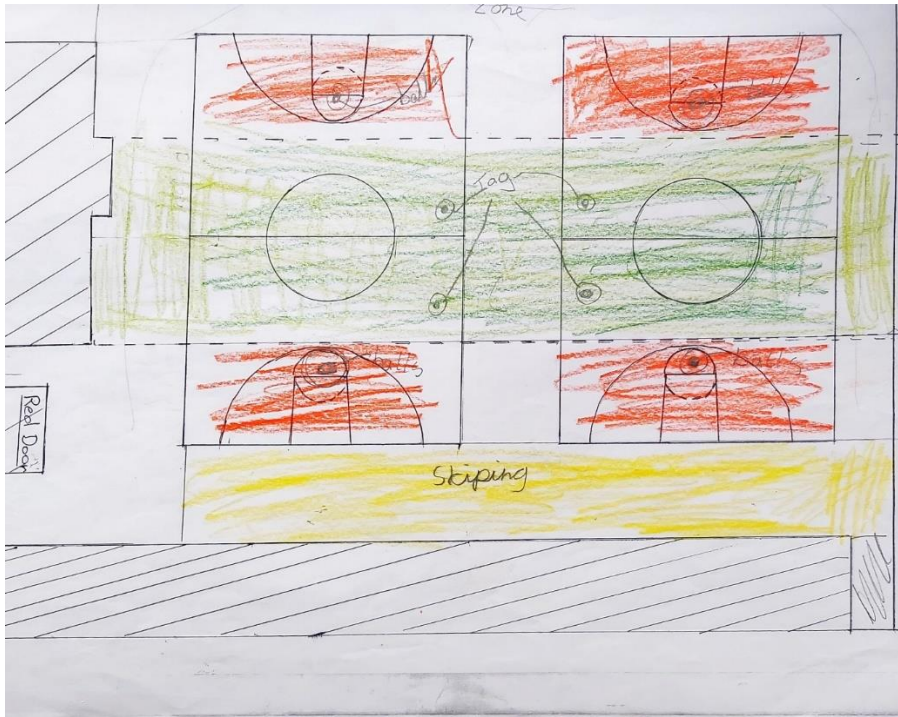
- Tag
- Bulldog
- Basketball
- Chatting around the yard

I think you should have a seating area.
You should have a place just for playing with the balls.

I like to play tag
I like to talk
I like to play with the balls

I like to play tag + skipping





4th Step:

We then drew up a ~~Chart~~ ^{Chart} representing the ideas people had ~~for~~ ^{for} the yard. One side showed what they liked ~~on~~ ^{on} the yard. The other side ~~represented~~ ^{represented} what they wanted to change about the yard.

Our plan was to interview the 5th and 6th Classes but then ~~they~~ yards changed and 4th joined our yard. ~~So~~ ^{So} we felt that we ~~would~~ ^{should} interview them since it was there yard too. But we only took a sample since ~~there~~ ^{there} was not enough time to do all of them.

We then interviewed 28 groups of two. To get used to interviewing people we did ~~a~~ ^{pilot} (pilot) interviews. ~~They~~ ^{They} ~~pu~~ ^{pu} The pilot interviews went really well so we decided to move on to the actual interviews. We interviewed a mixture of 4th, 5th and ~~sixth~~ 6th.

<p>Walking through the PAR Phases – Evaluation of the Scope of Participation (Reconstructive Analysis) 24 June 2015 Data Extract</p> <p>Children not involved = means that no children were spoken to or asked their views</p> <p>Consultative = means that children were consulted and asked their views, but were not involved in designing the consultation</p> <p>Collaborative = means that children contributed to designing the methods for the situation analysis, that their views were heard, and they were involved in the analysis</p> <p>Child-led = means that the child researchers themselves initiated, managed or led the process (with or without adult support) [Lansdown and O’Kane 2014, p.25]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Emerging Codes</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p>
<p>Phase 1 (recruiting participants from 5th and 6th classes; administration of questionnaire; analysis of data, poster presentation of results)</p> <p>1 YR evaluation of scope of participation was <u>child-led</u> <i>Because mm .. you really tell us what to do. We were kind of always like ... We were always doing everything ourselves like and you just helped us and you didn’t tell us what to do.</i></p> <p>5 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>collaborative</u> <i>’Cos like you helped us, like you were telling us what we have to do. But then when we were going to the classes we did it ourselves. We did all the talking.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process Self-motivated</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence Gradual release of responsibility</p>
<p>Phase 2 (questions for interviews, pilot interviews, peer interviews, data analysis)</p> <p>1YR evaluation of scope of participation was <u>collaborative</u> <i>Because you helped us most with that – you typed out the interviews. You told us what coding was because we didn’t really know what to do and what we were supposed to do</i></p> <p>5 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>child-led</u> <i>I think it was mostly child-led because really, the main part we were coming up with the colour, the colour codes for all the patterns that were coming up. You were the one that typed them out but we did the colour-coding and everything.</i></p>	<p>Building skills and independence</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence This was to ensure that the voice of the child participant was represented and it contributed to contextualized interpretation of the data (Phelan and Kinsella 2014, p.86).</p>

<p>Phase 2 (PowerPoint presentation for P and DP; implementation of changes) 6 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>child-led</u> for PowerPoint presentation <i>Because we presented the PowerPoint all by ourselves, with all our ideas and all our codes</i></p> <p>6 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>collaborative</u> for implementation of changes <i>We were the ones who recommended it and P and others put it into action</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence make a difference, change, transformation – know what is needed and what gaps exist knowledge constructed by YRs through their interactions with other children who are users of the yard</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence make a difference, change, transformation engaging with YRs in decision-making processes gives the decisions made a sense of legitimacy PowerPoint presentation created an interactive space between school principal, deputy principal and YRs It facilitated dialogue and a shared understanding of the yard environment new unfamiliar adult-child interaction pattern their own views and consciousness of rights are pragmatically formed (Stoecklin and Bonsin 2014, p.148)</p>
<p>Phase 3 (recruiting participants, mapping exercise, analysis of data) 6 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>child-led</u> <i>Because we were the ones that came up with what was the most common coming up. And we drew it out.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process Their ways of seeing were foregrounded (Cook-Sather 2007) Building skills and independence</p>
<p>Phase 3 (presentation of results/options A, B & C) 2 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>collaborative</u> <i>You were the one who put the pictures of the options on the PowerPoint and put it together, we just went around and presented it. But it was our ideas that were in it. We always had a say.</i></p> <p>4 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>child-led</u></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence make a difference, change, transformation a sense of research community</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence</p>

<p><i>Because we presented it to them, we showed it to them, we brought it up on the laptop. We steered it, we were in the driving seat.</i></p>	
<p>Phase 3 (implementation of recommended actions) 6 YRs evaluation of scope of participation was <u>child-led</u> <i>Because we did practically everything. We did most of the work. You were there to help us. But mostly I felt it was all us.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence</p>
<p>AR: if phase 1 went according to plan I should be becoming less and less, as opposed to being in the centre I should be moving to ... (gesture of moving from centre of the room to exit) YR3: <i>That's how I felt phase 3 was.</i> YR4: <i>yeah</i> YR3: <i>We did the work ... I thought it was all us in phase 3.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p>

<p>Footsteps (Hejje) Activity 23 June 2015</p> <p>Power Dynamics based on Data Extracts</p>	<p>Emerging Codes</p> <p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p>
<p>Children define their own stages of work</p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Collaborative activity</p>
<p>Phase 1 Goal (CR1) <i>We did a research project on how to make the Senior Yard more enjoyable for the students who went on it on break.</i></p>	<p>make a difference, change, transformation</p>
<p>Phase 2 Step 8 (CR3) <i>We presented the PowerPoint to P and DP. They were impressed.</i></p>	<p>Feeling like they count - taking YRs seriously</p>
<p>Phase 2 Step 9 (CR3) <i>P and DP decided to get more equipment such as skipping ropes, soft balls etc. They organised skipping workshops and everyone learned how to skip and were taught how to do cool tricks.</i></p>	<p>make a difference, change, transformation being listened to</p>
<p>Phase 2 What is you find the most challenging, the hardest part of Phase 2? (CR3) <i>the interviews 'cause some people just didn't cooperate with us</i></p>	<p>School barrier to PAR Maturity of student participants – silliness and inappropriate comments and general lack of positive contribution – attempts to derail the process Cannot necessarily control how others interpret our research</p>
<p>Phase 3 Step 2 (CR2) <i>We recruited more people from the new 4th, 5th, and 6th classes. We brought them to our room in groups of four. We brought them outside; they showed us where they play. We brought them back inside and they wrote down what they liked and disliked about the yard. We asked them do they ever get frustrated on the yard. Many said they got frustrated and suggested that we have special areas for certain games, called zones.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process</p> <p>Placing child participants at the centre of research proceeding</p> <p>Commitment to change (transformation)</p> <p>Growing in confidence and skill as researchers</p> <p>Given opportunity to act in authentic ways on their own terms (Horn 2014)</p>

	<p>Activity focused methods leading to student participants engaging enthusiastically</p> <p>Authentic and active knowledge production of oral and visual texts – listening and respecting</p> <p>Allowing space for participation</p> <p>Providing participants with opportunities to communicate ‘beyond words’ (Pink 2007)</p> <p>Social capital - sense of belonging</p> <p>Collective action – creating participatory capital</p> <p>Recognising children’s multimodal communicative practices as a mode of participation</p> <p>Developing a culture of participation (changing social norms)</p> <p>YRs imagining how to take social action</p> <p>shared habitus of participation</p> <p>structured participatory capital shared by YRs and child participants within this field (school)</p>
<p>What do you think was the most challenging task of Phase 3?</p> <p><i>(CR3) We all agreed as a group that the most challenging activity was the mapping activity. It was new and really challenging. There were so many layers to it.</i></p>	<p>Building skills and independence</p>

Appendix G –

Data Extracts from Interview with Class Teacher – Examples of Emerging Codes

Data Extracts from Interview with Principal – Examples of Emerging Codes

Interview with Class Teacher Data Abstract	Emerging Codes
<p>CB: (reading through printout of YRs PowerPoint presentation) <i>A lot of those did actually happen</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p> <p>Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Being listened to and acted upon Participatory capital</p>
<p>AR: Do you think PAR is a good method of facilitating students' views/their voice? CB: <i>Absolutely, I think it's fantastic, I think it worked out very well. It gave them ownership over it, which was super. I suppose the one thing about giving them the initiative to do it themselves is that they can't complain about anything that goes wrong afterwards. I think it's a life skill – giving them power and with it goes responsibility.</i></p> <p><i>I remember at the time they engaged very well with you. They were delighted. Even coming into class their confidence grew, speaking in front of others and making decisions it made them more part of the school environment definitely.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process Building skills and independence – capacity building Building of soft skills - communication skills, team work, negotiating, future planning, self-control, self-confidence Development of practical skills – IT skills (Badham and Wade, 2010; Halsey <i>et al</i>, 2006; Margo <i>et al</i>, 2006; Kirby <i>et al</i>, 2003) making a difference children taken seriously – opinions matter (scope and authenticity of participation) participatory capital – capable and resourceful</p>
<p>CB: <i>They kind of got a taste of both sides. And even the meetings – they were delighted to come out at the start but for a finish the gloss wore off. But I feel there was a lot of good things about it. But they did persevere, that was super and the other side of it is that when you do complete something there is a great sense of satisfaction. And they definitely got that out of it – some of their points were taken on board. They felt very important as a result of that. That can only be good for kids.</i></p>	<p>Cross-generational engagement – means of building social cohesion (Bashir, Atfield and Wells 2014, p.4). participation also allows YRs to have a greater understanding and appreciation of how organisations work Participation is not always positive – the time involved in participating can impact negatively on participants' time and energy [pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk 27/7/2017]</p> <p>School structure as facilitator (facilitation of meetings by Class teachers and management and through parental permission and student assent – opportunity for pupil participation) Ownership/control of the research process Participatory capital Practice agency</p>

	Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation
<p>CB: <i>I suppose really for their own futures that is the way it's gone – it's all group meetings/collaboration and working together. From that point of view, you really set them up for life in many ways- gave them life skills.</i></p>	<p>Discourse/dialogue as an instrument of power Adopting participatory practices with children - Changes will not happen by accident, good will or establishing ad hoc projects. They require new structures, new activities and a rethinking of the internal workings of each institution (Watson and Fullan 1992, p.219 cited in Fullan 1993, p.96) Adult awareness Teacher authenticity (Rudduck and Fielding 2006, p.226) Possibility to increase school connectedness for those involved (Kirby et al 2005)</p> <p>Children are less likely to be habitualised in certain ways of working or committed to particular methods of delivery because they are 'what has always been done'. Similarly, they are less likely to be burdened by past politics (Bashir, Atfield and Wells 2014, p.3).</p> <p>Personal development for children – 'beings and becomings'</p>
<p>CB: <i>Many of the programmes we are doing now (AY 2015-2016 and AY 2015-2016) involve collaboration, working things out together – look at Junior Entrepreneur – that has a similar structure- they have to come up with the ideas themselves and get them to the final production stage which is very similar to what they have done here (pointing to PowerPoint printout) and there's a great chance for success in both.</i></p>	<p>Having teachers and P who believe in and value children participating in decision making processes plays an essential and positive role in creating spaces (Moses 2008, p.338) School culture changing in Senior class (6th class) not just participatory practices Possibilities for children to experience active participation Recognition that people need results to encourage and sustain participation</p>
<p>AR: Would you see a future for projects like that (pointing to PAR ppt) in a primary school? CB: <i>I would actually and as you know I'm moving on next year (new school principal) I would look at something like this and take it on board and try it in my smaller setting next year (small rural school) definitely.</i></p>	<p>Possibility for PAR with children Commitment to student voice/agency Adult's understanding of PAR Primary school as social institution playing an important role in creating and fostering participation in social action Conceptualisation of children's participation as moving beyond the ideas of once-off consultation (Maconochie 2013) School broadening its focus considering political concerns and fostering democratic practice</p>
<p>AR: What about barriers, it wasn't all fun and games, for instance there were children leaving your class? CB: <i>Yeah, they might miss out on certain other activities, the timing of when they go</i></p>	<p>Withdrawal from class (barrier) Competing demands Attitude towards barrier</p>

<p><i>out, but it's no different than other activities, we're used to that in the school here anyway-they go out for music, different sports, choir, etc</i></p>	
<p>CB: <i>You did give up your time and there were lunchtime meetings There was a big-time commitment but at the same time what they got out of it – it was beneficial too that time to them. For the children who were researchers it was very good for them, and a lot of those questioned needed it, they benefitted from it. There is an argument for every child (researcher and participant) benefitting from it. Those who didn't want to - there was a lot of free choice there.</i></p>	<p>Commitment to student voice/agency and students as social actors</p> <p>Positive assessment of value of PAR for social action Participation in different ways and through different activities</p> <p>Importance of consent and assent – voluntary participation</p>
<p>CB: <i>That is what they will be doing in their employment in the future – working as part of a team, as a group and some of them need that more particularly in the higher classes they have had so much of the "other" (aspects of the primary curriculum). Things like this and feedback from parents on things like and JEP, they felt that aspects of the curriculum had been exhausted by the time they reached the higher classes (5th & 6th), so doing something like this is different but at the same time there's linkage with loads of different areas of the curriculum so they are just looking at it from a different angle.</i></p>	<p>Future oriented perspective of education (Andersen and Gerarts 2014, p.85) tension of orientation towards the present and the future Collaborative learning PAR involves practical application of aspects of the primary curriculum through active learning Application of problem-solving</p>
<p>AR: I suppose like everything else you have to promote staff 'buy in' to it. That's a challenge in itself. CB: <i>I suppose it is yeah, but I think that it the way we're going and more people are accepting that now. There would have been reluctance years ago to that but a lot of people see that this is the way things are now. Most people can see the benefits and they definitely outweigh the time factor and things like that. I can't see why it couldn't be used, obviously not every day. It's something you hit every so often, you revisit and see how we can go further. The pride and ownership they get out of it is very important. Even from the point of view that we've gone from the stage of imposing rules and conditions on them to a</i></p>	<p>Challenge of staff 'buy in' Changes in attitude</p> <p>Recognition of benefits Recognition of barriers</p> <p>Understanding of cyclical nature of action research Ownership/control of the research process Dialogue Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p> <p>Active engagement with children in decision-making processes gives the decisions made a sense of legitimacy (Bashir, Atfield and Wells 2014, p.3). Voice/agency/empowerment</p>

<p><i>situation where they take great pride and honour in things they have done themselves.</i></p> <p><i>If we had come in as adults I'm sure we would have been able to come up with all these things ourselves but it wouldn't have been half as big a deal to them – for instance even presenting was a great experience for them who were involved and great for the others to see that in the school community that the kids are a major part. From that point of view, I thought it was a huge success.</i></p>	<p>Benefits for YRs and child participants Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations intergenerational</p>
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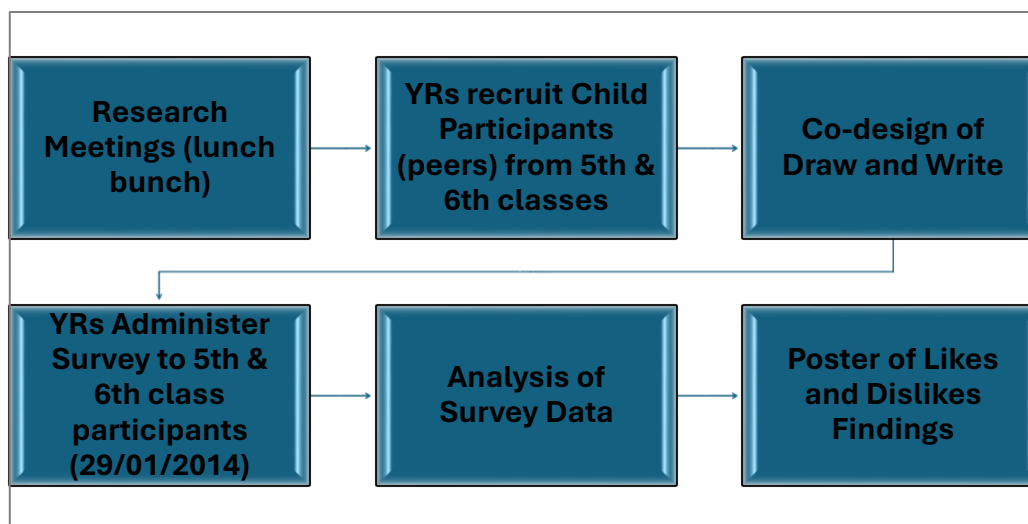
<p>Interview with Principal Data Abstract</p>	<p>Emerging Codes</p>
<p>In the AY 2013-2014 a group of 6 students undertook what is known as PAR with the intention of improving their play opportunities during lunchtimes and break-times on the senior yard. At the end of the 2nd phase of this PAR, the child researchers presented their findings in a PowerPoint presentation (pointing to printout of ppt) AR: What were your initial thoughts when they presented it to you and DP? P: <i>Well the children were very enthusiastic. They were very engaged. Not only were they very engaged, their audience (P and DP) was very engaged listening to what was going on. It was obvious from the way they presented it that they had got very perceptive ideas from the students around what was happening on the playground. There was a certain interest, enthusiasm and desire to move from the unstructured play that was going on to more informally structured opportunities for play involving skipping, hoops, balls and so on.</i></p>	<p>Ownership/control of the research process My reflections Building skills and independence (danger of overload) Hegemony – power struggle – school structures as barriers (limitations)/facilitators (enablers) Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Shifting power relations</p> <p>Enjoyment of participation – ownership Conviction Being recognised and appreciated by others for their time and effort Children taken seriously Children as activists Children as self-organisers Recognition or children's right to express their opinion and that their opinions are given due weight (UNCRC 1989) Depth and breadth of knowledge Actions carrying significance</p>

	Potential to make a difference Participation as empowerment
P: <i>And one of the other things that after the 3rd phase people were enthused about were zones on the yard, and the children had gone so far as figuring out that if we have balls on the yard well where can we have them, if we have skipping on the yard, well where can we have that. So, they developed their thinking to not only what was desirable but how that desirable thing could be achieved in reality.</i>	Competency in analysis of data in 3 rd phase Competent in presentation of findings Depth and breadth of knowledge Social actions carrying significance Potential to make a difference
AR: Could you see a place for any projects like this in the future? P: <i>Well when you look at what has happened on the yard now (AY 2016-2017) we haven't achieved what the children initially set out, it hasn't been achieved in totality. But there has been a change on the yard – there had been a massive change from what was going on before the research. We've gone from the situation where children were walking around where there was a bit of horse play to a situation where the children have a choice now of playing ball games, playing skipping games, playing tag games. While the zones, the formal zones that were laid out have disappeared, actually there's an understanding, a 'tacit' understanding for the children that ball games revolve around hoop areas, that tag games revolve around the outside of the court areas and across the middle of the yard. Similarly, if they are skipping it doesn't have to impede on other children. There's also an informal chatting zone over by the fence. This has all evolved from the original study which the children had done and presented to the classes.</i>	Knowledge, make a difference, change, transformation Realistic about what PAR with children can and cannot be reasonably expected to do (Brownlie, Anderson and Ormston 2006, p.67)
P: <i>There possibly is an opportunity to develop on that and to go back and engage with children again and see if there's more we can do and maybe there isn't more we can do to improve play opportunities. There possibly is the opportunity for more exploration with the children around what their thoughts are about what the playground is like now. It has evolved a lot in the last few years – we have gone from the situation where we had cones laying out very specific zones. The cones are no longer going out on the yard. There is an understanding among the children of where they can and can't play certain types of games or activities.</i>	Recognition of scope and authenticity of PAR Recognition of value of student participation Significance and meaning of PAR for the school Concrete situations making a difference, change, transformation

Appendix H – Description of YPAR Study (Cycles 1, 2 & 3)

YPAR Study Cycle 1 (January – February 2014)

In the following section I begin by describing how the YRs recruited child participants (i.e. their peers). I, then, focus on the research design specific to cycle 1 of the YPAR study and explain how content analysis of the Draw and Write technique was facilitated and the findings were disseminated.



Timeline of Cycle 1 of the YPAR Study

Recruitment of Child Participants by YRs in Cycle 1



In the spirit of YPAR it is important to be open to a range of ways of facilitating child co-researchers to participate fully in the study. I was conscious that my role was to act as advisor and guide. Therefore the YRs led the recruitment process. This involved visiting seven classrooms and giving oral presentations to fifth and sixth classes, distributing the information sheets and consent forms for parents/guardians and informed assent forms for child participants and collecting completed forms (Appendix B) in January 2014. In their oral presentations (20/01/2014) they explicated the content of the information sheets and the consent/assent forms. In the following days they collected the completed forms (21/01/2014 – 24/01/2014). As the adult researcher, I adopted a 'least adult role' approach (Mandell 1991) to minimise social distance between myself as the adult researcher and the YRs and to communicate that their contribution was valued. It meant acting as a mentor rather than a research leader. In recruiting the child participants the YRs had audience and influence (Lundy 2007).

Data Generation in Cycle 1: 'Draw and Write' Technique

At a 'lunch-bunch' meeting the YRs decided that their first task should be to find out what their peers liked/disliked about their school playground (13/01/2014). A number of examples of surveys were sourced through Google Images, these were discussed and they eventually opted for a 'draw and write' technique design (29/01/2014). They decided to undertake this research activity and I scaffolded the design of the survey.

The use of the 'draw and write' technique has its origins in studies relating to health and psychology (Bradding and Horstman 1999; Williams et al 1989). There is a growing body of research which uses this method to capture participant voice in educational settings with the aim of effecting change and impacting policy development (Leitch 2008). Common to all these studies is the use of a basic approach of asking participants to respond to a researcher's enquiry by drawing a picture and then annotating this through written responses, either at the point of construction or during a follow-up interview. Punch (2002) states that 'draw and write' is a useful tool as it provides time for children to reflect on what they wish to portray, removing the immediacy sometimes present in interviews and providing the child with some control over their form of expression.

A major determinant in adopting this method was the view that 'draw and write' technique supports more inclusive and participatory research in that it gives access to a group who may be excluded as a result of their limited verbal skills and vocabulary (Sewell 2011, p.178). 'Draw and write' (fig 4.5) was used as a method to draw and/or write about what the child participants liked/disliked about their school playground at break-time and lunchtime, to elicit the child participants' initial perceptions and to identify descriptive labels/categories.

Tick (✓):	Boy ()	Girl ()	5 th Class ()	6 th Class ()
	Write/Draw what you like about break-time/lunchtime in your yard:		Write/Draw what you dislike about break-time/lunchtime in your yard:	
				

Sample of Draw and Write (29/01/2014)

The draw and write technique was administered during a morning class period (11/02/2014 at 10:00am) in 2 classrooms. There were three YRs in each classroom. Their tasks were to seek informed assent from the child participants, explain the purpose and content of the survey to their peers. They were to distribute the sheets, answer queries and collect the completed sheets. There was a class teacher present in each classroom. Forty-six students from 5th class and 30 students from 6th class completed the survey (n = 76).

Data Analysis in Cycle 1: 'Draw and Write' Technique

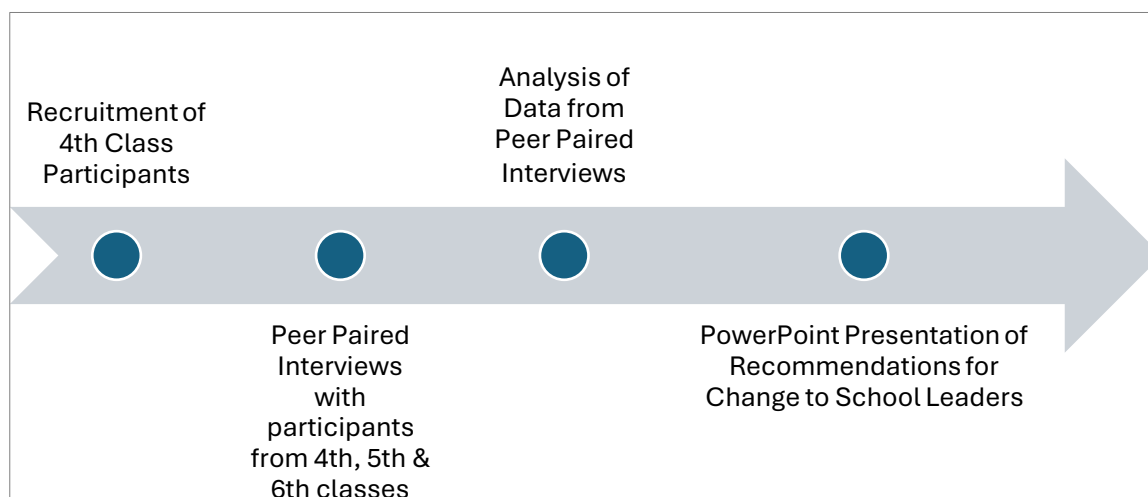
I worked with the YRs to scaffold the analysis of the draw and write. Analysis of the data involved the following steps:

1. The YRs sorted all survey sheets into 4 piles by gender (i.e. 5th class boys and girls, 6th class boys and girls). I encouraged them to read and re-read each survey sheet to get a sense of what the child participants were drawing and writing about (11/02/2014).
2. The YRs suggested that data should be recorded under the following headings - 'likes', 'dislikes' and 'would like/extra information'. The content of the draw and write sheets were read aloud by some of the YRs (11/02/2014). Later I transcribed the content of each survey sheet to data extraction sheets on a Microsoft Word document. The data extraction sheets were printed and the YRs checked them for accuracy of transcription (12/02/2014).
3. During the next research meeting the YRs explored (i) 'likes' and (ii) 'dislikes' (12/02/2014). They looked for patterns in the data. They discussed what was obvious in the data. They formulated descriptive labels. For example, likes included ideas related to

peers would like to see happen on their school playground leading to cycle 2 of the YPAR study.

YPAR Study Cycle 2 (April – June 2014)

In April 2014 I invited the YRs to engage in a second YPAR cycle (07/04/2014). All six YRs agreed that they would like to continue in the role of co-researchers. Three of the YRs expressed an interest in conducting interviews with their peers. In the next research meeting (08/04/2014) I introduced them to the work of Parrish et al (2012), where adult researchers in Australia conducted peer-paired interviews with children and individual interviews with teachers and school principals to understand how school environments affected children's playground physical activity levels. Four of the YRs stated that they would like to build on their previous research and interview their peers only. They were not interested in interviewing adults (i.e. teachers, SNAs and the school principal). The other YRs agreed with this suggestion. The YRs themselves, therefore, influenced decision-making in relation to the research design of cycle 2.



Timeline of Cycle 2 of the YPAR Study (April – June 2014)

As stated earlier in this chapter school playground changes were introduced during the second term of the 2013/14 academic year. This meant that fourth, fifth and sixth class children now shared a school playground during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Therefore, I impressed on the YRs that additional child participants from fourth class were required during Cycle 2 (Table 4.2). The next section describes how these child participants were recruited in April 2014.

Recruitment of Additional Child Participants by YRs in Cycle 2

The YRs gave oral presentations to the children in 4th class (n = 61) to encourage them to volunteer to participate in the peer-paired interviews (09/04/2014). They distributed information sheets and consent forms for parents/guardians and assent forms for child participants and in the following week they collected completed parental consent forms and children's assent forms. They recruited 26 fourth class children.

Data Generation in Cycle 2: Peer Paired Interviews

Interviews are regarded as an acceptable and effective method of gathering information from adults and children (Borra et al 2003; Jago et al 2009). Porcellato et al (2002) examined the appropriateness of focus groups with children and concluded that they were viable, but needed to be small, homogenous and interactive to maintain a high level of interest and participation. Paired interviews (peer pairs) met these criteria and represented a viable alternative for generating qualitative data from child participants. When the YRs were consulted three of them stated that they would like to conduct interviews with their peers (influence) to identify what changes needed to happen on the school playground to improve play opportunities. I presented the research of Parrish et al (2012) to the group. After discussion the YRs decided that the aim of this study was to explore children's perceptions of the factors influencing their engagement in physical activity during the lunchtime period. They wanted to explore the option of peer paired interviews for the next stage of the research. The YRs suggested that interview questions should be grounded in the findings of the 'draw and write' technique in order to further explore suggestions for change. Subsequently the YRs generated the following interview questions in two pilot interviews conducted with two girls from 6th class and two boys from 5th class (08/04/2014):

What is playtime like for you?

Where and what do you like to play?

In your opinion, what is working well on the school playground?

In your opinion, what is not working well on the playground?

What needs to change?

I introduced the YRs to techniques such as the use of wait time, positive body language and active listening and these were role-played during two pilot interviews (08/04/2014). The pilot interviews were conducted with two girls from 6th class and two boys from 5th class. Following these interviews they amended the questions as follows:

1. *What do you like about playtime?*
2. *What do you think is working well on the senior yard?*
3. *What do you dislike about playtime?*
4. *What do you think needs to change on the senior yard?*

Questions focused on children's activity preferences, school playground facilities and suggestions for changes to improve their experience of playtimes.

The child participants were interviewed in pairs. Each child was interviewed with a classmate of the same age and gender. The YRs arranged the interview pairs based on those who had consented to be in the study. Each interview was recorded on a digital voice recorder (SONY ICD-PX240) and lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. I was present in the adjoining room (which was separated by a screen) and could hear the interviews, but I was not a visible presence. The YRs began each paired interview reminding the child participants that all information was confidential and that they could opt out of the research at any stage without prejudice. They concluded each interview with a word of thanks for the children's valued contribution.

The YRs were advised regarding the importance of selecting a diverse sample of child participants in relation to the number of pairs interviewed from the 3 class groupings and the gender of these pairs.

Sixth Class Participants	Fifth Class Participants	Fourth Class Participants
Three interviews with girls (n = 6)	Six interviews with girls (n= 12)	Four interviews with girls (n = 8)
Three interviews with boys (n= 6)	Six interviews with boys (n= 12)	Four interviews with boys (n = 8)
Total interviewed = 12	Total interviewed = 24	Total interviewed = 16

Breakdown of Numbers of Child Participants interviewed in Cycle 2

The table presents the breakdown of the number of child participants who were interviewed for the three class groupings. There were 6 interviews conducted with sixth class children (3 interviews with girls (n=6) and 3 interviews with boys (n=6)), 12 interviews with fifth class children (6 interviews with girls (n=12) and 6 interviews with boys (n=12)) and 8 interviews with fourth class children (4 interviews with girls (n=8) and 4 interviews

with boys (n=8)). They conducted twenty-six semi-structured interviews (n=52) in total (01/05/2014 – 29/05/2014).

Data Analysis with YRs in Cycle 2: Peer Paired Interviews

The analysis of the peer paired interview data (14/06, 16/06, 19/06/2014) involved the following steps:

1. As it was near the end of the school year, to save time, I suggested that I should transcribe the interviews from the digital voice recorder to a Microsoft Word document. The YRs agreed and they checked the transcriptions for accuracy by comparing them to the audio recordings. I encouraged the YRs to read the interviews in sequence. I prompted them to add comments and reflections, for example, 'children like equipment' and 'being with friends', 'dislike sharing yard with 4th class pupils' and 'overcrowding' and 'want more equipment', 'soccer goals' and 'permission to kick balls on the yard'.
2. The next step of data analysis involved the YRs identifying patterns and deciding codes (for example, equipment, not enough equipment, games, rough play) as a guide to categorise the interview responses.
3. During the next research meeting (19/06/2014) data was again analysed question by question to check codes/categories. We started with 'likes' (e.g. games, equipment, balls, being with friends) then 'dislikes' (e.g. rough play, not enough equipment, not allowed to kick balls). I encouraged the YRs to make evidence-based practical solutions to present to school leaders that could be applied on their school playground based on answers to interview question 4 (What do you think needs to change on the senior yard?). I felt that it was important that their experiential, embodied knowledge was recognised and placed at the core of the co-production process (Bautista 2012, Lenette et al 2019).

Reporting Findings and Recommendations for Change in Cycle 2

The YRs decided to present their findings and suggestions for possible improvements to the senior yard as a PowerPoint presentation to the Principal and the Deputy Principal (24/06/2014).



Recommendations for Change Presented by YRs in Cycle 2

Following the recommendations for change extra equipment was introduced to the school playground (small balls and skipping ropes), skipping workshops were organised for the week after Halloween 2014 (2014-2015 academic year) and stronger sanctions (i.e. teachers on yard duty recording anti-social incidents in a 'yard book') were used by teachers and the school principal on the senior school playground for children who frequently disrupted games.

YPAR Study Cycle 3 (December 2014 – March 2015)

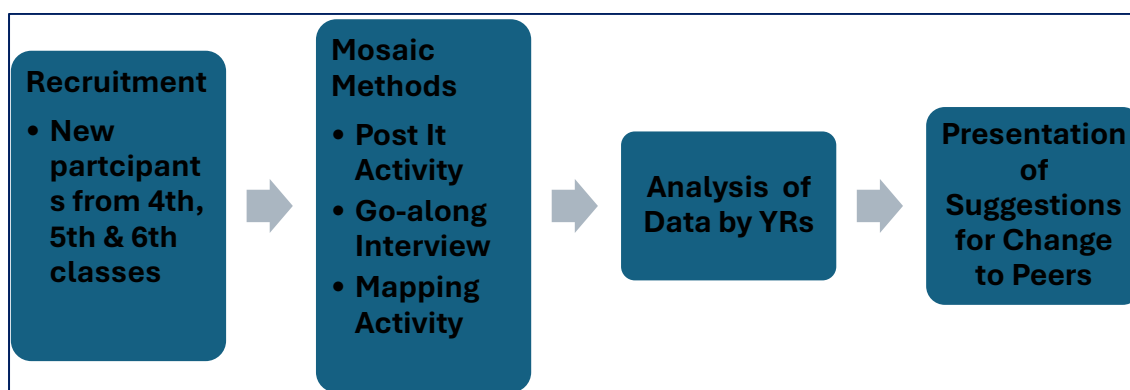
Two weeks after the skipping workshops (18/11/2014) I arranged a meeting with the YRs. They were invited to continue in their role as co-researchers. The YRs were keen to probe further the 'problems' they had located in the data from the first and second cycle of the YPAR study. They indicated that they would like to try more creative research methods which resulted in a third YPAR study cycle.

At the beginning of the next research meeting (10/12/2014) I presented examples of multiple methods research to the YRs (Clark and Moss 2001; Stanley et al 2012). Firstly, I described how Clark and Moss (2001) had used go-along interviews with pre-school children. Next, I explained how Stanley et al (2012) investigated children's perceptions of factors influencing their engagement in physical activity during their lunchtime using a school playground mapping activity. I described how the go-along interviews and the mapping activity were valuable research tools for obtaining a range of different perspectives

about child participants' play experiences on their school playground. I suggested that the child participants should lead the YRs through spaces where they played on the playground.

The YRs were encouraged to make suggestions for a suitable introductory activity – they suggested using a Post-It note (sticky note) activity, which they considered to be a very suitable method to focus child participants' attention and to facilitate individual or collaborative brainstorming. Together with the YRs we agreed that data generation should have four parts – (i) an introductory Post-It note activity conducted indoors to focus the child participants' thinking on activities they engaged in during playtimes, (ii) go-along interviews on the school playground to identify where they enjoy engaging in these activities (iii) upon returning to the interview room a mapping activity that suggests ways to improve their playtime experiences, (iv) and to conclude a presentation of suggestions for change by child participants. Two pilot interviews (13/01/2015 and 14/01/2015) were conducted with groups from 6th class (n = 4 girls) and 5th class (n = 6 boys). I was present for both interviews. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

I hoped that this compendium of methods would help the child participants to communicate more effectively about their current use of the school playground and what improvements they would like to see happen. While the issue of authority or 'empowerment' is an important rationale for using child-led methods there is also a philosophical rationale for them (Kusenbach 2003). Enabling child participants to move through familiar spaces while commenting on their experiences places them closer to their lived experiences than conventional sit-down research methods do, because all lived experiences are embedded in the spaces that people use (ibid).



Timeline of Cycle 3 of YPAR Study (December 2014 – March 2015)

The use of the participatory drawing activity (mapping activity) following the go-along activity had a further advantage in that, unlike in interviews where an instantaneous response is expected, the research participants were given time to reflect on their responses, which encouraged active conceptualization and contemplation (Gauntlett 2007). This additional time for reflection also gave the participants an opportunity to craft a more complete depiction, which is more difficult to achieve linguistically in a brief interview or survey (Literat 2013, p.87). In accordance with Freire's dialogic pedagogy, this technique discourages the sense of a hierarchy between researcher and subject, and it is comparatively more horizontal and more ethical than alternative textual strategies (ibid, p.88). In order to assuage the challenge of misinterpretation, because of the imaginative and creative nature of children's visual depictions, a subsequent discussion of these drawings with the YRs (closing activity) was important (Gauntlett 2005, 2007; Mitchell 2006; Young and Barrett 2001). Adopting this strategy and encouraging the participants to talk about their own drawings puts the YRs in the position of the listener and enables the participants to lead the interpretation process - which is vital, given that the visual evidence is a subjective product of the participants' own perceptions and lived realities (Literat 2013, p.94).

Recruiting New Child Participants in Cycle 3

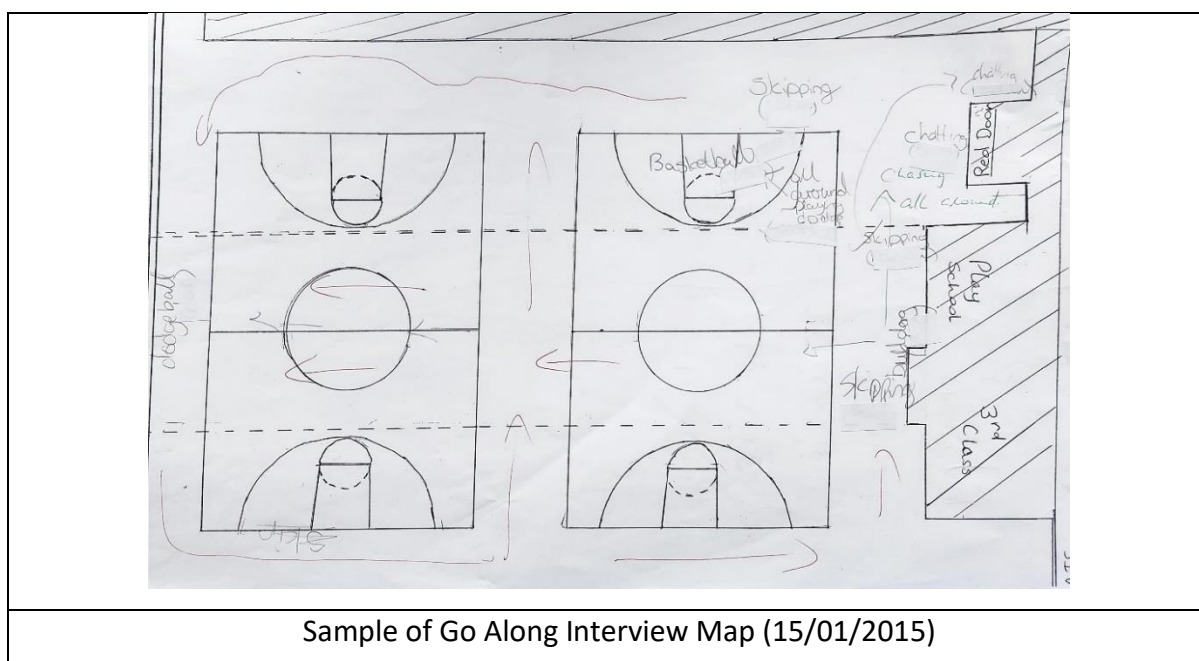
The first task for the YRs in cycle 3 was to recruit new child participants. The YRs gave oral presentations to explain the purpose of cycle 3 of the YPAR study to children in fourth, fifth and sixth class classes (16/12/2014 – 17/12/2014, 13/01/2015 -14/01/2015). Parent/guardian and child information sheets and consent and assent forms were distributed and collected by the YRs. Ninety-six children gave their consent to participate in cycle 3.

This is how the child participants were selected. Names of child participants who had consented to participate (n=96) were recorded on class lists. Their names were then written on cards and placed in separate boxes (e.g. Box 4G - girls from fourth class, Box 6B - boys from sixth class). Twelve names were drawn out from each box (12 boys and 12 girls from fourth, fifth and sixth classes, n = 72). Twelve interviews were conducted over 3 weeks. The

child participants were interviewed in their class grouping. Sixth class participants were interviewed first, then fifth class participants and lastly fourth-class participants.

Data Generation in Cycle 3 (15/01/2015 – 05/02/2015)

The YRs conducted twelve multi-method (mosaic) interviews (n = 72). Initially the child participants (6 children per interview) wrote what they liked to do in the playground on post it notes which were presented to the group. This was followed by a go-along interview (i.e. child-led tours) outdoors where child participants identified the places where they played on the playground and the games or activities that they engaged in while playing/being in those places. Following this research exercise participants were asked if they had any suggestions for changes they would like to happen on their playground to facilitate their playground activities. Child participants then came indoors and were given a blank plan/outline of the playground and asked to illustrate their suggestions for change (mapping activity). After the child participants had drawn/written their suggestions, the YRs asked clarification questions without influencing the content of the maps and asked child participants to label obscure items (Parameswaran 2003). All the research activities were audio recorded and video recorded by the YRs. Each mosaic interview in cycle 3 took approximately 1 hour.

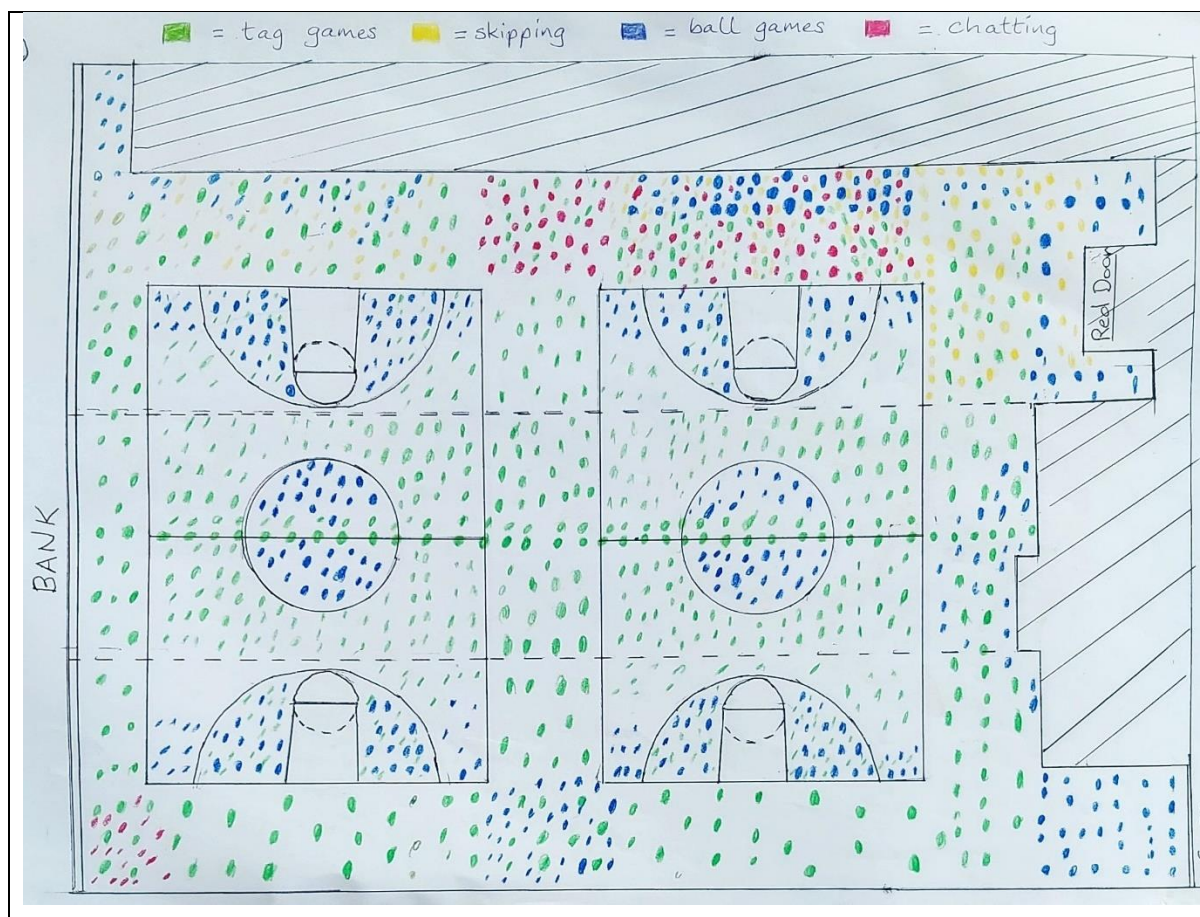


As the interviews were conducted during class time (1:30-2:30pm) I was given permission by the school principal to withdraw children from class over twelve afternoons and teachers were requested by the school principal not to use the playground on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:30-2:30pm. Due to time constraints only 72 child participants out of 216 children (33.3%) who used the playground daily participated and made suggestions for change.

Playground Audit during Cycle 3

After conducting 3 mosaic interviews I suggested that an additional research instrument should be introduced to ensure that suggestions for change ('yard zone suggestions') reflected what was actually happening daily during playtimes. This entailed an investigation of 'what' happens and 'where' it happens (Armitage 2005) on the school playground. It was therefore decided to conduct a playground audit. The YRs took photos of the senior school playground from upstairs classrooms over 2 lunchtimes (21/01/2015 and 22/01/2015). Next they divided a school playground map into a 16-area grid according to playground markings (basketball court markings), with reference points such as red door, side gate, bank, fence, 3rd class windows and 4th class windows.

In order to develop the research instrument the YRs assigned photos to specific areas of the grid. The YRs then scanned the photos and identified where the greatest concentrations of activities occurred on the school playground, for example, tag games, ball games, skipping and chatting/ hanging out. They estimated how many children were engaged in those activities in each area. Following this the YRs in pairs recorded activities on maps of the playground (fig 4.10). Green dots represented tag games, yellow dots represented skipping activities, blue dots represented ball games and red dots stood for children chatting or hanging out. They nicknamed it the 'drone' map.

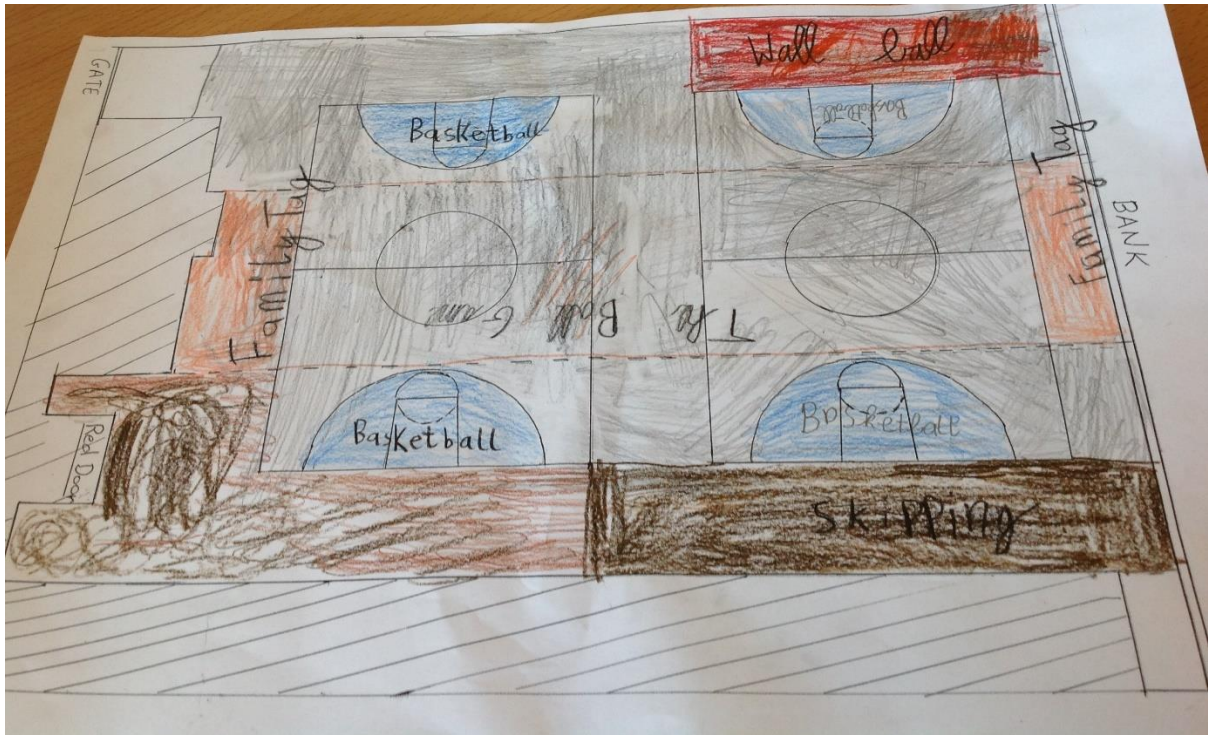


Sample 'Drone Map'

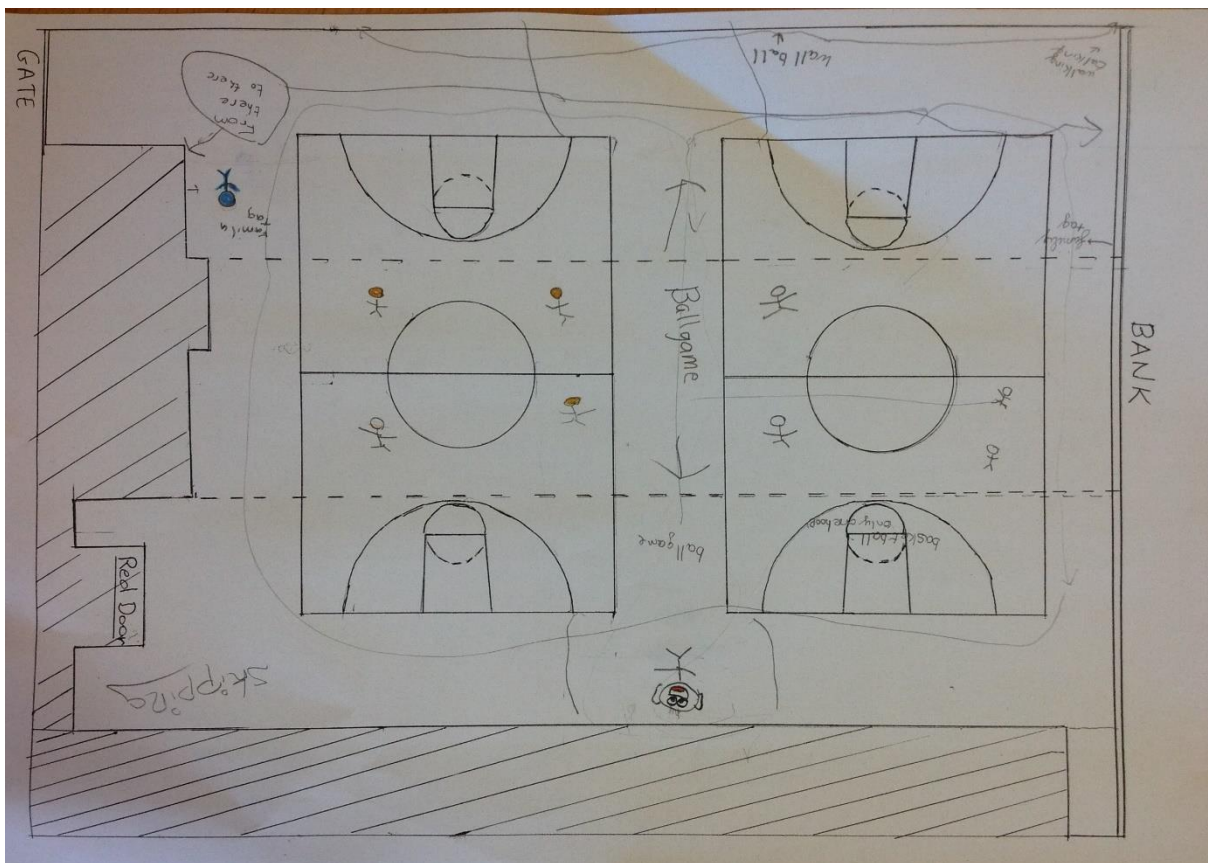
(green = tag games, yellow = skipping, blue = ball games, red = chatting)

Data Analysis Cycle 3 (10/02/2015 – 26/02/2015)

The YRs with my help evaluated the child participants' mapping suggestions for 'zone' areas for different activities on the school playground. Images drawn by the child participants were manually coded and qualitatively analysed by the YRs.



Example of Child Participants' Suggestion for Zone Areas

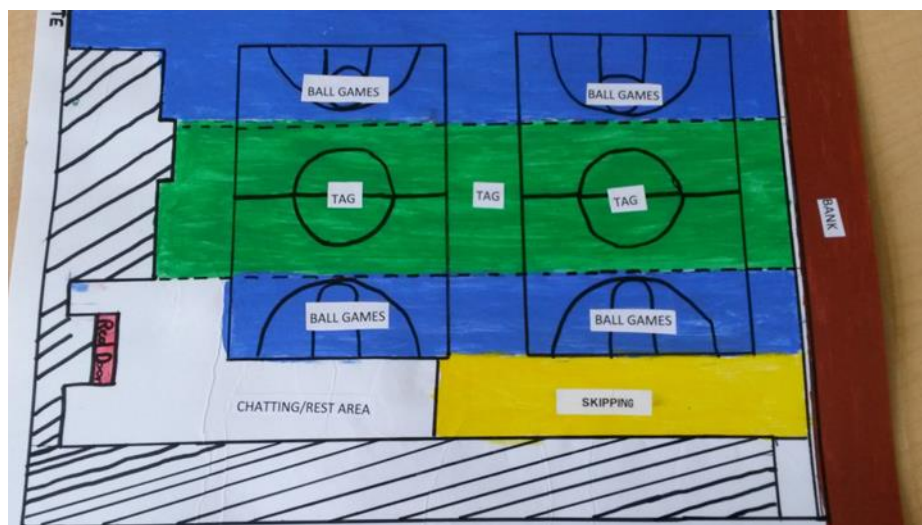


Example of Child Participants' Suggestion for Zone Areas

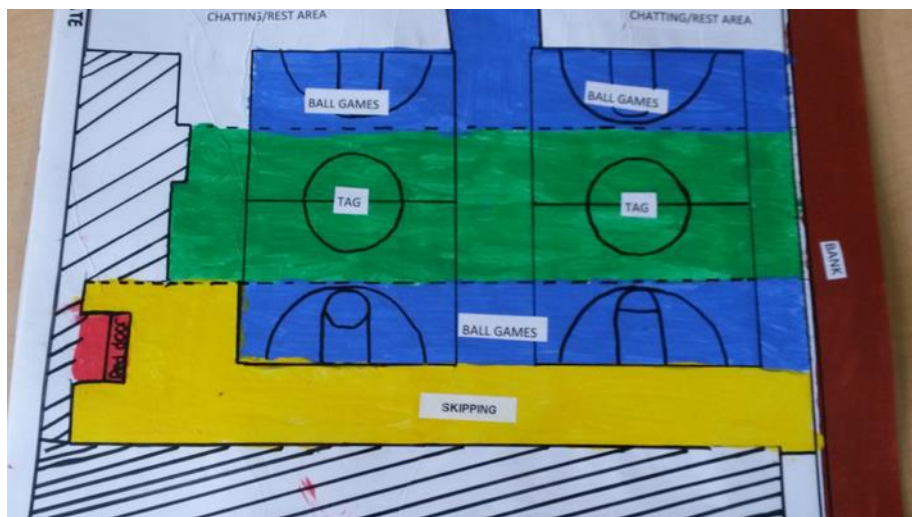
This process involved first assessing every suggestion and creating a list of all the different types of images drawn (e.g. stick men with ball = ball games, stick men running = tag games, stick men skipping) and colour coded areas indicated by the child participants on the school playground maps. Every inclusion/exclusion decision was discussed by the entire group until they achieved consensus that it corresponded with the 'drone' map. Any images they rated as simply too obscure (e.g. cartwheels and gymnastics) were removed from the analysis. Similar images were grouped together (i.e. included areas for tag games, ball games, skipping, chatting, n=10). These were then compared again with the 'drone' map. This refined images to 5 options. The YRs then considered options that provided large areas for tag games that would have least disruptions from other activities on the school playground (i.e. away from areas where there was the greatest concentrations of ball games such as the basketball posts, walls and fences). Possible implementable solutions were further refined to 3 options when areas for skipping were considered.

Presentation of Suggestions for Change Cycle 3

The YRs decided that these options for change (zones) should be presented to all fourth, fifth and sixth class children. Prior to the presentations the YRs compiled a PowerPoint presentation (4 slides - 3 playground options and the drone map). Options for change were presented to children and class teachers in 9 classrooms on 11/03/2015 (9:30-10:30 am) and 12/03/2015 (9:15-10:30 am).



Option A



Option B



Option C

Children then voted (secret ballot) for their preferred option. This gave an opportunity for all children from fourth, fifth and sixth class to have a say in decision-making about changes on their school playground. The chosen option (Option C) was then presented to the school principal (18/03/2015) and suggestions were made by the YRs about how this could be best implemented. I was present for this meeting.

The new school playground arrangements were trialled after the Easter holidays 2015 (14/04/2015). Zoning the playground involved dividing it into separate distinct areas. A group of fourth-class students took charge of laying out cones before every break and collecting them when breaktimes finished. The cones acted as visual indicators of where

areas started and finished. Classes were given additional equipment such as basketballs and long skipping ropes. The qualitative research methods used in cycle 3 to explore child participants' views, experiences and perceptions of play opportunities on their school playground attempted to privilege their interests and to maintain the YRs' primary control over problem identification, data generation, analysis and interpretation (Spaaij et al 2018) in order to lead to a grounded intervention (Juras et al 1997).